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Debt-Crisis: The State Is Bankrupt, Workers Must not Bail it Out

What a difference a few months make! Gone is the self-assuring message of a better future for capitalism that dominated the news on the economy in the bourgeois media at the end of 2009. Today there is increasing talk of bad days to come. It would seem that the celebrated 'green shoots of economic recovery' have either withered out or proved to be a mirage. Instead the economic landscape, save for a few hold outs like China, is dominated by multiple signs of a continuous economic crisis.

A round two in the 'Great Recession'

The OECD and other official global bourgeois economic organizations are still producing data 'demonstrating' that capitalism has if not a good bill of health, at least resilience. Economic 'buoyancy' is the adjective more connected with China and India, and, the US and most of the industrialized world is supposedly way out of the so called 'great recession'. Yet this fiction of improving national Gross Domestic Products and other economic indicators proving that the

system is entering the expansion moment of its economic cycle -in the narrative of bourgeois economists- is becoming more and more untenable.

In reality, after the respite afforded by the governments expansionist policies used all over the world to keep the system away from total collapse, today, just as in 2007-2008 at the time of the burst of the real estate bubble, the world financial system is once again in turmoil. In the last two months the stock and bond markets have been on a rollercoaster throughout the globe - in the US, by mid June, all major indexes have lost about 14% from its record high at the end of April. Despite the fact that all central banks have kept unchanged their expansionist monetary policies keeping the interest rates that they control near to zero, credit, the life blood of the system, has been getting scarcer and more expensive. Libor, the rate that bank charged to each other for short-term loans reached a 10 month high in early June. And, in the so-called 'real economy', production is slumping as the governments'

economic stimuli are losing steam.

However the guilty parties this time, according to the media, are not the so-called 'greedy Wall Street bankers' and their acolytes around the world. This time fingers are being pointed at the 'free-spenders governments' that, ironically, had rushed to rescue the banks from the brink of the abyss at high of the financial crisis in 2008-09. What started as a sovereign debt crisis in Dubai and then in Greece, a peripheral country of the heart of capitalism in Europe, has spread in the last few months to the whole Euro currency zone (Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Italy are in fact as insolvent as Greece) provoking a 'Euro crisis' and ultimately threatening the financial system the world over.

Once again the State goes to the rescue

In May, faced with a developing situation that was threatening to get totally out of control, the bourgeoisies of the main capitalist countries rallied to contain a full blown financial catastrophe. However, this was not without rifts and difficulties, particularly

overcoming Germany reluctance to play the savior role, which shows the weight of tendency of each for itself among bourgeois states. The *NY Times* said, "Rarely have so many central banks taken such extraordinary steps to stave off banking and national collapses. Their wariness about what they have wrought is palpable" (May 25th, 2010). Indeed! With the US playing a leading role, Germany finally agreed to a virtual bail out of European weakest economies that were on the brink of collapse under the weight of a national debt that have become unmanageable.

It's no coincidence that the one trillion dollars fund created to bail out the PIGS is reminiscent of the US government programs designed to rescue its own financial system in 2008. In fact, the US bourgeoisie has had its hand all over this 'European' policy, with the Federal Reserve going as far as to guarantee the liquidity of European banks through a so-called currency swap program. This illustrates that the American bourgeoisie knows full well that no national capital is safe from the debt-crisis contagion, but it also shows the enormous power that American capitalism still has over its wannabe imperialist competitors.

Following the governments' "extraordinary steps to stave of banking and national collapses" there has been an uneasy calm that seems to augur unpleasant things to come. In fact the media is full of predictions of a so-called 'double-dip' recession coming over capitalism's horizon.

Certainly things will get worse rather than better. The sobering debt-crisis that started in Dubai and Greece is just the tip of the

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'Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico: A New Step in Capitalism's Devastation of the Planet

This article on the Deepwater Horizon disaster was written about one month ago. The time elapsed has not brought the relief and solution to the resulting greatest ecological disaster in the history of the US, which the ruling class had promised. Instead, it has sadly confirmed the premise of the article: capitalism in its death throes cannot offer any perspective to humanity and the planet. In fact, the longer the oil continues to gush, the clearer the bankruptcy of the system becomes. The Obama administration had just lifted a ban on drilling in protected areas when the oil rig exploded. After this latest capitalist disaster happened, it became clear that the administration had no means to address it. Most notably, the utter lack of any plan as to what to do in the face of a disaster has become widespread public knowledge. This has so exposed the ruling class to shame, embarrassment, and the truth about its bankruptcy, that it had to pass a six-month moratorium on the ban on off-shore oil drilling it had just lifted. Of course, it did so in an effort to refurbish its image as an 'environmentally aware'

state, and not out of any real concern for the planet or human lives! It is amply evident that this ridiculous measure will do nothing to change the damage already inflicted on the environment and human lives. It also cannot stop American capitalism's reckless and furious search for cheap oil in the politically stable waters of its homeland as it reckons with its desperate necessity to be competitive on the world market. The six-month moratorium will do nothing to address the obvious disregard for even the minimum of accident-prevention, safety, or emergency measures, as we have observed in the Mineral Management Service's practice of rubber-stamping the oil companies' requests for approval for drilling. It's a well-known fact today that BP provided phone numbers of defunct agencies and deceased 'experts' in environmental protection and intervention whom the MMS was to contact in case of an emergency! This latest capitalist disaster has exposed the truth about the system: its drive for profit overrides any human or environmental consideration, which is why we can only expect more such disasters to

happen in the near future and as long as capitalism exists.

On 20 April 2010 an explosion rocked the floating rig Deepwater Horizon about 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana. The rig finally sank on Thursday, April 22, causing the worst oil spill in history and leaving the blown-off drill pipe gushing millions of gallons of oil and methane gas into the ocean every day. This has been going on for almost one month at the time of writing, and will go on for an unforeseen number of months to come. This oil spill adds to the long list of ecological catastrophes caused by capitalism's blind rape of the planet as it searches for ever cheaper ways to maintain a competitive edge. It also reminds us of what's in store for the workers' future safety conditions. The explosion killed eleven workers, and comes in the wake of the recent explosion of a West Virginia coal mine which left 24 workers dead.

At the level of the impact on the environment and the livelihood of the local people, the damage being caused by this disaster

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A New Step in Capitalism Devastation of the Planet

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is immeasurable, and will last for decades to come. The 'disaster prevention' agency set up by the capitalist state in the form of the Minerals Management Service has been exposed as totally corrupt and utterly inept. While its function was officially to make sure that pre-drilling operations were safe for the environment, and that the equipment used was safe for human lives, it was at the same time charged with collecting hefty royalties from the oil companies, a practice put in place in order to allow cheap costs of production to take precedence over considerations for the environment and human lives. In fact, the federal government fills its coffers with oil company royalties, and buys oil at a cheap price as the oil companies shift the economic burden onto the backs of their workers by cutting costs and more and more disregarding safety measures. This is reminiscent of the role of the state agency that was supposed to deal with the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina, FEMA. The total bankruptcy of these bodies put in place by the capitalist state is so evident that president Obama has decided to split the MMS in two. One part of it will now collect the royalties while the other will supervise operations. This is how capitalism is trying to save face and mop up the mess.

Oil giant BP itself, as well as Transocean which BP contracted for labor, and Halliburton, contracted for equipment and some drilling procedures and material, blame each other for the disaster, in a daily mud-slinging match. BP is so confident in the force of its economic stature that it even pleaded to surpass federal government standard liability imposed in such cases. While the maximum penalty imposed is \$75 million,

BP has pledged \$89 million. It does not say, however, that its revenues for the first quarter of 2010 were in the billions. BP's added self-imposed liability amounts to increasing our cable bill by about \$5 a month for just a couple of months of the year. Halliburton, on its part, laughs at the supposedly 'strict' penalties the capitalist state will pass against it because it knows its insurance will pay it about three times as much as it will have lost in revenues. And what about the 'cleaning up' of the environment? Well, the Coast Guard is using oil boons! That's the equivalent of using Kleenex tissue to try and mop up the water from a flooded house.

These operations are so totally inadequate that residents of New Orleans anticipate that the oil from the spill will be dumped on shore during this year's just starting hurricane season, causing further devastation to an already impoverished and contaminated area. As for the bosses' regard for human lives, the explosion led to a night of terror for the men working on the rig, and an anxious night of waiting for their families. During the rescue operations performed under Coast Guard supervision, several oil workers contracted by Transocean, the Swiss-based company that owned the rig, were kept on board a rescue boat, watching the Horizon burn for about 12 hours before the vessel finally headed to shore, a trip that then took another 12 hours or so. One of the workers said, "*They kept us there until almost 11:30 the next morning, letting us watch our buddies burn. We counted over 25 boats there. There was no reason to keep us there.*" They were pulled aside for tape-recorded interviews before they were allowed to see their families and were not given phones or radios to get in touch with them. It is obvious the authorities wanted to question the oil workers before they could

talk with anyone on shore, the better to distort and obscure any inkling as to the truth of the 'accident'.

All of this is enough to indict the moribund system we live in. But it doesn't end here. The amount of oil spilling into the Gulf of Mexico is at least 10 times the size of official estimates. Expert findings suggest the BP spill is already far larger than the 1989 Exxon Valdez accident in Alaska, which spilled at least 250,000 barrels of oil, remnants of which can still be found today, 21 years later. Scientists' estimates, more accurate than the lies peddled by BP in its attempts to limit its liability and clean up its image as an 'environmentally responsible' oil giant, put the amount of oil and gas spilled at between 56,000 and 100,000 barrels a day. This new, much larger, number suggests that capturing - and cleaning up - this oil will be a much bigger challenge than anyone has let on. BP keeps claiming the spill is 5,000 barrels a day.

Sure enough BP has a long history of violations, but it has many accomplices, the US state being the greatest. One of BP's largest refineries in the US exploded in March 2005 causing 15 deaths, injuring 180 people and forcing thousands of nearby residents to remain sheltered in their homes. The incident was the culmination of a series of less serious accidents at the refinery, and the engineering problems were not addressed by the management. Maintenance and safety at the plant had been cut as a cost-saving measure, the responsibility ultimately resting with executives in London. There have been several investigations of the disaster, and eventually the company pleaded guilty to a felony violation of the Clean Air Act, was fined \$50 million, and sentenced to three years probation. On October 30, 2009, the US Occupational Safety and Hazards

Administration (OSHA) fined BP an additional \$87 million - the largest fine in OSHA history - for failing to correct safety hazards revealed in the 2005 explosion. Inspectors found 270 safety violations that had been previously cited but not fixed and 439 new violations. BP is appealing against that fine.

The list of violations by BP is endless, and the list of disputes between BP and the US government is impressively long. One has to wonder, then, why such an environmental charlatan as BP is allowed by the US to have 40% of its market in this country. In fact, by allowing very lax environmental and safety safeguards, the US is a prime accomplice in the disasters perpetrated by BP. It is certainly economically very convenient for the US to have to buy its own oil from a company that produces it at a low price. The US allows it to contract out parts of its labor - as BP did in this case with Transocean and Halliburton - and BP operates in US waters. Its record of malpractice, cost-cutting, use of old or malfunctioning equipment, and utter disregard for workers' safety make it possible for BP to produce at a low cost! The drawback is nonetheless serious: it is that the US is at a technological disadvantage in the modernization of its own oil extracting and production apparatus in the context of an increased need for the cheapest sources of energy available, i.e. oil. This is what lies at the heart of the present proposed energy reform bill by the Obama administration. In the contest of the aggravating economic crisis, the US desperately needs to gain a competitive edge on the world market. The disputes have also involved the US and Britain over their involvement with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, for example, a thorn in the side of the US as it tries to gain control over resources which other countries - European states, China - also want. This is why we would be mistaken to believe that the actions by the US agencies aimed at penalizing BP's worst behavior are a reflection of the state's concern for the safety of the environment and human lives. On the contrary, the US is using these environmental disasters to clean up its own image as the champion of environmental protection and assert its authority in an industry which is vital to its competitiveness on the world market. It is effectively transforming such disasters into weapons of its own trade wars against other countries, in the case of BP, against Britain.

The US, like all other capitalist states, knows perfectly well that the dependence on oil will not be done away with any time soon under current capitalist conditions, and less so at the time of its most acute economic crisis. Oil is the only source of energy that can give it a competitive edge, regardless of the environmental or human cost. And above all, oil is absolutely indispensable as a weapon of war, the ultimate expression of capitalist competition - both because it is vital for fuelling your own war machine, and because control over its sources can be used to hamper the war machines of your rivals.

Capitalism will never be 'green'. Its disregard for man and nature explodes each day more forcefully the bourgeoisie's mystifications and lies about its ability to bring a better tomorrow. The many images of dying wildlife, and the knowledge of the loss of human lives and livelihood resulting from this and other disasters, can only fill us with horror and outrage, and a deep concern about the future. This event further exposes the utter irrationality of capitalism. It can prompt a fruitful reflection on the fact that human life and the planet are at a crossroads where there is a real possibility of the human species becoming extinct because of the continued existence of capitalism. It is high time we destroy capitalism, before it destroys us. *Ana 19/5/10*

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iceberg. There is no secret, for instance, that the average government debt-to-GDP ratio of the G-20 nations has jumped from 78.2% in 2007 to 98.9% in 2009, and is projected to reach the breathtaking figure of 118% in 2014. In fact, throughout the whole world governments, corporations and individuals are sitting on a mountain of debt that has no chance of being repaid. And worse still this debt has reached such proportions that it has become a factor in the aggravation of capitalism's chronic economic crisis.

The bourgeoisie's solution to the crisis – make the workers pay!

There's a concerted agreement between national capitals about the fact that the debt-crisis has to be confronted through a combination of spending cuts and tax increases, even though different bourgeois factions emphasize one side or the other of the equation, according to its right or left wing ideological credentials.

This implies, no matter what place in the bourgeois political spectrum the advocate occupies, a new brutal assault on the working and living conditions: everywhere austerity programs are being announced, varying in the degree of their severity, but all centering on cutting public workers pay and benefits, increasing retirement age and rising income taxes.

A brief look at the best known examples of the current and plan austerity programs clearly illustrates the scale of the attacks raining down on the working class. In Italy,

if the austerity plan proposed by Berlusconi is materialized, pay for civil servants would be frozen for three years, top-level civil servants' salaries would be cut, and retirement of state employees would be delayed. Greece has announced the most dramatic attacks, increasing the retirement age to 65 and cutting public salaries to bring the deficit down from the current 13.6% of GDP to less than 3%. Spain has imposed pay cuts of about 5% for civil servants, increasing the age of retirement and tax increases. Portugal has increased taxes and introduced cuts in public-sector wages and corporate subsidies. In Britain, the new coalition government has announced the most severe tax increases and spending cuts since Margaret Thatcher's era in the '80s – 25% cuts for all government departments over the next five years, freezing civil servants pay for another 2 years, raising the age of retirement much earlier than expected (from 65 to 66 for men from 2017). France is expected to increase the retirement age to 62 or 63 from 60, while lengthening the duration of contributions required for a full pension and freeze in hiring of state employees.

In the US, Obama's administration has not yet fully embraced the European governments' administered austerity programs as a way to fight the crisis - officially the message is that this is a European fiscal crisis, while the US is out of the recession and, at most, will "*encounter a slower and bumpier recovery*" (*NY Times*, May 25th 2010) in the present world economic conditions. However, the talk about 'recovery' notwithstanding, draconian austerity is already a daily reality for most of the working class in

America both in the private and the public sector. Let's not forget that, in richest country of the globe, the working class 'enjoys' probably the worst social benefits of any country in the industrialized world: longer retirement age (67 for men), shorter paid vacation time (an average of two weeks) and the worse health system around. In the public sector this austerity at present is being administered mostly by states and municipal governments that to varying degrees are facing the same fiscal crisis we are witnessing in Europe. From California to New York (two of the states with the worse fiscal deficits) state governments are implementing the same tax increases and spending cuts recipes adopted by Europe. Salary freezes and cuts, reductions of benefits, increases of furloughs and lay-offs have been all put on the table for this sector of the working class. Yet, the worse is still to come. When the belt-tightening credo becomes the official policy at the federal level in the near future, tax increases and cuts in government spending will translate to an all out attack on workers living and working conditions.

Against capitalist attacks: the class struggle

The political message we hear more these days from the dominant class is that the so-called developing sovereign debt-crisis is the product of mismanagement, the fault of irresponsible governments that have lived for too long beyond their means, granting awesome pensions and other benefits to retired workers and supporting the needy and

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Lessons of the California Students Movement

California is the epicenter of the developing student movement against cuts to public education.¹ The March 4 (M4) demonstrations were a manifestation of the response by the various actors involved in the movement. This article will analyze the specific origins of M4 and tendencies involved in the movement, which were only briefly enumerated in the previous article. These aspects are presented so as to better understand the formulation, direction, weaknesses and strengths of the California student movement.

Origins of M4

The selection of the March 4 date as the proposed “Day of Action and Strike” came out of the October 24 2009 conference held at UC Berkeley. The conference was called after a coordinated state-wide protest on September 24. It was organized almost entirely by various union organizations² and their Trotskyist allies (ISO, LMV, SO³); with the participation of Trotskyist influenced student groups like *Advance The Struggle* (AtS)⁴ and *Student Unity & Power* (SUP).

Two clear factions among the 700 – 800 delegates around the question of what precisely to call the “day of action,” with the union allies calling for a “diversity of tactics” (“Day of Strike and Action”) and AtS/SUP calling for more militant action (“Day of Strike”). The argument used by the Trotskyist camp was that by being restricted to strike efforts this “would limit participation dramatically and give the

unions an excuse to remain passive.”⁵ In the end, the union current won out and M4 became a “day of strike and action.” The Trotskyists celebrated the victory because now, with the encouragement of actions such as letter writing campaigns to the state legislature, union participation could be maximized. However, AtS/SUP – who’ve been angered at the tactics adopted by the ISO -- have still been actively involved in spreading the idea that the unions should come to the ‘defense’ of the struggle and help in the mobilization.

Here again we are provided stunning clarity with how the union apparatus and its leftist appendage continually derail class struggle. Their role is to sabotage working class militancy and efforts at autonomous organization. One way in which this is accomplished is through the continuous funneling of working class struggles into the coffin of bourgeois electoralism and blocking the development of its consciousness with the bourgeois ideologies of nationalism and inter-classism. As this neurotoxin courses through the veins of the class, workers’ struggles become isolated behind one camp of the bourgeoisie in rivalries which the proletariat have nothing to gain from. The unions are active agents in this process and leftists are their willful servants in this

Since M4: The movement fractures

After M4, a conference was held in Los Angeles on April 24 to discuss the next proposed “Day of Action” (slated for October 7) as well as to formulate the principles of the movement. The conference was poorly attended, with between 70 – 100 participants, and was unable to vote on anything other than the next proposed “Day of Action” due to the poor attendance and fractious nature of the groups

5.- See *Socialist Worker’s* article: “March 4th and the next steps,” May 29 2010

present—just as well since several groups spoke against the inclusion of “anti-capitalist” as a principle of the movement!

The student movement itself has been winding down as the school year ends but two additional pressures are also putting a drain on organizing efforts: coordinated harassment on the part of university administrations and failure on the part of the movement to garner wider support from the working class. These two pressures are interconnected and reflect on the movement’s significance and weaknesses. Across the state, university administrations have coordinated their targeted harassment of student activists. The violent brutalization and hostage taking of a student at UC Davis by police forces on M4 is one extreme example of this. Since M4 there has been a pernicious abuse of the “student conduct” hearings to threaten students with academic sanctions so as to deter further action. On at least one campus, university administration conducted disciplinary hearings against students for an action initiated on another campus!⁶

The movement was largely unable to significantly extend beyond narrow confines of the union apparatus and selected groups of radicalized students. And thus, the student movement fell prey to all manner of leftist derailment of class struggle—unsurprisingly; “diversity of tactics” really just means one thing to a unionist: any response besides class struggle!

The influence of the ‘occupationist’ tendency

However, if one end of the derailment came from leftist organizations seeking to impose their “united front” ideology on the movement another came from within the groups which positioned themselves in opposition to them: the radical students associated with the “occupationist” tendency—a trend most vocal and theoretically centralized in Santa Cruz. One of the opening lines of *The Coming Insurrection*⁷ states “‘The future has no future’ is the wisdom of an age that ... has reached the level of consciousness of the first punks.” This text had an indelible impact on the development of the occupationist trend in the movement. This is expressed throughout their literature. One of the pivotal texts produced by this tendency is entitled “Communiqué from an Absent Future.”⁸

Within *Absent Future*, the failure of the “occupationists” to adequately grasp the nature of the capitalist crisis becomes apparent. Their increasing isolation stems precisely from their classless analysis encapsulated in statements such as, “[calls] for unity are fundamentally empty. There is no common ground between those who seek to uphold the status quo and those who seek to destroy it.” Along with the correct rejection of “united frontism,” they also reject the basis for the evolution of a proletarian movement: the mobilization of the class in general assemblies for the widest possible discussions and the election of revocable delegates. They then go on to provide the anti-CPE struggle as an example of a movement which began as an expression of “a rebellion that starts in the classrooms and radiates outward to encompass the whole of society” but, de-

6.- See *Occupy CA’s* article: “First Student Conduct letter issued at UC Irvine,” 19 April 2010.

7.- <http://tarnac9.wordpress.com/texts/the-coming-insurrection/>

8.- <http://wewanteverything.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/communique-from-an-absent-future/>

9.- See the ICC’s “Theses on the spring 2006 students’ movement in France” http://en.internationalism.org/ir/125_france_students

10.- See ICC’s article: “The youth revolts in Greece confirm the development of the class struggle,” *International Review* no. 136 - 1st quarter 2009

11.- <http://en.internationalism.org/wr/334/reflections-on-struggles-in-greece>

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poorest sectors of society through a generous welfare system. Yet, we are told, there is light at the end of the tunnel. The spokesmen of capitalism try to convince us that all can be fixed, that capitalism is well and dandy, needing only some structural adjustments. They bring forward tons of numbers to ‘demonstrate’ that society needs to come to terms with the fact that sacrifices need to be made, that, putting it in economic terms, there is no way forward other than through some kind of tax increases and social benefits cuts.

From the point of view of the bourgeoisie, there is some validity to these arguments, but they are far from telling us the whole story and, in particular, we can’t expect the dominant class to say that its economic system is simply collapsing, that it’s not responding to the monetary and fiscal policies that have kept the historic crisis of capitalism manageable over the last four decades. In fact, what makes the latest episode of the economic crisis unique is the evidence that the policy of abusing credit (at state, corporations and individual level) which the bourgeoisie have used to create demand artificially high, to keep profits flowing and thus keeping the system a float, has hit a wall, and worse, has become an active factor in capitalism’s economic convulsions. The

recognition of the failure of this so-called expansionist policy is driving the austerity shock therapy policy now being announced by capitalism, at the risk of provoking a sharpening of social conflicts and particularly a confrontation with the working class, which is the main target of this attack.

From the point of view of the working class, accepting the logic of capitalism means submitting itself to a future of increasing impoverishment, a deterioration of working and living conditions comparable to the misery of the period of the so-called Great Depression. The reality is that there is no solution to the crisis of capitalism other than getting rid of this obsolete mode of production, which can only continue to survive by denying the means of survival to increasing sectors of society while a tiny minority of the population lives a lavish and parasitic existence. The only way forward out of this social madness is the class struggle, starting by an uncompromising resistance to capitalist austerity attacks and the development of a movement able to challenge the bourgeoisie and its capitalist state. In a few words, for the working class the only way out of the present society’s malaise is to get rid of capitalism’s social relations of production and creating instead a system of production geared in the needs of society as a whole and not for the profit of tiny minority.

Eduardo Smith, 06/23/10.

Arizona “SB 1070”

Against the Repressive Immigration Policies of the State: The Solidarity of the Whole Working Class

In April, the Arizona state legislature passed a bill (SB 1070), since signed into law by Governor Jan Brewer, unprecedentedly brazen in its attack on both illegal immigrants and workers generally. The immigration issue, which had been gaining importance in the United States for some years, has grasped the head of the bourgeoisie and tugged the bourgeoisie’s rhetoric around itself. The various factions of the bourgeoisie, in turn, have endeavored to drag the working class into its discourse on immigration by means of sponsored demonstrations and rallies, all of which play to some nationalism or other and all of which can only be destructive to the working class’ actions in its own defense.

One need not read very far into the bill to find what has ignited so much controversy. SB 1070 is a collection of amendments to Arizona’s existing collection of immigration laws. The first amendment it makes gives new powers to any Arizona law enforcement official. It states that, “*where reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States, a reasonable attempt shall be made, when practicable, to determine the immigration status of the person*”¹. SB 1070 also mandates the sharing of information gathered about illegal immigrants with Federal agencies, and makes it a crime to obstruct the, “*receiving, sending, or maintaining*”² of information about immigration status. The information can affect applications for Federal or Arizona welfare benefits, drivers’ and business licenses, or other government services. Finally, “*a law enforcement officer, without a warrant, may arrest a person if the officer has probable cause to believe that the person has committed any public offense that makes the person removable from the United States*”³. All of this can be found in the first two pages of the bill. The dominant faction of the bourgeoisie in Arizona has certainly been up front with its policy!

That the right faction of the bourgeoisie in Arizona chose to represent its bill as “cooperative enforcement” of Federal immigration laws within Arizona speaks to its intentions. SB 1070 is not intended merely as “*an indispensable tool for the police in a border state that is a leading magnet of illegal*

immigration”⁴. It’s meant to provide a model for other states that have been revising their immigration laws since 2007, the last time a federal effort to reform immigration law collapsed⁵. More than that, it is one model that new Federal efforts at the revision of immigration law would have to consider. Certainly SB 1070 has inspired the Congressional leadership in both houses to revisit the issue: Democratic leader Harry Reid acknowledged that, from the bourgeois point of view, “*our immigration system is broken*”, and invited Senate Republicans to work with Democrats in creating comprehensive immigration legislation⁶. Whatever proposals they might bring will certainly be influenced by SB 1070, as Republicans have been forced, under pressure from primary challengers, to line up in support of the bill⁷. Clearly, the right wing of the American bourgeoisie wants immigration law more restrictive, wants greater police power, and wants these increases codified in Federal law. However, in order to understand the situation fully, it is necessary to grasp the reasons why the right wants these things.

The need for a new policy is something on which the whole of the bourgeoisie can agree. Apart from any other considerations, the bourgeoisie knows very well that their system is always at a rolling boil, and that the conditions of 1986—the last time the Federal government has comprehensively overhauled immigration law—are not the conditions of 2010. The provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act made it illegal to knowingly hire illegal immigrants, gave amnesty to certain long-term-resident illegal immigrants, and provided a path toward legalization for some illegal immigrants who worked as seasonal workers. However, since then, the number of illegal immigrants has grown to an estimated twelve million. Objectively, this is not a bad thing for the bourgeoisie, for various factions of which this is variously a pool of laborers to be exploited, competitors with which to threaten other workers, and potential union dues-payers⁸. However, it would be even better for the bourgeoisie if they could keep this group of people in their current

4.- Archibold, ‘Arizona Enacts Stringent Law on Immigration’, *New York Times*, 23 April, 2010

5.- Ibid.

6.- Hulse, Herszenhorn,, ‘Democrats Outline Plan for Immigration’, *New York Times*. 29 April, 2010.

7.- Archibold, op. cit.

8.-Immigrant Demonstrations, *Internationalism* 139

condition—cowed, desperate, and afraid to struggle—as well as countable and regulated. This reflects the need of the bourgeois state to bring all social life under its oversight.

That objective, to turn a useful and exploitable group into a useful, exploitable, and controllable group, is at the heart of any bourgeois immigration strategy. The right’s turn towards police repression and tightening of border controls allows the state to invade the lives of illegal immigrants, putting them “in the system”, as well as making them even more afraid of the state than they are now. This fear will, the right hopes, deter further illegal immigration, drive illegal immigrants away from claiming welfare benefits, and most importantly, make them docile in the workplace⁹. The left of the bourgeoisie, however, is concerned that repression will have other consequences. An actual decrease in illegal immigration would, as already seen, be harmful to the bourgeoisie in its war against the proletariat. They worry also that the United States could be cutting off its nose to spite its face. For this section of the bourgeoisie, the history of segregation, which was useful in the labor market in the same way SB 1070-style immigration reform would be useful, weighs heavily on their minds. They remember the damage that discrimination did to the reputation of the United States, both internationally and internally, as a champion of democracy and “human rights”¹⁰. At the same time, they remember how useful the movement against segregation was to them politically as a faction, and have speculated that “*an immigration debate could help energize Hispanic voters and provide embattled Democrats seeking re-election in November*”¹¹. These double priorities help explain the energy of the anti-SB 1070 demonstrations, whose members are animated by “anti-racism” and anti-fascism—comparisons to Nazi-era demands for “papers” are rife at their rallies¹²—and whose organizers are backed financially by the movers and shakers on the bourgeois left.

Both factions of the bourgeoisie have ap-

9.- Alexander, From SB 1070 to J.D. Hayworth’s Book on Illegal Immigration, “Whatever it Takes”, *Intellectual Conservative*, 2 May, 2010.

10.- Archibold, op. cit.

11.- Ibid.

12.- <http://nuevaraza.wordpress.com/2010/06/01/austin-counterprotest-rally-against-supporters-of-sb-1070-june-12/>

pealed to the working class in the language of nationalism. The Right speaks the language of crime and culture, exhorting ‘native’ Americans to mobilize against illegal immigrants in defense of their safety and way of life. The Left speaks the language of common humanity, but also the language of ‘pride’. The various Latin American nationalisms are all given play when the Left of the bourgeoisie demonstrates on this issue. One speaker remarked, un-ironically, that Arizona was “Mexican land”, a variation on the common Leftist theme that the land was stolen from Native Americans. All these tactics are meant to destroy any relationship between immigrant and ‘native’ workers, and to build up nationalist barriers even between citizens. This ultimate aim of dividing the working class, even mobilizing ‘native’ workers so that they might police their ‘illegal’ fellows, is one of the few things on which the bourgeoisie can agree.

From the point of view of the dominant class there is a pressing need for some kind of ‘immigration reform’. However there is no guarantee that they will be able to agree on and implement a common policy. As we have seen during the ‘debate’ over health insurance, and the previous attempt at a comprehensive immigration reform, the ideological polarization within the right and left factions of the bourgeoisie can obstruct policies that are obviously in the best interest of the national capital as whole. Whatever the outcome of the American bourgeoisie’s current ideological squabbles on the issue of immigration, one thing is for sure: the only ‘solutions’ they can offer to the massive displacement of impoverished workers and peasants from the periphery of capitalism will involve more repressive policies, in all their forms. They will continue to have no qualms about taking advantage of this particularly vulnerable sector of the working class for capitalism’s benefit.

The only possible solution is for the working class to recognize, not the “common humanity” of all its members, but their common social situation. Against the ideological and material attacks of the bourgeoisie, the working class can only resist by building its own solidarity amid its own struggles, slow as they might be to develop in the current climate. RW, 6/25/10.

Intervention on the Philly Nurses Strike

“We welcome this leaflet addressed to the striking nurses in Philadelphia, in order to help organize and extend the struggle that the unions wanted to sabotage. We want to salute wholeheartedly these kind of initiatives”

What is REAL Solidarity?

The Nurses’ Strike Rally today is not the first time that various unions throughout the city have called on their members to attend the rallies of other workers in struggle. When city workers’ contracts expired last July, workers represented by TWU, AFSCME, and the SEIU had a joint rally downtown in Love Park as they all had either been without a contract, or were having a contract expire—and they were all facing similar attacks. **The bosses and the politicians want to push the effects of the crisis onto working people**, to make them pay for the system’s failure by giving up things they, their parents, and their grandparents had been fighting for decades to win. Today again, various unions throughout the

city representing a variety of workers have called on their members to come to the Temple Nurses’ & Health Professionals rally to support them.

Yet **this is as far as the unions’ call for solidarity goes**. Despite the fact that city workers and the Temple nurses were without a contract during the SEPTA strike, we weren’t attending demonstration, pickets, or mass meetings, and the SEPTA workers were basically “on their own” (even the suburban train workers continued to work because they are under a different contract!) Now that the Temple nurses are on strike, workers in other sectors and workplaces are called to attend a short rally in support of the nurses. Yet there is no talk of what other workers are going to do about the fact that they are facing the same attacks Nurses are: our bosses want us to pay more for benefits, accept raises that don’t keep up with inflation, and happily work in worse and worse conditions. City workers still don’t have a contract and are facing massive attacks from the mayor, and

there’s no talk of trying to get solidarity from other workers at Temple (both in the hospitals and the Universities). **Why do workers attend each others’ rallies, yet struggle and strike at different times throughout the year all alone except for the extra head counts at the rallies?**

Despite what we all may hope, **one group of workers against a rich and powerful employer has the deck stacked against them**. Real solidarity means struggling together, not just as this or that sector of workers, but as the working class, fighting together against the attacks to our living standards that we all face. Real solidarity means *uniting our struggles, it means taking decisions together about how to push the struggle forward, it means mass meetings open to every worker to discuss and decide how to struggle together, it means sending delegations to other workplaces to convince others to join the struggle for their own demands and our own!* The unions can’t do this—as the legally recognized negotiators of the price of our labor, they have to conduct “respectful” struggles

and be on good terms with the bosses—yet **what would scare our employers into backing off from their attacks more than a movement that spread?** Workers need to meet together and discuss for ourselves how we can struggle together; *we can’t just wait for the union to do the struggling for us or to tell us how to struggle*. And we need to struggle together—to reach out to other workers to join our struggle. Maybe some workers cannot go on strike with us, maybe they can do a sick-out, or take a long lunch to meet together, demonstrate, or some other action. The point is we need to struggle together to win. We need to do this ourselves, deciding what to do together—we can’t let the unions do this for us, or we will keep having the same kind of half-hearted solidarity and support. **We need real solidarity!**

If you’re are interested in discussing how we can fight back together as workers, talk to your co-workers, other workers in struggle you know, and if you want, feel free to email: phillyworkersdiscussiongroup@yahoo.com

West Virginia Mine Disaster: The State is Also to Blame

On April 5th, 2010 a deadly explosion of methane gas ripped through the Upper Big Branch coal mine near Montcoal, West Virginia. Early reports from the authorities stated that 25 miners had been killed, but 4 were unaccounted for, and could possibly have survived had they made it to the underground survival chambers that are supposed to offer a safe haven of clean air and fresh supplies to any miners trapped below ground.

One can only imagine the collective exasperation that gripped the mining towns of southwestern West Virginia, and indeed the entire Appalachian coal belt, as they were once again forced to face the grim reality of the brutal demise of family, friends and loved ones deep in the mines. One can hear the resounding cries of “Not again!” emanating from mining families across the region, as the Upper Big Branch disaster follows on the heels of a similar catastrophe in Sago, West Virginia just four short years before, in which 12 miners were killed in another explosion of combustible methane gas.

Much like Sago four years earlier, the media from across the nation and globe descended on the small West Virginia town pursuing yet another ‘disaster story’ that promised to pump up ratings and keep a worried nation enthralled with the suspense surrounding the rescue efforts for the 4 missing miners. Over the next several days, we were treated to televised press conference after press conference from local politicians, the state Governor, rescue authorities and company officials encouraging us to keep up hope that the missing miners would be found alive.

However, regardless of the media-driven suspense, anyone with an objective view of the situation could only conclude that after an explosion of such magnitude so far underground, the missing miners would not be found alive. Indeed, as the days passed, the tone from the official press conferences grew more and more grim. On April 9th, four days after the explosion, officials announced that there were in fact no survivors. Apparently, the damage inside the mine has been so great that rescuers had passed by the bodies of the four missing miners in their initial searches several times without even recognizing them. The underground survival chambers—another supposed marvel of modern technology to eliminate the ancient perils of underground labor—utterly failed to do anything to stop a violent explosion of methane gas.

Another mine tragedy has this time taken the lives of 29 miners. Combined with similar recent mine disasters in Russia and Mexico, the world is once again grimly reminded that even in the so-called ‘post-work information age’, significant numbers of workers continue to make their living putting in long hours in a dark hole dug into the side of a mountain filled with poisonous gasses than can ignite at any time and where the risk of a deadly cave-in is omnipresent.

However, despite the media’s perpetual desire to exploit the suspense of the rescue efforts—a theme common to all disaster stories—there was nevertheless something a little different about the media’s response to the Upper Big Branch Mine explosion compared to how it treated the Sago disaster four years earlier. Now, the political climate is different. George W. Bush—a fellow known for his close connections to the energy industry—is no longer President. The new President is none other than Barack Obama, a man elected on a solemn pledge

of ‘bringing change’. Moreover, this disaster takes place in a climate of anti-corporate rhetoric emerging from the Wall Street collapse and subsequent bailouts in 2008. The dominant narrative of bourgeois ideology is that the state is now the working man’s friend—his only real protection against the greed of the banks on Wall Street that have the power to wreck the entire economy, and the vicious pursuit of profits by reckless companies such as Massey Energy (the Upper Big Branch Mine’s owner) that skimp on costly safety measures in order to increase their bottom line.

Keeping in line with this narrative, the media subjected us to a barrage of “investigative reporting” in the week of so after the disaster documenting the numerous and repeated safety violations at the mine and the outrageous political conduct of Massey Energy in pursuit of maximizing its profits—conduct, we were told, that included the effective purchase of a seat on the state Supreme Court for a barrister friendly to Massey’s corporate vision.

As a result of this reporting, we learned an entire slew of disconcerting facts such as that in the month prior to the explosion the Upper Big Branch Mine had been cited for 57 safety infractions by federal inspectors, including 2 citations just the day prior to the explosion. Similarly, we learned that in 2009, Massey Energy had been fined a total of \$382,000 for “serious and unrepentant” violations for lacking proper ventilation as well as failing to follow through with its safety plan. In the year prior to the explosion, federal regulators had ordered portions of the mine closed over 60 times. Finally, as if to reassure us that the state was on the case, we were informed that the FBI has opened a criminal probe into the explosion, investigating charges of criminal negligence by Massey Energy and the possible bribing of federal regulators. Then, as if to show us his profound difference of character with Bush, President Obama himself attended the memorial service for the dead miners, eulogizing them with the gift of eloquence his predecessor sorely lacked.

So how did the dominant media narrative explain the apparent powerlessness of federal government regulators to do anything to stop yet another mine explosion of an almost identical cause as that which caused the Sago disaster four years earlier? They blamed it on Bush. According to this narrative, under George W. Bush, a ruthless conservative, free-market ideology fell over the federal government, through which big business was able to ‘capture the state’ and effectively neutralize its power to regulate the private accumulation of wealth when it comes into conflict with the overall interests of society.

This narrative of corporate domination of the state under the auspices of Bush and his Republican buddies is being carted out to explain just about every disaster that the Obama administration has had to deal with since taking office. The collapse of Wall Street and the subsequent necessity of the mega corporate bailouts is blamed on the gutting of banking regulations under Bush, which allowed the development of banks ‘too big to fail’. Similarly, the mine disaster (and now the giant oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico) is blamed on the evisceration of regulatory agencies during 8 years of Republican rule, in which the conservatives pursued a devastating strategy of ‘starving the state’, resulting in the loss of competent regulatory personnel, deflated budgets for regulatory agencies

and the development of a cozy relationship between industry and government in which government regulators looked forward to a giant pay day upon retirement from public service in the very industries they were supposed to regulate. “Surely,” the narrative goes, “Obama can’t be expected to fix this mess in just two short years in office. But he’s on the right track. For starters, he really cares enough to show up to your funeral and make a nice speech.”¹

Of course what this narrative fails to mention is that the process of selling off the job of essential state functions to private businesses and neutering federal regulatory agencies—while it may have been the ideological brain child of the Regan/Thatcher Revolution of the 1980s—has been pursued with as much fervor by Democratic administrations as Republican ones. Clinton himself was a champion of the so-called ‘entrepreneurial state’, a stance shared by his Vice President turned anti-global warming activist Al Gore. Moreover, despite paying lip service to some of the anti-corporate rhetoric sweeping the country, Obama’s own connections to big business interests, particularly Wall Street is well known—a fact the media has found difficult to conceal, necessitating some tepid criticism of his administration as “too close to the banks.”

What does this all mean for the working class who bear the brunt of such disasters as the Upper Branch Mine explosion in the form of lost lives, lost jobs, shattered families and economic ruin? Who are our friends and enemies? Where can we turn for protection against the big greedy corporations who obviously show little hesitation to put our lives on the line when it comes to making a profit? Well, for one thing, it should be clear from the Upper Branch Mine disaster and those like it, that we cannot rely on the state. Despite pledges and promises to increase safety following the Sago disaster in 2006, the explosion at the Upper Branch Mine belies the futility of relying on the state to protect us on the job, or even to make simple changes that could save lives, such as ensuring the proper ventilation of methane gas, which experts all agree could have prevented this explosion. Obviously, Massey Energy has more to fear from its shareholders for not making a profit than it does from the federal government for failing to comply with tepid safety standards. This has proven the case as much under the Obama administration as under the previous Bush regime.

The question of the increasing privatization of essential state functions and the idea of the ‘capture of the state’ by various corporate interests in the most powerful state in the world is a question that is ripe for theoretical deepening for the workers’ movement. To what extent is this idea an actual reflection of the dynamic in decomposing capitalism? What are the implications for the state’s ability to do its job of advancing the overall interests of the national capital against narrower sectoral interests? What are the implications of this

1.- Consequently, this line has proven much more difficult to maintain during the continuing carnage resulting from the explosion of the oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, with the media now talking about “Obama’s Katrina,” in the wake of the federal government’s inability to do anything to stop the release of oil into the ocean. See article in this issue.

for the tactics and strategy of the workers’ movement? These are all questions that demand further clarification. However, the point of departure for this remains the perspective defended by revolutionary Marxism: the state is the executive arm of the bourgeois class; it is not a neutral organ, which the working class can use to protect itself from greedy corporations. The state is an organ of the very same social system that produces that corporate greed: world capitalism.

We will hear a lot about this in the period ahead. The bourgeois media will continue to work the theme of the state against the corporations as long as it can.² Workers must recognize this for what it is: an ideological ploy to tie the working class to the state, to make it see its future in defending the state from corporate seizure. Workers must realize that in reality there is no fundamental difference between the corporations that exploit them and the state agencies that are supposed to regulate those corporations. This is true even when the state takes action against a particular corporation whose actions call the credibility of the state as the protector of society into question.³

As for the miners of West Virginia, this disaster is one more example of the assault on their living and working conditions, which has already been declining for decades. These workers have suffered between the Scylla of a declining coal industry in a state which offers few other employment opportunities on the one side, and the Charybdis of speed-up and declining safety standards on the other, as the coal companies struggle to make their remaining operations profitable. However, regardless of the desperate state of the working class in the coal belt today, we should be careful not to fall into an uncritical nostalgia for the early twentieth century when the miners of West Virginia fought numerous pitched battles with the coal companies’ hired goons in an effort to win the right to organize. These episodes took place in a different historical period, during the transition between the ascendant and decadent phases of capitalisms, when the integration of the unions into the state had not yet been fully completed. Moreover, almost without exception, these actions were eventually defeated—often violently crushed—generally with the generous assistance of the federal state.⁴

Today, the future of the class struggle lies not in pitched armed battles, but with the extension of mass struggles across sectors, eventually unifying the entire working class behind a decisive confrontation with the capitalist state.

Henk, 06/18/2010.

2.- The emerging dominant narrative of the state as the protector against greedy and socially irresponsible corporations is not without challenge. As we showed in our article on the “Tea Party” in *Internationalism* #154, capitalist ideology in decomposition is also capable of producing a bizarre anti-corporate ideology, which is simultaneously, if somewhat inconsistently, anti-state.

3.- Somewhat luckily for the U.S. bourgeoisie, the recent oil rig catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico has taken place on the watch of British Petroleum, giving the U.S. the chance to convince the world that not all greedy irresponsible corporations are American.

4.- This included the now infamous use of the United States Army Air Core to bomb rebelling miners during the “Battle of Blair Mountain” in 1921

Greece, Turkey, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, Rumania, USA, Japan, China....

Against the 'Medicine' of Austerity: the Class Struggle!

In Greece, there is immense anger and the social situation is explosive. Right now the Greek state is raining blows on the working class. All generations, all sectors of the class are being hit hard. Workers in the private sector, in the public sector, the unemployed, pensioners, students working on temporary contracts... No one is being spared. The working class as a whole is threatened with dire poverty.

In the face of these attacks, the working class is beginning to react. In Greece, as elsewhere, it is coming out onto the streets, going on strike, showing that it is not prepared to put up with the sacrifices demanded by capitalism.



But for the moment, the struggle has not yet become really massive. The workers

of Greece are going through a difficult period. What to do when all the media and all the politicians insist that there is no alternative but to pull in your belt and save the country from bankruptcy? How to stand up to the monster of the state? What methods of struggle are needed to establish a balance of force in favor of the exploited?

All these questions are faced not just by the workers of Greece, but by workers all over the world. There can be no illusion: the "Greek tragedy" is just a foretaste of what's waiting for the working class all over the planet. Thus "Greek style austerity packages" have already been officially announced in Portugal, Rumania, Japan and Spain (where the government has just cut public sector workers' pay by 5%)! In Britain, the new coalition government has only just started to reveal the extent of the cuts it's aiming to make. All these attacks, carried out simultaneously, show once again that the workers, whatever their nationality, are part of one and the same class which everywhere has the same interests and the same enemies. Capitalism forces the proletariat to endure the heavy chains of wage labor, but these same chains also link together the workers of all countries, across all frontiers.

In Greece, it's our class brothers and sisters who are under attack and who have begun to fight back. Their struggle is our struggle.

**Solidarity with the workers of Greece!
One class, one struggle!**

We have to reject all the divisions the

bourgeoisie tries to impose on us. Against the old principle of all ruling classes – "divide and rule" – we have to raise the rallying cry of the exploited: "workers of all countries, unite!"

In Europe, the different national bourgeoisies are trying to make us believe that it's all down to Greece that we are going to have to pull in our belts. The dishonesty of the people in charge of Greece, who have allowed the country to live on credit for decades and have fiddled the public accounts, they are the main cause of the "international crisis of confidence" in the euro. One after the other, governments are using this false pretext to explain the need to reduce deficits and bring in draconian austerity measures.

In Greece, all the official parties, with the Communist Party at the forefront, are whipping up nationalist feelings, blaming "foreign powers" for the attacks. "Down with the IMF and the European Union!" "Down with Germany!" – these are the slogans raised in the demonstrations by the left and the extreme left, doing their best to defend Greek national capitalism.

In the USA, if the stock markets are taking a dive, it's all down to the instability in the EU; if companies are closing down, it's a result of the weakness of the euro, which is a handicap for the dollar and US exports...

In short: each national bourgeoisie is accusing its neighbor and blackmailing the workers it exploits: "accept sacrifices, otherwise the country will be weakened, and our competitors will take advantage of us". In this way the ruling class is trying to inject us with nationalism, which is a dangerous poison for the class struggle.

This world of division into competing nations is not ours. The working class has nothing to gain from being chained up to the capital of the country it lives in. To accept sacrifices today in the name of "defending the national economy" is just a way of preparing the ground for further and harder sacrifices tomorrow.

If Greece is on the edge of the abyss; if Spain, Italy, Ireland and Portugal are close behind; if Britain, France, Germany, the US are also in deep trouble, it's because capitalism is a dying system. All countries are doomed to sink deeper and deeper into this mess. For the last 40 years the **world** economy has been in crisis. Recessions have succeeded each other one after the other. Only a desperate flight into debt has up till now enabled capitalism to achieve any degree of growth. But the result of this today is that households, companies, banks and states are now weighed down with debt. The bankruptcy of Greece is just a caricature of the general and historical bankruptcy of this system of exploitation.

The ruling class needs to divide us: we need solidarity! The strength of the working class is its unity!

The austerity plans now being announced are a frontal, generalized attack on our living conditions. The only possible response is therefore a massive movement from the workers. It's impossible to respond to these attacks by fighting in your own corner, in your own factory,

school or office, isolated and alone. Fighting back on a massive scale is a necessity. It's the only alternative to being crushed separately and reduced to poverty.

But what is being done by the trade unions, those official 'specialists' of the struggle? They organize strikes in numerous workplaces... without ever trying to unite them. They actively encourage sectional divisions, especially between private and public sector workers. They march the workers out on sterile 'days of action'. They are in fact specialists in dividing the working class. The unions are equally adept at instilling nationalism. One example: the most common slogan of the Greek trade unions since the middle of March has been "buy Greek!"

Following the trade unions always means following the road to division and defeat. Workers need to take the struggle into their own hands, by organizing in general assemblies and deciding on the demands and slogans to raise, by electing delegates who can be recalled at any moment and by sending massive delegations to discuss with other groups of workers, in the nearest factories, offices, schools and hospitals, with the aim of encouraging them to join the movement.

Going outside the trade unions, daring to take control of the struggle, taking the step of going to see other sectors of workers... all that seems very difficult. This is one of the obstacles to the development of the struggle today: the working class lacks confidence in itself. It is not yet aware of the enormous power it holds in its hands. For the moment, the violence of the attacks being mounted by capitalism, the brutality of the economic crisis, the proletariat's lack of self-confidence – all this tends to have a paralyzing effect. The workers' response, even in Greece, is still well below what the gravity of the situation demands. And still the future belongs to the class struggle. Against the attacks, the only way forward is the development of increasingly massive movements.

Some people ask: "why wage such struggles? Where can they lead? Since capitalism is bankrupt, and no reform is really possible, doesn't that mean that there's no way out?" And indeed, inside this system of exploitation, there is no way out. But refusing to be treated like dogs and fighting back collectively means standing up for our dignity. It means realizing that solidarity **does** exist in this world of competition and exploitation and that the working class is really capable of bringing this priceless human feeling to life. And then the possibility of another world can start to appear, a world without exploitation, nations or frontiers, a world made for human beings and not for profit. The working class can and must have confidence in itself. It alone is capable of building this new society and reconciling humanity with itself by taking what Marx called "the leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom".

Capitalism is bankrupt, but another world is possible: communism!

International Communist Current
May 24 2010

Ricardo Flores Magon

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perspective, the takeover of Tijuana was the most interesting – the American town of San Diego, which was an IWW stronghold, was situated north of Tijuana. Wobblies filled the PLM's insurrecto army to the extent that Americans became the majority of "liberal" fighters in Tijuana. Unfortunately, the fact that there was a large American presence in the insurrectos' ranks was used by the PLM's political enemies to discredit them. The main myth that came out from these propaganda attacks was that the PLM was engaging in filibustering – a myth that still lingers today.

The PLM's strategy proved ineffective in the end. The "revolutionary" soldiers under the control of the reformist and liberal Madero eventually crushed the PLM insurrectos. The PLM never recovered politically from this. It was a victim of its confusions and political weaknesses: in particular its conspiratorial vision of a worker's revolution, despite the break the PLM had made with liberal bourgeois politics. That this break with liberalism was influenced by anarchist ideology did not help either, but this is a secondary question here.

After 1911 the PLM entered a downward

spiral of political dissolution and irrelevance. Its political mistakes and the military defeat of the Baja "adventure" have already been referred to. But also, historically, there is also this fact: the working class in Mexico had failed to build a class movement independent from the warring bourgeois factions and was ideologically or militarily engaged with one or the other 'revolutionary' armies. To weather this period would have required a lot more organizational strength and political clarity than the PLM already had.

After the PLM lost its influence in Mexico, two more historic events in the period proved his class allegiance: the First World War and the Russian Revolution. In March 1918, Ricardo wrote for the last issue of *Regeneracion* an internationalist manifesto calling for the workers of the world to oppose WW1 and to overthrow their bosses. Ricardo and his brother Enrique Flores Magon were thrown into an American jail for opposing the war effort, where Ricardo died in 1922. He was an unmistakable supporter of the Russian Revolution, despite his criticisms of it. These two positions by themselves prove his loyalty to the principles of the proletariat, and we can say without a doubt that despite his political weaknesses he died as a true militant of the world working class. And that we honor.

RS, 6/28/10.

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Date: Saturday August 7th. Time: 4.30pm - 7.30pm

Venue: The A-Space Anarchist Community Space 4722 Baltimore Ave, Philadelphia, PA

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The Legacy of Ricardo Flores Magon

"Brothel, fortress, hospital, miserable death: this is the gift that will be received by the family members of those heroes who die for the fatherland, while the rich and the politicians will binge away the gold that has been sweat by the people in the factory, the shop, and the mine."

-Ricardo Flores Magon on WWI (from *Regeneracion*, 9th October, 1915)

Ricardo Flores Magon is a well known figure in Mexican history. Although an anarchist until his death, the Mexican authorities were able to recuperate his martyrdom and integrate his image to the social order by baptizing him as one of the spiritual authors of the modern Mexican constitution. So, today in Mexico, a politically sanitized Flores Magon is recognized as one of the first vocal adversaries of Porfirio's Diaz dictatorship. However, communists and anarchists, and people well acquainted with the labor history of Mexico, are well aware of his anarchist-communist convictions, his roots in workers' organizations, and his numerous and failed attempts to spark a workers' revolution in Mexico.

He and the bulk of the leadership of his political organization, the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party), were for most of their political lifespan, situated in the United States. Most of the PLM's political activities in Mexico were coordinated in exile. However, little is ever mentioned about the PLM's relationship to the American workers' movement, or their belief that a workers' revolution in Mexico was important in so far that it is part of a worldwide struggle against international capital and in a sense, part of the international project to end the exploitation of man by man. In fact, if it wasn't for the continuous support of workers' organizations both in the U.S. and other countries, the PLM would not have been able to accomplish what it did politically (or pay prison bailout – Magon spent more than half of his exile years in prison). The PLM, with all their flaws, confusions, and quite honestly, some very big mistakes, were ultimately part of a workers' movement increasingly receptive to the idea of world communist revolution. There are lessons to be learned about their tribulations. Therefore this article will be about the PLM as part of not only the class struggle in

Mexico, but in the United States and the rest of the world.

The story starts in October of 1903, when Ricardo Flores Magon was released from prison in Mexico City. Well aware that the Diaz regime was losing its patience with him - to the point that he might get killed if he continued with his political activities - Ricardo, his brother Enrique, and a group of his collaborators crossed the Mexican-American border. In the early years, Ricardo's group exposed through their paper *Regeneracion* (Regeneration) a brand of anti-Diaz liberalism. They illegally smuggled the liberal paper to Mexico and at one point it became the most popular newspaper in Mexico. However, increasingly but absurdly, the group's liberalism diminished as they got immersed in the American workers' scene. In St. Louis Missouri, the soon-to-be PLM militants studied Marxism and anarchism, and befriended all sorts of political exiles, from both anarchist and Marxist affiliation. Their class perspectives increasingly burgeoned in 1906 in the Cananea and Rio Blanco strikes in northern Mexico. In both strikes, PLM members participated. In the early 20th century, the class struggle in northern Mexico and the southwest of the United States was particularly intense due to the nature of the border. At that time - while in formal political terms there was a border - economically the border seemed tenuous at best. Workers from America and Mexico crossed the border all the time to participate in the area's mining and railway projects. So the region was particularly fertile for class struggle and the radicalization of the PLM. PLM militants participated in the 1906 strikes of Rio Grande and Cananea, both situated in Northern Mexico, strikes that eventually ended in bloodbaths.

The strike experiences would eventually lead the PLM to entertain the idea of armed insurrection. In July of 1906 the PLM officially solidified into a party by publishing their first manifesto. It called to use "whatever means possible" to overthrow Porfirio Diaz¹. By this time, the PLM leadership was anarchist, but due to a fear of repression and alienating their audiences, they pretended a liberal façade by speaking in terms of "po-
1.- <http://www.archivomagon.net/Periodico/Regeneracion/TerceraEpoca/PDF/e3n11.pdf>

litical liberty", but identifying that such liberty cannot come without a solid economic base. The manifesto identified the PLM's cause with that of the "workers of the world" observing that the workers' cause has no frontiers. In their attempts to use "whatever means to overthrow Diaz", the PLM organized an insurrection by conducting raids into Mexico using El Paso Texas as a base. The insurrection got thwarted due to treason and bad logistics.

In the United States, the socialistic political tendencies of the PLM started to become evident. In 1907 Ricardo Flores Magon and some of his collaborators were imprisoned for violating neutrality laws. In the trial, all sorts of socialists and anarchists and trade-unionists publicly defended the militants of the PLM. The anarchist Emma Goldman published their manifesto in her journal *Mother Nature*. Eugene Debs argued that the imprisonment of the PLM militants was part of an international attack against working class militants. The Western Federation of Miners financed the PLM's defense. Mother Jones collected thousands of dollars to aid the PLM in the trials. The popular socialist journal *The Appeal to Reason* argued that the PLM's activities were part of a global struggle that could lead the United States to a workers' revolution. Finally, several PLM members were known to distribute IWW propaganda. In the eyes of the state, the issue quickly became more dangerous than mere violations of neutrality laws – the PLM was intimately tied with the American anarchist and socialist scene.

After Ricardo stepped out of jail in 1910, he became increasingly disillusioned with the mainstream American left. He called many socialists cowards and he ridiculed the AFL. Furthermore there was a recurring racist attitude about them. American leftists sometimes stereotyped the Mexican worker as a dumb, illiterate peasant. Most of the members of the PLM were workers, including Ricardo Flores Magon, who was very poor for most of his life, thus he naturally resented the stereotype. He found anarchist support more acceptable: Emma Goldman routinely spoke about Mexican affairs in *Mother Nature* and concluded that Mexico was an important region for the hypothesized world revolution. Nevertheless, Flores Magon thought that the PLM should

solidify relations with various international workers' groups, in order to spark a broader workers' movement in the American southwest and the Mexican north.

In September 1911, the PLM released another manifesto. At this time, Mexico was burning with the so called "revolution", so the PLM leadership felt that it was necessary to make explicit their revolutionary goals. The new manifesto transcended the liberalism of the first one, arguing to transcend the so called "1857 Constitution" which was liberal in – the latter which the PLM initially professed to defend from Diaz' authoritarianism. In the new manifesto, Ricardo wrote:

*"Against Capital, Authority and the Church the Mexican Liberal Party has hoisted the Red Flag on Mexico's fields of action, where our brothers are battling like lions, disputing victory with the hosts of bourgeoisdom, be those Maderists, Revysts, Vazquists, Cientificos or what not, since all such propose merely to put in office someone as first magistrate of the nation, in order that under his shelter they may do business without any consideration for the mass of Mexico's population, inasmuch as, one and all, they recognize [sic] as sacred the right of individual property."*²

The PLM leadership, well aware that different factions of the boss class were trying to dominate the anti-Porfirio sentiment, formulated a plan for action. The PLM leadership, still based in the United States, thought that in order to engage effectively in a military campaign, it would be easiest to start by a takeover Baja California, a thinly populated border state in Mexico. By January 29th of 1911, the PLM, with the help of numerous American militants, took Mexicali, the capital of Baja California. The success was followed by other takeovers of northern Mexican towns by PLM insurrectos, including Tijuana.

The PLM's military campaign was truly an international phenomenon. The PLM had some grounding in the American workers' scene at that time, and several of its fighters where "Anglos". From this international
2.- <http://www.archivomagon.net/Periodico/Regeneracion/CuartaEpoca/PDF/e4n56.pdf>

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POLITICAL POSITIONS OF THE ICC

Internationalism is the section in the U.S. of the **International Communist Current** which defends the following political positions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organizations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'antifascist 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 organization, 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 organization 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 organized 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 nationalization of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labor, 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 organization constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalization of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to 'organize 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.

Organized intervention, united and centralized 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 organizations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organizations 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*.