June 30th: it’s time to take control of our own struggles!

Why are nearly a million workers – from education, the civil service, local councils – preparing to go on strike on June 30th?

For the same reason that half a million workers marched through the streets of London on 26 March. And for the same reason that tens of thousands of university and school students took part in a whole movement of demonstrations, occupations and walk-outs last autumn. They are more and more fed up with the never-ending attacks on their living standards being organised by the government, whether in the form of cuts in healthcare, rising tuition fees, growing unemployment, wage freezes or – a major issue in the June 30 strike – an assault on pensions, so that teachers for example will pay more towards their pension, retire later, and get a smaller pension at the end of it.

Workers and students, the unemployed, pensioners... are also less and less convinced by the justifications offered by the government (and, with a few tiny differences, the Labour ‘opposition’): ‘we need to make these cuts to get the economy going again, so really they are in everyone’s interest’. People have been making all kinds of sacrifices in response to similar arguments for a long time now, and still the economy keeps going downhill and our living standards with it.

And the idea of striking together, of making the response to the attacks as widespread and as inclusive as possible, has also appeared more and more logical to a growing number of us, given that we are all facing the same attacks, and given that so many isolated, dispersed struggles have been doomed to defeat.

But there’s another question raised by the planned ‘day of action’. What are the real motivations behind the decision of the official trade union machinery to call this strike? Do they really want to organise an effective response to the government, implying that Labour would be able to offer an alternative?

The ruling class has reason to fear us.

The ruling class has good reason to fear that its attacks will provoke a bigger response than it can comfortably handle. It has in front of it the evidence not only of what happened in Britain in autumn, and the numbers who turned out on 26 March, but also the growing tide of revolt that has swept across North Africa and the Middle East, and has now hit Europe with the massive movements in Spain and Greece, where tens of thousands, the majority of them young people facing a very uncertain future, have occupied city squares and held daily assemblies where the participants are free to express their concerns not only about this or that government measure but about the whole political and social system that rules our lives. This movement is not yet a “revolution” but it is certainly creating an atmosphere where the question of revolution is being discussed more widely and more seriously.

Little wonder that the state in Britain wants to keep resistance trapped inside the safe walls of official protest: The trade union apparatus has a key role in this, keeping us to the strict guidelines laid down in the trade union rulebook which stipulates: no strike action to be decided by mass meetings; no solidarity strikes; if necessary, cross picket lines of workers in other sectors because otherwise you might be engaging in illegal “secondary action”: only strike if you are a properly paid up member of the union, etc etc.

Take the struggle into our own hands!

Does this mean that the action on 30 June is a waste of time?

No, not if we use it as a means to come together, discuss and decide on more widespread and effective forms of resistance. Not if we use it to overcome our fear of taking charge of our own struggles.

The examples of Tunisia, Egypt, Spain or Greece are there in front of us: when people gather together in large numbers, when they occupy public spaces and begin to demand the right to speak and to take collective decisions, they can overcome their fear of repression by the police or of punishment by the bosses.

They offer us the “model” to follow - a model which in any case is not a new invention but which has appeared in all the major workers’ struggles of the last century: the open general assembly, which maintains control of all its delegates or commissioners by making them elected by a show of hands and recallable at any time.

Before June 30th, we can call for general meetings at work, open to all employers regardless of job or union, where we can decide how to spread the action as widely as possible. In the schools and colleges, there is a real need to overcome the divisions between teachers and non-teaching employees, between staff and students, and to work out how to bring everyone into the struggle. In the councils and government departments, the same applies: discussion groups and general meetings of all kinds can help to overcome these divisions and make sure that the struggle involves many more than are ‘officially’ on strike.

On the day of the strike, we need to make sure that pickets are not just token affairs but are used to widen and deepen the movement: by persuading everyone in your workplace to join the strike; by sending delegates to other workplaces to support their struggle; by acting as a focus for discussion about how to take the struggle forward in the future.

Demonstrations must not be passive parades ending in a ritual rally. Demonstrations provide an opportunity to hold street assemblies where the aim is not to listen to pre-arranged speeches by politicians and union hacks but to allow as many people as possible to exchange their experiences and express their views.

There’s much talk, especially from the ‘left’, about how the cuts and other attacks are not really ‘necessary’ and are ‘ideologically’ driven. But the truth is that for capitalism in crisis it is totally necessary and unavoidable to try to reduce our living standards. What’s necessary for us, the exploited, is not to try to convince the exploiters that they should organise their system in a better way. It’s to resist their attacks today and tomorrow, and in doing so to gain the confidence, the self-organisation and the political awareness needed to pose the question of revolution and the need for the complete transformation of society. 4, 6, 11
The strikes and demonstrations planned for the 30 June by teachers’ unions and the PCS civil union are being hyped in a way that follows inevitably the precedent set by the protests of last year. The fact that the workers of this May-June 2011 had demonstrated in Britain the 24/4/11 headlined with “Magnificent march - now let’s strike to beat the Tories” - reporting that all speeches in favour of a strike next time round were greeted enthusiastically.

30 June is the next in a series and left- ists are already discussing what the big event after that will be in the autumn. The Socialist Worker headlines read “30 June strikes can turn the tide against the Tory government” (4/6/11) and “30 June: we must seize opportunity for a mass strike” (23/4/11). These items should be put in the context of what they said before the 26 March demo: “A huge protest could give millions of people confidence to fight against every cut and for every job—and to bring down this rotten Tory government of the rich.” And how did the huge protest of 26 March make people feel? Many were impressed by the size of the demo, but deflated when they reflected afterwards on what could have been. Some felt, rightly, from the start, that it might be a pointless procession leading nowhere. Others saw something more positive in the occupation of buildings in Trafalgar Square and Wapping.

Whichever way you look at 26 March, it was dominated by the unions and their supporters, in the banners, in the speeches, in the way that so many people turned out for the first time into a massive passive stroll. The SWP thinks it’s possible to “Kick Cameron’s crumbling coalition” (4/5/11) but 30 June is still dominated by unions and, as things stand, based on the proposals of Left and unions, will have no more effect that 26 March.

Also, it is necessary to look a little closer at the idea of a “mass strike” that might be part of the process of ‘kicking out’ the government. The Office for National Statistics has released the figures showing the wealth of the UK in the industrial trial action in the 12 months to March. At 145,000 it’s the lowest since records in their current form began in 2001. This puts into clearer focus the ‘real house pricing’ of the property market. Neverthe- less the numbers do reflect a reality – a hesi- nation faced with the gravity of the economic crisis. Many people were inspired by the student protests against cuts to education in the year in Britain, by the social movements in Tunisia and Egypt, and more recently by the dem- onstrations and assemblies in Spain and Greece, but this inspiration has not yet been transformed into widespread action.

To make anything of the 30 June actions work- ers need to prepare to go beyond union boundar- ies, to discuss in advance what could be achieved if workers took control of their own struggles. When it comes to the unions’ “big day”, the strike can be extended ‘from the bottom up’ by calling on workers in other unions and sectors to take un- official action; instead of the usual pre-arranged rallies, we can be thinking in terms of genuine as- semblies where everything can be discussed and decided, with the possibility of the handcuffs going on as part of a caring and calming process leading to the patient, who’s already frightened and unable to cope, cuff him and calming him down to the slogans of the Left and unions.

The Left talks about ‘mass struggles’ only to un- dermine the possibility of their appearance. Any workers who have come to the conclusion that the government must be overthrown will feel the need to discuss the needs of the struggle, the issues and obstacles that face the working class, and the long- term perspectives for the class struggle, and are far more to offer than all the big talk of the unions and the Left. Car 3/6/11

Policing the decline in health care

The police are playing an in- creasingly prominent role in the NHS and social services. As health services are more and more stretched there is a greater emphasis on maintaining public order.

One example of this is the increasing tendency to treat the mentally ill as if they were criminals. You can get a ridiculously sanitised idea of this from the police training videos on viacom.com/23913544 in which the handcuffs go on as part of a caring and calming process leading to the patient, who’s been causing a disturbance, being delivered to a place of safety. The reality is not so pretty – half a dozen police raid the home of someone who is already frightened and unable to cope, cuff him and take him away in an ambulance. Sometimes dawn raids are carried out as though the mentally ill individual is some sort of terrorist.

Mental illness has become more systematically brutal in recent years, there never was any golden age within capitalism. The conditions in which the mentally ill live within capitalism directly trigger mental illness, capitalist society is also incapable of providing adequate support that might enable the mentally ill to continue to lead normal lives. Instead, it re- lies on repression and compulsory treatment (or “compulsory treatment orders” of the Mental Health Act) – necessary because the most severely mentally ill cannot cope in what passes for normal life. As conditions worsen, what care there was tends to be progressively replaced with an inhuman and thoroughly racist mode of enforcement prioritising na- ked repression.

In terms of treatment of the mentally ill, the closure of the old asylums in the 1960s and 70s was presented as – and believed to be – a great liberation from the old repressive imper- sonal institutions. But hopes were dashed by the paucity of provision and ‘care in the community’ was re- ally about ‘neglect in the community’. It turned out to be just another cost cutting measure, en- hanced by the development of the drug treatments. But the overall issue of the treatment of mental illness throughout capitalism is beyond the scope of this article.

Another example of the increased weight of re-pressive forces relates to the lusher rules for divul- ging patient information to the police. For decades it was believed that information was confidential unless the law (in the case of road accidents and terrorism) or a Court demanded it be divulged. Now the Department of Health’s Code of Practice on Confidentiality, 2003, states “Under the common law staff are permitted to disclose personal information in order to prevent and support de- tection, investigation and punishment of serious crime.” Furthermore, unlike the disclosure of information to the police, the disclosure of Oyster travel information to the po- lice, there is no clear framework for making such disclosures. Doctors, nurses, social workers, or organisa- tion or individual members of front line staff who are likely to be most vulnerable to police pressure are not even on any records kept of police requests for information or whether these were accorded to or refused. (See “Police access to health information: confidential records” by Mattibas, ncl.ac.uk/2010/issue4/pdf/dickson4.pdf).

Lastly, there is no denying that there are more mental health service cuts going on than ever before. As conditions worsen, what care there was tends to be progressively replaced with an inhumane and thoroughly racist mode of enforcement prioritising na- ked repression.

As we approach the 2010 general elec- tion in Britain the ICF reminded workers what the experience of the Labour govern- ment had been. Not only was the gap between the haves and the have-nots much the same as it was 60 years ago: the impov- erishment of a great many was worsening. The social and economic policies that are produced on an endless carousel, continue to show that the state of the capitalism economy means fur- ther deterioration in the conditions of life of the working class.

In March, for example, it was confirmed that, with official price inflation rising faster than offi- cial wage levels, real household income had fallen for the first time in 30 years, and by the great- est amount since 1971. It doesn’t take a genius to work out that, with a pay freeze and pay cuts in the public sector, and the private sector imposing the ‘discipline of the market’, incomes are down and the real level of price rises is higher than of- ficial inflation.

The official acknowledgement of the decline in incomes is not only bad news for those whose in- comes are directly under attack but also for the overall state of the economy. If, as some claim, consumer spending accounts for 65% of the economy, then lack of spending power, with real earnings falling and with cuts to benefits and tax allowances among the poor, is likely to lead to a greater emphasis on the state, under, more unemployment, and even less money in the economy.

The most recent forecasts of the OECD for the British economy suggest that this has not unsurprisingly been fur- ther revised downwards. More dramatically, another forecast, by the Resolution Foundation, suggests that average pay in 2015 will be no higher than in 2001. This puts into clearer focus the ‘real house- hold income’ question. Continuous inflation over 14 years means a continuing erosion of living standards for those in work, while for those out of work the many cuts in benefits will further worsen the quality of life for the unemployed.

Meanwhile, the difference between the top earn- ers and the rest of the working population is back to 1918 levels, or approaching the situation in Vic- torian times — according to who is interpreting the figures. The top 0.1% has the same proportion of national income as it did in the 1940s. The income of those in the top 1.0% went up in 2009- 10.

The annual income of the chief executives of the FTSE 100 companies went up 32 percent last year to an average £3.5million. The income of the top 0.1% is now 145 times that of those on median full-time incomes. Between 1996-97 and 2007-8 the income of the bottom 50% went from £16,000 to £17,100, while from 2019-20 it is predicted to reach £18,700, while the top 0.6% will aver- age £901,600. Most of these increases in social inequality took place under a Labour government that was supposedly committed to ‘social inclu- sion’.

The fact that lots of the big money is made in financial speculation, hedge funds, insurance, banking, property, land, advertising and all sorts of other dubious ‘services’ is particularly galling when you consider the meagre rewards given to those who work at the sharp end in health, educa- tion, construction, manufacturing and other areas of activity from which people can di- rectly benefit.

Every tranche of figures tends to confirm an ever-widening impoverishment. Those who claim that capitalism can be reformed so that all can benefit have no evidence for such a proposition. The development of the class struggle is the only basis for tackling the problem.

The class struggle isn’t simply between the rich and the poor. The fundamental conflict in capital- ist society is between the ruling bourgeoisie and the working class that produces all value in soci- ety. Workers’ struggles don’t just consist in attacks on the rich as individuals but need to attack, dam- niple and replace the basic social relations of capital (wage labour and production for profit) and the state which tries to keep them alive, despite the fact that they are the fundamental reason for the impoverishment of the vast majority of human be- nings.

20 Britain

International Review 145

Social revolts in North Africa and the Middle East, nuclear catastrophe in Japan, war in Libya

Only the proletarian revolution can save humanity from the disaster of capitalism

What’s happening in the Middle East?

Contribution to a history of the workers’ movement in Africa

What are the workers councils? (V)

1917-21: the Soviets and the question of the state

Decadence of capitalism

The Comintern and the virus of ‘Luxemburgism’ in 1924

The Communist left in Russia

The Manifesto of the Workers’ Group of the Russian Communist party (IV)
Western intervention in Libya: a new militaristic hell

S

ince March 19th there has been no let-up
in the military intervention in Libya under
the dual banner of the UN and NATO. But
we needn’t worry: the last G8 summit has reaf-
firmed that “we do not seek war” and putting
their differences to one side, are “determined
to finish the job”, having called on the Libyan
leaders to negotiate with his “people as a whole
lost all legitimacy”. Russia has allied itself with
the new anti-Gaddafi front, offering its assistance
to mediate with the main “two no longer regular
as the leader of Libya.” As a sign of their support
for the “Arab revolutions” and thus also for the
Libyan people, world leaders are split over pres-
sing Saudi Arabia to put its hand in its pocket for a
gift to the “Arab revolutions” of $45 billion dollars.
Meanwhile, this beautiful outsourcing of “solidar-
ity” towards the anti-Gaddafi insurgents united
in the National Transitional Council of Libya, whose
representatives spend more time in Western em-
bassies than in the combat zones, seems incom-
patible with a war that has got more and more
dug down. Gaddafi’s forces, despite being on
the back foot since March 19th, are continuing
to pound the rebels, both in Bengazi and Mis-
rla. We are far from seeing the eviction of the
Libyan forces, denounced by the “international community”
for their cruelty, and from the advent of democracy that was the pretext for this new
imperialist operation that follows in the wake of the “Green Revolution” is desperately clinging on
to power. The country presents a spectacle of deso-
lution, far away from the hopes and enthusiasm
that were raised by the movements in Tunisia and
Egypt. There are dozens of deaths every day in
Misrata (according to the World Health Organisa-
tion) and carcasses of tanks and military vehicles
litter the roads, while the towns are looking more
and more like Beirut in the 1970s and 1980s. Evi-
dent is the sense of groupness of the people, in the
same way that the US would not hesitate to violate
the dual banner of the UN and NATO. But
since March 19th, it is about bringing to light the
totalitarian nature of the world that the US would not hesitate to violate
the UN and NATO, and that this kind of operation, precisely at the time when France and Britain are having difficulty in carry-
ing out their anti-Gaddafi operation, is the only way to
bring about the realisation of the national “sacri-
fice” of an “ally”, that it intends to meet the rules of the game wherever it judges
it necessary. Finally it succeeded in obliging the
governments of the world to salute the value of
this exploit, often with considerable reluctance.

The US gains from bumping off Bin Laden

(Extract from the resolution on the international situation.
19th ICC Congress)

These failures of the USA have not discouraged
Washington from pursuing the offensive policy
which has been carried out since the beginning
of the 1990s and which has made it the main fac-
ctor of instability on the world scene. As the resolu-
tion from the last congress put it: “Faced with this
disarray, Obama and his administration will not
be able to avoid continuing the world policies of their predecessors… if Obama has envisaged
a US withdrawal from Iraq, it is in order to re-
fund the involvement in Afghanistan and Paki-
tan.” This was illustrated recently with the ex-
clusion of Bin Laden by an American commando
raid on Pakistani territory. This ‘heroic’ operation
obviously had an elecrical element as we are now
saying a year and a half away from the US elections. In
particular it was aimed at countering the criticism
of the Republicans, who have reproached Obama with being soft in affirming US hegemony on
the military level; these criticisms have been stepped up
during the intervention in Libya where the leadership of the operation was left to the Franco-
British tandem. It also meant that after using Bin
Laden in the role of Bad Guy for nearly ten years it was time to get rid of him in order not to ap-
pear completely impotent. In doing so the USA proved that it is the only power with the military,
technological and logistical means to carry out this
kind of operation, precisely at the time when France and Britain are having difficulty in carry-
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this exploit, often with considerable reluctance.

Explosion at Chevron refinery
Four workers killed

Chevron disaster

On the evening of 2 June there was an explo-
sion at the Chevron refinery in Pembroke
shire in which 4 workers were killed and one seriously
injured. Sky News quoted an unnamed person as saying that this was a “tragic industrial accident”.
It went on to say that the blast was not “thought
to pose any ongoing threat” (from contaminants). They have apparently been safely blown away.
This magical disappearance of contamination is exactly what was reported from the blast at the
same site on 29th October 1999 when Chevron and Total ran the Buncifeeld oil depot that exploded in December 2005, resulting in 40 injuries. These companies were found to have committed 20 serious health and safety breaches at Buncifeeld and
deprived specific safety measures demanded in 2007, these have still not been complied with and, ac-
cording to the HSE, were still being designed and
put in place at the end of 2012. While the law
according to the HSE, were still being designed and
put in place at the end of 2012. While the law

Notes on internationalist anarchism in the UK (part 2)

There are numerous comrades calling themselves anarchists or libertarians who defend proletarian
positions on unions, nationalism, and imperialist
war, and that this includes members of groups or
traditions we would have in the past dismissed as leftist, such as the AF and Solfed. This led to
a re-evaluation on our part, reinforced by our in-
national discussions, and even common work,
with groups like the CNT-AIT in France and
the anarchists of the UK. This was illustrated recently with the ex-
clusion of Bin Laden by an American commando
raid on Pakistani territory. This ‘heroic’ operation
obviously had an elecrical element as we are now
saying a year and a half away from the US elections. In
particular it was aimed at countering the criticism
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19th ICC Congress: The economic crisis reveals the failure of capitalism

We are publishing here the first part of the reso-
lution on the international situation adopted by the
ICC at its 19th Congress, which was held in May.

From the forum discussions respect for the youth, the inability of the communist left to do this etc

“I think one of the problems of the communist
left is that I think a lot of its militants don’t respect
the youth, or rather, they think they do but they
don’t really know how to …”

The young generations have their own pa-
sibilities and a culture which they do not want to
be reduced to ordinary adults who have to carry
out an effort to overcome as well: democrats, eclecti-
icism, immediatism, “worldisflatism,” hipsterism,
and more like Beirut in the 1970s and 1980s. Evi-
dent is the sense of groupness of the people, in the
same way that the US would not hesitate to violate
the UN and NATO, and that this kind of operation, precisely at the time when France and Britain are having difficulty in carry-
ing out their anti-Gaddafi operation, is the only way to
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this exploit, often with considerable reluctance.

Ascendence/Decadence Periodisation
and Colonialism

“... if we view capitalism prior to 1914 as a ‘progressive’ stage in human history, then what
do we think of British colonialism and foreign policy in places like India and China? After all, the
horrors of British imperialism brought these kind of ‘backward’ countries with pre-capitalist social relations kicking and screaming into mod-
ern ‘civilisation’"...

“I think he saw it as progressive because it transformed the labour process into a necessarily
collective process and socialised the productive forces, and it removed the basis for the previous
isolated forms of social life and laid the basis for a communist society based on ‘world-historic’
leadership..." (Marx)

“Marx... hoped that revolution in the advanced
countries would enable countries like Russia to forgo the bourgeois democratic stage and go straight for a reasonable hypothesis at the time, so you are
quite right to say that he was against the idea of mixed economy, that one should go straight
through...”

Join us in our discussions online!

en.internationalism.org
Solidarity with the “indignant” in Spain: The future belongs to the working class!

While the media has been full of Obama’s ‘triplexist’ visit to Europe, or the scandal about Dominique Strauss-Khan, they have not told us much about the real earthquake hitting Europe: a vast social movement which is centred in Spain and has already set off an immediate echo in Greece and threatens to break out in other countries as well.

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, who have attacked the 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 the more you read about that’s lamentable, the more you get 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 DSK, or the travails of Cheryl Cole, 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 ‘indignados’, the ‘indignant’, in Spain has been spreading since the general strike of 29 September 2010 against the planned reform of pensions. This general strike ended in a day of demonstrations that shut down the government and accepted its proposed changes (which involves workers who have been sentenced to up to one year in prison 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 generation, a collective voice 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 Por- tugal, a call-out to a demonstration by the group ‘Precocious Youth’ made up of 5000 young 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 ‘Jovens sin Futuro’ (Young People with no Future). These impecu- nious 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 Jovens sin Futuro group to plan another demo for 15 May in Madrid, but this call was cancelled by Demo- cracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now) appeared in Madrid. Its platform denounces unemployment and the crisis; it presents a claim to be “apolitical”, neither left nor right. Democracy Real Ya also launched an appeal to demonstrate on 15 May. It was in Madrid that the procession had the greatest success, with about 250,000 demonstrators. It was meant to be a moment of such magnitude 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 De- mocracia Real Ya were a spectacular success: they expressed the anger of a whole generation among young people who faced with the problem of unem- ployment at the end of their studies. Everything was to the movement’s benefit, but it called for demon- strations 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 communique denouncing the police violence.

The publication of this communique immediately provoked an indignant reaction and widespread solidarity. What the indignants were also to become known for was the use of social networks to spread out this movement. While the movement of the ‘indignados’ in Spain has sponta- neously re-appropriated a working-class fighting tradition, the ‘indignant’ movement is still more massive urban assemblies have sprung up, re- grouping tens of thousands of people from all the generations and all the non-exploiting layers of society. In these assemblies, everyone can speak out, express their anger, hold debates on different questions, make proposals. In this atmosphere of general ferment, tongues are set free, all aspects of social life are examined (political, cultural, eco- nomic, technical, etc.). And the most remarkable thing is the collective nature of ideas that are discussed in a climate of solidarity and mutual respect. In these assemblies, “I am not a spectator,” declare the particip- takers where anyone can write down their ideas on a piece of paper. The movement organises itself into working committees of intelligent people on all sorts of questions are set up, and care is taken to avoid disguised clashes with the forces of order. Violence within the assemblies is forbid-den and drunkenness banned with the slogan “La Aparición” (the revolution is not a party!) Each day, clean-up teams are organised. Public canteens serve meals, volunteers set up nursing centres, and there are no children. Libraries are put in place as well as a “time bank”, where talks are given on all sorts of themes (politics, culture, economy, ecology), which is called “Days of reflection” doesn’t scare anyone, on the contrary. But this movement is in no way a “Spanish Revolution” as the Democracy Real Ya collec- tives present it. Unemployment, casuistry, 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 unem- ployment, especially among the young, has made its appearance in Madrid as in Cairo, in London or in Paris, as in Athens in Buenos Aires. We are all together in this downward spiral. We are all fac- ing the decomposition of capitalist society, which expresses itself not only in poverty and unemploy- ment, but also in the multiplication of disasters and wars, in the dissolution of social relations and a growing marginalisation (with or without label), especially, among other things, in the growth of sexual ag- gression and violence against women both in the family and public space.

The movement of the “indignados” is not a revolu- tion. It is only a new step in the development of generalised struggles. It is a new, first and 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 “Indepen- dent Republic of Puerto del Sol”, this movement is evidence that the horizons of the current world are already becoming actors on the stage of history. They are precursors of even greater storms that will open the road to the emancipation of humanity.

Through the use of the internet, of social net- works and mobile phones, this young generation
The movement reigneits in Greece

B

anews at protests in Madrid made fun of Greek “protesters” in the face of the austerity attacks they have already suffered and those which are to come. In reality strikes and demonstrations have become commonplace in Greece, but a new wave of “indicative” protests was soon ignited, in Athens and in towns across the country, recounting the Spanish situation. I am not sure if the time of writing this has gone on for more than a week. A web page press was quick to notice that there was something different in the demonstrations. The Greek daily Kathimerini (27/5/11) observed “The absence of political parties, unions, students and environmental activists, an international characteristic that we cannot find in any protest.” In a country with very active unions and political parties this is very significant as there has been no absence of “official” protest from the Left against the ‘socialist’ PASOK government of George Papandreou.

What’s also been different has been the character of the protests, which have often taken the form of assemblies where all points of view have been expressed. The “indignos” in Athens’ Syntagma Square, for example, there was a solid three hours of discussion in which 83 people spoke. Some spoke in terms of democracy and patriotism, but others put forward the importance of the self-organisation of the working class and the need for a General Strike. There were also Greek flags on display at the start of this wave of protests, although the number has clearly increased over time.

Reference with the protests in Spain is that in Greece there has been a wide range of ages involved, far more workers and their families, with a decided lack of young people. This is understandable as the range of attacks on living standards is so extensive. The main stream Kathimerini (27/5/11) states the obvious: “Decisions, it seems, are being taken to satisfy the pressing demands of banks, markets and creditors rather than to safeguard the interests of the proletariat to make even the most patient person indignant.”

The Greek Deputy Prime Minister denounced the movement without an ideology or organisation, which bases itself on only one feeling, that of rage. Against this view Kathimerini (27/5/11) replies “Indignation” may be the badge of someone who is not aware that “at these rallies we see a large part of society come together, most of whom will say that they don’t see any of our politicians as being fit to work in opinion polls and who will opt to abstain from general elections. Their physical presence, even if it is a statement, is authentically political.”

Opposition to the movement has taken many forms. When, for example, protesters prevented MPs leaving parliament (until extra police detachments arrived) the Speaker of the Greek Parliament warned “History has shown that a climate of generalized rejection of parliamentarianism in Greece has had tragic consequences wherever it has been expressed.” In Greek terms, from a PASOK spokesman, such warnings should be taken as references to the Right-wing dictatorships of Pangalos, Kondylis and Metaxas in the 1920s and 30s, regimes which for the first time in the country’s history had the intention to obscure the role of democracy and PASOK in particular at the heart of the repressive Greek capitalist state. But the protests include the main Greek Stalinist party (the KKE) which states (25/5/11) “That a planned people’s struggle is not possible is a fact proven in the past. That the people must not make one that’s objective and materialist. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible. It’s not a question of making one that’s objective and materialist. It’s not a question of making one that’s objective and materialist. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s impossible.”

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 this new dream of humanity to become a reality, the working class, the class which produces all the essentials of wealth, has to realise it. The history of this new society, achieve a truly universal “democracy” and restore dignity to the human species.

Sofiane, 27.5.11

Continued from page 8

90 years after Kronstadt

A tragedy that’s still being debated in the revolutionary movement

The movement, either in the private or public sector, they have the potential to have a real, a bittersome impact, and to reaffirm the determination to carry on with the struggle for a human society which Enzo stood for. ICC 19.5.11

I

It is very painful for us to tell our readers and contacts about the death of our comrade Enzo on Saturday 15 May. Although we knew he was ill, nothing prepared us for such a sudden and tragic end. The news of his death hit everyone like a bolt out of the blue, leaving us stunned and also, with the regret that we were not able to be with him in the last moments of his life.

A number of contacts in Italy knew Enzo and have expressed the same sorrow about his death. They knew him not just as a communist militant but as someone who, in his political activity, in his interventions at public meetings, in discussions, was so well able to express his own pain at the sufferings capitalism inflicts on the human species, often with tears in his eyes. Enzo was a young proletarian who had lived through exploitation, redundancy and unemployment but who was always happy, always smiling, always positive, and above all, always in a position to react, to fight against all this barbarism and build a truly human society. His militant activity in the ICC was always characterized by this conviction and his determination, even in very difficult circumstances, to contribute to this fight. His death is a great loss for the ICC and for the whole working class.

We want convey our deepest solidarity with Enzo’s family, brothers and comrades, and extend our deepest sympathy to them.

We have been unable to debate this question without clarifying our positions on Marxism and anarchism. Each of these two positions has its own important contributions to make to our revolutionary fight. I want to contribute a series of articles to this in the future. We are very appreciative of the interest of comrades in this topic.

Enzo lived his life fighting for the ICC and for the whole working class.
This is the concluding part of a contribution aimed at clarifying the ICC's analysis of the main anarchist groups in Britain.

7) The 1970s have been described as a “period of sonnemorce” for anarchism in Britain. But the upsurge of the national liberation movement and the development of libertarian ideas on various fronts, for example as a radical wing of the CND protests, or as an element in the emergence of “movements” around sexual politics, punk rock and their daily life in general. British anarchism in the late 60s and early 70s also had a brief flirtation with Propaganda by the Deed in the form of the ANW and other groups. Also important was the work of the Solidarity group descended from Socialisme ou Barbarie, and like the left group, which had broken away from Trotskyism. Though closer to counci
tanism, than anarchism, Solidarity’s publications had a big impact on a large section of libertarian audience. In 1963 a new Anarchist Federation of Britain was set up to bring together all the various groups with only a small number of exceptions. In this latter year, Heath (a founding member of the present-day AF) recalls in his essay on the anarchist movement since the 60s (pp 386-387) a series of contradictory tendencies from anarchosyndicalists and communists to individualists, pacificists and ‘lifestyles’. Heath even uses the term “proletarian”. Indeed, in the wake of Stalinism and its ideology of the anti-liberalism and faddism of all kinds in the AF.

8) Under the impact of the international revival of workers’ struggles after May 1968, there was a re
tion against this swamp and various attempts to develop a class struggle libertarian tendency with a more effective form of organisation. The ORA-ACA-LCG days, were distributed to bookshops, with a com
erative programme of the ORA/WA/LCG, had returned from France where they had been living and working and where they had joined the libertarian communist movement. A decision was made to set up the Lib
erationary Anarchist Federation (ORL) which the SWP and rapidly moved in an anar

The next quote is from ‘AF’. The first ten years’ “The Anarchist-Trotskyist camp which emerged in the late 70s meant that there was no anarchist communist organisation, not even a skeletal one, which attempted to act as a first line of defence against the miners strike of 1984-5 as well as to mobilisa
tion like the Stop the City actions of 1984. But in an
tinuous political debate and, two years after the ICC had been expelled from the No War But The War of the People. It must be admitted that the ICC’s own response was often marred by a somewhat sectar

9) In the middle to late 80s, there were two main developments in the organised anarchist move
tion of the ACF. On Class War, Nick Heath’s summary of these developments, from his essay mentioned above, can be quoted in full: “Class War and the ACF were two of the main anarchist groups. The ACF does not believe in the same way as the more commonly used term ‘anarchists’ to describe the followers of libertarian communism. The ACF movement is a network of anarchist groups, which started out as a small group of individuals. The ACF was formed in 1986 after a series of events, including the split in the ANW and the formation of the CWF. It was primarily composed of people who had been involved in the anti-war movement.

10) Given that some of the elements involved in the formation of the AF had been through the route which led from the ORA to the neo-

6. Thus, we have generally defined a parasitic group as one which, for a variety of reasons, has developed a parasitic relationship with other groups. This parasitism is not always conscious, but may result from a lack of clear political direction or a failure to develop a clear political strategy. In other cases, it may be deliberate, with the group seeking to gain power or influence at the expense of other groups. In some cases, the parasitism may be more subtle, with the group attempting to absorb or co-opt other groups rather than actively seeking to dominate them. In all cases, the parasitism can have serious consequences for the development of the movement as a whole.

7. There were exceptions. For example, Marc Chirk of the French communist left maintained a very fraternal relationship with anarchist communists, and his group was certainly internationalist similar, although the French councilists and the Italian social-communist left maintained an open but consistent relationship with anarchism. The Italian faction of the International Social-Communist Federation (CNP), which had been expelled from the No War But The War of the People. It must be admitted that the ICC’s own response was often marred by a somewhat sectar

8. For example, the participation of the London Workers’ Movement in the 1980s and in the “third” incarnation of No War But The War of the People.
Contact the ICC

Debate is vital to the revolutionary movement. One of the most important elements of our activity, defined in our Basic Positions, is the “Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions”. This, we are convinced, is only possible through the confrontation and discussion of differing views and positions within the revolutionary camp.

For this reason, we urge our readers to write to us with their comments, opinions and disagreements on the positions and analyses that we defend in our written press, including our web site. We will do our best to reply to all serious correspondence as quickly as possible, although given our limited resources we may not always be able to do so immediately. Should the subject matter be of general interest, then we may publish both correspondence and our reply in our press.

While debate amongst revolutionaries is vital, it is equally necessary not to fall into the trap of thinking that our activity is something anodyne and acceptable to the bourgeois dictatorship disguised under the trappings of the democratic state. We will not under any circumstances publish our correspondents’ real names, nor their home or e-mail addresses.

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The discussion on the ICC’s French internet forum has been particularly animated and passionate these last few weeks around a tragic event: the bloody crushing of the insurrections at Kronstadt.

Ninety years ago, in 1921, the workers stood up to the Bolshevik Party dictatorship, amongst other things, the restoration of real power to the soviets. The Bolshevik Party then took the terrible decision to repress them.

A participant in this forum debate called Youhou sent us a letter which we warmly welcome and which we publish here below. She makes both the effort to synthesize the different points of view coming out of the posts and to close the debate.

Here, it’s not at all our aim to close the discussion. On the contrary, it seems to us that in the spirit of the comrade, her text is just one stage in the debate.

Finally, we agree with her in the last lines when she says: “Join in this passion; death and internal debate is our best weapon faced with the ideology of the bourgeoisie”.

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Was it an “error” or a tragic “necessity”?

One of the ideas put forward by Jean-Notroux: “The proletariat cannot constitute itself into a class and then, after the revolution, into a dominant class without a teneacious political organisation, within which its tendencies swell and culminate under the influence of bourgeois influences borne by different so-called ‘workers’ institutions, organisations and parties, a struggle which necessarily involves episodes of confrontation and violence”.

Mouhamed, a little more nuanced, explains that the Bolsheviks could not have done otherwise. But on this point, I fully agree with Tibo and Underthegun: the crushing of Kronstadt did not go in the direction of the revolution. This massacre was absolutely necessary and precipitated the defeat of the Russian revolution. Why? These were workers that were killed and massacred and not some white-collar counter-revolutionaries as Trotsky himself conceded: “We waited as long as possible for our Mind comrades, the sailors, to open their eyes and see where the mutiny was leading them”. Communist society cannot be born from fratricidal struggles: such a massacre is not the result of revolutionary tactics. Trotsky himself concedes:

“The Bolsheviks did not make a mistake. Trotsky actually says: “Yes, we have a ‘finally human’ world to build. And that cannot be based on the bodies of workers killed by other workers.””

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

* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are capitalist wars. 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, an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on to produce the Soviet state, the foundation stone of world communism.

* The statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called “socialist states” or “regimes” are nothing but the second stage of the class struggle. They are an attempt to discipline the working class and sabotage its role as a revolutionary force. The various forms of union organisation, whether “official” or “rank and file”, serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its strength.

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

* The class struggle is a way of struggle for the working class. The expression of social relations with no historical 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. Activating secret action through small minorities, it is an inadmissible imposition to class organisation. Terrorism derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

* A so-called “socialist” or “communist” party 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. Communist society is the transformation of the political and cultural domination by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a new society in which all decisions are directed 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”, to “take positions” in the battles, nor to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them; it is to become the vanguard, 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 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 capitalist society.

Our origins

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the heroic role of its vanguard. The various political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the International Communist movement, and in particular the three Internationals (the International Workingman’s Association, 1868-72, the Social International, 1889-1905, and the German, Dutch and Italian Lefts).