



world revolution

It's not just the bankers, it's not just the Tories **The struggle against capitalism is a struggle between classes**

Resistance against the present social order is spreading, from the huge social revolts in Tunisia and Egypt to the movement of the 'indignant' in Spain, to the general strikes and street assemblies in Greece, the demonstrations around housing and poverty in Israel, and the 'Occupy' movements across the USA, now echoed on a smaller scale in the UK. Awareness that this is a global movement is becoming sharper and more widespread.

In Britain, on 9 November, students will again be demonstrating against the government's education policies, and on 30th November up to three million public sector workers will be on strike against attacks on their pensions. For weeks now electricians have been holding noisy demos at building sites in defence of their jobs and conditions and will also be out in force on 9 November.

Not yet a revolution, not yet the 99%

The word 'revolution' is once again in their air, and 'capitalism' is once again being widely identified as the source of poverty, wars and ecological disasters.

This is all to the good. But as the exploited and oppressed majority in Egypt are being made painfully aware, getting rid of a figurehead or a government is not yet a revolution. The military regime that took over from Mubarak continues to imprison, torture and kill those who dare to express their dissatisfaction with the new status quo.

Even the popular slogan of the Occupy movement, 'we are the 99%', is not yet a reality. Despite widespread public sympathy, the Occupy protests have not yet gained the active support of a significant proportion of the '99%'. Millions feel anxious about the uncertain future offered by capitalism, but this very uncertainty also creates an understandable hesitation to take the risks involved in strikes, occupations and demonstrations.

We are only just glimpsing the potential for a real mass movement against capitalism, and it is dangerous to mistake the infant for the fully-grown adult.

But those who have already entered the struggle can also be held back by their own illusions, which the propagandists of the system are only

too eager to reinforce.

Illusions such as:

'It's all the fault of the bankers and/or neoliberalism'

Capitalism is not just the banks, or a 'deregulated' market. Capitalism is a social relation based on the wage system, on the production of commodities for profit, and it functions only on a world wide scale. The economic crisis of capitalism is a result of the fact that this social relation has become obsolete, a blockage on all future advance.

Regulating the banks, bringing in a 'Robin Hood Tax' or extending state control does not uproot the essential capitalist social relation between the exploited and their exploiters, and gives us a false goal to fight for. The unions' call for 'growth' is no better: under capitalism this can only mean the growth of exploitation and environmental destruction, and in any case, today it can only be based on the racking up of huge debts, which has now become a major factor in the deepening of the economic crisis.

'Right wing politicians are our main enemies'

Just as the bankers are the mere agents of capital, so politicians from right to left are instruments of the capitalist state, whose only role is to preserve the capitalist system. Cameron's Tories begin where Labour left off, and Obama, despite all the hype about the 'hope' he represented, continues the Bush administration's imperialist wars and assaults on living standards.

'We need to make parliamentary democracy work better'

If the state is our enemy, demands for its reform are also a diversion. In Spain 'Real Democracy Now' tried to get people to fight for an improved parliamentary list, more control over the selection of MPs etc. But a more radical tendency opposed this, recognising that the general assemblies which were everywhere the organising form of the protests could themselves be the nucleus of a new way of organising social life.

So how can the struggle advance? By recognising and putting into practice certain basics:

That the struggle against capitalism is a struggle between classes: on the one hand the bourgeoisie and its state, which controls the majority of social wealth, and on the other hand the working class, the proletariat – those of us who have nothing to sell but our labour power.

The struggle must therefore spread to those parts of the working class where it is strongest, where it masses in the largest numbers: factories, hospitals, schools, universities, offices, ports, building sites, post offices. The examples are already there: in the strike wave that broke out in Egypt, when 'Tahrir Square came to the factories', and they were forced to dump Mubarak. In Oakland in California where the 'Occupiers' called for a general strike, went to the ports and got the active support of dockers and truckers.

To spread the struggle, we need new organisations: the practice of forming assemblies with elected and mandated delegates is reappearing everywhere because the old organisations are bankrupt: not only parliament and local government, but also the trade unions, which serve only to keep workers divided and to ensure that the class struggle never exceeds the legal limit. To overcome union divisions and keep struggles under the control of the workers, we need assemblies and elected committees in the workplaces as well as on the streets.

To get rid of capitalism, we need revolution: The ruling class maintains its power not only through lies, but also through repression. Class struggle is never 'non-violent'. We have to be prepared right now to defend ourselves from the inevitable violence of the cops, and in the future, to overthrow the state machine by a combination of mass self-organisation and physical force.

The only alternative to capitalism is communism: Not state-controlled exploitation like under the Stalinist regimes, not a return to isolated communes exchanging their goods, but a world wide association of the producers: no wages, no money, no borders, no state!

**International Communist Current,
5/11/11**

November 30: government and unions aim to smother the workers' response

Despite the government claiming that it had made major concessions on pensions, aimed at averting the 'irresponsible' public sector strike on 30 November, the day of action will go ahead and around three million workers from education, the health service, local government and elsewhere will be on strike that day.

The government was criticised by some business leaders and right wing panic papers like *The Daily Mail* for backing down to union pressure. For example, public sector workers over 50 would get more protection for final salary schemes being scrapped elsewhere, and those earning £15,000 a year or less would not have to pay the increased contributions being demanded of others. For the right, all this is grossly unfair on private sector workers and that queer beast, 'the tax payer', who, as always, will have to 'foot the bill'.

These arguments are just attempts to split public

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Political pressures on the Coalition as economy nosedives

In April, in exchanges in the House of Commons Prime Minister David Cameron advised Labour’s Angela Eagle to “*Calm down, dear.*” He told Tory MP Nadine Dorries she was “*frustrated*”. There was the usual debate between the ‘outraged’ and those who thought it was ‘just a bit of fun’, but it wasn’t until October that Cameron felt compelled to apologise. This appeared to stem from the Coalition’s concern about women’s lack of appreciation of its activities.

In September, a leaked government memo outlined a ‘secret plan’ to ‘win back women’ in the face of a collapse in female support, especially in the working class. The polling evidence behind this concern was unsurprising as there are plenty of ways in which women are hit disproportionately by government cuts. According to the Women’s Budget Group report in November 2010 “*the cuts represent an immense reduction in the standard of living and financial independence of millions of women, and a reversal in progress made towards gender equality*”¹.

Furthermore, “*the WBG’s analysis shows that:*

- *the groups that will suffer the greatest reduction in their standard of living due to cuts in public services are lone parents and single pensioners, the majority of whom are women;*
- *lone parents will lose services worth 18.5% and female singles pensioners services worth 12% of their respective incomes;*
- *overall single women will lose services worth 60% more than single men will lose as proportions of their respective incomes, and nearly three times those lost by couples;*
- *the cuts will lead to hundreds of thousands of women losing their job. 53% of the jobs in the public sector services that have not been protected from the cuts are held by women and the pay and conditions of employment of all public sector workers, 65% of whom are women, are likely to deteriorate;*
- *cuts in welfare spending fall disproportionately on the finances of women. Child Benefit is paid almost 100% to women; while 53% of Housing Benefit claimants are single women. Both benefits have been cut significantly in real terms and eligibility has been tightened.*”²

Moreover, women often have the responsibility for family budgets and day-to-day household spending and are arguably directly confronted with the continuing rise in the cost of living. They are also more likely to be direct carers for children, the elderly and the infirm and see the impact

1. http://www.wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports_4_1653541019.pdf
2. *ibid*

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sector workers – who will only get adequate pensions if they work for around 40 years and who will be paying a huge slice of their wages towards their retirement fund – from those in the private sector, who have been even more screwed but whose interests lie not in attacking public sector workers but in fighting alongside them for better conditions all round.

Given the huge dissatisfaction among workers over the pension issue – because whichever way you paint it, all of us are being asked to work longer, pay more, and get less – the unions have been obliged to take up this issue and were in no position to abandon plans to strike on 30 November. The ‘sell-out’ would have been too obvious.

But does this mean that the government was genuinely scared by the prospect of three million workers having a day off? Hardly: giving tens of thousands a lot more ‘days off’ through unemployment doesn’t scare them a bit. And, being less stupid than *The Daily Mail* assumes its readers to be, serious politicians know that the unions are responsible servants of the national interest and can be trusted with the job of ensuring that the ‘biggest strike since 1926’ remains a purely symbolic affair like the ones on 26 March and 30 June.

What we have here is a classic division of labour between government and unions. The real differ-

in terms of cuts to health and social services.

In October the leader of the Women’s Institute said the Coalition wasn’t listening to women: “*she criticised Mr Cameron’s male-dominated Cabinet, the Coalition’s ‘chilling’ decision to cut legal aid in divorce cases and to scrap an organisation that represents women in Whitehall*”³.

So, it’s clear why the government has experienced a desertion of female support. Its overall polling position is holding up surprisingly well, but the bourgeoisie wants to be confident that it can manipulate election results according to its requirements.

Credit where credit’s due

During this year’s Conservative Party conference, the Coalition’s economic policy came under scrutiny. Osborne’s speeches were raked over for any sign of a ‘Plan B’ to deal with the slowdown in the economy. In particular, the proposal for the Treasury to buy bonds issued by private companies, referred to as ‘credit easing’ by Osborne, was seen as a tacit admission that the current economic policy mix is not working as it should.

If ‘credit easing’ was given a ‘let’s wait and see’ response by the press, the same could not be said of David Cameron’s pre-released speech where he said that responding to the debt crisis needed “*households - all of us - paying off the credit card and store card bills*”. Critics ranging from the British Retail Consortium to the Institute for Public Policy Research lined up to ridicule the idea, saying that it would lead to a reduction in consumer spending and exacerbate the drag on growth.

The phone hacking scandal

In the WR 348 we presented a detailed analysis of the scandal around the issue of phone hacking in News International. It is worth recalling the pressure that was put on Cameron over his links with the Murdoch empire and the factional struggles behind the scandal. We described Cameron as “*being one of the slowest to recognise Murdoch’s increasingly destabilising and divisive role, which is why, to bring him to heel, his links to Murdoch were highlighted more than any other politician’s*”⁴. We concluded by saying that the campaign had succeeded in its primary

3. Daily Telegraph, 21/10/11 - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/8842544/Women-are-being-ignored-by-the-Coalition-says-Womens-Institute-head.html>
4. Murdoch scandal: The lies of the rich and famous, WR347 - <http://www.en.internationalism.org/wr/347/ni-murdoch-scandal>

ences that exist between them are secondary to their shared interest: finding an austerity package that both can agree to and sell to the workers, and ensuring that workers’ anger is channelled into the legally acceptable forms of ‘struggle’.

But despite the considerable difficulties facing all workers considering going into struggle today – the threat of lost income or the sack, the weight of past defeats, the inexperience of many sectors and generations of workers who have not been on strike before – there is always the danger that things will not turn out quite how the ‘official representatives’ of labour have planned. It’s worth noting, for example, that the unions are not envisaging ‘one big march’ in London this time round, perhaps because the two previous examples were so evidently felt by many workers to be no more than a passive stroll culminating in dull celebrity speeches. Unions will hope that any local demonstrations or actions will be just as passive, but they could also provide workers from different local workplaces with a better opportunity to come together across sectional divisions and discuss seriously how to take the struggle forward after the ‘great day’. But that will depend on our willingness to challenge old habits and begin taking things into our own hands. **Amos 5/11/11**

objective: “*Murdoch’s spell over UK political life is broken and rifts in the British bourgeoisie temporarily papered-over with PM Cameron finally disciplined*”⁵.

Downfall of Fox

In October Liam Fox finally resigned his position as Secretary of State for Defence after a brutal media campaign focussing on his relationship with Adam Werritty. It has emerged that Werritty and Fox were the primary forces behind the Atlantic Bridge, a charity promoting close co-operation between the UK and America. This ‘charity’ had already been criticised by the Charity Commission and had been wound up in September 2011. Senior members of the current cabinet (including Hague, Osborne and Gove) had also been involved with this organisation although none seem to have had the tangle between their political and personal lives that Fox had with Werritty.

Fox’s downfall is officially attributed to the blurred nature of Werritty’s role and the inappropriate access he was given. The web of business and political connections was complex, but the most significant aspect of his activity seems to be his connections with the Eurosceptic right-wing in Britain, and also conservative forces in the US.

Revolt of backbenchers

On 24 October there was the largest ever Conservative Party rebellion on Europe. The Commons was voting on the question of whether there should be a referendum on Britain’s role in Europe. The official position of all the major political parties was ‘No’ but this didn’t prevent 81 Tory rebels from voting ‘Yes’. Junior members of

5. *ibid*

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Nuclear energy, capitalism and communism

In contrast Marx had a strong concern for nature, both at the theoretical level of the relationship between humanity and nature as we have already seen, and at the practical level where he wrote about the danger of the exhaustion of soils by capitalist farming and about the impact of industrialisation on the health of the working class: “*Moreover, all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility...Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the labourer.*”²³

We cannot set out the ‘energy policy’ of communism in advance but starting from the fundamental fact that production will be for human need rather than profit we can predict that the pattern of energy use will change significantly and can set out some aspects of this:

- we can anticipate a vast reduction in the production of unnecessary commodities and in the transportation of other commodities whose only purpose is to increase the profits of the capitalists;²⁴
- similarly there may be a reduction in unnecessary travel to and from places of work as communities take on more human proportions, as the boundary between work and non-work activities blur, as the divorce between town and country is overcome;
- creativity and intellect will be devoted to meeting human needs so we can anticipate significant developments in energy sources,²⁵ es-

23. Marx, *Capital* Vol. I, Chapter XV Machinery and modern industry”, Section 10, “Modern industry and agriculture.”
24. See “The world on the eve of an environmental catastrophe” in *International Review* no. 139 for examples of this.
25. See: Makhijani, A. 2007, *Carbon-Free and Nuclear-Free: A Roadmap for U.S. Energy Policy* for a summary of alternative sources of energy.

the government either resigned or were sacked. 19 Labour MPs joined the revolt and even one Lib-Dem MP joined in.

Most of the MPs obeyed the diktat issued by their parties and the No vote was carried comfortably but it was clear that, particularly among the Tories, obedience was reluctant at best.

No escape from the crisis

We can see from this survey that some elements of the ruling class have differences with the current administration. On one question, the economic crisis, the whole ruling class is united. The need to reduce the state’s debt, slash the welfare budget and push through a sustained attack on working class living conditions is agreed by all.

The Murdoch, Fox and Eurorebellion episodes are the public face of the battle within the British ruling class over foreign policy that has been going on for decades. The elimination of Fox and the implicit threat to expose even more of Cameron’s dealings with the Murdoch empire can be seen as a warning to the Cameron clique. However, one of the benefits of the Coalition with the Liberal Democrats is that it means that Cameron can’t be held hostage by the right wing in the way John Major’s government was.

Most of the bourgeoisie still has confidence in current political arrangements. It recognises that an attempt to unseat the Coalition is unnecessary and would unleash instability at a dangerous juncture for the economy. The most important pressure on the political apparatus of the bourgeoisie comes from the deepening economic crisis, and there is nothing it can do to avoid that. **Ishamael 29/10/11**

pecially renewables, as well as in the design of means of production, transport and other equipment and machinery to make them more energy efficient and long-lasting;

Since a communist society will have a concern for the long term this implies vastly reducing the use of non-renewable sources of energy so that they remain available for future generations. It should be noted that even the uranium required by nuclear power is a non-renewable resource so it does not break the reliance on finite resources. This implies that renewable energy will be fundamental to communist society, but because the creativity and intelligence of humanity will be freed from its current shackles this does not imply a return to the privations of previous organic economies.

Communism and nuclear energy

It is not for us to dictate to the future the decisions it will take on this question. But the above implies a significant reduction in the use of energy and changes in the forms of energy informed by increased scientific understanding. The potential dangers of nuclear power and the fact that spent fuel and contaminated waste remains a risk for hundreds of thousands of years suggest that nuclear power may not have a place in a society that is concerned with the common good of this generation, of future generations and of the planet that we all depend on.

In contrast, capitalism today is stepping back from the pretence to be ‘green’. Green energy today is largely peripheral, although may expand if it is economic to do so. However, the way that capitalism uses all sources of energy exposes humanity to dangers because the threat it poses does not spring from this or that policy and element of production but from the laws that govern capitalism and from the historic legacy of societies based on exploitation. **North 19/06/11**

Electricians: solidarity across industries is the key

There is no doubting the level of the attack on electricians’ jobs, pay and conditions involved in ending the Joint Industry Board agreement, which will lead to cuts of up to 35% and many jobs reclassified as semi-skilled or unskilled. Go to any of their weekly protests outside various construction sites, or read their discussion forums, and you’ll hear just how disastrous it would be for workers already doing long hours of overtime in order to be able to afford house, car and necessities. “*Think we can kiss good bye to our houses cars family life etc.*”, “*there will be no holidays or football or trips to the pub anymore. It will be a struggle to put new shoes on the childrens feet every few months*” (<http://www.electriciansforums.co.uk>).

When 8 big electrical contractors on construction projects announced they planned to pull out of the JIB and impose worse conditions, with Balfour Beatty sending out 90 day notices to their employees to accept a change of contract, there was a deafening silence from the union, Unite. Workers’ indignation was obvious: “*I reckon that the Unions are up to their eyeballs in this as well*”, “*the unions have been very quiet on this ... it stinks a bit*” (posts on 30.7.11).

Difficulty of developing a struggle

Ask about the fightback, and workers have often been exasperated that nothing seems to be happening, Unite has been delaying everything, and some fear that other sparks will not have the stomach for a struggle. Early morning protest meetings of 3-400 workers outside construction sites, the effort to persuade the workers on the need to join the struggle, and the opportunity for discussion and temporary blockades of the site entrances, every week for 3 months are not insignificant, but electricians have no illusion that this will push back the attack.

Electricians clearly face important difficulties in developing their struggle. To go into struggle today, in the face of an economic crisis with high unemployment, wages in general frozen or falling with inflation eating away at living standards takes courage for workers in any industry. In construction, with its traditions of subcontracting, creating divisions between directly employed and subcontractors, as well as blacklisting of militant workers, there are particular difficulties. It’s been important to think about the experience of struggles in the 1970s and 80s: “*I spent a year of my life at your age fighting a strike that was doomed, and you are going the same way. Hardship you don’t know the meaning of it son, I have seen men cry that they could not feed their kids and worrying how they would survive ... We fought our fight and we lost ...*”, “*What the 70s & 80s had was membership who were prepared to accept the majority vote or show of hands, and walk, but even then not everyone showed at the picket line, and never an official of the union was seen on picket lines I stood on anywhere in the land !! ... Also if the fitters or the welders walked so did we, and vice versa!*” To develop today’s struggle past defeats need to be confronted and the lessons drawn, as well as returning to positive experiences of what working class struggle means. The long strike, confined to one industry, was indeed a trap leading to bitter defeats like that of the miners in 1984 or the printers at Wapping. These were occasions when everyone did not walk out together, and even when different sectors were struggling at the same time – in ’84 both dockers and car workers struck while the miners were out – they did not succeed in linking up.

Developing solidarity

Unofficial action started in the summer when the attack was announced and has continued with the early morning protests outside construction sites run by BESNA employers (those wanting to leave the JIB agreement) particularly in London, Manchester and Newcastle. These have provided a focus for workers to get together and discuss the struggle, with an open mike and workers listening to what is said. Workers in other industries, retired or students, and some anti-capitalist protesters have been able to come and show their solidarity – when a group from Occupy London turned

up with a banner they had made they got a cheer. They are an opportunity for those convinced of the need to struggle to discuss with and persuade others to join them, often with success. In London the protests have often marched from one site to another – such as from Blackfriars to Cannon Street. And several of those who have refused to cross into work have been victimised. They are also the occasion for a temporary blockade of the entrance.

But whose solidarity? For Unite, we need to lobby parliament, to seek the solidarity of the great and the good against “*rogue employers*” (Unite leaflet for 9th November demonstration). And indeed Jeremy Corbyn turned up to Blackfriars on 12th October to tell us about an early day motion. Are we seriously expected to believe that in the middle of an economic crisis, with workers in the public sector – including the NHS and education – facing attacks, that this is just a question of rogue employers who need to be reined in by the government?

Unite are not unaware of the push for solidarity, but their method is to wheel out the PCS deputy general secretary, Chris Baugh, to assure workers of his union’s solidarity and propose public and private sector both take action on 30th November. Yet neither Unite nor the PCS, nor any other union, has done anything to overcome the media black-out of the attack or the struggle. What do public sector workers know of the attack on electricians or their efforts to fightback? Workers need to get together now and build links without the mediation of union leaders and their hollow speeches that can, and are likely designed to, make it seem that someone else can do it for them.

For *Siteworker*, which describes itself as a paper for site workers and trade unionists, it is clear it is not just 7 or 8 rogue employers: “*We would be naïve if we were not aware that the giant general construction companies, who run and absolutely control the industry, must have given their approval to this breakaway group...*” and therefore “*we can only succeed with other trades and occupations reinforcing our ranks and standing alongside us in working class industrial solidarity, in a union or not, in common cause and purpose.*” Understanding the need for workers to unite across such divisions is vital for the development of struggle, although this is seen in terms of uniting workers in the construction industry while the whole working class is under attack and needs to strike back together. And the way they see to unite those in a union with those who are not is to support union recruitment – despite their observation that Unite has largely been conspicuous by its absence from the efforts to struggle so far.

A *Siteworker* update special, noting that early morning meetings are not enough, proposed “*Stopping production is what will bring the big firms to the negotiation table*” but until then the blockades must continue – their jibelectrician.blogspot.com site notes how much various firms have lost through the disruption of these blockades. Meanwhile, after 3 months of regular protests, Unite is just starting to ballot for industrial action – but only electricians at Balfour Beatty, widely seen as the bosses’ ringleader. Yet another division is being set up between those workers called into struggle and the rest. Striking to ‘force’ employers to negotiate with the union leaders is like demanding that the bosses sit down with another set of bosses, or the government, and expecting that you can get anything but another sell out “*as has happened in the past*” (*Siteworker*).

However strong the illusions remaining in Unite, or at least in its methods of struggle, the sparks have shown a real militancy and determination. This has been demonstrated in the effort to discuss in the protest meetings, the effort to convince other workers, and the attempts to seek solidarity within and beyond the construction industry – calls to join protests by students and public sector workers, welcoming other workers showing solidarity, and on 19th October making contact with Occupy at St Pauls. It is only the solidarity of the rest of the working class, and not MPs or union bureaucrats, that will scare the bosses into withdrawing any of their attacks. **Alex 5/11/11**

Working class living standards Decades of decline

“*It can surely never be a good thing for living standards to be falling in the way they are. Of course not, but if the relatively high level that living standards reached in the run up to the crisis was unsustainable, then the present adjustment, painful though it undoubtedly is for many households, was both inevitable and necessary, the latter because it helps to make the UK a competitive economy once more.*”¹

One of the enduring themes of the ruling class is the idea that the current crisis is the result of a credit-fuelled consumerism. Supposedly the working has run up a credit card bill with high living during the boom and now we have to tighten our belts in order to pay for it.

The ‘boom’ than never was

As with all the best lies this contains elements of truth. Credit certainly did expand at an unsustainable rate at all levels of the economy and the ultimate crash came about because this enormous accumulation of fictitious capital could no longer be valorised. The insane propagation of credit was actually a conscious policy of the bourgeoisie and the latest in a long line of attempts to overcome the chronic stagnation that has dominated the economic picture since the 70s.

But the really insidious lie is that the working class enjoyed some sort of renaissance during the ‘boom’. In fact, average yearly growth in the UK during the period from 1992-2008 was 2.68% with peak growth far lower than in previous decades. This is marginally smaller than the average 2.9% achieved in the post-war boom, where Britain significantly lagged behind its rivals. The idea of an “unsustainable” boom is therefore at odds with the evidence which suggests a more moderate expansion. The so-called ‘credit boom’ was thus nothing more than a boom in credit expansion – and in spite of this enormous credit injection, the actual economy itself grew only modestly.

A ‘consumer boom’ without prosperity

If actual economic growth didn’t exactly match up to the idea of a boom, what about the situation of the working class? In the year 2000, 4.5 million workers aged 22+ subsisted on less than £7 per hour (in 2010 £s)², around 40% of workers in that age group. By 2010, the number was 3.5 million or 32%. On the face of things, the number of workers on low pay as defined by hourly rate has declined quite strongly, although 32% of the workforce living on very low wages is still a surprising statistic for a supposed boom.

The rise of part-time working partially obscures a reality behind the headline figures of slightly declining wages. The number of involuntary part-time and involuntary temporary workers (i.e. people who worked in those conditions because they couldn’t find a full-time and/or permanent job) peaked in 1994 at around 846,000 and 650,000 respectively. Involuntary part-timers reached their lowest number (around 550,000) in 2004 before beginning to rise again. Involuntary temps fared somewhat better, remaining just below 400,000 before beginning to rise again in 2009. By the beginning of 2010, involuntary part-timers had reached a new peak of over a million. Involuntary temps have yet to reach the previous peak but there are still roughly 500,000 of them and the trend is upwards³.

The figures above suggest perhaps mild improvements, at least for those in work, at least until the recession hit. But the indicators covering the broader impact of poverty paint a more depressing picture. In 1992, the number of people living on low income (at 60% or less than the median wage - the point in the income scale where half the population get more, the other half get less) peaked at roughly 14.5 million. This dipped slightly the following year and followed a slow downward trend finally reaching its lowest point

1. Why the squeeze in living standards is very welcome, Telegraph, 11/10/11 - <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jeremywarner/100012523/why-the-squeeze-in-living-standards-is-very-welcome/>
2. The Poverty Site - <http://www.poverty.org.uk/51/index.shtml?2>
3. Trends in Part-time and Temporary Work, Institute of Public Policy Research

in 2004/05 at just below 12 million. Since then the figure has been rising. However, those receiving less than 40% of the median wage never dropped below 4 million and their numbers have slowly and consistently grown⁴.

Even worse, “*Median wages in the UK were stagnant from 2003 to 2008 despite GDP growth of 11 per cent in the period. Similar trends are evident in other advanced economies from the US to Germany. For some time, the pay of those in the bottom half of the earnings distribution has failed to track the path of headline economic growth.*”⁵

The share of value generated in the economy that goes to workers has fallen considerably over the past few decades: “*In 1977, of every £100 of value generated by the UK economy, £16 went to the bottom half of workers in wages; by 2010 that figure had fallen to £12, a 26 per cent decline*”⁶. Contrastingly, “*£39 went to the top half of workers ... and £39 went to businesses and owners in the form of profits*”.

The situation today

Unemployment has (according to the official figures) reached a 17 year high, standing at 2.57 million or 8.1%. The number actually receiving benefits is 1.6 million. In 2008/9 (the most recent data) 13.5 million were living below the poverty line with the figure forecast to increase with what the IFS is calling the “*largest three-year fall in median income since 1974-77*”⁷.

Inflation has reached 5.2% on the CPI measure, 5.6% on RPI. But the headline figures don’t appreciate the impact that inflation has on the poorest, for whom the rise in the actual cost of living is considerably higher. One report demonstrated that in 2008/9, the inflation for the bottom fifth was 4.3% compared to an overall RPI figure of 2.4%⁸.

The working class has experienced a permanent recession

In conclusion, the so-called ‘boom’ had a minimal impact on the actual living conditions of the working class. The numbers in overall poverty occasionally fell by a small margin and the numbers right at the bottom actually rose. While the numbers of those on low wages moderated slightly, median income was stagnant again showing the overall wage pressure on the majority of the working class. What little improvement has been seen is due to be wiped away by the new plunge into crisis.

If the last decade seemed like a boom for the ruling class and their press that’s because their share of social wealth increased enormously. The “unsustainable” rise in living standards, so lamented by the ruling class, consisted of a slight reduction in absolute penury. The lowest number of people in poverty since 1990 was 12 million in 2004/5. To put this number in perspective it is worth recalling that in 1982, at the end of a brutal recession, the number of people in poverty by the same measure was a mere 8 million. For the working class and particularly its most impoverished members, the period of the so-called boom has been worse in terms of living conditions than the recessions of previous periods!

The ‘boom that never was’, along with its supposedly “unsustainable” living standards it provided, is an utter illusion. It should be seen rather as the feeble sputtering of the dying fire of capitalism, paid for by the wholesale exploitation and degradation of millions of working class people. Any future ‘recovery’ - itself looking more unlikely by the day - will see no relief for the working class. **Ishamael 5/11/11**

4. Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2010, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
5. Missing Out: Why Ordinary Workers Are Experiencing Growth Without Gain, The Resolution Foundation, July 2011
6. *ibid*
7. UK seeing a big rise in poverty, says IFS, BBC News Online, 11/10/11, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15242103>
8. Inflation ‘is higher for the poor than for the rich’, BBC News Online, 14/6/11, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-13757680>

Occupy Wall Street protests: the capitalist system itself is the enemy

Readers have undoubtedly been following the events surrounding the OCCUPY WALL STREET (OWS) movement. Since mid-September, thousands of protestors have occupied Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan, just blocks from Wall Street. Protests have now spread to hundreds of cities around North America. Tens of thousands have taken part in occupations, demonstrations and general assemblies that have shown levels of self-organization and direct participation in political activity unseen in the US for many decades. The exploited and angry population has raised its voice, shown its indignation against the ills of capitalism. The international impact of OWS across the world should not be underestimated: protests have taken place in the most important centre of world capitalism, raising slogans and frustrations that echo those raised throughout Europe and North Africa.

However, the future of the movement seems uncertain. While many protestors vow to continue their occupations indefinitely, it is becoming increasingly clear that the movement’s initial spontaneous energy is in reflux, as its hallmark general assemblies (GAs) are transformed more and more into a passive echo chamber of the “working-groups” and “committees,” many of which appear to be dominated by professional activists, leftists, etc. The situation remains fluid, but we think it has reached a certain level of development that we can now attempt to make a preliminary assessment of its meaning and identify some of its strengths and weaknesses.

The ICC has been able to participate in these events in New York, where several militants and close sympathizers have made a number of trips to Zuccotti Park to speak with occupiers and participate in the GAs. ICC sympathizers elsewhere have sent us reports on their experiences in these movements in their cities. A vibrant discussion has also started on our website’s discussion forum¹. This article is a contribution to this debate and we welcome our readers to join in the discussion.

How to respond to capitalism’s attacks? The struggle to find the class terrain

First we must recognize that the current occupation movement grows from the same source as all the massive social revolts we have witnessed over the course of 2011: from the movements in Tunisia and Egypt to the emergence of the *indignados* in Spain, the occupations in Israel and the mobilizations against austerity and union-busting in Wisconsin and other states, the frustration and desperation of the working class - in particular the younger generations hit hard by unemployment².

Thus we see a direct continuity between OWS and the growing willingness of the working-class to fight back against capitalism’s attacks on an international level. OWS is clearly not a bourgeois campaign to derail and co-opt the class struggle. On the contrary, it is the latest in a series of movements, largely organized through the internet and social media - outside the unions and official political parties - through which the working class is seeking to respond to the massive attacks being unleashed against it in the wake of capitalism’s historic crisis. The movement is thus to be welcomed as a sign that the proletariat in North America has not been completely defeated and is unwilling to suffer capitalism’s attacks indefinitely. Nevertheless, we must also recognize that there are different tendencies at work in the movement, that a combat is taking place between different wings. The dominant tendencies have a strongly reformist outlook, the more proletarian tendencies are having a very difficult time locating the class terrain of its struggle.

In defence of the sovereignty of the General Assemblies

Perhaps the most positive aspect of the OWS protests has been the emergence of the General Assemblies (GA) as the movement’s sovereign organs. That represents an advance over the mo-

bilization in Wisconsin, which despite its initial spontaneity, was quickly taken over by the organizational apparatus of the unions and the left of the Democratic Party³. The emergence of the GAs in OWS represents continuity with the movements in Spain, France and elsewhere, and stands as marked evidence of the capacity of the working class to take control of its struggles and learn from events in other parts of the globe. Indeed, the internationalization of the GAs as a form of struggle is one of the most impressive features of the current phase of the class struggle. The GAs are, above all else, an attempt by the working class to defend its autonomy by involving the entire movement in the decision making process and ensuring the widest and broadest possible discussion with the class.

However, despite their importance in this movement, it is clear that the GAs in OWS have not been able to function without considerable distortion and manipulation from the professional activists and leftists who have largely controlled the various working-groups and committees that are supposed to be nominally responsible to the GAs. This weight has contributed to a severe difficulty for the movement in maintaining an open discussion and has worked to prevent it from opening a discussion of extending itself beyond the occupations to reach out to the working class as a whole. The 15M movement in Spain has also encountered similar problems⁴.

Early in the occupation, in response to persistent calls from the media for the movement to identify its goals and demands, a press committee was formed for the purpose of publishing an OCCUPY WALL STREET journal. One of our comrades was present at the GA when the first issue of this journal - which had already been produced and disseminated to the media by the press committee - was taken up. The predominant sentiment of the GA was one of outrage that a journal had been produced and disseminated to the media with content that did not reflect the consensus view of the movement, but seemed to reflect one particular political point of view. A decision was made to remove the person responsible for the production and dissemination of the journal from the press committee. This action represented the power of the GA to assert its sovereignty over the committees and the working groups. An embryonic expression of the “right of immediate recall,” the offending member of the press committee was promptly removed for exceeding his mandate.

However, at a GA several weeks later—on the eve of Mayor Bloomberg’s threatened eviction of the occupiers from Zuccotti Park—our comrade found a remarkably different atmosphere. With the eviction looming, the GA was virtually devoid of meaningful discussion. The majority of the GA was taken up by reports from the working-groups and committees without discussion. The only discussion that was permitted by the GA facilitators was regarding a proposal by the Manhattan borough President to limit the performance of movement drummers to two hours a day. This GA never broached the issue of the future of the movement. It did not even consider the question of how to develop a strategy and formulate tactics for extending the movement beyond its current limitations and almost certain demise in Zuccotti Park.

At this GA, one of our comrades attempted to propose that the occupiers look to the future by reaching out beyond the park’s boundaries to the working class of the city, where they were likely to receive a warm reception. Our comrade was told that the intervention was not on the topic of the proposal to limit drumming and that the time limit for interventions (arbitrarily set by the facilitators at one minute) had been exceeded. Another proposal was made by a participant to form a delegation to speak about the movement to students at several area colleges and universities. Her propos-

al was also rejected, with many protestors indicating that they had no desire to spread the movement and that if the students wanted to support the occupation, they should come to Zuccotti Park.

How, then, can we explain the tendency for the working groups, committees and facilitators to progressively assert control over the movement as time passed?

The danger of Anti-Politics

The OWS movement has been characterized from the start by a certain ‘anti-political’ spirit that has served to deaden discussion, prevent the polarization of conflicting ideas and the development of class demands. This has made it possible for leftists, political celebrities and politicians of all stripes to step in and speak for the movement, and allowed the media to present the OWS movement as the early stages of a “Left-Wing Tea Party”⁵.

OWS’s almost militant refusal to take up the question of goals and demands, which we think represents a general reluctance to consider the question of power, presents something of a conundrum for revolutionaries. How do we understand this phenomenon, which has also been present in other movements? As far as OWS is concerned, we think it flows in large measure from the following factors.

The continued weight of the bourgeoisie’s ideological campaigns around the death of communism

While it is true that the main social force behind these movements appears to be the younger generation of workers, many of whom were born after the collapse of Stalinism in 1989, there remains a genuine fear in the working class to take up the question of communism. While Marx may be in the process of rehabilitation in terms of his critique of capitalism, there is still a great fear of being associated with a system that many continue to believe, “has already been tried and failed” and which runs counter to the goal of establishing “true democracy”. While it is possible to see many signs and slogans at these occupations quoting Marx to the effect that capitalism has become unworkable, there remains total confusion regarding what can replace it. On the other hand, the longer term perspective is for the weight of the ‘nightmares of the past’ to weaken and pose less of a barrier to those searching for the genuine content of communism, for a new rethinking of the future of society to flourish.

The predominance of the young generation

By and large these movements are animated by the younger generation of workers. Although older workers affected by the massive destruction of jobs that has occurred in the U.S. since 2008 are also present in the movements, sociologically the driving force of these protests are workers in their 20s and 30s. Most are well-educated, but many have never held a steady, secure job in their lives. They are among the most deeply affected by the massive long-term unemployment that now haunts the U.S. economy. Few have the experience of the shop floor in anything other than a tenuous way. Their identities are not rooted to the work-place or their job category. While these sociological qualities likely make them more open to an abstract broad solidarity, they also mean that most lack the experience of struggles defending living and working conditions through the formation of specific demands and goals. Having been largely exiled from the production process, they have little concrete left to defend other than their dignity as human beings! The necessity of developing specific demands and goals is thus not so apparent. In a world where no real future can be seen, it is not surprising that the younger generation have difficulty thinking concretely about how to develop the struggle for the future. Thus, the movement becomes trapped in a celebration of the process, of the occupations themselves, as the occupation site becomes a community, and in some cases, even Obama Presidency.

a home⁶. Another aspect that can’t be ignored is the weight of post-modernist political discourse, particularly on those who have been through the US university system, which instils a mistrust and rejection of ‘traditional’ class politics.

That being said, we shouldn’t ‘expect the infant to be a man’. The mere existence of general assemblies is a victory in itself, and they provide excellent schools where the young can develop their experience and learn how to combat the forces of the bourgeois left. All this is vital for the struggles to come.

The specifically American context

OWS remains stubbornly trapped in the context of U.S. politics and history. There is often little mention of the international roots of the crisis and social movements in other countries. The predominant belief of the movement continues to be that the immense problems facing the world can all in one form or another be traced back to unethical behaviour by bankers on Wall Street, aided and abetted by the U.S. political parties. The stripping of regulations governing the interaction of commercial and investment banks, the unscrupulous running up of a real estate bubble, the growing influence of corporate campaign money on the U.S. state, the immense gap between the richest one percent of the population and the rest, the fact that Wall Street sits on billions of dollars of surplus cash that it refuses to reinvest in the American economy, remain the movement’s chief grievances. Moreover, the identification of the main problem as “unregulated financial capital” has served to maintain illusions in the ultimately altruistic nature of U.S. bourgeois state.

Clearly, the OWS movement’s anti-political ethic has served to hamper it from going beyond the level of the process itself and in the end has only served to reproduce the kind of political domination that it rightly feared. This should serve as a powerful lesson for future movements. While the movement is right to be sceptical of all those that would seek to speak for it, the working class cannot shy away from open discussion and confrontation of ideas. The process of polarization, of working out concrete goals and demands—as difficult as it is—cannot be avoided, if the movement is to advance. In the end, a movement dominated by an extreme eclecticism of ideas “all demands are equally valid” will ensure that only those demands that are acceptable to the bourgeoisie will advance. The goals of re-regulating capitalism, of taxing the rich and breaking the stranglehold of corporate money on the electoral process are actually goals shared by many factions of the U.S. bourgeoisie! Is it not a little coincidental that Obama wants to pay for his jobs plan with a surtax on millionaires? There is a strong risk that the main factions of the bourgeoisie could steer this movement in a direction that serves their own interests in its factional fights with a resurgent right-wing. However, in the final analysis the bourgeoisie’s complete inability to solve its mortal crisis will see the illusions in ‘American Dream’ smashed, replaced by the nightmare of existence under capitalism.

Only the working class offers humanity a future

For all its weaknesses, we must recognize the profound lessons that the OWS protests hold for the further development of the class struggle. The emergence of GAs—probably for the first time in decades on North American soil—represent a major step forward for the working class as it seeks to develop its struggle beyond the bounds of the unions and bourgeois left. However, we must argue that a movement that falls in on itself rather than seek extension to the class as a whole is doomed to failure, whether that failure comes as a result of repression, demoralization or eventual co-optation behind the campaigns of the bourgeois left. At the current juncture of the class struggle we face a situation where the sectors of the working class with the least experience of collective labour

6. Over the last several weeks, the media has reported on several cases of young people who quit low-paying jobs or dropped out of school to participate in the occupations.

Continued on page 5

1. See the thread on our forum at <http://en.internationalism.org/forum>
2. <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2011/september/indignados>

3. Although in contrast to Wisconsin, where for a moment the spectre of a general strike across the state was raised, OWS represents a much less “massive” mobilization, characterized as it is by a core group of protestors and those who stop by to participate on an irregular basis.

4. See our article ‘Real Democracy Now!’: A dictatorship against the mass assemblies, <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2011/special-report-15M-spain/real-democracy-now>

5. See Peter Beinhardt, “Occupy Protests’ Seismic Effects” for a statement of how the bourgeois left thinks OWS could be of use as a grassroots adjunct to the Obama Presidency.

Occupy London: the weight of illusions

“Occupy London stands together with occupations all over the world; we are the 99%. We are a peaceful non-hierarchical forum. We’re in agreement that the current system is undemocratic and unjust. We need alternatives; you are invited to join us in debate and developing them; to create a better future for everyone.”

This is the statement which greets you upon finding the Occupy London website (occupylsx.org). It’s certainly true that there have been occupation movements all over the world, with actions springing up in over a hundred cities in the USA, starting with the Occupy Wall Street movement, and in places throughout Europe (Frankfurt and Glasgow, to name but two). The general format has been the occupation of a public space followed by discussions, protests and joint actions.

That the people taking part in the occupations have genuine concerns about the state of the world, the economy and political action is beyond dispute. A comrade of WR recently visited both occupied sites: *“I visited Finsbury Square where I spoke to two young women, one unemployed and one working. One of them described their reasons for being there as being at some level unhappy with the current state of things.”* The occupations provide something that is not in very great supply in Britain – a public space where people are free to come and discuss in general assemblies in an effort to try and understand the current situation of the world. The people at the occupations have come from different parts of the country, as well as from other countries. Some are actually working whilst taking part in the protest. There have been attempts to send delegates to, amongst other things, the current ongoing electricians’ protest. This at a time when, throughout the country as a whole, despite the widespread fear and anger engendered by the austerity being rained down, there has been little in the way of a genuine workers’ response.

As the recent events in Spain and Greece have demonstrated, the assemblies are the lifeblood of workers’ self-organisation. They are the place where political confrontation, clarification and reflection can take place. The clearest example of this was the intense discussions in Spain between those arguing for ‘real democracy’, that is, a better, improved governmental democracy and those putting forward a proletarian perspective: *“There were some very moving moments as the speakers were very excited and almost all spoke of revolution, of denouncing the system, of being radical (in the sense of ‘going to the roots of the problem’ as one of them said).”*¹

The discussions around the Occupy London protests still revolve around two key themes: how to ‘improve’ Parliamentary democracy, to win it back ‘for the people’ against the rich, the bankers, the elite; and secondly how to bring about social justice – i.e. a more equitable distribution under capitalism. As our comrade put it: *“I eventually found the meeting, rather late, in the University Tent where there was a discussion on democracy where I learned that they don’t really have democracy in Spain as it is all party lists in proportional representation with no voting for an individual MP, and the parties are part of the state, which some of them felt was all a hangover from the dictatorship under Franco...In this meeting the politicians were pretty much to blame for everything.”*

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2011/september/indignados>

Continued from page 4

are the most combative. On the other hand, those with the most experience of concrete struggles in defence of their living and working conditions still remain quite disoriented by capitalism’s attacks and uncertain of how to fight back. Many are just glad to still have a job and have recoiled under the weight of capitalism’s offensive against its living and working standards.

Moreover, in the U.S., the persistent campaigns of the right wing to smash the unions have actually had the effect of revitalizing the union strait-jacket in the workers’ eyes to some degree, and have further disoriented this sector of the working

There were some dissenting voices which tried to raise the question of the economy, to point out that democracy in the UK isn’t any better. And there were some bizarre contributions to discussion including the idea that we should get the public involved in public office in the same sort of way they are called for jury service – perhaps this could replace political patronage in the House of Lords... or we should get better managers into government as in China... One thought that tinkering with the



system of voting for parliaments was the way to try and take the assembly experience to a wider level. I was able to make 3 short contributions to the discussion. (1) That the way politicians behave is not caused by the Spanish, UK or any other voting system but the fact they are defending capitalism. (2) To support points on the role of the crisis – which is not just down to the bankers. (3) To say I had hoped to hear more about the assemblies, and to mention a list of historical experiences including workers’ councils. Although there was some hand waving of approval to some of what I said, the overall discussion went back to looking for ways to perfect bourgeois democracy.”

Occupy London is not only smaller than the movements in Spain and the USA that inspired it, but the voices raised in support of a working class perspective have been relatively weaker, and those defending parliamentary democracy relatively stronger. For instance the efforts to send ‘delegations’ to the electricians’ protests only a short walk away were seen as an entirely individual decision and initiative of those who participated, whereas in Oakland the Occupy Movement called for a general strike as well as evening meetings so that those who had to work could also participate (see <http://www.occupyoakland.org/>). This has left Occupy London very vulnerable to the manoeuvres around the threatened eviction – or the alternative offer of a reduced number of tents for two months – and the media circus around what is going on in the hierarchy of St Paul’s Cathedral with the resignations of first the Canon and then the Dean.

The reaction of the mainstream media has been mostly predictable, from the ‘shock! horror!’ headlines to articles in the more liberal / left wing press arguing that these occupations represent a ‘boost’ or a ‘shaking up’ of a staid democratic system. All in all, most of the press, and the established church, have tried to find a way to argue that politicians should be ‘responding’ to the ‘concerns’ of legitimate protest. But in the absence of a perspective for going out to make contact with the

class⁷. In fact, to the extent that this sector of the working class participated in the OWS movement, it was largely under the union banner, but with the unions working systematically to segregate their members from the occupiers. It was clear that under the unions, the workers were there to support the occupiers, but not to join them! It is in the working-class’ struggle to defend its living and working conditions, at the location where society reproduces itself, that the organs that can actually implement the transition to a society of associated producers —the workers’ councils—can emerge. It is here where the fact that capitalism can no longer offer lasting reforms can be discovered, as the working class’ struggle to protect its living stan-

7. See our article on the recent Verizon strike.

wider working class this predictable media feeding frenzy, and how they present the occupation, has become a point of fixation.

The threat of eviction, and how to defend against the violence and repression involved, is obviously an important concern. In many places across America, this ‘response’ by elected politicians has taken the form of heavy repression (witness the 700 protestors tricked and then arrested trying to safely cross Brooklyn Bridge, arrests and

beatings at other occupations²). However, when one of our comrades went to a general assembly at Finsbury Square that discussed how to react to the threatened eviction at St Pauls (before the offer to stay for 2 months and leave at an agreed date) the way the media would portray their response was the major concern. A proposal to go directly to workers, made by our comrade, like a reminder by another participant that their aims went beyond keeping the occupation going indefinitely, were not taken up. In fact both felt like distractions.

The greatest danger now is that Occupy London will become trapped in a hopeless inward looking dynamic leaving the Church and the media to make all the running. **Graham 04/11/11**

2. *The Guardian* even reported that the son of legendary Bluesman Bo Diddley was arrested whilst trying to show support for the Occupation in a Florida plaza... named after his father! (14/10/11)

International Review 147

Economic catastrophe
is unavoidable

‘Indignant’ movements in Spain,
Greece and Israel: from indignation
to the preparation of class combat

Contribution to a history of the
workers’ movement in Africa
(III): the 1920s

Revolutionary syndicalism
in Germany (III):
the FVDG during the First World
War

Decadence of capitalism:
the post-war boom
did not reverse the
decline of capitalism

dards are constantly frustrated by the persistent economic crisis. It is at the point of production where the fact that today human society can only reproduce itself on a global level will become apparent to the working class.

That said, we don’t minimize the immense difficulties facing the working class in all sectors today in finding the class terrain and developing the willingness to fight back against capitalism’s attacks. On the first score, we think the OWS movement has remained trapped on the bourgeois rhetorical terrain; however, on the latter it is of immense value in showing a glimpse of how the working class can take control of its own struggle.

Internationalism, 10/19/2011

Libya Gaddafi’s gone, the ruling class remains

The war in Libya is over and the old dictator Gaddafi has met a violent and inglorious end. The leaders of the free and democratic powers are congratulating themselves on their support for the rebels (now the legal government). The people of Libya celebrate their new freedom and the victory of the revolution. Not too triumphalist, a word of criticism for the brutal manner of Gaddafi’s end, not fitting for one in the rulers club, but a job well done by NATO for a change. This is the narrative in the media.

Gaddafi wasn’t the only one to meet a violent end; 50 Gaddafi supporters were executed with their hands tied behind their back on the eastern edge of Sirte. The town of Tawargha was ransacked and the 30,000 residents banned from returning because of their support for Gaddafi. We shouldn’t be too surprised by the level of brutality meted out to the defeated, because the new regime received its training under the old regime, in fact some of them used to be the old regime.

The new Transitional National Council of Libya wants to avoid the mistakes of Iraq where many of the repressive structures were dismantled. This time those who benefited under Gaddafi will remain. When criticism of the old regime is made the emphasis is on the idea of the all powerful dictator with his handful of loyal cronies rather than the embarrassing collusion of the whole Libyan elite. The announcement of Abdurrahim al-Keib as the new interim Prime Minister can be seen as an attempt by the TNC to distance itself from the past. The previous holder of that position, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, was a justice minister under Gaddafi. Also we shouldn’t forget that the nations who raced to defend democracy this year were rubbing shoulders with Gaddafi last year.

This attempt to bury the past is also an attempt to avoid a new civil war between the factions that have emerged in the new Libyan state. The bourgeoisie in Libya is not united in action. There are differences between east and west Libyans, Islamists, tribes, local warlords and non-TNC rebels. The TNC is an attempt to hold things together and prevent the country descending into total chaos.

The inter-bourgeois war in Libya also had a clear imperialist dimension. The intervention of France, Britain and the US via airstrikes, 10,000 according to the BBC, helped to swing the civil war in the favour of the rebels.

The triumph of the TNC over Gaddafi’s forces is no victory for the working class or the legions of the exploited in Libya. The development of the uprising into a civil war between bourgeois factions, backed by the imperialist powers, was a symptom of the weakness of the working class in comparison to Egypt, where the working class played a significant role in the movement even if it failed to take decisive leadership.

This does not mean that the class struggle is totally absent from Libya. At the end of October, strike action by Waha Oil workers, unhappy at the continued presence of the same directors who collaborated with the Gaddafi forces during the civil war, had been going on for two months. The TNC backed the directors, not the workers of course. Workers from other refineries and other sectors of the oil industry joined them in protest outside the National Oil Corporation headquarters, also unhappy about the Gaddafi supporters who manage them.¹ The future for the Libyan workers lies in the continuing defence of their own class interests against whichever faction takes the reins of power, but their main hope lies in the development of the class struggle throughout the region and across the globe. **Hugin, 5.11.11**

1. The strike is continuing at the time of writing though media coverage is limited. You can see a TV report here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEDSmjxT8gg>

Nuclear energy, capitalism and communism (part 2)

This is the second part of an article written following the catastrophe at Fukushima in Japan, showing capitalism’s predatory exploitation of nature. In the first part we look at energy use in human development and the relationship between humanity and nature. It goes on to show that from the dawn of capitalism increased energy use has also led to both the denial of energy to those who lack money and a heavy price has also been paid in the lives of those who work in the energy industries and others who have been killed and maimed by the degradation of the environment. The whole article can be found online at <http://en.internationalism.org/wr/347/nuclear>.

Coal and oil: the foundations of industrial capitalism

Prior to the widespread use of coal the energy available was essentially determined by the amount of the sun’s energy that was converted to plant growth through photosynthesis. This included the production of foodstuffs for animals and humans and of timber. This natural cycle seemed to impose an insurmountable limit to the amount of muscular and thermal energy that could be utilised and thus to the level of production and the wealth of society. Poverty and widespread misery seemed eternal, unalterable, facts of life. The large scale extraction of coal and subsequently oil broke this barrier by allowing access to the earth’s energy stores, to the product of the photosynthesis of past millennia.¹

The 19th century and the first part of the 20th were dominated by the use of coal. The advance of the industrial revolution is often measured in the tons of coal mined, the tons of iron produced and the miles of railway line laid. We have given some indication of the first of these above, but It can also be measured in the changing patterns of energy use and in the amount of energy used per head. We noted above that in 1560 coal accounted for just over 10.6% of the energy consumed in England and Wales. By 1850 this figure had increased to 92%.² Coal was initially used to replace wood in industries such as smelting, pottery and brewing that required large amounts of heat, and it only gradually affected the actual organisation of production and directly increased productivity. Static steam engines were initially developed to pump water from mines, which, although inefficient, allowed coal and other resources, such as tin in Cornwall, to be mined from previously inaccessible depths. Subsequently engines were adapted to drive machines, notably in the cotton industry, and as means of transport.

Total energy consumption increased progressively throughout the industrial revolution. Total consumption in England and Wales in 1850 was 28 times as great as in 1560. In part this was accounted for by the substantial growth in population that took place during this period but the real scale of the increase is shown by the fact that consumption per head went up fivefold.³

The oil industry gradually developed during the 20th century, with significant developments in production techniques and the scale of production taking place in the inter-war years. By 1929 the trade in oil had grown to \$1,170m, with the main exporters being the US, Venezuela and the Netherlands Antilles, although refineries were also established during this period in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia by the US and in Iraq and Lebanon by British and European enterprises.⁴ However, it was only after the Second World War that oil came to dominate energy production, accounting for 46.1% of total world energy production in 1973, although by 2008 this had fallen to 33.2%.⁵

1. In this and other parts of the text the author has drawn on the analysis in *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution* by E. A. Wrigley that has already been cited several times in this text.
2. Wrigley, op. cit. P.37.
3. Ibid., p.94. Total consumption went from 65,130 to 1,835.300 terrajoules and consumption per head from 19,167 to 96,462 megajoules.
4. Kenwood and Lougheed, *The growth of the international economy 1820-1990*. Routledge, 1992 (3rd Edition).
5. International Energy Agency, *Key World Energy Statistics 2010*, p.6. The same report shows that measured by consumption oil accounts for a greater

The increasing use of energy has been a feature of industrialisation around the world. It expresses not only the increase in scale of production and the impact of rising population, but also the development of productivity with the increase in the quantity of the means of production, including energy, that each worker is able to set in motion. This trend has continued today: between 1973 and 2008 total energy consumption increased by 80%.⁶

The revolution in the form and quantity of energy available to humanity underpinned the industrial revolution and opened the door from the realm of want to that of plenty. But this revolution was driven by the development of capitalism whose purpose is not the satisfaction of human needs but the increase of capital based on the appropriation of surplus value produced by an exploited working class. Energy is used to drive the development of productivity but it is also a cost of production. It is part of the constant capital alongside raw materials, machines and factories and, as such, tends to increase in relation to the variable capital that is the source of capitalism’s profits. It is this that dictates capitalism’s attitude to energy.

Capitalism has no regard for the use of energy, for the destruction of finite resources, other than as a cost of production. Increased productivity tends to require increased energy, so the capitalists (other than those in the oil industry) are driven to try and reduce the cost of this energy. On the one hand this results in the profligate use of energy for irrational ends, such as transporting similar commodities back and forth across the world and the ceaseless multiplication of commodities that meet no real human need but serve only as a means to extract and realise surplus value. On the other, it leads to the denial of access to energy and to the products of energy for millions of humans who lack the money to be of interest to the capitalists. This is illustrated in Nigeria where Shell pumps out billions of dollars worth of oil while the local people go without or risk their lives by trying to illegally tap the oil from the pipeline. The price is also paid by those working in the energy industries in lives lost and bodies maimed or poisoned and by the environment and all that lives in it, from the polluted, toxic waters of the Thames that characterised 19th century London to the warming of the globe that threatens the future of humanity today.

Nuclear energy

The potential to use nuclear fission or fusion to produce power has been known about for around a century but it was only after the Second World War that it was actually realised. Thus, while its general context is that outlined above, the specific context is the post-war situation dominated by the rivalry between the USA and USSR and the nuclear arms race that resulted. The development of nuclear power is thus not only inextricably linked to that of nuclear weapons but was arguably a smokescreen for the latter.

In the early 1950s the American government was concerned about the public’s response to the danger of the nuclear arsenal it was assembling and the strategy of first strike that was being propounded. It’s response was to organise a campaign known as Operation Candor to win the public over through adverts across the media (including comic books) and a series of speeches by President Eisenhower that culminated in the announcement at the UN General Assembly of the ‘Atoms for Peace’ programme to “*encourage world-wide investigation into the most effective peacetime uses of fissionable materials.*”⁷ The plan included sharing information and resources, and the US and USSR jointly creating an international stockpile of fissionable material. In the years that followed the arms race went on unabated and nuclear weapons spread to other powers, often under the guise of a civilian nuclear power programme, as proportion of the total, dropping from 48.1% of the total in 1973 to 41.6% in 2008 (p.28).
6. International Energy Agency, *Key world energy statistics 2010*, p.28. The total went from 4,676 Mtoe (Million tonne oil equivalent) to 8,428 Mtoe.
7. Quoted in S. Cooke, *In mortal hands: A cautionary history of the nuclear age*, Bloomsbury New York, 2010 (paperback edition), p.110.

in Israel and India. The initial reactors produced large quantities of material for nuclear weapons and small amounts of very expensive electricity. The sharing of nuclear knowledge became part of global imperialist struggles; thus in the late 1950s Britain secretly supplied Israel with heavy water for the reactor it was building with French assistance.⁸

Despite talk about energy too cheap to meter, nuclear power has never fulfilled this promise and has relied on state support to cover its real cost. Even where private companies build and run plants there are usually large open or hidden subsidies. For example privatisation of the nuclear industry in Britain failed when Thatcher attempted it in the 1980s because private capital identified there were unquantifiable costs and risks. It was only in 1996, when the ageing Magnox reactors that would soon need decommissioning were excluded from the deal that private investors were prepared to buy British Energy at a knockdown price of £2bn. Six years later the company had to be bailed out with a £10bn government loan.⁹

While advocates of nuclear energy today argue that it is cheaper than other sources this remains a questionable assertion. In 2005 the World Nuclear Association, stated that “*In most industrialized countries today, new nuclear power plants offer the most economical way to generate base-load electricity even without consideration of the geopolitical and environmental advantages that nuclear energy confers*” and published a range of data to support the claim that construction, financing, operating and waste and decommissioning costs have all reduced.¹⁰ Between 1973 and 2008 the proportion of energy from nuclear reactors grew from 0.9% of the global total to 5.8%.¹¹

A report published in 2009, commissioned by the German Federal Government,¹² makes a far more critical evaluation of the economics of nuclear power and questions the idea that there is a nuclear renaissance underway. The report points out that the number of reactors has fallen over the last few years in contrast to the widespread forecasts of increases in both reactors and the power produced. The increase in the amount of power generated that has taken place during this period is the result of upgrading the existing reactors and extending their operational life. It goes on to argue that there is a lot of uncertainty about the reactors currently described as being ‘under construction’, with a number having been in this position for over 20 years. The number under construction has fallen from the peak of over 200 in 1980 to below 50 in 2006.

As regards the economics of nuclear power, the report points to the high level of uncertainty in all areas including financing, construction, operation and decommissioning. It shows that the state remains central to all nuclear projects, regardless of who they are formally owned and operated by. One aspect of this is the various forms of subsidy provided by the state to support capital costs, waste management and plant closure and price support. Another has been the necessity for the state to limit the liability of the industry in order for the private sector to accept the risks. Thus in 1957 the US government stepped in when insurance companies refused to agree insurance because they were unable to quantify the risk.¹³ Today it is estimated that “*In general national limits are in the order of a few hundred million Euro, less than 10% of the cost of building a plant and far less than the cost of the Chernobyl accident.*”¹⁴

8. Ibid., p.148-9.
9. Ibid., p. 357-8.
10. World Nuclear Association, *The new economics of nuclear power*, p.6.
11. International Energy Agency, *Key world energy statistics 2010*, p.6
12. *The World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2009 With Particular Emphasis on Economic Issues*. Commissioned by German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Reactor Safety. Paris 2009.
13. Cooke, op. cit., p.120-5. The government set an arbitrary ceiling of \$500m on its liability despite the views of its own experts that the “*the size of the risk involved cannot be accurately estimated*” (ibid, p. 124).
14. German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Reactor Safety, op.cit., p.44.

The dangers of nuclear energy are as fiercely debated as the costs and the scientific evidence seems to be very variable. This is particularly the case with the Chernobyl disaster where the estimates of the deaths that resulted vary widely. A World Health Organisation Report found that 47 of the 134 emergency workers initially involved had died as a result of contamination by 2004¹⁵ and estimated that there would be just under 9,000 excess deaths from cancer as a result of the disaster.¹⁶ A report by Russian scientists published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences estimated that from the date of the accident until 2006 some 985,000 additional deaths had resulted from the accident from cancer and a range of other diseases.¹⁷

For those without specialist medical and scientific knowledge this is difficult to unravel, but what is less questionable is the massive level of secrecy and falsification that runs from the decision by the British government to withhold publication of the report into one of the first accidents in the industry at Windscale in 1957 to Fukushima today where the true scale of the disaster only emerged slowly. Returning to Chernobyl, the Russian government did not report the accident for several days, leaving the local population to continue living and working amidst the radiation. But it was not only Russia. The French government minimised the radiation levels reaching the country¹⁸ and told its population that the radiation cloud that spread across the whole of Europe had not passed over France!¹⁹ Meanwhile the British government reassured the country that there was no risk to health, reporting levels of radiation that were forty times lower than they actually were²⁰, and then quarantined hundreds of farms. As late as 2007 374 farms in Britain still remained under the special control scheme.²¹

Nuclear energy is being pushed by various governments as a ‘green’ solution to the problems associated with fossil fuels. This is largely a smokescreen to hide the real motives, which are concerns about the possible exhaustion of oil, the increasing price of oil and the risks associated with a dependence on energy resources outside the state’s control. This green facade is slipping as the economic crisis leads states to return to coal²² and to push down the costs of exploiting new sources of oil, much of which is physically hard to access, or requires processes that pollute and despoil the environment, such as coal-tar sands. Energy supplies have also been a factor in the imperialist struggles over recent years and it seems likely that this may increase in the period ahead. Nuclear energy then comes back to where it started as a source of fissile material and a cover for weapons programmes.

Communism and energy

The Stalinist regimes that appropriated and besmirched the name of communism shared all of capitalism’s attitudes to energy use and acted with complete disregard for the health of the people or the damage to the environment. This was true of the former USSR yesterday and is true of China today. This feeds the widespread confusion that communism is about enforced industrialisation and disregard for nature.

15. World Health Organisation, 2006, *Health effects of the Chernobyl accident and special health care programmes*, p.106.
16. Ibid., p.108.
17. Yablokov, Nesterenko and Nesterenko, “Chernobyl: Consequences of the catastrophe for people and the environment.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 1181, 2009, p.210. This study has created a significant amount of controversy with criticisms that it amalgamates incompatible data, disregards studies that do not support its argument and does not follow accepted methodologies. See, for example, the review in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 118, 11, November 2010.
18. Cooke, op. cit., p.320.
19. Yablokov et al, op. cit., p.10
20. Ibid., p.14
21. Cooke, op. cit., p.321.
22. Coal has grown as a proportion of total energy supply from 24.5% of the global total in 1973 to 27% in 2008. Source: International Energy Agency, *Key world energy statistics 2010*, p.6.

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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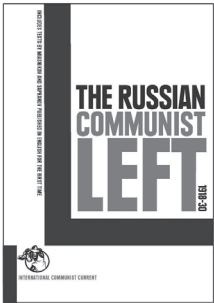
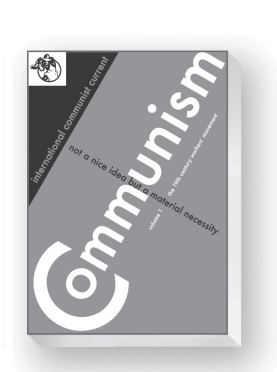
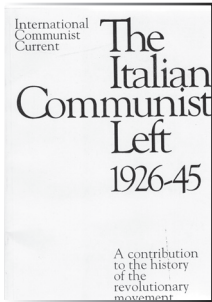
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Greece: austerity package meets working class resistance

After Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou proposed and then ditched the idea of a referendum, globally share prices rallied. After winning a confidence vote but then indicating he would step aside, the financial markets looked forward to the possibility of Evangelos Venizelos leading the team to meet up with the EU/IMF/ECB troika to negotiate the conditions of the next bailout. Economic reality means that this is much more than a routine visit to the bank manager. There is so much at stake for Greece, the eurozone and the world economy.

If Greece was to default on its loans it would have a widespread impact way beyond its national frontiers. Effectively Greece has already been excused billions. It has been agreed that Greece’s creditors will annul 50% of what’s owed to them, effectively wiping out 106 billion euros at a stroke. This was presented as a ‘haircut’. Capitalism doesn’t have any solutions to its historic crisis, only deepening austerity. None of the alternative measures proposed by different factions of the bourgeoisie offer the prospect of a revival in the economy. This applies just as much to printing money and resorting to debt and quantitative easing, as it does to viciously cutting and cutting again without any concern for the impact it will have on any potential for growth.

The only prospect is austerity

In May 2010 after the first massive 110 billion euro bailout of the Greek economy there was a 10% cut in public sector wages alongside a whole range of measures. These were on top of an already existing austerity regime. This ‘rescue plan’ proved utterly ineffective and a second package was negotiated this July, which led to further extensive cuts.

As was widely predicted this didn’t have a positive effect on the economy either. So, in October, there was a further round of negotiations. The banks might have taken a ‘haircut’, but 30,000 more public sector workers were to lose their jobs and deeper wage and pensions cuts were proposed. European leaders have said there will be no more money if Greece is not committed to the euro. There is no real choice, for either Greece or Europe, as all routes taken tend to exacerbate rather than soothe the economic crisis. The conservative New Democracy opposition in Greece has been very severe in its rhetoric against Papandreou’s PASOK government, but they’re really only quibbling about details. Eventually, they

endorsed the latest austerity package. After all, before PASOK came to power in May 2009, the previous ND government had already started the attacks on living standards that were to intensify under Papandreou.

Workers’ resistance to attacks

It was during the last New Democracy government in December 2008 and early 2009 that there was a wave of militant protests against the shooting of a 15-year-old student by the police. In the occupations and assemblies that took place during that movement there was a clear demonstration of the potential for struggle.

The size and militancy of the many general strikes in Greece in 2010 showed that the working class in Greece was not just going to roll over in the face of the frontal assault on its living standards. However, the degree of control by the unions ultimately limited the impact of these workers’ actions.

In Greece in 2011, apart from the strikes called by unions in response to the very real anger felt throughout the working class, there has also been an echo of the ‘indignados’ movement in Spain with assemblies meeting in many cities. Among other concerns they considered the perspectives for the development of the struggle.

And, as new government measures have been announced, proposed, or rumoured, there have been further strikes and protests. These have involved particular groups of workers or been, like the 5 October general strike, throughout the public sector. The 48 hour general strike of 19-20 October involved the most widespread protests in decades. There were more occupations, initiatives beyond the actions proposed by union leaderships, and the whole scale of the protests and the range of those demonstrating in massive protests across the country was noted, for example, by the cynical foreign press corps. Offices, government buildings, banks, schools and courts were closed. Hospitals were running on an emergency basis. Public transport came to a standstill.

In a major demonstration outside the Greek parliament the Stalinist KKE and Stalinist PAME union made a point of defending parliament. This was not just a ceremonial guard but involved beating up and intimidating protesters. Not content with attacking those who had come to demonstrate, they handed some over to the police. This activity inevitably lead to clashes with those who wanted to reach parliament. This was not an iso-

lated outbreak of violence as Stalinists attacked demonstrators protesting at a number of other locations.

Nationalism is always the enemy

Every year on 28 October in Greece there are parades in commemoration of the day in 1940 when Greek dictator Metaxas refused an ultimatum from Mussolini. This led to an Italian invasion and marked the beginning of Greek participation in the Second World War. Usually this feast of Greek nationalism is marked by an epidemic of Greek flags and the usual speeches, but this year there were protests against the austerity regime. All over Greece missiles were thrown, parades were blocked, MPs of the main parties were harassed and in some instances parades were called off.

In Thessaloniki, Greece’s second city, the Greek President was greeted by 30,000 demonstrators. Police were unable to disperse the protesters, the parade was cancelled and demonstrators took over the podium. These protests were not organised by the unions and seem to have been in many respects spontaneous. The President said that the choice was between participating in protests or in elections. Papandreou denounced the “*insult*” to Greece’s “*national struggles and institutions*” and the ND leader complained that protests had “*ruined our national holiday*”.

However, while it is true that disrupting 28 October commemorations is more or less unheard of, the protests were not entirely devoid of nationalism. In particular, there was a certain amount of anti-German sentiment expressed, partly based on Germany’s role in the EU. A banner in Crete said “*No to the Fourth Reich*”. Also Papandreou was denounced as a “*traitor*” in a way that could only have a nationalist interpretation. But, looked at overall, these most recent protests are further confirmation that, rather than reverentially bowing in front of its masters, the working class is not crumpling under the attacks.

The bourgeoisie can’t expect a passive working class

The bourgeoisie has no solutions to its economic problems. Not only that, it is faced with a difficult social situation in which workers in some places are resisting the attempts to make them pay for the capitalist crisis. Vicious austerity measures don’t inevitably immediately lead to workers’ struggles. Look at the example of Ireland where, so far, the 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

response to the cuts in living standards has been very muted.

Yet the bourgeoisie does expect a response to its measures sooner or later as it has nothing else to offer. In Spain, for example, the ruling Socialist Party has already raised taxes, cut wages and radically reduced investment. If it loses power after the forthcoming 20 November election the incoming government has promised to further deepen budget cuts. This is not going to aid economic recovery and will make one more contribution towards a global recession. In turn, as a recent International Labour Organisation report pointed out, this is going to contribute to widespread social unrest.

Papandreou’s manoeuvres around the referendum were also a demonstration that the Greek ruling class knows that it can’t simply ram austerity down the workers’ throats, however much the leaders of the EU and IMF might demand it. But those same leaders are also going to find workers in ‘their own’ countries behaving in the same rude and unacceptable manner in the near future.

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

OUR ACTIVITY

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

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

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

OUR ORIGINS

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

Political positions of the ICC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-‘Communists’), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘anti-fascist fronts’ and ‘united fronts’, which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union