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## Political Decay and Economic Crisis

# US Ruling Class Faced With No Easy Options

*Internationalism* has devoted an article in each issue since the November 2010 Mid-Term elections to analyzing the political situation facing the U.S. bourgeoisie. Our analysis has centered around the increasing difficulty of the U.S. political class to overcome the effects of social decomposition on its own apparatus, expressed primarily through the progressive descent of major elements of the Republican Party into open ideological politics—a situation that puts the GOP's ability to act in overall interests of the national capital in jeopardy. In our last issue, we analyzed how this process has been carried the furthest at the level of state government, evidenced by the totally ham-fisted attempts of certain Republican Governors to smash public employee unions, thus depriving the bourgeois state of one of its most important bulwarks against class struggle.<sup>1</sup> In our analysis, these policies run counter to the overall need to maintain a functioning union apparatus, faced with the threat of renewed class struggle in response to an economic crisis that shows no signs of going away.

As a result of this descent into ideology by elements of the U.S. political class, the main factions of the national bourgeoisie<sup>2</sup> now face

<sup>1</sup> See our article in *Internationalism* #158, "Public Employee Union Busting in Wisconsin and Elsewhere: The Ideological Decay of the U.S. Bourgeoisie Deepens".

<sup>2</sup> We realize some readers would like us to expand on what we mean by "main factions of the national bourgeoisie." Indeed, we think it is an important task in the period ahead to draw a more complete map of the U.S. bourgeoisie, in order to

a stark dilemma threatening the traditional ideological division of labor between the Democratic and Republican parties at the national level. The beginnings of a class response to the economic crisis, symbolized by the massive mobilization of workers in Wisconsin in March (before being recuperated into a defense of unions and "democracy"), should move the main factions of the national bourgeoisie to consider a policy of putting the left in opposition in order to better control working class anger. This strategy would seem to be best accomplished by the election of a Republican President in November 2012.

### The Dilemma of the 2012 Presidential Election

However, the increasingly ideological nature of many elements of the Republican Party makes implementing this strategy dangerous for the U.S. national capital. The GOP's increasingly inflexible approach to politics calls into question its ability to serve as a credible party of government on the national level. Thus, the main factions of the U.S. national bourgeoisie seem to be faced with two choices looking forward to 2012. The first is to work for President Obama's re-election in order to avoid the possibility of a radical Republican taking office, unable to effectively govern in the overall interests of the bourgeoisie, en-

understand the nature and historical evolution of its factions. We intend to take up this effort in the future.

acting policies more in line with libertarian, free-market, "starve-the-state ideology" than the concrete needs of the national capital as a whole. The second is to attempt to give life to a more moderate Republican candidate who is able to resist the most extreme interpretations of GOP ideology. This figure would need to be capable of governing from a more pragmatic perspective, recognizing the need to avoid unwise and untimely provocations—utilizing a more levelheaded approach to managing the social and economic crisis besetting the country.

In our view, there are major problems in implementing either of these options for the U.S. bourgeoisie. The first option would risk further upsetting the ideological division of labor between the Democratic and Republican parties, almost forcing a second term Obama administration to engage in open austerity against the working class. Moreover, an Obama re-election would likely require engineering a repeat of the massive voter turnout effort of 2008. If the President is to win re-election, the bourgeoisie will need to mobilize the younger generation behind his candidacy again in order to counteract the strong anti-Obama fervor among Republicans. Undoubtedly, this will be much more difficult to pull off a second time. Many 2008 Obama voters have grown frustrated with his vanilla Presidency that has not lived up to their "historic" expectations. Enthusiasm for the Obama administration is currently rather low; although, it is possible the nomination of an extremist Republican candidate could produce a similar motivation to turnout for the President.

The second is fraught with difficulty given the depth of the GOP's ideological deterioration. It is not even clear at this time if a more moderate Republican candidate could survive the party's primary process, which in today's political climate would seem to reward those with the most ideological bent. Already early in the campaign, supposedly moderate Republican candidates, such as former Governors Mitt Romney and Tim Pawlenty, have been required to pander to the Republican right-wing.<sup>3</sup>

Faced with these difficulties, the main factions of the U.S. bourgeoisie have little choice but to attempt to implement both options si-

<sup>3</sup> Pawlenty recently gave a speech suggesting the Obama administration's economic policy constituted "central planning," an ominous allusion to the former Eastern Bloc. (See [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pawlenty-to-propose-tax-cuts-smaller-government-role-in-economic-address/2011/06/06/AGQzqkKH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pawlenty-to-propose-tax-cuts-smaller-government-role-in-economic-address/2011/06/06/AGQzqkKH_story.html)). Meanwhile, Romney continues to have difficulty defending his implementation of a version of "Obamacare" as Governor, creatively attempting to argue that the question should be left up to the states.

multaneously, deferring the final selection of a strategy for 2012 until after the Republican primary has been sorted out. Thus, the U.S. domestic political situation has been characterized by a wild roller coaster ride over the last eight months, with dramatic swings in momentum back and forth between President Obama and the insurgent Republican right wing. In November, the mid-term elections were a clear victory for the Republican Party; Obama emerged badly wounded with the pundits openly suggesting a one-term Presidency.

However, a string of legislative victories in the lame duck Congress; followed by months of uncertainty regarding the Republicans' Presidential field saw momentum shift back in Obama's favor. The President's skillful release of his long-form birth certificate at the culmination of a shameless media circus seemed to spell the demise of the most ludicrous forms of conspiracy theory surrounding the Presidents' legitimacy. However, the seeming *coup de grace* came on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with the announcement of the assassination and burial at sea of America's arch-enemy Osama Bin Laden. Although perhaps a bit earlier in the election cycle than the White House would have liked, in one fell swoop the President seemed to have finally established himself as a genuine American warrior who accomplished the ultimate victory over the terrorism that had frustratingly eluded his Republican predecessor.

While the post 9/11 patriotic celebrations were a genuine tragedy, this time they were pure face. Ultimately, the morbid celebration of the brutal death of an abstract enemy in a far off land proved to be no consolation for the economic and social pain gripping the American working class.

Already, barely a month after the event, whatever political boost the President thought he was getting from having "slain the beast" has largely evaporated. Obama's approval rating has now dropped below its pre-Osama assassination level, as the economy stubbornly fails to show any signs of improving. Even bourgeois economists have been forced to admit the likelihood of a double dip recession as unemployment remains stubbornly high, the housing market heads for Hades once again and the pain of inflation begins to take hold. The political consequences of all this has been that in a hypothetical Presidential race, some polls now show Romney defeating Obama.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-loses-bin-laden-bounce-romney-on-the-move-among-gop-contenders/2011/06/06/AGT5wiKH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-loses-bin-laden-bounce-romney-on-the-move-among-gop-contenders/2011/06/06/AGT5wiKH_story.html). The main factions of the national bourgeoisie can probably take some solace in the

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## No Respite From 'Natural' Disasters Under Capitalism

Over the past decades we have observed a multiplication of violent phenomena that 'experts' pay-rolled by the bourgeoisie describe as 'natural disasters'. They encompass a wide range: from wildfires, to floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. The bourgeois media peddle the lie that there is nothing humanity can do to protect itself against nature's whims and that we should just resign ourselves to fate. We remember how they cynically painted the Japanese population's prostration in the face of the horrific sequence of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear devastation as a serene Zen attitude in the face of adversity. That's how the ruling class would want us to be: prostrated. In the US, a winter with record snowfalls, wildfires, a monster flood of the Mississippi river, and, more recently, one of the deadliest tornado seasons on record have left thousands of people homeless, hundreds dead, and caused inestimable suffering. This is reason enough to feel disheartened. But revolutionaries must help the working class see through the thickness of bourgeois deceptions the truth that capitalism is at the root of these environmental abnormalities and that the working class, through its struggle to overthrow this dying system, is the sole force in society that can offer real answers to the problems posed by capitalism's ravaging of the planet. As we behold the massive destruction and human suffering left behind, we need

to pose the questions: What is happening to the environment? What really accounts for the devastation wracked by these violent weather phenomena?

An outbreak of dozens of tornadoes killed 314 people in five states on April 27 and a massive twister killed 138 in Joplin, Missouri on May 22, not to mention scores others before the two deadly dates. 2011 now ranks as the fifth deadliest year in US tornado history. And the tornado season is not even over yet. President Obama, visiting Joplin, Missouri, one week after an EF-5 tornado touched down, had barely declared the state of emergency for the area, when more tornadoes struck California and Massachusetts. These two states are far from Tornado Alley, a term used to describe a swath of land from the Deep South, through the southern plains and into the upper Midwest. The unusually destructive violence of these storms is now coupled with their widening and highly unpredictable pathway. It has to be affirmed very clearly that this east and north-ward spreading of tornado activity in recent years, the tornadoes' abnormal size and utter violence, are explained by global warming, and that capitalism is completely implicated. La Niña, a cyclical system of trade winds that cools the waters of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, made a sudden exit about three months

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# US Ruling Class Faced With No Easy Options

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Of course, it is not even clear that the U.S. bourgeoisie will be able to engineer an Obama-Romney (or another moderate Republican) race for 2012. Romney still has to run the gauntlet of the Republican primaries in which there will be a strong temptation to nominate a right wing ideologue. His previous support for the individual health insurance mandate, his Mormon religion and his acceptance of the reality of man-made global warming will not sit well with many Republican primary voters.<sup>5</sup>

With people like the bizarre, yet immensely popular, Michelle Bachman already in the race, Sarah Palin still not ruling out a run despite strong pressure from Republican insiders to stay on the sidelines, and the neo-Confederate Texas Governor Rick Perry pondering a campaign, there remains a real threat that a candidate totally unacceptable to the main factions of the national bourgeoisie will ultimately win the Republican nomination.<sup>6</sup>

It is for this reason that the national bourgeoisie realizes it must develop a strategy for managing a growing class response to the crisis in a situation in which a traditional left in opposition arrangement is not possible. In some ways, the increasingly belligerent and tactically clumsy approach to politics of the Republican right wing—in particular by Republican Governors at the state level—has helped in this endeavor. The bourgeoisie has taken full advantage of the movements in Wisconsin and elsewhere to attempt to energize a new “people’s movement” around the unions and the left wing of the Democratic Party (the so-called “progressives”).<sup>7</sup>

This movement, although still unable to

fact that the poll shows Romney as the only potential GOP candidate that outpolls the President.

5 Rush Limbaugh recently declared that Romney’s purchase of the global warming hoax means the effective end for his campaign. See [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/romney-draws-early-fire-from-conservatives-over-views-on-climate-change/2011/06/08/AGkUJAMH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/romney-draws-early-fire-from-conservatives-over-views-on-climate-change/2011/06/08/AGkUJAMH_story.html)

6 In a different poll than the one cited above, Palin currently leads Romney in a hypothetical GOP primary, highlighting the current dilemma facing the U.S. political class. See <http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/reuters-ipsos-poll-sarah-palin-leads-mitt-romney-barack-obama-beats-gop-field>. Above all, these differing results show the inherent dangers of over reliance on polling data!

7 Of course this incipient movement was dealt a serious blow by the recent Twitter “sexting” scandal surrounding New York City Democratic Congressman Anthony Weiner, one of the leading spokesmen for “progressives” in Congress. The precise nature of the multifarious sex scandals ripping through the U.S. bourgeoisie at the moment remains unclear. Are they the result of political manoeuvring, or are they more reflective of the arrogance of a U.S. political class that seems to think it can get away with anything?

match the right wing Tea Party in organization or fanaticism, can serve several functions for the main factions of the national bourgeoisie in the period ahead. First, it can serve to deflect class anger at the crisis into the dead ends of the unions and the defense of bourgeois “democracy” as Republican governors show few signs of slowing their assault on the public employee unions. Second, this movement could help President Obama’s re-election efforts against a right wing Republican candidate by channeling the populace’s disgust with the state of the nation into a “lesser of two evils” campaign. Another possibility is that votes to this left wing of the Dem. Party can attract the votes of those dissatisfied with Obama, thereby creating the terrain for a republican victory which would then put the Democrats into opposition. The Democratic Party may see this as necessary depending on the development of the crisis, and manipulate accordingly, without the electoral results expressing an agreed-upon strategy between the two parties. The larger question is really what the ruling class will be forced to do to confront the crisis, but it is not united on the ideological level.

However, perhaps most importantly, this so-called people’s movement could ultimately form the skeleton of a left in opposition to a centrist Obama who has little option but to enact open austerity in his second term. We have seen a possible preview of this strategy in the near revolt of rank and file Democrats in Congress against the President’s deal to preserve the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy in the lame duck session. It is not for nothing that there has been a consistent campaign on the left attacking the Obama administration for being too close to Wall Street and the banks.

Nevertheless, all this could ultimately come to naught given the degree of ideological hardening that has taken place in U.S. society in the last two decades—a reality that is contributing greatly to the increasing difficulty the main factions of the U.S. bourgeoisie are having controlling the outcome of its electoral circus. There are not many persuadable voters anymore, so the bourgeoisie has to rely on manipulating voter turnout in order to try to achieve its electoral objectives. High turnout is generally better for Democrats, as was the case with Obama’s “historic” election in 2008, while fewer voters at the polls favors

the Republicans, as witnessed by the 2010 midterms.

Given this reality, Obama will face many challenges in the 2012 campaign, whether or not he is the choice candidate of the main factions of the bourgeoisie and regardless of his opponent. Already, Obama staffers have admitted that his margin for victory in the Electoral College will be slimmer this time around, conceding several key swing states he won in 2008 to the eventual Republican nominee.<sup>8</sup>

The lesson in all this for the working-class is clear. The rot that eats away at capitalist society has advanced to such a stage that it now infects the very political apparatus of the ruling class itself. The unique flavor of decomposition in the United States, which is marked by a progressive ideological hardening of intellectual and political discourse, are combining with the specific features of the U.S. state (the Electoral College, a Senate weighted in favor in the most backward states, etc.) to produce a grave political crisis that poses the distinct possibility a candidate unacceptable to the main factions of the national bourgeoisie could win a Presidential election. The most “responsible” elements of the U.S. political class will work to try to prevent this outcome, even if it risks complicating the ideological division of labor in the class struggle. Whatever the outcome in 2012, it is clear that there is no electoral result that serves the proletariat’s class interest in a society marked by such profound social and intellectual decay.

## The Bourgeoisie Struggles to Manage the Economic Crisis In the Midst of Political Rancor

Of course, the political crisis of the U.S. ruling class is not transpiring in a social or economic vacuum. On the contrary, it is taking place in the midst of the worst economic crisis of the capitalist system since at least the Great Depression. It is in this context that the ideological meltdown of certain factions of the U.S. bourgeoisie has been most keenly felt.

In the face of massive unemployment, rock bottom wages, a real estate crisis that many analysts fear will soon suffer a second downturn and an enormous national deficit, all the Republican Party can do is scream for more tax cuts, fewer regulations and the gutting

8 See [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-has-his-work-cut-out-for-him-on-the-political-map/2011/06/08/AGXbJYMH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-has-his-work-cut-out-for-him-on-the-political-map/2011/06/08/AGXbJYMH_story.html)

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ago even though we were in the grip of one of the most powerful Las Niñas on record. It is very possible that if La Niña had maintained its strength there would not have been so many or such violent tornadoes due to La Nina’s stabilizing effect on the jet stream, a high speed air current that acts as an atmospheric ‘fence’ where cool and dry air meets up with warm, moist air—two of the main ingredients for severe storms. Without La Niña around, the jet stream, which by this time of the year should be farther north, has gone rogue. Instead of moving north, in April and May the jet stream hung around the middle of the country, where it has the chance to violently mix cool, dry northern air with warm, moist southern air. It is no longer a secret that surface water temperatures are rising as a result of global warming, and the sea surface temperature of the Gulf of Mexico is between 1.8 and 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.0 to 1.5 degrees Celsius) warmer than average. If there’s more moisture and the atmosphere is warmer, it is more unstable, so, there’s more potential for severe thunderstorms to develop.

As we can see, there is nothing fatalistic about ‘natural disasters’, and these events can be traced to the anarchistic and reckless mode of production under which we live, a system that has more regard for quick profit than for man or nature. When, in the face of this shift in tornadoes’ path the weather ‘specialist’ and ‘scientists’ paid by the ruling class ask questions such as: “Is there a new Tornado Alley?” it is not to answer that capitalism has caused global warming, a manifestation of which is the changing directions and speeds of air currents such as the jet stream. This question is futile because the ruling class would not use that knowledge to plan for a different distri-

bution of the population, one that will keep it out of harm’s way. Nor will it develop different types of dwellings which can provide greater protection against extreme weather conditions. Indeed, as at the time of hurricane Katrina, the bourgeois state and its various agencies set up with the purpose of responding to emergencies, proves once again its utter uselessness, inefficiency, and corruption. It is not these various agencies who organized rescue, provided comfort, and prepared for repairs in the immediate aftermath of the storm. It is the local population who, in many cases risking their own lives, threw their weight selflessly where they saw the urgent need to intervene. We can expect that the population who has been left homeless will remain so for an indefinite time.

The ruling class is keen on assembling weather forecasters and ‘specialists’ who can soothe the population’s anxiety over the large issues of the generalized degradation of the environment and global warming by trivializing questions such as “Is there a new Tornado Alley?” The ruling class knows that there are lingering, deeper questions about the short and long term consequences of climatic change on humanity and nature and the responsibility of capitalism. It fears that the greater the devastation wracked by what the ruling class calls ‘natural disasters,’ the more apparent its inability to offer prevention, a minimum of protection and restoration of the environment, and support for the populations affected by these ‘disasters.’ Indeed, it is clear that the louder their bleats about how sorry they feel for the deaths and losses suffered, the cheaper their ‘reconstruction’ efforts are shown to be. In order to distort the truth about global warming and thereby protect its image, the

ruling class insists on attributing the multiplication of ‘natural’ disasters to improvements in observations, reporting, documentation and record keeping. These improvements are certainly true, but it is not a statistical account that can explain either the apparent shift in weather pattern or the impact this is having on human life. As to this last point, in examining tornado fatalities from 1950-2005 we see that the majority of fatal tornado events occurred mainly outside of the traditional Tornado Alley region, into the lower-Arkansas, Tennessee, and lower-Mississippi River valleys. This distribution is not to be attributed to a shift in tornado occurrences, but instead a combination of climate and non-climate related factors.

We have seen how global warming is related to the shift in tornado pathway above. Within the non-climate factors, it is noticeable that a larger percentage of mobile homes and lower-stock housing materials are used in this region than any other region in the US. From 1985 to 2005 mobile home fatalities accounted for 44% of all fatalities, when in the southeast the percentage of mobile homes averages over 20% in most counties. The overall population density in the southeast is greater than in the traditional Tornado Alley. A higher percentage of elderly and impoverished persons live in this area, which enhances this region’s vulnerability. This is further aggravated by the population shift to the area resulting from unemployment, which pushes this vulnerable sector of the population to move to areas where housing is cheaper, and poorer. Hence, the increased number of tornado fatalities in that area. It is not by changing the geographical mapping of what constitutes a Tornado Alley today that we can explain global warm-

ing or address the issues of poverty and unemployment. This is an exercise presently occupying a great number of meteorologists, a trick employed to ‘explain’ the increased number in tornado fatalities. The responsibility of the ruling class in the tornado fatalities regardless of a tornado pathway is obvious when we hear the answer to the question of why there were never building codes in the traditional Tornado Alley area.

According to Tim Reinhold, senior vice president for research and chief engineer at the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) in Tampa, Fla., it comes down to something called the “return period” -- the interval between two disaster events in a given location. Although major tornadoes happen every year, the likelihood they’ll happen twice in the same place is very low. “*With tornadoes,*” Mr. Reinhold says, “*because they’re relatively small and don’t cover very much ground, the chances that a particular building in Tornado Alley would be hit is 1 in 5,000 per year. And within that, the chance that the tornado will be F4 or F5 is even lower. So to make everyone build houses to stand up to that level would be a huge cost increase.*” This idea, besides revealing a delirious state of a mind out of touch with reality, underscores the ruling class’ attitude: human life—that of the exploited class, to be precise—is a matter of statistical calculations, and, above all cost-efficiency! This is why under decadent capitalism scientific knowledge is concealed, distorted, and prostituted: to serve profit. In order to see the flourishing of science at the service of humanity, science which can be put to use to restore nature and man’s relationship with it, the working class must destroy capital.

Moreover, although the Republican Party only controls one house of Congress at the present time, the current political realities of U.S. politics have allowed it to exert an incommensurate weight on the overall direction of U.S. state capitalism’s policies in the face of the economic crisis. Although now even many bourgeois economists recognize that the U.S. economy suffers from a grave “demand deficit” caused by the massive concentration of wealth in the hands of an increasingly small elite and the resulting inability of the working class to consume much of anything, there is no political possibility at the present time of any additional demand-stimulus emerging from Washington. All policy attention is now focused on the massive federal budget deficit; with the political debate defined only as an opposition between those who would cut a lot (Republicans) and those who would cut slightly less (Democrats).

In this vein, the Republican Party has defined the debate in Washington on economic policy over the several months, primarily through the cruel austerity budget proposal put forward by the GOP’s new wonder boy, Congressman Paul Ryan from Indiana. Chief among his proposals has been the audacious plan to replace Medicare with a system of vouchers for seniors so they can buy their health insurance on the open market. While applauded for his “bravery” and “boldness” by pundits in the bourgeois media, the Ryan budget has been met with strong hostility from the American working class, with polls showing almost universal rejection of this idea. Clearly, just the hint of an attack on the modest centerpiece of the minimum social wage offered in the United States has stoked a class instinct, with even many workers who vote Republican rejecting this proposal as a

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Ana, 4/6/11.



# Revolts in the Middle East: For massive struggle against the dictatorship of capital

Demonstrations and confrontations have continued in North Africa and the Middle East. Uprisings by oppressed populations, as well as workers' strikes and demonstrations, are still taking place in a number of countries in the region, and there have been growing echoes elsewhere in Africa. At the same time, conflicts and wars between rival bourgeois factions, and the imperialist policies of the powers involved in the region, weigh very heavily on the development of these movements. A mortal danger faces the oppressed classes and the proletariat in all these countries. Alongside the traps of nationalism and democracy, they are also being met with brutal state repression and the 'humanitarian' bombs of imperialism. But the need to feed themselves, to live with dignity, to carve out a future means that our class brothers and sisters cannot just give in. In front of such a situation, what can and should be done by the working class of Britain, France, Germany and all the countries at the heart of world capitalism? The struggle of the oppressed and the exploited in these countries is our struggle; the armies and bourgeois cliques who are massaging them are our common enemies.

## Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia: workers' and social struggles persist

In Egypt, the street, the determination of the demonstrators, the militancy of the working class got the better of Mubarak. But after he went, the bourgeoisie could breathe a sigh of relief: Tahrir Square, the central focus of the movement, could again be open to traffic. The population could go home, in many cases 'free' to slowly starve. The provisional government run by the army and its Supreme Council could take up the reins of state, promising free and democratic elections. But their real aims were made clear when, on 23 March the Sharaf cabinet passed a new law promising jail and a fine of E£500,000 for "anyone inciting, urging, promoting or participating in a protest or strike that hampers or delays work at any private or public establishments". Of course, strikes and protests are already banned under the hated 'Emergency Law' that has been in force since 1981. One of the key demands of the protestors was that this law be repealed - while this has been promised by the Sharaf government, it still hasn't been dismantled.

However, neither this new law, nor the in-

tervention of the police and the army against demonstrators and strikers have put a stop to the discontent, which has continued despite the 'victory of the revolution'. Indeed the new law has actually provoked a new wave of protests and strikes. On 12 April, the daily *al-Masry al-Youm* wrote about "the permanence of protest movements and strikes in numerous region of Egypt. They are about wages, working conditions, work contracts, etc. These movements involve very diverse sectors". In Alexandria, for example, teachers demanded the suppression of their temporary status and the granting of indefinite contracts. In Cairo, the employees of the fiscal administration offices demanded a wage increase. There have been other strikes in public transport, health, textile, and even the tourism sector.

Mass protests are still taking place across Egypt with thousands of protestors gathering in Tahrir Square on 1st and 8th April demanding faster reform. These protests have been met with typical brutality, with soldiers storming the square and killing at least two protestors. Previously, these protestors had openly been joined by up to 15-20 soldiers who joined in the protest against the regime - the crowds made a conscious effort to protect these defectors from arrest by the security forces and this seems to have been what provoked the savage response.

Other political forces are already developing in order to succeed where Sharaf has failed. New 'independent' unions are springing up, while on the political front the Popular Alliance is overtaking Tagammu as the leading standard bearer of 'Socialism'. These new developments perfectly express both the strengths and weaknesses of the movement in Egypt: the elemental rage of the masses at their intolerable living conditions is fuelling a new militancy and determination, but weaknesses at the level of class consciousness makes it difficult for the workers to channel this militancy into a direct defence of their own interests. Instead, they turn to the forces of the bourgeois left and infuse them with a new dynamism. This leaves the movement deeply vulnerable to sabotage from within.

The situation in Algeria has also been marked by permanent unrest. On 3 April, the paper *al Watan* declared: "The students have not calmed down. The hospital doctors have

expressed their defiance against Ould Abbès. Communal guards threaten to 'encircle' the Presidential palace. Paramedics are on strike again". In education, a three day national strike around the issue of pensions is due to take place even though education employees faced repression during a demonstration over working conditions.

In Tunisia, the oil workers employed by SNDP have again come out on strike, rejoining the teachers who have been out for weeks against the most miserable pay and conditions.

In countries like Swaziland, Gabon, Cameroon, Djibouti, Burkina Faso and most recently Uganda there have been demonstrations by students, workers and others, influenced by what happened in North Africa. They have frequently been met with savage state violence. The working class in these countries is not very numerous and despite the determination of hungry populations, this makes it much easier for the bourgeoisie to resort to massive repression.

## Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya: war between bourgeois gangs undermines social revolt

In Yemen, although the 'official' opposition announced on 25 April its agreement with the plan for resolving the crisis proposed by the Gulf Cooperation Council, envisaging the departure of president Saleh within weeks, the response from the street was unambiguous: "We categorically reject any initiative which does not involve the departure of president Saleh and his family" - the words of a communiqué from a coordinating committee of young people organising the sit-in in the university of Sanaa. The next bit of the communiqué says a lot about the determination of the demonstrators: "the opposition only represents itself", it says, and calls for an end to all dialogue with the regime and for Saleh's immediate departure. Here again the response of the state was the same: during demonstrations in Taëz, Ibb and Al-Baïda, the army used live ammunition against the demonstrators.

When it comes to shedding blood in the street, the el-Assad family in Syria is in the front line. Since 12 March large numbers have been demonstrating on the streets. The reasons are the same: growing poverty and daily oppression. The response of the sinister Bashir el-Assad is brutal in the extreme: according to different estimates, up to 500 people have been gunned down by the army and security services. Tanks, armoured cars and snipers have routinely been positioned outside mosques to crack down on any show of defiance. This has been especially true in the town of Deraa where the movement started. The government's justification? The army entered Deraa "in response to appeals for help from the inhabitants, calling for an end to the acts of sabotage and murder by extremist terrorist groups" (cf the *Orange* site, 26.4.11).

These are indeed hypocritical lies, but no less hypocritical than the attitude of the great powers who claim to be concerned about the situation in Syria and have called for an end to the violent repression. Cameron tells us that this is unacceptable and the Syrian ambassador's invitation to the Royal Wedding was cancelled. The French and the Italians held a summit. The Obama administration is thinking about sanctions. However, president Sarkozy, who led the charge to intervene militarily in Libya, has excluded an intervention in Syria without a resolution from the UN Security Council. A resolution which everyone knows will be impossible to obtain and which no one wants. The Syrian population can just put up with it; Syria is not Libya. Syria is a country of 21 million inhabitants, with a much more formidable army than Libya today or Iraq yesterday; above all, it's an imperialist power which counts in the region. It has some important allies in its anti-American policies, especially Iran, and diplomatic support from Russia and China. A military intervention in Syria would destabilise the whole Arab-Muslim world and no one knows where it would end. The imperialist powers will have to defend their squalid interests in a different way here.

But there is a real danger facing the insurgent population in Syria. The el-Assad government draws its support from the Alawi religious minority, while 70% of the population is Sunni. In the absence of a sufficiently strong and conscious working class, it could be easy to pull an oppressed and hungry population behind one or another bourgeois faction. This could result in a real civil war as in Libya; and a similar danger is emerging in Bahrain.

For weeks now the population in Bahrain has been demonstrating to demand the departure of the prime minister, Khalifa ben Salman Al Khalifa, the uncle of the king Hamad ben Issa al-Khalifa, part of a Sunni dynasty which has reigned for a hundred years in a kingdom with a majority Shia population. Calling for bread and the right to free speech in this emirate is susceptible to being derailed into a 'Shia' struggle against the corrupt Sunni dynasty.

Meanwhile the imperialist vultures are circling. Already the Saudi army has entered the country to defend the Sunni power; tensions are growing between Iran and its neighbours in the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman). Since the middle of March, Iran has been criticising the repression of a movement which is de facto led by Shites, if only because they are the majority of the country. The hypocrisy of France, Britain and the USA, who are currently bombarding Libya in the name of humanitarianism, is striking: not a word of protest against the repression in Bahrain, because Bahrain and its Saudi accomplices are their allies, and they all have a common enemy: Iran. The manoeuvres of the imperialists around the situation in Bahrain do not bode well for the development of the protest movement in this country.

In all the countries of the Arab world, populations are rebelling, the economic crisis is raging. But the movements are not all the same and their prospects are not identical. In countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria it is more difficult for the local bourgeoisies to carry out large-scale massacres, just as it is more difficult for the big imperialist powers to defend their interests by applying direct military force. The difference between them is that in these countries there is a sizeable working class which, while it hasn't been able to take the lead in the movement of revolt, still has a considerable weight in the social situation.

## International class struggle: the only remedy for nationalist and democratic poison

The crisis today is not limited to the Middle East. Its effects are hitting home in America, Europe and Asia as well. Struggles involving the young generation of the working class have developed in Greece, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Britain. The working class in these countries has mobilised against the austerity plans which each national bourgeoisie is trying to impose. These reactions are important and necessary. In many of the demonstrations, there has been a real sympathy for the revolts and struggles which have broken out in Egypt, in Tunisia and elsewhere. In the countries at the heart of capitalism, the working class is beginning to sense that the revolts in North Africa and the Middle East spring from the same source as their own struggles. But this is not enough.

To defend themselves against the massive attacks being organised by capital, the workers' struggles also have to be much more massive and unified than they have been up till now. And in taking this step the proletariat in the central countries will be able to offer a concrete solidarity to the workers' struggles and social revolts in the Middle East - not only because the struggles in the belly of the beast will weaken the ability of the beast to aid the repression in the weaker countries or to carry out its military plans, but also because the struggles in the 'democratic west' will help proletarians all over the world understand that the blessing of democracy is a curse in disguise.

T. Based on an article from *Révolution Internationale* 422, May 2010

Continued from Page 2

step too far. As a result, while many Republicans in Congress continue to defend the Ryan plan, the GOPs most serious Presidential contenders, including Romney, have remained non-committal.

Although the Ryan Medicare plan has been revealed, for the moment, as a bridge too far in the class war, this has not stopped the forward march of austerity on all fronts from all factions of the bourgeoisie, both Republicans and Democrats. The drama building over the looming congressional vote to extend the U.S.' 'debt ceiling' has been used as a cynical cover for negotiations between the parties on extensive cuts to the federal budget: cuts that will ultimately hurt the working class and erode its purchasing power even further. Nevertheless, in this game, the Democrats have been all too willing to let their Republican rivals take the lead allowing their own party to play the card of the "smaller bully" on the playground.

Still, among the bourgeoisie's more serious economists the sense grows that the political dynamic in Washington has broken down to the point where the U.S. state is incapable of acting in the best interests of the national capital. Paul Krugman has written of "The Mistake of 2010," comparing it to the years 1936-37 when the New Deal slowed and the Depression deepened. For Krugman, U.S. state capitalism's attempts to stimulate the economy and create jobs have been meager at best. The political focus on reducing the deficit over job creation is a huge blunder that will only deepen the demand crisis in the economy and grow the federal deficit in the long run as tax receipts decline even further. Meanwhile, Robert Reich openly wonders whether the Republican Party is deliberately sabotaging the economy for po-

litical gain, as the Obama administration willingly cuts its own throat—happy to fight the economic policy debate on the GOP's chosen rhetorical terrain.

These controversies are reflective of the overall impasse of state capitalism today faced with an economic crisis without precedent. Krugman and Reich may be right that the U.S. political class' obsession with deficit reduction will only deepen the economic and fiscal crisis. However, while the massive Keynesian stimulus these "responsible economists" call for may alleviate the immediate pressure on the economy by providing a brief steroid-like boost, the Republican Party is not totally mistaken either when it argues that further deficit spending only serves to add more debt that in all likelihood will never be repaid. However, this debate is moot; as even Krugman admits, there is no chance of another serious stimulus in the foreseeable future.

In short, the U.S. bourgeoisie now finds itself faced with a real Kafkaesque dilemma from which there is no escape. In this world, all options are bad; all answers are ultimately wrong answers; all doors lead to nowhere. While the ideological deterioration of the Republican Party likely does pose the most acute threat to U.S. state capitalism, this does not mean that the Democrats have the "correct" approach that will solve the persistent economic crisis. On the contrary, its preferred policies—while perhaps less immediately damaging, less overtly contradictory, less immediately provocative of social chaos—are ultimately no less futile faced with a global capitalist system that is, at this juncture, utterly beyond repair. At the end of the day, however, it is still up to the working class to send this rusting wreck of a system to the historic junkyard where it belongs.

Henk, 06/09/11.



# World economic crisis: The demise of credit

*If lying was a mortal sin, the ruling class would have died a long time ago. Everywhere it's been shouting from the rooftops, on the TV, the radio, in its newspapers and journals: Look: there it is – a light at the end of the tunnel! The proof: unemployment is falling. Or so it seems. In the US and in France, in the last few months the unemployment rate has had its biggest drop since the outbreak of the crisis of 2007. In Germany, it's fallen to its lowest since 1992! And the big international institutions have been parading their optimism. According to the IMF, in 2011,*

*world growth will reach 4.4%. The Asian Development Bank is predicting growth rates of 9.6% for China and 8.2% for India. Germany, France and the US will reach 2.5%, 1.6% and 2.8% respectively. The IMF even predicts a growth rate of 1.7% for Japan this year, despite the earthquake and the nuclear disaster! A decisive argument for the return of better times: the stock exchanges are soaring... So, do these gleams of light announce an imminent resurrection of the economy? Or is this the classic hallucination of a dying creature?*

## Poverty, poverty

In the US, then, things have been getting better. Gone is the spectre of the 1929 crash. No chance of seeing interminable queues outside the employment offices like in the nightmarish 1930s. It's just that...at the end of March, McDonald's announced an exceptional recruitment of 50,000 jobs in one day. On 19 April, there were three million people waiting to apply at the doors of the restaurants! And the firm hired 62,000.

The reality of the present crisis is revealed in the suffering inflicted on the working class. Unemployment in America is officially falling, but the state's statistics are a huge trick. For example, they exclude everyone classed as "NLF" (Not in the Labor Force). These includes older people who have been laid off, long term unemployed discouraged from looking for work, students and the young, unemployed people on job-seeking schemes... in short, in January 2011, 85.2 million people. The state itself has been obliged to recognise that the number of poor people makes up 15% of the American population and is continuing to grow.

The explosion of poverty on the soil of the world's leading power shows the real state of the international economy. All over the planet, living conditions are becoming more and more inhuman. According to the estimates of the World Bank, around 1.2 billion people live below the poverty line (1.25 dollars a day). But the future is even more sombre. For an increasing proportion of humanity, the return of inflation will mean that it is getting harder and harder to keep a roof over your head or even to eat. World prices of food products have risen 36% above their level a year ago. According to the last issue of *Food Price Watch*, produced by the World Bank, every 10% rise in world prices pushes a minimum of another 10 million people below the poverty line. 44 million people have thus officially fallen into poverty since 2010. Concretely, the prices of basic necessities are becoming more and more prohibitive: maize up by 74%, grain by 69%, soya 36%, sugar 21%.

## The decadence of the system

A new chapter in the historic crisis of capitalism is opening up in front of us. Since the summer of 2007 and the bursting of the 'sub-prime' bubble in the USA, the world crisis has worsened inexorably, at an increasing pace, without the bourgeoisie being able to come up with the merest shadow of a solution. Worse, its efforts to deal with the problem are preparing the ground for further convulsions. The economic history of the last few years resembles a sort of infernal spiral, a downward pulling whirlpool. And this is a drama that has been in gestation for the past 40 years.

From the end of the 1960s to the infamous summer of 2007, the world economy has only kept going through a systematic and increasing resort to debt. Why is this? A short theoretical detour is required here.

Capitalism produces more commodities than its markets can absorb. That is almost a tautology:

- Capital exploits its workers - in other words their wages are lower than the real value they create through their labour.

- Capital can therefore sell its commodities at a profit. But the question is: to whom?

Obviously, workers buy these commodities, as far their wages allow. There remains therefore a good part which is not sold, corresponding to what isn't paid to the workers when they were producing them, the part containing an added value, a surplus value, which alone has this magic power to create profit for Capital.

The capitalists themselves also consume things, and in general we know they are not too badly off...But they alone can't buy all the commodities containing surplus value. It would make no sense for Capital as a whole to buy its own commodities to make a profit: this would be like taking money from its left pocket and putting it in its right pocket. Any poor person can tell you that you can't get rich that way.

To accumulate, to develop, Capital therefore needs to find buyers others than workers and capitalists. In other words, it is imperative that it finds outlets outside its system, otherwise it will find itself weighed down with unsold goods and a market that has become engorged. This is the celebrated 'crisis of overproduction'.

This 'internal contradiction', this natural tendency towards overproduction and this ceaseless obligation to find external outlets is also one of the roots of the incredible dynamism of this system. Capitalism has had to trade with all economic spheres without exception: the former ruling classes, the peasants and artisans of the whole world. The history of the late 18th century and the entire 19th century is the history of colonisation, of the conquest of the globe by capitalism. The bourgeoisie was ravenous for new territories on which it forced, through multiple means, the populations to buy its commodities. But in acting this way, it was also transforming these archaic economies; little by little, it was integrating them into its system. The colonies slowly became capitalist countries themselves, producing according to the laws of the system. Not only were their economies less and less susceptible to being outlets for the commodities produced in Europe and the USA: they too were generating their own overproduction. To develop, Capital was therefore again and again forced to seek out new territories.

This could have been a never-ending story but our planet is only a round ball: to its great misfortune, Capital had hardly taken 150 years to complete its conquest. At the beginning of the 20th century, all the main territories had been taken, the great historic capitalist nations had divided up the world. From then on it was no longer a question of new discoveries but of taking the possessions of rival nations. Germany, the poorest in colonies, was thus put in the position of the aggressor and unleashed the hostilities of the First World War, driven by the necessity which Hitler formulated openly in the lead up to the Second World War: "Export or Die".

From then on, capitalism, after 150 years of expansion, became a decadent system. The horror of the two world wars and Great Depression of the 1930s is the dramatic and irrefutable proof. However, even though, during the 1950s, it destroyed the extra-capitalist markets which still existed (like the French peasantry), capitalism did not fall into a mortal crisis of overproduction. Why? We return to the initial idea we were trying to demonstrate: if "*Capitalism produces more commodities than its markets can absorb*", it has been able to create an artificial market: "*From the end of the 1960s to the infamous summer of 2007, the world economy has only kept going through a systematic and increasing resort to debt*".

The last forty years can be summarised as a series of recessions and recoveries financed by credit. With each open crisis, Capital has increasingly resorted to debt. And it's no longer a question of just supporting 'household consumption' through state aid...no, whole states have themselves plunged themselves into debt to artificially maintain the competitive edge of their economy faced with other countries (by directly financing investment in

infrastructure, by loaning to banks at the lowest possible rate of interest so that they in turn can lend to households and enterprises...). In short, by opening up the sluice-gates of credit, the world is awash with money and all sectors of the economy are in the classic position of the debtor: every day new debts are taken out to pay for yesterday's debts. This dynamic inevitably leads into a dead-end.

And here the summer of 2007 opened a new chapter in the history of capitalist decline. The capacity of the world bourgeoisie to slow down the development of the crisis by an increasingly massive recourse to debt has reached its limits. Today, convulsions follow each other in quick succession without any respite or real recovery. The powerlessness of the bourgeoisie in front of this new situation is patently obvious. In 2007, with the bursting of the sub-prime bubble, and in 2008 with the collapse of the banking giant Lehman Brothers, all the states of the world were only able to do one thing: pump up the finance sector and let public debt explode. And this was not just a one-off. Since 2007, the world economy, the banks and the stock exchanges have only kept going through a permanent transfusion of public money derived from new debts or simply from printing money. One example: the USA. In 2008, to save the financial sector from generalised bankruptcy, the US Federal bank launched an initial phase of money-printing – QE1, or Quantitative Easing 1 – amounting to more than 1400 billion dollars. Just two years later, in January 2010, it had to renew the whole operation by launching a QE2: 600 billion injected thanks to printing off more dollars. But this is still not enough. Hardly 6 months later, in the summer of 2010, the Fed had to renew the buy out of debts that had reached their deadline, at a rate of 35 billion a month. In all, since the latest stage of the crisis began, that's over 2300 billion dollars coming out of the pocket of America's central bank. It's the equivalent of the GNP of a country like Italy or Brazil! But obviously history doesn't stop there. In the summer of 2011, the Fed will be obliged to launch a QE3, then a QE4!...

The world economy has become a bottomless pit, or more precisely, a black hole: it is absorbing increasingly astronomical quantities of money/debt.

## The future? Inflation & recession!

It would however be wrong to claim that the immense sums of money injected by all the states of the planet today are having no effect. Indeed, without them, the system would literally implode. But there is a second consequence: the unprecedented increase in the mass of money on a global scale, particularly in dollars, is about to corrode the system, to act on it like a poison. Capitalism has become a dying patient dependent on its morphine fix. Without it, it would die, but each new injection gnaws away at it a little more. So while the injections of the years 1967-2007 allowed the economy to hold, today the doses needed are on the contrary speeding the patient towards its demise.

Concretely, by printing money, the different central banks are consciously producing what the economists call 'funny money'. When the monetary mass grows faster than real activity, it loses its value. As a result prices rise and we have inflation.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, in this sphere, the world champion is the US. They know that their currency has been the pillar of economic stability since the end of the Second World War. Still today no one can bypass the dollar. This is why since 2007 it has been the US that has produced the greatest quantity of money to back up their economy. If the dollar has not been put out of commission, it's because China, Japan etc have been, despite themselves, obliged to buy

<sup>1</sup> However, it will certainly do it unofficially the next time to avoid having to admit the patent failure of all its previous measures!

<sup>2</sup> Observant readers will say: "But his monetary mass increased at a huge rate in the period 1990 to 2000 without there being an inflationary surge". It's true and the reason is simple: the saturation of the real market pushed capital to flee towards the virtual economy (the stock exchange). In other words, the monetary mass augmented considerably above all in the financial sphere, so it was not the price of commodities but of shares which shot up. But this speculation, however mad and disconnected it was from reality, is still in the final analysis based on enterprises that do produce value. When the latter are threatened en masse by bankruptcy (in particular the banks that finance them), this whole casino game gets exposed to the light of day. This is what happened in 2008: the crash, and the bigger crashes yet to come. This is why investors are now running after gold and food products in a desperate search for a value 'refuge'. We will come back to this.

dollars. But this precarious equilibrium is also reaching its end. There are less and less buyers for US Treasury Bonds because everyone knows they are not really worth anything. Since 2010, it has been the Fed itself buying up its own T-Bonds to maintain their value! Above all, inflation is beginning to develop in a significant way in the US (between 2 and 105 according to what source you use, with workers increasingly feeling the pinch in their food shopping). The President of the Fed in Dallas, Richard Fisher, who this year sits on the monetary policy committee, has raised the risk of a hyperinflation comparable to what happened in the Weimar Republic in 1923.

This is a fundamental tendency. Inflation is growing in all countries. And the capitalists are increasingly distrustful of all currencies. The shocks to come, the probable collapse of banks and entire states, are placing a very big question mark over the whole international financial system. The consequence of this is tangible: the price of gold is hitting the roof. After a 29% rise in 2010, the hunt for gold is now beating record after record, for the first time jumping the fence of 1500 dollars – five times what it was ten years ago. The same phenomenon with silver, now at its highest level for 31 years. The University of Texas, which trains economists, has recently put its whole treasury of a billion dollars into gold. We can see from this the confidence that the American big bourgeoisie has in its own currency! And this is not just an epiphenomenon. The central banks themselves have bought more of the yellow metal in 2010 than they have sold, a first since 1988. All this means nothing less than the end of the Bretton Woods agreement (not officially but de facto) which after the Second World War set up an international monetary system based on the stability of the dollar.

The bourgeoisie is obviously aware of the danger. Incapable of stopping the flow of credit, to stop the money printing presses from turning, it is trying to limit the damage and to reduce debt by introducing draconian austerity plans which are aimed first and foremost at the working class. Almost everywhere, wages are being frozen or cut in the private and the public sector, health and social benefits are being slashed. In short, poverty is on the rise. In the USA, Obama has announced that he wants to reduce the US debt by 4000 billion dollars in 12 years. The sacrifices which are going to be imposed on the population are unimaginable. But this solution really is no solution. In Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain...one austerity plan comes after the next and yet the deficits continue to grow. The only effect of this policy is to plunge the economy a little deeper into recession. There is only one outcome of this dynamic: after the failure of American households in 2007, of the banks in 2008, it's now the turn of states themselves to sink into bankruptcy. There can be illusion on this score: the defaults on payment by countries like Greece are inevitable. Even American states like California are not immune and questions have been asked about the credit-worthiness of the US economy as a whole. The consequences for the acceleration of the world crisis are incalculable: explosion of the euro zone, deregulation of currencies, hyper-inflation....

It's not possible to make exact predictions, to see when and where the next crack in the world economy will appear. Will the catastrophe that hit Japan (which brought down production in the world's third-ranking economic power by 15% in March) be the detonator? What will be the impact of the destabilisation of the Middle East? Will we see the collapse of the dollar or the bankruptcy of Greece or Spain? No one can tell in advance. One thing is certain though: we are going to see a succession of extremely brutal recessions. After the slow development of the world economic crisis between 1967 and 2007, we are now entering a new chapter in the decadence of capitalism, marked by incessant convulsions in the system and an explosion of poverty.

Pawel 30/4/11.



# US Diplomatic Quarrel with Israel Highlights Weakness of World's Superpower

In less than a month at the time of writing, a second border clash left at least 14 dead and scores of wounded as Israeli troops opened fire on a crowd of Palestinian protesters trying to break into the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights from Syria. Barely one month before, hundreds of people broke through a border fence and clashed with thousands of Israeli troops mobilized in anticipation of possible unrest as Palestinians prepared to protest the anniversary of the Arab defeat in the 1967 Mideast war. This is just a 'skirmish' compared to the history of violence and bloodletting that stains the region, the latest eruption of confrontations in an age-old conflict that has pitted the Israeli and Palestinian populations against each other as each sinks deeper and deeper in their ruling classes' respective nationalist ideologies: Palestinian "liberation" and Israel Zionism. For more than 60 years since the establishment of the Israeli state, these nationalist ideologies, fueled by the dominant classes on each side and aggravated by the opposing interests in the area of all the major Western powers, have caused immeasurable suffering and destruction, with no perspective for peace.

## US Shifts Policies to Adapt to Its Weakened Position

Already back in the early 90's the US had to adapt to the disappearance of the influence of the USSR in the Middle East as it became clear that countries which had been supported by the USSR during the Cold war, such as Syria, looked for a new 'sponsor,' while others, such as Iraq, threw their weight around in search of a greater imperialist position in the region. A 'peace accord' between Israel and the PLO became the centerpiece of US policy as it attempted to orientate the future shaping of alliances in the region and ensure a predominant role for the US. This led to the Oslo accords of 1992, where the US sponsored an agreement between Israel and the PLO in which the latter would recognize Israel's right of existence and

Israel would agree to the creation of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West bank. The Oslo accords however floundered in the early 2000's, as Israel, emboldened by the Bush administration's 'war on terrorism' following the attacks of September 11, and its acquiescence with Israel's policy of building Jewish settlements in the West bank, played its own card and tried to strengthen its imperialist position in the area. The US went along with Israel's withdrawal of its compromise on the Palestinian question. In this way, it hoped to both soothe Israel's growing attempts to play its own card, and reaffirm and strengthen the US position of dominance. The 'war on terror' may have given the US and Israel a sense of cockishness for a while, but it proved incapable of restoring the position of hegemony of the US. Instead, it multiplied the animosity and challenges against it, created fissures within once stable nations, and encouraged all imperialisms, big and small, to take advantage of the weakened US position to gain influence in the wake of US failure. This is what is at the root of the present intolerable and unpredictable situation of 'each nation for themselves.'

In the face of this apparent loss of control over the inter-imperialist scenario, the US bourgeoisie became increasingly alarmed. In 2008, it succeeded for a time in gaining some control over its election campaign (see article in the present issue on the difficulties of the US bourgeoisie vis-à-vis its own political strategy) and put at the head of its state a democratized team who developed a foreign policy with the rhetoric of cooperation and 'peace,' rather than war. This was done in order to reverse eight years of disastrous foreign policies implemented by a Bush administration hell-bent in flexing US military muscle in the face of the multiplication of challenges against its hegemony even at the cost of increased isolation. But restoring the US' position of world power, a daunting task for the Bush administration,

is proving impossible for the Obama administration, which is faced today by increasingly difficult and multiplying challenges. Even the US gendarme in the Middle East, Israel, its staunchest ally in the region, repeatedly challenges US authority with acts of insubordination against it. While the US needs the cooperation of Israel to impose its control over the region—which lies at the core of the Obama administration's attempts at bringing Israel and Palestine back to the negotiating table—, Israel constantly defies any attempt by the US to bring about a settlement between the two parts. President Obama's speech on May 19 aimed at sending a message to Israel that it intended to be the one to 'run the show' as to the prospects of a new round of 'peace negotiations' between Israel and Palestine. This attempt however turned into a diplomatic embarrassment for the US, as Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu fired back with vehement assertions that clearly showed he was not going to follow US diktats. President Obama had to renege on his earlier statement on May 19 about the necessity for Israel to accept two states on the basis of the '67 borders and grant Netanyahu a grand platform before a joint meeting of Congress, where he was warmly applauded. Netanyahu was rebuked again on May 26, when the US announced sanctions against an Israeli company for its role in a September 2010 transaction that provided a tanker valued at \$8.65 million to...The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines!

The US desperately needs to show that it has the ability to force Israel to toe in line so as to discourage other powers in the region, i.e. Syria and Iran from playing their own imperialist cards. The US is also very concerned that Israel's hard stance about the Palestinian question risks fuelling even greater anti-American sentiments in the area, in which case the US would have to side with Israel and lose the little diplomatic credibility it is trying to win. The US' desperate need to maintain order in the

area to prove its status as world power leads it to take increasingly contradictory steps. In the relationship with Syria and Iran, in particular, the US walks a dangerously fine line. If it cannot convince Syria of the advantage of siding with it, and with the advent of a nuclear Iran, the US will lose all diplomatic credibility. Its overtures to Syria, exemplified by the US president's reluctance to take a stronger stance against President Abbas in the wake of the bloody repression he is leading against the Syrians protesting for his ousting, can only frighten and irritate Israel, who sees Syria as a dangerous prey and ally of Iran. The stakes are high, as it is clear that without progress in the Israeli-Palestinian 'peace process' the Europeans will take full advantage of US weakness and endorse Palestinian statehood at the United Nations in September. While the US wages this as a stick in front of Israel's nose, it has no carrots to offer. Indeed France, most notably among the European nations, has already suggested that endorsement of Palestinian statehood is what it intends to give.

The chaos and destabilization that have ravaged the planet since the collapse of the ex-Soviet bloc at the end of the 80's, resulted in the weakening of the world's remaining superpower—the US. The ensuing constant reshuffling of ad-hoc alliances has been the hallmark of life in the last two decades, and a mere foretaste of more and worse to come. The latest 'historic' speech delivered by President Barack Obama on May 19 has to be understood against this backdrop of aggravating political instability and imperialist rivalries. The quarrels with the Israeli state and the disagreements with the European counterparts—most notably France—over the future contours of a Palestinian state are a manifestation of the weakened hegemonic position of the US and a stark confirmation of the impossibility of peace under capitalism.

Ana, 6/6/11

## Canadian Elections: Behind Talk of the "Historic Election," the Image of the State Remains Fragile

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Stephen Harper's Conservative Party won its first ever majority government, upping its margin in the House of Commons from 143 seats to 166. As a result of the election, the Liberal Party's tally of seats (34) has been reduced to an historic low, while the *Bloc Québécois* (BQ) has been virtually wiped out as player in federal politics, holding on to only 4 seats. However, for the bourgeois media the real story of this "historic election" was the rise of the social democratic New Democratic Party (NDP), which took the most seats in its history (103) and now forms the official opposition in Ottawa for the first time ever.

As a result of the election, the Conservatives now have the power to enact whatever legislation they want—no longer threatened by possible opposition non-confidence votes. However, although they now control a majority of seats in the House of Commons, only 37 percent of voters actually voted for a Conservative MP. In large measure, the Conservative majority was built by "splits on the left," as an insurgent NDP competed strongly with Liberals in a number of key ridings, throwing the race to the Conservatives. The Canadian bourgeoisie is now stuck with a scandal-ridden Conservative government for the next four years boasting a ruling team that has shown bold contempt for the "democratic process" in the past, even though it only formed a minority government. The fear of what the Harper Conservatives will do in a majority government to further damage the democratic illusion must be a real concern for the Canadian bourgeoisie at the present time. So far, the Conservatives would appear to be taking pains not to rock the boat too far, too fast having waged a campaign around "stability."

Clearly, this was not the optimal election result for revitalizing democratic and electoral illusions among a populace that has grown increasingly cynical and disengaged from its

state over the last decade and half. Nevertheless, given the structure of the Canadian state, it became evident fairly early on in the campaign that another Conservative government would be the outcome of the election. Therefore, in order to attempt to salvage the situation—the Canadian bourgeoisie—after a period of hesitancy at the beginning of the campaign—moved to build up the candidacy of NDP leader Jack Layton, legitimating his party as a viable option to the Liberals. (See "The Canadian Bourgeois Attempts to Revive its Democratic Illusion Once Again" in *Internationalism* #158). Playing on the historic volatility of the electorate in Quebec, the NDP shot past the Liberals and the BQ there, winning seat after seat in a province where it had previously been virtually absent. Whether or not the Conservatives would have formed a majority government without a strong showing by the NDP is a matter of some debate, but a Conservative government was inevitable given the near total ineptitude of the Liberal campaign.

As the result of the election, the Canadian state is now characterized by a sharp polarization between a right-wing party in power and a social democratic left in opposition. Although the continued presence of the Harper Conservatives in power is not the optimal situation for the Canadian bourgeoisie; this is assuaged to some degree by the revitalization of a left opposition in the NDP. With the historic defeat of the Liberal Party and the near total destruction of the BQ, the Canadian state is moving—for the moment at least—towards a more stable two party opposition in the political system. This will allow the Canadian bourgeoisie to more effectively operate the ideological division of labor between the right in power/left in opposition in anticipation of future class confrontations in the offing, once a still buoyant Canadian economy succumbs to the shoals of the global economic crisis.

Nevertheless, the current arrangement is still fraught with difficulties for the Canadian bourgeoisie. First, the brazen, often callous, Harper Government—whom over 60 percent of voters rejected—remains in power. By the time its "mandate" is done in 2015, it will have been in power for nine years. This follows a thirteen-year period of corruption laden Liberal Party rule, which was largely built on "splits on the right," before the unification of the Conservative Party in 2003. Despite its image as a more flexible multi-party democracy *vis a vis* its neighbor to the south, the Canadian state is currently unable to produce a ruling team other than the same old corrupt Liberals or Conservatives. The recent attempt to give the Liberal Party a new face by bringing in Harvard History professor Michael Ignatieff as party leader fell flat on its face, with Conservative attack ads painting him as something less than a true Canadian for having lived so long in the United States. Ignatieff himself was unable to win his own suburban Toronto riding. As it currently stands, in order to give the state a new veneer, the Canadian bourgeoisie would have to bring the NDP to power, a prospect that would risk upsetting the ideological division of labor, and a result that seems unlikely anytime in the near future given the electoral map of Canadian politics.

Moreover, in order to make the NDP the official opposition, the Canadian bourgeoisie had to do so by "going the Québec route", destroying the officially separatist federal party (BQ) in the process. Now, the NDP is indebted to its base in Québec and will be forced to adopt rhetoric more sensitive to the majority francophone province's nationalist aspirations—complicating its relationship with the rest of Canada. Yes, the Canadian bourgeoisie was able to salvage this election to some degree with the elevation of the NDP, but the situation it finds itself in today remains fraught with danger for the legitimacy of the democratic

and electoral illusion. Despite all the talk of an historic election, voter participation remained quite low at 61 percent, just slightly higher than 2008's historic low (59 percent.)

For now, although the right/left division of labor between the Conservatives and the NDP is useful to the Canadian bourgeoisie given the threat of future class confrontations, the current arrangement seems unlikely to offer more than a modest boost to the state's legitimacy. While it is not possible to predict the future evolution of Canadian politics with precision, it seems likely that the Canadian state will need to try to revitalize the Liberal Party as a viable party of government in the period ahead—most likely by appointing a young and appealing new face as party leader: Justin Trudeau, Liberal MP from Montreal and son of the late enigmatic Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, would seem to fit this bill to the tee. Although, the Liberal Party suffered an historic defeat in May, it was not decimated completely. As quick as the NDP was built up, it can be brought down again, most likely through the desertion of voters in Québec. In order to eventually replace the Conservatives as the ruling party should the situation call for it, the Canadian state needs a party capable of winning votes in both Québec and the rest of Canada in order to counteract strong Conservative party strength in the West. It is not clear if the NDP is capable of doing this, nor is it likely that the Canadian bourgeoisie wants to burden its social democratic party with national power at this time.

Already there are signs of discontent brewing within the Canadian working class that would be most effectively neutralized through a left opposition in close cooperation with the unions. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers called a series of rotating strikes as contract negotiations with the Crown

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# Solidarity with the “indignant” in Spain: The future belongs to the working class!

*Continued from Page 8*

talks are given on all sorts of questions – scientific, cultural, artistic, political, and economic. “Days of reflection” are planned. Everyone brings along their knowledge and skills.

On the surface, this torrent of thought seems to lead nowhere. There are few concrete proposals or immediately realisable demands. But what appears clearly is first and foremost a huge sentiment of being fed up with poverty, with austerity plans, with the present social order; and at the same time a collective will to break out of social atomisation, to get together to discuss and reflect. In spite of the many illusions and confusions, in what people say as well as on the placards and banners, the word “revolution” has re-appeared and people are not afraid of it.

In the assemblies, the debates have raised the most fundamental questions:

- should we limit ourselves to “democratic regeneration”? Don’t the problems have their origin in capitalism, a system which can’t be reformed and which has to be destroyed from top to bottom?

- Should the movement end on 22 May, after the elections, or should it continue and develop into a massive struggle against the attacks on living conditions, unemployment, casualisation, evictions?

- Should we not extend the assemblies to the workplaces, to the neighbourhoods, to the employment offices, to the high schools, to the universities? Should we root the movement among the employed workers who have the strength to lead a generalised struggle?

In the debates in the assemblies, two tendencies have appeared very clearly:

- a conservative one, animated by non-proletarian social strata, which sows the illusion that it is possible to reform the capitalist system through a “democratic citizens’ revolution”;

- the other, a proletarian tendency, which highlights the necessity to do away with capitalism

The assemblies that were held on Sunday 22 May, the day of the elections, decided to continue the movement. Numerous speakers declared: “we are not here because of the elections, even if they were the detonator”.

The proletarian tendency affirmed itself most clearly in the proposals to “go towards the working class” by putting forward demands against unemployment, casualisation, social attacks. At Puerta del Sol, the decision was taken to organise “popular assemblies” in the neighbourhoods. Proposals were made to do the same thing in the workplaces, the universities, the employment offices. In Malaga, Barcelona and Valencia, the assemblies posed the question of organising demonstrations against reductions in the social wage, proposing a new general strike: “a real one this time” as one of the speakers put it.

It was in Barcelona, the industrial capital of the country, that the central assembly at Catalonia Square seemed to be the most radical, the most infused by the proletarian tendency and the most distant from the illusion of “democratic regeneration”. Thus, the workers from the Telefonica, the hospitals, the fire-fighters, the students battling social cuts joined up with Barcelona assembly and began to give it a different tonality. On 25 May, the Catalonia Square assembly decided to give active support to the hospital workers’ strike, while the assembly at Puerta del Sol in Madrid decided to decentralise the movement by convoking “popular assemblies” in the neighbourhoods in order to put a participatory, “horizontal” democracy into practice. In Valencia, demonstrating bus workers got together with a demonstration of local residents against cuts in the schools budget. In Zaragoza, bus drivers joined the assemblies with the same enthusiasm.

In Barcelona, the “indignos” decided to maintain their camp and to continue the occupation of Catalonia Square until June 15.

## The future is in the hands of the young generation of the working class

Whatever direction the movement goes in, whatever its outcome, it is clear that this revolt, initiated by a young generation confronted with unemployment (in Spain 45% of the population aged between 20 and 25 is out of work) is definitely part of the struggle of the working class. Its contribution to the international movement of the class is undeniable.

It is a generalised movement which has drawn in all the non-exploiting social strata, and all the generations of the working class. Even if

the class has been part of a wave of “popular” anger and has not affirmed itself through massive strikes and specific economic demands, this movement still expresses a real maturation of consciousness within the only class that can change the world: the proletariat. It reveals clearly that, in front of the increasingly evident bankruptcy of capitalism, significant masses of people are beginning to rise up in the “democratic” countries of Western Europe, opening the way towards the politicisation of the proletarian struggle.

But, above all, this movement has shown that the young people, the great majority of them casual workers or unemployed, have been able to appropriate the weapons of the working class struggle: massive and open general assemblies, which have allowed them to affirm their solidarity and take control of the movement outside the political parties and trade unions.

The slogan “all power to the assemblies” which has emerged from within the movement, even if only among a minority, is a remake of the old slogan of the Russian revolution: “all power to the soviets”.

Even though today people are still fearful of the word “communism” (owing to the weight of the bourgeois campaigns after the fall of the Stalinist regimes of the old eastern bloc), the word “revolution” doesn’t scare anyone, on the contrary.

But this movement is in no way a “Spanish Revolution” as the Democracia Real Ya collective presents it. Unemployment, casualisation, the high cost of living and the constant deterioration of living conditions for the exploited are not at all a Spanish specificity! The sinister face of unemployment, especially among the young, has made its appearance in Madrid as in Cairo, in London as in Paris, in Athens as in Buenos Aires. We are all together in this downward spiral. We are all facing the decomposition of capitalist society, which expresses itself not only in poverty and unemployment, but also in the multiplication of disasters and wars, in the dislocation of social relations and a growing moral barbarity (which expresses itself, among other things, in the growth of sexual aggression and violence against women both in the “Third World” and the “advanced” countries).

The movement of the “indignos” is not a revolution. It is only a new step in the development of the working class struggle on global scale – the only struggle that can open up a perspective for the youth “with no future” and for humanity as a whole.

Despite all the illusions about the “Independent Republic of Puerta del Sol”, this movement is evidence that the horizon of a new society is taking shape in the entrails of the old. The “Spanish earthquake” shows that the new generations of the working class, who have nothing to lose, are already becoming actors on the stage of history. They are precursors of even greater storms that will clear the road to the emancipation of humanity.

Through the use of the internet, of social networks and mobile phones, this young generation has shown that it can break through the black-out of the bourgeoisie and its media, laying the basis for solidarity across national borders.

This new generation emerged on the international social scene around 2003, first in the protests against the military interventions of the Bush administration, then with the first demonstrations in France against the reform of pensions in 2003. It reappeared in the same country in 2006 with the massive movement of university and high school students against the CPE. In Greece, Italy, Portugal, Britain, young people in education made their voices

heard in response to the future of absolute poverty and unemployment that capitalism is offering them.

The tidal wave of this “no future” generation recently struck Tunisia and Egypt, resulting in a gigantic social revolt which toppled Ben Ali and Mubarak. But it should not be forgotten that the decisive element which forced the bourgeoisie in the main “democratic” countries (especially Barack Obama) to dump Ben Ali and Mubarak was the emergence of work-



ers’ strikes and the danger of a general strike movement.

Since then, Tahrir Square has become an emblem, an encouragement to struggle for the younger generation of proletarians in many countries. This was the model the “indignos” in Spain followed when they set up their camp in Puerta del Sol, occupied the main squares of over 70 towns and drew all the oppressed social layers into the assemblies (in Barcelona, the “indignos” even renamed Catalonia Square “Plaza Tahrir”).

The movement in Spain is, in reality, much more profound than the spectacular revolt which was crystallised in Tahrir Square in Cairo. It has broken out in the main country of the Iberian Peninsula, a bridge between the two continents. The fact that it is unfolding in a “democratic” state in Western Europe (and - what’s more - one led by a “socialist” government!) can only help to undermine the democratic mystifications deployed by the media since the “Jasmine revolution” in Tunisia.

Furthermore, although Democracia Real Ya describes this movement as a “Spanish revolution”, hardly any Spanish flags have been flown, whereas Tahrir Square was awash with national flags<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the inevitable confusions accompanying this movement, it is a very important link in the chain of today’s social struggles. With the aggravation of the world crisis of capitalism, these social movements will more and more converge with the proletarian class struggle and contribute to its development.

The courage, determination and deep sense of solidarity displayed by this “indignant” generation shows that another world is possible: communism, the unification of the world human community. But for this old dream of humanity to become a reality, the working class, the class which produces the essentials of all the wealth of society, has to rediscover its class identity by developing massive struggles against all the attacks of capitalism.

The movement of the “indignos” has once again started to pose the question of the revolution. It is up to the world proletariat to resolve the question by giving the movement a clear class direction, aimed at the overthrow of capitalism. It is only on the ruins of this system of exploitation based on commodity production and profit that the new generations can build a new society, achieve a really universal “democracy” and restore dignity to the human species.

*Sofiane, 27.5.11*

<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, we have even seen slogans calling for a “global revolution” and for the “extension” of the movement across national frontiers. An “international commission” has been created in all the assemblies. In all the big cities in Europe and America, and even in Tokyo, Pnomh Pen and Hanoi, we have seen solidarity demonstrations by Spanish expatriates.

## Canadian Elections

*Continued from Page 5*

Corporation broke down. Although the current series of rotating strikes in different cities on different days remains firmly union-controlled, there is a real discontent brewing among postal workers over pay, deteriorating job conditions, safety issues and disciplinary policies. Unlike its neighbor to the south, the Canadian state will be able to respond to this growing discontent among the working class through the use of a political shell game featuring bold sounding rhetoric by the left party in opposition, which is frustrated by the right in power. Moreover, the Canadian state will be able to call on its still functioning union apparatus to control the workers’ anger. In this sense, despite the fact that Canada can perhaps claim a more consistent history of class struggle than the U.S., the Canadian bourgeoisie might now be much better placed to divert struggle when it arises than its southern neighbor currently is. Witness the difference in approach of the Canadian bourgeoisie in handling the Canada Post strike, compared with the attempts to virtually destroy public employee unions in Republican controlled states in the U.S. For the bourgeoisie, it pays to have a left party with credentials and a capable union apparatus to call on in time of need!

For the working class the lessons of this election are clear. There exists no bourgeois political party that is capable of defending our interests in the context of the global bank-

ruptcy of the capitalist system. While Canada may have been spared the worst of this crisis up until now, the writing is on the wall that it will not be spared forever. Sky-high housing costs, spiraling consumer debt loads and tenuous employment are our future under any government of the bourgeoisie regardless of its partisan badge. Workers will have to take up the struggle on its own class terrain against parliament and all the parties of the bourgeois class.

*Henk, 06/07/11.*

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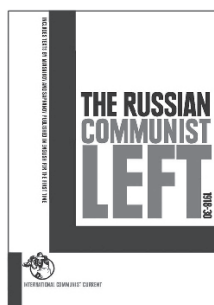
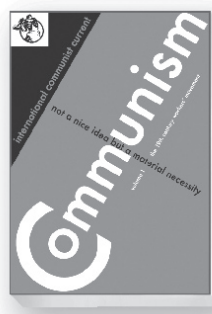
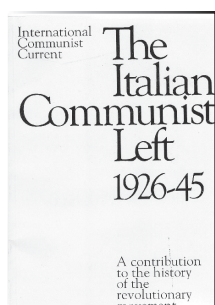
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# Solidarity with the “indignant” in Spain: The future belongs to the working class!

*The events in Spain have been unfolding since 15 May with the occupation of the Puerto del Sol Square in Madrid by a human wave made up mainly of young people rebelling against unemployment, the Zapatero government's austerity measures, and the corruption of politicians. The movement spread like wildfire to all the main cities in the country - to Barcelona, Valencia, Grenada, Seville, Malaga, Leon - making use of social media like Facebook and Twitter, and*

*videos uploaded onto Youtube; and that's largely how we have got information about the movement outside of Spain, because the bourgeois media have pretty much imposed a black-out on the events. If they would far rather have us thinking about Obama, or Dominique Strauss Kahn, it's because this movement represents a very important step in the development of social struggles and of the combat of the world working class faced with the dead-end that is capitalism.*

## The premises of the movement

The movement of the ‘indignos’, the ‘indignant’, in Spain has been fermenting since the general strike of 29 September 2010 against the planned reform of pensions. This general strike ended in a defeat mainly because the trade unions sat down with the government and accepted its proposed changes (which involves workers who have been active for 40-45 years getting 20% less when they retire than they had expected). This defeat gave rise to considerable bitterness within the working class. But it also provoked a profound anger among the young people who played an active part in the strike movement, in particular by expressing their solidarity with the workers’ pickets.

From the beginning of 2011 the anger began to take shape in the universities. In March, in Portugal, a call-out to a demonstration by the group ‘Precarious Youth’ mustered 250,000 people in Lisbon. This example had an immediate impact in the Spanish universities, especially in Madrid. The great majority of students and young people under 30 have to live on 600 euros a month by taking on part-time jobs. It was in this context that a hundred or so students formed the group ‘Jovenes sin Futuro’ (Young People with no Future). These impecunious students, who come mainly from the working class, called for a demonstration on 7 April. The success of this initial mobilisation, which brought around 5000 people together, incited the Jovenes sin Futuro group to plan another demo for 15 May. In the meantime the collective Democracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now) appeared in Madrid. Its platform denounces unemployment and the “dictatorship of the market”, but claims to be “apolitical” - neither left nor right. Democracia Real Ya also launched an appeal to demonstrate on 15 May in other towns. But it was in Madrid that the procession had the greatest success, with about 250,000 demonstrators. It was meant to be a well-behaved march that would end tranquilly in Puerto del Sol.

## The anger of the ‘no future’ youth spreads to the whole population

The demonstrations of 15 May called by Democracia Real Ya were a spectacular success: they expressed a general discontent, especially among young people faced with the problem of unemployment at the end of their studies. Everything was due to end there, but at the end of the demonstrations in Madrid and Grenada some incidents provoked by small ‘Black Bloc’ groups led to a police charge and about 20 arrests. Those arrested were treated brutally in the police stations, and afterwards they formed a collective which issued a communiqué denouncing the police violence. The publication of this communiqué immediately provoked an indignant reaction and widespread solidarity against the forces of order. Thirty totally unknown and unorganised people decided to



Assembly in Madrid's Puerta del Sol

set up a camp on Puerto del Sol. This initiative immediately won popular sympathy and the example spread to Barcelona, Grenada and Valencia. A second round of police repression lit the touch paper and since then increasingly massive gatherings in central squares have been taking place in over 70 towns.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 17 May, the organisers of the ‘15 May movement’ had envisaged holding silent protests or various dramatic performances, but the crowd that had come together in the squares shouted loudly for the holding of assemblies. At 8 in the evening, assemblies began to take place in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and other cities. From Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>, these assemblies became a real avalanche. Everywhere gatherings took the form of open general assemblies in public spaces.

In the face of police repression and given the prospect of municipal and regional elections, the Democracia Real Ya collective launched a debate around the theme of the “democratic regeneration” of the Spanish state. It called for a reform of the electoral reform in order to put an end to the two-party system monopolised by the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the right-wing Popular Party, calling for a “real democracy” after 34 years of “incomplete democracy” since the fall of the Franco regime.

But the movement of the ‘indignos’ to a great

extent went beyond the democratic and reformist platform of Democracia Real Ya. It did not restrict itself to the revolt of the “600 euro generation”. In the demonstrations and the occupied squares of Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Malaga, Seville etc, on the placards and banners you could read slogans like “Democracy without capital!”, “PSOE and PP, the same shit!”, “If you won’t let us dream, we won’t let you sleep!”, “All power to the assemblies!”, “The problem is not democracy, the problem is capitalism!”, “Without work, without a home, without fear!”, “Workers awake!”, “600 euros a month, now that’s violence!”.

In Valencia a group of women shouted “They tricked the grand-parents, they tricked their children too - the grandchildren must not allow themselves to be tricked as well!”

## Mass assemblies, a “weapon loaded with the future”

In the face of bourgeois democracy which reduces “political participation” to every four years “choosing” between politicians who never keep their election promises and who just get on with implementing the austerity plans required by the remorseless deepening of the economic crisis, the movement of the ‘indignos’ in Spain has spontaneously re-appropriated a working class fighting weapon: the open general assemblies. Everywhere massive urban assemblies have sprung up, regrouping tens of thousands of people from all the generations and all the non-exploiting layers of society. In these assemblies, everyone can speak up, express their anger, hold debates on different questions, and make proposals. In this atmosphere of general ferment, tongues are set free; all aspects of social life are examined (political, cultural, economic...). The squares have been inundated by a gigantic collective wave of ideas that are discussed in a climate of solidarity and mutual respect. In some towns “ideas boxes” have been set up, containers where anyone can write down their ideas on a piece of paper. The movement organises itself with a great deal of intelligence. Commissions on all sorts of questions are set up, and care is taken to avoid disorganised clashes with the forces of order. Violence within the assemblies is forbidden and drunkenness banned with the slogan “La revolucion no es botellón” (rough translation: “the revolution is not a piss up”). Each day, clean-up teams are organised. Public canteens serve meals, volunteers set up nursing centres and crèches for children. Libraries are put in place as well as a “time bank”, where

*Continued on Page 6*

## Political positions of the ICC

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

- \* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- \* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.
- \* The stratified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.
- \* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an

ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

- \* All the nationalist ideologies - ‘national independence’, ‘the right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.
- \* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. ‘Democracy’, a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.
- \* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-‘Communists’), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘anti-fascist fronts’ and ‘united fronts’, which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.
- \* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union 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 move-

ment 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*.