



world revolution

Immigration: workers have no country

As 1 January 2014 approached, government, media and opposition cranked up the levels of hype over the lifting of restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarian immigration. Not just in the UK, but in the other nine EU countries that had also imposed temporary restrictions in 2007, there were vivid forecasts of what economic and cultural dangers threatened.

In Germany right wingers said that immigrants who were only coming to the country for benefits should be deported. They call it 'Armutsmigration' – 'poverty migration'. The Social Democratic Vice Chancellor of Germany put a 'balanced' point of view "We don't need all-out discrimination against the Bulgarians and Romanians but nor should we ignore the problems some big German cities faced with the immigration of poor peoples." Like the Labour Party in Britain, they say they're against racism, but poor foreigners are a problem.

In Britain the government has made sure that new immigrants will not be automatically entitled to benefits, that they can be deported if begging or homeless. On the right, Boris Johnson (who says he's pro-immigration) wants a two year clamp down on migrants receiving benefits, and for the state to get tough on illegal immigration. From UKIP Nigel Farage puts forward a five year halt to immigration as the way to solve all social and economic problems. The left say that immigration is good for the economy. Farage says that maybe it would be better to be poorer.

'Benefits tourism' is the catchphrase in Britain. However, it's just the latest label used to stoke up prejudice and find new scapegoats. Ed Miliband and other leading figures in the Labour Party say that immigration got out of control under Blair and Brown and that there should be 'sensible' controls on immigrants. They agree that immigration can enrich culture and economy, but Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna thinks that there has been far too much "low-skill immigration" in the EU. He maintains that "the founders of the European Union had in mind free movement of workers not free movement of jobseekers."

Ultimately, across the British bourgeoisie, there is agreement that Britain is a 'small island' country, that there's only room for so many, and immigration has to be firmly under control, if not



An immigrant worker on strike at Grunwicks in the 1970s

actually stopped. This 'common sense' view (like its equivalent in a big, non-island country like Germany) is used to back up the basic nationalist framework of capitalist ideology. With all the recent anti-immigrant propaganda it is hardly surprising that surveys in the UK are showing more people wanting a reduction in immigration, and more wanting a big rather than a small reduction. Labour says that cheap, unskilled foreign workers are taking jobs that could go to cheap, unskilled British workers. If you're unemployed you could put your situation down to one of many causes. You might feel it's because of some personal inadequacy, or you might listen to the media and politicians telling you that foreigners have taken all the jobs. Neither explanation gets close to understanding the roots of unemployment in the basic workings of the capitalist system.

The effects of the economic crisis, imperialist war, ecological disaster, social problems like urban overcrowding and rural desertion, cultural impoverishment – all these flow from the reality of capitalism, not from workers travelling to find work and other opportunities. On the contrary, the more capitalism sinks into crisis, the more the exploited will be forced to move from country

to country in search of work, shelter or security. This is something built into the condition of the working class, which has always been a class of immigrants.

Capitalism poses everything from a national standpoint. If workers' wages are reduced the bourgeoisie wants workers to blame workers from other countries, not the bourgeoisie's system of exploitation. Workers can't let themselves go along with nationalist ideology, whether it's of the right or the left. The most dramatic example of how nationalism can be used against us is in times of war when workers have been taken in by calls to sacrifice their lives in defence of the nation – in other words, the interests of the national capitalist class and its state. But any time that capitalism tries to divide workers, the only response can be by uniting to resist exploitation, by waging a common struggle of all proletarians, 'native' and 'foreign', employed and unemployed. Workers' struggles ultimately have the potential to do away with all frontiers, all nation states, and to build on the rich cultural diversity of all humanity. **Car** 11/1/14

One hundred years since 1914: Right and left justify imperialist war



The sailor's mutiny in northern Germany in 1918 sparked the German revolution and helped end the war

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The spying game part 2

In part one of this article, *The Spying Game*, September 2013, we mentioned the existence of spying throughout civilisation and the way that it's been perfected by the capitalist ruling class, the bourgeoisie, a class which is Machiavellian and conspiratorial par excellence. We looked at the factors which underlie the spying activities of this class: economic, military and class domination. We saw, from the archives of the Russian secret services, the Okhrana, 'liberated' by the Russian Revolution of 1917, just how pervasive and extensive was the spying of the capitalist state over a hundred years ago and how the development of technology has taken this forward in an entirely 'natural' fashion. Finally, without underestimating the ruthlessness and intelligence of the bourgeoisie, whose different factions will not hesitate to spy on each other and the working class and its revolutionary forces, we look at the limitations of the state's spying and repressive apparatus in controlling populations in revolt, particularly the organised proletariat.

The actions of the bourgeoisie only make bad situations worse

After the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001, security and spying went onto another level as the spread of terrorism reinforced the idea that societies, countries and 'allies' are besieged fortresses fearing attacks of one sort or another on the 'homeland'. The result has been an increase in barbed and razor-wire, floodlit, concrete and steel checkpoints, patrolled by military, police and vigilantes, and in electronic and droned surveillance along European and American borders. All this is often accompanied by a constant campaign against asylum-seekers and refugees, against the threat of 'penetration' of one kind or another, from 'alien' foreigners to cyber-warfare. Never before has a ruling class been forced to develop and deploy such sophisticated arsenals of surveillance and repression. It's been estimated that 6000 miles of walls have gone up in the last ten years alone¹, a sure expression of the decomposition of capitalism in this so-called 'globalised and inclusive' world. But no matter how much the authorities try to set up surveillance mechanisms aimed both externally and internally, no matter how much the US (and others) turn their countries into fortresses against migrants, instability, trafficking, or potential terrorists, the system cannot stop the descent into greater chaos and violence. On the contrary, it contributes to it. The strongest, most well-equipped power in the world, the USA, cannot stop the destabilisation of its borders.

In Mexico twenty-six thousand people were killed in 2012 alone in its border-related drug wars and Russian *RT News* has reported that Mexico has "the highest levels of US intelligence assistance outside Afghanistan" (22/12/13). On the Canadian border there's a whole united nations of crime gangs trafficking humans, narcotics and weapons. US/Canadian border patrols have increased by 700% since 9/11 and there's even talk of building a wall there! More and more areas of the globe are prone to flights of refugees and migrants, victims of war, crime and poverty, of defeated uprisings in the slums and townships. None of this can be stopped by barbed-wire and fences and certainly not by the most powerful computer spyware yet invented which, for the most part, just looks on cynically and helplessly. The recent heart-rending events covered by TV, showing Africans, Iraqis, Afghans and, increasingly Syrians fleeing from wars and poverty, often perishing in the attempt in deserts or at sea, reveal the inability of the European powers to stem this flow of human misery. Indeed, their wars directly contribute to it. The Italian island of Lampedusa alone has, according to *The Guardian*, 3/10/13, seen more than 8000 migrants land in the first 8 months of the year, with the same article quoting human rights organisations in Italy saying that the Mediterranean had "become a cemetery. And it will become even more so". And this while the region and its sea are under surveillance like never before.

1. Joe Henley, 'Walls: an illusion of security from Berlin to the West Bank', *The Guardian*, 19.11.13.

"If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear"

One of the glib phrases used by the ruling class in order to justify its wholesale spying upon us is: "If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear". It was used by British Foreign Secretary William Hague at the beginning of the National Security Agency (NSA) 'scandal' in the summer and has also been attributed to the Nazi Reich Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. Recent revelations (*Newsnight*, 18/12/13) show how there is not a whit of evidence that the NSA's surveillance has prevented one terrorist attack. The 'alert' of August 3 and 4 last, which was based on the NSA's uncovering of supposed planned attacks on western embassies in Arab countries, resulting in 19 diplomatic posts being shut down, shows how these completely unverifiable threats are used for political purposes, both to rally populations and intimidate them as well as to cover up or justify imperialist manoeuvring. And as for the excuses about 'preventing another 9/11', there's plenty of publicly known evidence that the US security services knew quite a lot about the bombers before the event. All the major powers are now well on the way with drone technology which is used for both surveillance and attack - without your forces being hurt. China, for example, has recently deployed drones in the East China Sea, increasing its operational and strike capabilities. But these weapons used to strike 'terrorist' targets, with the majority of their victims being innocent civilians, are just oil on the fire, creating, from pools of disaffected, despondent unemployed youth, more suicide bombers, more jihadis. This in turn demands ever more sophisticated tools in the longer run to 'contain and control' ever more potential enemies. These latter, imbued with nationalism, religious fervour or just anger and a thirst for revenge are themselves just as much victims of capitalist decay. Yemen is an example of it, where Al-Qaeda is not "On the path to defeat" as President Obama put it, but is continually renewed and expanding, becoming increasingly dangerous and more difficult to track. And none of this whole range of surveillance does anything to counter the 'home-grown' terrorists from which there's almost no protection. The 7/7 London bombers and the two deeply troubled Boston bombers, who had no links to Al Qaeda and who used an ordinary household appliance, a pressure cooker, to create carnage and havoc, are examples of this. And if the security forces, with all the money, technology and facilities thrown at them, can't follow a couple of known potential terrorists how are they going to track the hundreds coming back to Europe from Syria, Somalia and elsewhere, let alone the 'lone wolves' already present?

Nevertheless, the fear of terrorist attacks 'at home', arising from the chaos spilling over from western-led wars in the Middle East, has sparked another push for the development of surveillance techniques and a mentality of 'defend the state' in those same western countries. This also applies to the increasing risk of world-wide cyber attacks, the latter being part of the same spiral. There are no innocent states here, and while the US is the strongest element, they are all at it against each other, France, Germany, Russia, China, etc. who all adapt their own national ideology to support their role as 'victims' and 'protectors'. And democracy is strengthened particularly by those who object to this surveillance, the 'whistleblowers' like Edward Snowden and his ilk who want 'transparency' in order to boost the democratic state². At the same time the 'gap' between the state

2. It's beyond irony that Snowden has been welcomed to Russia by the Putin regime whose agents still operate from the notorious Stalinist-era Lubyanka building in Moscow. The investigative journalist and security expert, Andrei Soldatov, estimates that the FSB spy agency employs 200,000 people. The same could be said about Snowden's elevation to hero by some of the most oppressive left wing states of Latin America - all of whom are involved in using the latest technology for spying and surveillance and who want to use Snowden in order to push their own nationalistic anti-Americanism. Thus any whistleblower can easily become a tool in the hands of one state or another, showing that the tentacles of 'Big Brother' can't be broken by individuals - who can become integrated

and the general population has been growing with the former seeing the latter more and more as an element to be distrusted, tracked and spied upon. Technological developments have made this spying and surveillance easier and more extensive, as shown by the example of the US and Britain tapping directly into fibre optics at the bottom of ocean floors, which are a major part of everyone's communications.

Alongside the development of spy technology there is also the cancerous growth of the forces of capitalist order. It has been estimated that up to 30,000 people are working directly for the NSA, with something like 200,000 employed by 13 different secret services and any number of contractors, and there's nothing new about contract spies working for the state - several large private security agencies worked for the US state at the beginning of the 1900s. There are no figures for the British GCHQ but it must be many thousands, and it's notable that they are all heavily unionised. There's growing infiltration by an army of police/security agents in protest movements, mosques, drug cartels and mafias and none of it makes any impression, it is even counter-productive in the state's own terms, and becomes an end to itself swelling the security aspect and deepening the murkiness of the state apparatus³. The secret services themselves take on a certain 'autonomisation' and tend to get out of control, involved in all sorts of manipulations and shady dealings. The most recent example of that is the CIA in and around Syria providing arms and money directly and indirectly to jihadi forces while reporting to Congress that only the Free Syrian Army was receiving aid, sending its FSA stooges to Washington to insist that this was the case and that the FSA was a strong force on the ground with the jihadis being a small minority⁴. This 'autonomisation' is also evidenced by the British ex-Cabinet minister, Chris Huhne, who was in this exalted position for two years up to 2012 and who said that the Cabinet was in "utter ignorance" of the two biggest covert operations undertaken by GCHQ, Prism and Tempora (*The Guardian*, 6/10/13).

Britain: you don't need jackboots for a police state

'Democratic Britain', the 'Mother of Parliaments', has more CCTV cameras than anywhere in the world by a large margin. In 2011, Cheshire police came up with a number of 1.85 million, along with sharply improving facial recognition software. There's also the development of internet-enabled computer chips which are increasingly going into many products and were even being put in litter bins on the streets of London, enabling them to 'communicate' with passing smart phones. Everywhere are spies: on workers (trackers, personalised computers for jobs, individual productivity targets, etc.), universities, schools, local authorities, companies, uniformed thugs at tube stations, social security informer lines, grass-

into democratic or nationalist campaigns - but by the smashing of the state as a whole. These tentacles are thus not an exception nor a scandal but the true face of capitalist society based on militarism, competition and the oppression of the exploited and its revolutionary minorities.

3. Against this trend of increases in the security apparatus of the state throughout decadent capitalism, between the wars, the US, wary of covert state activity and underestimating part of its responsibility as the major power, shut down or degraded most of its own intelligence agencies, with the exception of the FBI. That led them to rely more on the British whose Empire had intelligence structures that had existed since the 19th century and which had been constantly updated and strengthened. These British agencies were even used to spy on sections of the political apparatus of the US during the inter-war years and throughout the Second World War. See *In Spies We Trust: The Story of Western Intelligence* by Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones. But the US has learned its lessons since.

4. A couple of days after the now discredited FSA spokeswoman was giving her CIA-inspired lies to Congress, IHS Janes Consultancy published its authoritative findings saying that there were up to 45,000 hard-line Islamists fighting in Syria with some 10,000 directly linked to Al Qaeda (*Daily Telegraph*, 15.9.13). These startling facts seem to have contributed to the administration's overall re-think on the Syrian war.

up an immigrant adverts - all these outside the 'official' secret services, but no less part of the militarisation of society. Under the whip of competition and profits, companies establish 'profiles' of every single customer. Once you have bought a product via electronic means or with a store card then this technology is used to know the when and where of your buying habits. Although employee blacklists have existed since the working class was born, technology has vastly improved their reach. Police forces across the country supplied information on thousands of workers to a blacklist operation run by Britain's biggest construction companies in a conspiracy of the state with its police and industry (*The Observer*, 13/10/13). Such talk had been dismissed by elements of the state as 'a conspiracy theory' but this is just the tip of the iceberg, going well beyond the construction industry.

When Tony Blair left office in 2007, his Labour government had built up a surveillance state that out-performed the Stasi in its scope and in the technology used. Parliament passed 45 criminal justice laws and created 3000 new criminal offences. Labour Prime Minister Brown, who followed Blair, extended this record and the Tories have further extended it since (*The Guardian*, 14/8/13).

In the 1984 miners' strike six pickets were killed and eleven thousand arrests were made by the paramilitary police, who assaulted miners and their families with impunity, used snatch squads, set up illegal road blocks and vandalised cars and property belonging to miners and their supporters. No expense was spared by the state in this campaign, one that it was determined to win at all costs, and much of this was under the direction of the secret Whitehall group, MISC57, set up in 1981 for this very purpose. Also against the miners were the DHSS, which illegally stopped dole payments, the media of course with the BBC at its head showing it was not above some North Korean-style film manipulation. The Director-General of MI5 at the time, Stella Rimington, wrote in her 2001 biography about how MI5 used its counter-subversive agents against the miners. Stipendiary magistrates were leaned upon, legal rights for the miners were ignored, police evidence was crudely fabricated and tightly restrictive bail conditions were backed up by courts. All this could have been overcome, and many workers were being further radicalised by the repression, but the NUM with its nationalist and corporatist agenda was mainly responsible for isolating the strike.

The trade unions are now state structures whose role is to oversee, channel, even initiate the actions of workers in order to subsequently control the force of the working class. As state organisations representing the national interest, the trade unions rely on a regimen of information coming to the top through the union conduits that exist deep into any strike, discontent or actions by the workers. The union structures also lend themselves to infiltration by other parts of the state and the secret services in particular. A news report for the BBC, 24 October 2002, said that Joe Gormley, a past president of the National Union of Miners, was a Special Branch informant. Also, during the 70's when more and more wildcat strikes were breaking out, the report said that more than 20 trade union leaders were talking to Special Branch. Files released under the Freedom of Information Act point to the use of secret service 'moles' within the NUM during the 1984 strike and the same report (*The Guardian*, 16/5/05) details how MI5 and GCHQ eavesdropped on striking miners. It's worth noting that only a tiny fraction of secret service and government documents relating to these events have been released because of "national security". In relation to the role of the secret services in industrial relations, the same BBC report above details how the car company Ford only agreed to invest in Halewood on Merseyside because of a suspected secret deal with MI5 and Special Branch. According to a former SB officer, Tony Robinson, part of his responsibilities was "to make certain that the Ford factory is kept clear of subversives". Also on the

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'Recovery': once again the bourgeoisie administers the drug of credit

The British bourgeoisie have recently become more confident about declaring that there is an economic recovery underway – at long last – in Great Britain. Nonetheless, where more serious commentary is concerned, the sense of relief amongst bourgeois economists and commentators is still tempered with some reserve, even if it mainly concerns the length of time the recovery is taking. A Financial Times poll of economists at the beginning of the year gives a good sense of the current view of matters held by the bourgeoisie:

"After 3 grinding years of stagnation and almost seven after the financial crisis started, economists have finally regained their confidence that Britain's economy is on the move."

A large majority believes the recovery will at least maintain its recent strength and households will begin to feel better off in 2014, as wages begin to grow faster than prices and unemployment continues to fall. Few think there are clouds on the horizon in 2014, although more worry about the longer term." (Financial Times, 2/01/2014)

It should be noted that these expert commentators did not actually anticipate this much-praised upturn:

"Several quarters of strong growth have encouraged UK economists, largely caught out by the upturn's strength, to become much more optimistic." (ibid)

Well, quite! There is no reason, in other words, to suppose that these experts have somehow got the hang of where the economy is heading. Also we should note that the term 'recovery' is being used here in a specific and restricted sense. Seven years on from the start of the current financial crisis the economy is still well below the level prior to the crisis – 2 percentage points or so. In fact, therefore, there is no 'recovery' as yet, if recovery means (as it is often taken to mean) getting back to the level before the crash. If the present recovery, in the sense of a period of sustained growth, does indeed continue as the economists hope, then the economy might actually recover (in the sense of getting back to where it started) sometime before the next election. Some economists have actually noted that, in this respect, the performance of the economy is actually worse than during the Great Depression.

The global picture

It is necessary to see matters in a wider context. The British economy is not isolated from the rest of the world economy. The European economy, for example, was mired in recession for no less than 18 months and it is not really out of the woods yet:

"The [UK] was one of the few to beat expectations in the second half of 2013, when the recoveries in the euro area and Japan faltered." (ibid)

It should be noted that it is only in the current period that Britain appears to be doing better than its rivals:

"Despite its strong performance over the past year, the UK economy has consistently lagged behind most rivals since the crash. Until last year it was among the worst performers of the Group of Seven economies." (ibid)

It is also the case that China, India and Brazil – all members of the so-called BRIC group of countries – have been suffering severely recently at the economic level. In the case of Brazil this has had repercussions at the social level, showing the underlying instability that characterises all these countries. Indian growth has slowed significantly so that the rupee has weakened to the extent that it is causing serious worry to the Indian bourgeoisie. This is true even though the rate of growth looks very healthy compared with the advanced economies – this point also applies to China. China's rate of growth is still over 7% (according to the official figures at least):

"From the overall situation we can predict that the future industrial growth rate will decline, the export growth rate may drop and economic growth is still under downward pressure," said Zhang Liqun, an economist, in a statement accompanying the release of [an official purchasing managers' index]." (ibid)

The Chinese bourgeoisie is very conscious of

the fact that the economic and social situation in China is very fragile, unlike most Western commentators who tend to be mesmerised by China's growth rates. However, even these commentators have toned down their references to the glittering prospects offered by the process of 'globalisation'. In general, all that the bourgeois commentators mean by talking about globalisation is that they are hoping that China (and India and Brazil) will grow with sufficient strength to make up for the lack of demand in the Western economies and supply a sufficiency of markets to keep them functioning. And we have arrived at a point where the prospects for that happening are clearly diminished very severely. This has been accepted by the bourgeoisie increasingly over the last months.

China responded to the global financial crisis with a rapid and very large extension of credit to keep its economy moving and now has to find a means of dealing with the overhang to keep its banking and shadow banking system intact, which sounds familiar¹. China experiences the global

1. Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke provided a definition of shadow banking in April 2012: "Shadow banking, as usually defined, comprises a diverse set of institutions and markets that, collectively, carry out traditional banking functions—but do so outside, or in ways only loosely linked to, the traditional system of regulated depository institutions. Examples of important components of the shadow banking system include securitisation vehicles, asset-backed commercial paper (ABCP) conduits, money market mutual funds, markets for repurchase agreements (repos), investment banks, and mortgage companies." (<http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/bernanke20120413a.htm>)

crisis of capitalism just like any economy even if its growth rates are, for the present, still something for the developed economies to envy.

Similarly, in the case of Britain, the recovery that we have been discussing here seems, at least in part, to be the result of government interventions that have been made recently – notably its intervention in the housing market, which is widely credited with helping to restore consumer confidence. And consumer confidence is cited as a key factor in the recovery:

"Though many economists this year stick to that policy advice [to change the monetary policy remit to something more expansionary], they recognise that that they did not see the change of mood that persuaded households to spend, even with incomes still under pressure." (ibid)

If this is the main factor that has caused the economists to be caught out, then that hardly suggests that this is a broad based, sustainable recovery such as the bourgeoisie are aiming for:

"Diane Coyle of Enlightenment Economics warned that the supply side of the economy was holding it back. 'There are multiple and long-standing problems with the economy's capacity to produce and export'" (ibid) She cites skills gaps and lack of finance for growing companies, for example.

Undoubtedly, the steps that the government has taken to stimulate the housing market are the most striking 'contribution' it has made to this rather lop-sided recovery. Obviously, the government can pat itself on the back if it thinks this is a major component of the recovery, as many commenta-

tors do. The problem is that the bourgeoisie is in essence resorting to the same methods which got it into so much trouble in 2007. What the bourgeoisie mean by getting the housing market moving is that prices are rising as the conditions under which loans are given are eased – thus encouraging new buyers who have been locked out of the market. These easier conditions – which are government backed – exist alongside the bourgeoisie's general policy of 'easy money' (quantitative easing and very low interest rates) that it has had in place since the financial crisis to sustain the economy. Just as the Chinese bourgeoisie are doing now, eventually the ruling class in Britain and elsewhere will have to pay a price for this in terms of restricting credit in order to avoid a new 'debt crisis'.

In sum, the ruling class is trapped in a downward spiral because its financial machinations can't overcome the basic contradictions of its system, which is perpetually driven to produce more than what Marx called the "restricted consumption of the masses" can absorb. This is not overproduction in relation to need, but overproduction in relation to demand backed by the ability to pay. The drug of easy credit may bring temporary relief to the patient but in the end the medicine only exacerbates the disease: giving the consumer money to pay for your own production is ultimately self-defeating unless it is accompanied by the possibility of opening up new markets, and this is severely limited in a world where capital already dominates almost every corner of human existence. **Hardin, 10.1.14**

Cuts: capitalism has no alternative

At the beginning of January, outlining the coalition government's Spending Review of 2016-17 and 2017-18, George Osborne 'alarmed' Iain Duncan Smith and 'angered' Nick Clegg by proposing that the initial £25 billion in spending reductions would include £12 billion in welfare cuts.

This in no way indicates that there are serious differences between these government politicians. One senior government figure has described this as "a difference in narrative between George Osborne and Iain Duncan Smith who both want to cut back the welfare state ... There is the lopping off narrative of George Osborne and then there is the narrative of making people less reliant on the welfare state by making work pay. But that takes a long time"¹. Nick Clegg has another narrative: while agreeing to the proposed £25 billion deficit reductions it is "lopsided and unbalanced" to take all this from spending and "the only people in society, the only section in society, which will bear the burden of further fiscal consolidation are the working-age poor".

When we look at the reality behind these exchanges we will see that (a) all these politicians are accomplished bare-faced liars, even when they speak the language of harsh truths; (b) the cuts they envisage are every bit as vicious as described in Osborne's announcement but will be much more widespread; and (c) the bourgeoisie and their government have no choice but to continue to attack the conditions of the working class in the defence of capitalism.

Dishonesty from all sides

Let us start with Clegg's concern to balance benefit cuts with tax. The LibDems envisage 20% of the £25 billion will come from tax, and there is a definite proposal for a mansion tax on homes worth £2 million. This is nothing but a fig leaf to hide their support for the cuts, as they carefully publicise a proposal that will not impinge on the working class and the vast majority of the population, all the better to lull us into a false sense of

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/06/cabinet-split-george-osborne-welfare-cuts>

security – and to get elected.

Iain Duncan Smith takes the medal for common or garden hypocrisy with the narrative that cutting benefit is good for you by making work pay. The only way to do that in the capitalist crisis is to cut benefits ... but the majority of people receiving working age benefits are actually in work, getting working tax credits or housing benefit. Nor does he tell us where all the new jobs will come from.

If we look outside the present government to the Labour shadow chancellor, a comment by Simon Jenkins shows that there is no alternative on offer here. "Indeed, after listening to Balls evade every question put to him this week, I realised he would have done much the same as Osborne, mistakes and all. Balls never challenged Osborne's subservience to the City and the Bank. He never questioned the liquidity squeeze or demanded risks be taken with inflation."²

Harsh realities of the cuts

The political parties have no basic differences when it comes to attacking working class living standards, especially those of the most vulnerable sectors, such as the young and the pensioners. Take the removal of housing benefit from young people under 25. In large cities such as London it is usually not possible to obtain independent housing on a single average wage so those unable to live with parents, even among the employed, will be forced into appalling crowding or homelessness. The overall cost of housing benefit to those under 25 is currently £1.8 billion according to the Department of Work and Pension figure, but the measure will only save about half that, while those with children or fleeing domestic violence are exempted. The 'balancing' measure to means test social housing for those on £60,000 to £70,000 a year might save £40-£76 million (see *Guardian* article, note 1). The article quotes a Whitehall source saying "It is laughable that you can get anywhere near £12bn in cuts this way".

If we look at the figures of what Osborne's poli-

2. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/07/george-osborne-talks-tough-acts-labour-chancellor>

cies will save we can see that he hasn't told us the half or even the 90% of where £12 billion will be saved from benefits, let alone the full £25 billion is coming from. The blighted perspectives for young people today are real enough, but we should realise that if we accept the chancellor's logic the attacks will have to encompass the whole working class: "Even for a budget as large as welfare, £12bn is not a trivial sum. It is the equivalent of freezing the value of all working-age welfare benefits for five years."³ In particular we can already see that the new rules for Universal Credit, which will cover tax credit and housing benefit in future, are making it impossible for many of those relying on housing benefit to get rented accommodation at all.

Except for pensioners – surely they'll be OK with the Cameron's promise of a 'triple lock' on the state pension to rise with the higher of prices, pay or 2.5%? Pensions are, in reality, also under attack, chiefly through the rise in the pension age. And the triple lock will not change a situation in which those reliant on the state pension are condemned to a life of poverty: the basic state pension of £110.15 a week, plus £200 winter fuel allowance, works out to less than £6,000 a year or about half the pay for a 40 hour week on the minimum wage. Like pensions, even the areas of the economy that are 'protected' or 'ring fenced' such as health or education are inadequate and feeling the squeeze.

With capitalism caught in an irresolvable crisis of overproduction, each business and each national economy is fighting to gain a share of a market that is too narrow to keep them all going. It is not a question of more or less state, but of how the state will manage to attack the living standards of the working class to make its economy more competitive. For workers it is a question of recognising that the whole working class is under attack and that we can only resist together. **Melmoth/Alex 11.1.14**

3. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/06/george-osborne-engineering-role-state>

Ukraine: Russia's offensive against its great power rivals

Since 21 November, Ukraine has been going through a political crisis which looks a lot like the so-called 'Orange Revolution' of 2004. As in 2004, the pro-Russian faction is at loggerheads with the opposition, the declared partisan of 'opening up to the West'. There is the same sharpening of diplomatic tensions between Russia and the countries of the European Union and the USA.

However this remake is not a simple copy. In 2004 the rejection of an obviously rigged election lit the fuse; today it's the rejection by President Viktor Yanukovich of the agreement on association proposed by the EU that's at the origin of the crisis. This issue with the EU, a week before the date envisaged for the signing of the agreement, provoked a violent offensive against the government from the different pro-European factions of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, who have been shouting about "high treason" and demanding the resignation of the President. Following calls for "the whole people to respond to this as if it was a coup d'État, i.e. by coming out on the streets"¹, the demonstrators occupied the town centre of Kiev and camped out on Independence Square, the symbolic centre of the Orange Revolution. The brutal repression, the confrontations and large number of injuries led the prime minister Mykola Azarov to declare that "what's happening has all the signs of a coup d'État" and to organise counter-demonstrations. As in 2004, the media in the big democratic countries made a lot of noise about the will of the Ukrainian people to free itself from the Moscow-backed clique in power. The photos and reporting didn't so much put forward the perspective of democracy but the violent repression by the pro-Russian faction, the lies of Russia and the diktats of Putin. The hope of a better, freer life is no longer tied to the perspective of an electoral victory by the opposition, which today is in a minority, unlike in 2004 when Victor Yushchenko was a sure bet to win.

Ukraine: an imperialist prize

In 2005, with regard to the Orange Revolution, we wrote:

"Behind this barrage, the essential question has nothing to do with the struggle for democracy. The real issue is the ever growing confrontation among the great powers, in particular the US's present offensive against Russia, which aims at getting Ukraine out of the Russian sphere of influence. It is important to note that Putin directed his anger essentially against the US. In fact, it is the US which is behind the candidate Yushchenko and his 'orange' movement. At the time of a conference in New Delhi on December 5, the leader of the Kremlin denounced the US for trying to "reshape the diversity of civilization through the principles of a unipolar world, the equivalent of a boot camp" and impose "a dictatorship in international affairs, made up of a pretty-sounding pseudo-democratic verbiage". Putin has not been afraid of throwing in the face of the US the reality of its own situation in Iraq when, on December 7 in Moscow he pointed out to the Iraqi prime minister that he could not figure out "how it's possible to organize elections in the context of a total occupation by foreign troops"! It is with the same logic that the Russian president opposed the declaration by the 55 OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) countries in support of the process taking place in Ukraine and confirming the organization's role in monitoring the unfolding of the third round of the presidential elections of December 26. The humiliation the 'international community' inflicted on Putin by refusing to acknowledge his own backyard is aggravated by the fact that several hundred observers from not only the US, but also from Great Britain and Germany, will be sent.

Ever since the collapse of the USSR and the catastrophic constitution of the Commonwealth of Independent States (which was meant to salvage the crumbs of its ex-empire), Russia's borders have been relentlessly under threat, both because of the pressure from Germany and the US, and the permanent tendency toward exploding, inherent

to it. The unleashing of the first Chechen war in 1992, then the second in 1996 under the pretext of the fight against terrorism, expresses the brutality of a power in decline trying to safeguard its strategically vital position in the Caucasus at all costs. For Moscow the war was a matter of opposing Washington's imperialist schemes, which aim at destabilizing Russia, and those of Berlin, which developed an undeniable imperialist aggressiveness, as we had seen in the spring of 1991, when Germany played a major role in the explosion of the Yugoslav conflict.

The Caucasus question is therefore far from a solution, because the US resolutely continues to advance its own interests in the area. It is in this context that we can understand Shevardnadze's eviction in 2003 by the 'rose revolution', which placed a pro-American clique in power. This has allowed the US to station its troops in the country, in addition to those already deployed in Kyrgyzstan and in Uzbekistan, north of Afghanistan. This strengthens the US' military presence south of Russia and the threat to Russia of encirclement by the US. The Ukrainian question has always been a pivotal one, whether during tsarist Russia or Soviet Russia, but today the problems is posed in an even more crucial fashion.

At the economic level, the partnership between Ukraine and Russia is of great importance to Moscow, but it is above all at the strategic and military levels that the control of Ukraine is to it of even greater importance than the Caucasus. This is because, to begin with, Ukraine is the third nuclear power in the world, thanks to the military atomic bases inherited from the ex-Eastern bloc. Moscow needs them in order to show, in the context of inter-imperialist blackmails, its capacity to have control over such great nuclear power. Secondly, if Moscow has lost all probability of gaining direct access to the Mediterranean, the loss of Ukraine would mean a weakening of the possibility to have access to the Black Sea as well. Behind the loss of access to the Black Sea, where Russia's nuclear bases and fleet are found in Sebastopol, there is the weakening of the means to gain a link with Asia and Turkey. In addition, the loss of Ukraine would dramatically weaken the Russian position vis-à-vis the European powers, and particularly Germany, while at same time it would weaken its capacity to play a role in Europe's future destiny and that of the Eastern countries, the majority of which are already pro-American. It is certain that a Ukraine turned toward the West, and therefore controlled by it and the US in particular, highlights the Russian power's total inadequacy, and stimulates an acceleration of the phenomenon of explosion of the CIS, along with a sequel of horrors. It is more than probable that such a situation would only push whole regions of Russia itself to declare independence, encouraged by the great powers"².

The big difference between today and 2004 is a result of the weakening of the USA, which has been accelerated by its succession of military adventures, notably in the Middle East. Russia's retreat on the international scene has on the other hand been attenuated, notably with the Russo-Georgian war in 2008. This conflict reversed the tendency towards rapprochement between Georgia and the EU, which Ukraine was also aspiring to. So while the first 'revolution' was an offensive by the USA against Russia, the second is by all the evidence a counter-offensive by Russia. It's president Yanukovich who sparked the hostilities by annulling the association agreement with the EU in favour of a 'Tripartite Commission' including both the EU and Russia. The accord initially envisaged would have allowed the establishment of a free trade zone that would have seen Ukraine joining the EU by the back door and thus moving closer to NATO. These attempts at rapprochement with the EU were seen by Moscow as a provocation since the aim was to tear Ukraine away from its influence. The situation in Ukraine has been essentially determined by these imperialist conflicts.

The immediate origin of this new crisis can be traced to the pressure mounted by Russia and the western powers on the Ukrainian bourgeoisie since the pro-Russian faction came to power in the 2010

elections. From this time, Angela Merkel offered to act as an intermediary in the negotiations over the gas contracts signed with Moscow in 2009 by the former prime minister, Julia Timoshenko. But Moscow immediately declined the offer, thus preventing the Europeans from sticking their noses in Russo-Ukrainian affairs.

Three months before the Vilnius Summit which was to culminate in the signing of the agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Russia issued its first warning by closing its frontiers to Ukrainian exports. A number of sectors, including steel and turbines, suffered as a result. Ukraine lost 5 billion dollars in this business; 400,000 jobs were at stake, along with numerous enterprises that work solely towards the Russian market. Moscow also resorted to the following piece of blackmail: if Ukraine doesn't join the Customs Union around Russia, the Kremlin would ask other members of this Union to close their frontiers as well³.

The various cliques of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie have been deeply divided by all this pressure. Certain oligarchs, like Rinat Akhmetov, had been opposed to signing the Vilnius agreement. At the moment, everyone is waiting to see the outcome. The pro-EU oligarchs, but also those close to Russia, are fearful of any exclusive relationship with Moscow. They want to maintain for as long as possible Ukraine's position of 'neutrality', to maintain stability until the next elections in order to postpone a confrontation with Russia. Ukraine's exclusive alignment with Russia's imperialist policies is thus not accepted, even by the pro-Russian faction.

On the other hand, the pressures from the EU are not without their own contradictions. The main outlets of Ukrainian industry and agriculture are the countries of the former Soviet Union. Ukraine exports next to nothing to the EU countries, which is on the verge of signing a free trade agreement for commodities which don't actually exist! For Ukrainian commodities to meet with European standards, industry would have to invest around 160 billion dollars in the productive apparatus.

For the western powers, Ukraine is mainly of interest as a supplementary sphere of influence. Customs barriers between Ukraine and Russia are practically non-existent – there are few customs duties. Thus both from Moscow's and the west's points of view, the agreement with the EU boils down to opening Russia up to western commodities. Obviously, this is unacceptable for Russia.

The working class must not be taken in by the democratic lie

Ukraine is being hit by the contradictions between its economic interests and the pressures of imperialism. This impasse is undermining the coherence of its various bourgeois factions and pushing them into an irrational stance, notably the opposition. While the party in government is more or less for the 'neutrality' of the Ukraine, the opposition is trying to sell the Ukrainian population the illusion of a standard of living comparable to that of the Europeans if Ukraine would only sign the agreement with the EU. But its heterogeneous composition, which is a difference with 2004, shows the degree to which the advance of decomposition has put its mark on any political perspective. The most lucid European analyses⁴, which are in principle in favour of Ukraine's European orientation, don't hide this:

"If this opposition takes power, I don't see very well how it will turn out for an opposition led by a boxer who may be affable enough but isn't up to running a government. Then the next personality is Timoshenko and her team, and everyone knows that this is a mafia team from the word go. There really are big questions about the financial honesty of this team – that's why she's in prison. Then the third component is the Nazis⁵. Thus Nazis plus mafia plus incompetent people – it would be a

3. Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia, which along with Russia are Ukraine's main trade outlets

4. See the interview with Ivan Blot about the Ukrainian opposition on *The Voice of Russia*

5. The Svoboda party is formally called the National Socialist Party of Ukraine. Historically it descends from the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, whose armed wing (the UPA) actively collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War and massacred the Jews of Galicia in western Ukraine

catastrophe. It would be a government like certain states in sub-Saharan Africa". Here we see clear verification of the fact that "The area where the decomposition of capitalist society is expressed in the most spectacular way is that of military conflicts and international relations in general"⁶.

The ideological grip of the different factions of the political apparatus is being undermined by the contradictions of the situation. The division of labour that is normal in the more developed democratic countries doesn't work very well here. But this doesn't stop the democratic mystification being used against the working class in Ukraine as much as at the international level. Here too we have the supposed struggle between democracy and dictatorship. The bourgeoisie is also well able to play on the nationalist strings which are so well kept up in Ukraine. The appeals to the interests of the 'Ukrainian nation' peddled by the pro-Russian faction are echoed by the many national flags carried in the demonstrations.

The 'Orange Wave' of 2004 was the result of divisions within the ruling class which weakened the position of Victor Yanukovich⁷. Control of the state apparatus began to escape him. The success of his rival, Yuchenko, was to a large extent due to the paralysis of the authority of the central state, but also to Yuchenko's ability to make use of the official values of the regime of Leonid Kuchma, president between 1994 and 2005: nationalism, democracy, the market and the so-called 'European option'. Yuchenko became the 'saviour of the nation' and the subject of a personality cult. The ideology of the 'Orange' movement was in no way different from the mystifications the bourgeoisie had used to brainwash the population for 14 years. The masses who supported Viktor Yuchenko or who backed Yanukovich were simply pawns manipulated by different bourgeois factions in the interest of this or that imperialist option. Today the situation is no different in this respect. The 'democratic choice' is just a trap.

We could add that Yuchenko, whose clan took power after the 'Orange Revolution', did not hesitate to impose repression and sacrifices on the working class when he was the prime minister and head banker of the government of his pro-Russian predecessor, Kuchma. The Yuchenko clan not only made use of the illusions of the Ukrainian population to get into power, but also considerably enriched itself on the back of the state, fully justifying its reputation as a mafia-like clique and resulting in the imprisonment of his accomplice, Julia Timoshenko.

But this same Timoshenko, heroine of democracy and the Orange Revolution, is at the origin of 15 billion dollars of credit from the IMF obtained through tough negotiating for three months. As an annex for this agreement, this is what she obtained for the working class in Ukraine: raising of the retirement age, increase in local taxes, in the price of electricity, water, etc.

In spite of their disagreements about imperialist options, the different political factions of the bourgeoisie, from right to left, have no other perspective than to force the working class into poverty. To take part in elections for this or that political clan will not slow down the attacks. Above all, by ranging itself behind a political faction of the bourgeoisie and behind democratic slogans, the workers lose their capacity to struggle on their own class ground.

Ukraine and all the sharks swimming around it express the reality of a capitalist system at the end of its tether. The working class is the only class radically opposed to this system. It must above all defend its own historic perspective and fight against all the campaigns aimed at mobilising it for the battles between competing bourgeois cliques, each one in a bigger dead end than the next one. The proletarian revolution is not opposed to a particular bourgeois clique and in favour of another, but is against their whole system – capitalism. **Sam 22/12/13.**

6. Resolution on the international situation from the 20th Congress of the ICC http://en.internationalism.org/inter/133_ukraine.htm

7. See 'Ukraine, the authoritarian prison and the trap of democracy' http://en.internationalism.org/ir/126_authoritarian_democracy

1. Appeal by Julia Timoshenko, the head of the clan in power between 2005 and 2009, issued from prison

2. http://en.internationalism.org/inter/133_ukraine.htm

Mali, Central African Republic: behind the democratic alibi, imperialist war

As capitalist society slowly unravels, its inner nature as a war of each against all comes openly to the surface, and takes on a particularly savage form in its weakest regions, where pogroms, inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence threaten the basic social fabric. In the Middle East, in Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria, the divide between Sunni and Shia Muslims has been deepened by a series of suicide attacks by al-Qaida type groups on Shia mosques and gatherings. In Africa, the 'world's youngest state', South Sudan, is collapsing into a horrific chaos marked by massacres between Nuer and Dinka tribal groups; in the Central African Republic, Muslim and Christian gangs vie with each other in brutality. But as this article written by our French comrades shows, these expressions of barbarism at the local level are exacerbated and even manipulated by the bigger imperialist powers who are seeking to defend their own interests at all costs. In Syria, for example, the forces on the ground are sustained by players on the global arena: Assad's Shia/Alawite regime by Iran, Russia and China; the 'moderate' Sunni rebels by the US and Britain, and the radical (Sunni) Islamists by countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In the Central African Republic, France has been supporting Muslim militias against their own former pawn who had turned for help to the rival South African imperialism, which is in turn backed by China. The permutations and alliances change constantly, but what doesn't go away is the way that imperialist powers will make use of any local dictator, army or armed gang in the never-ending struggle against their rivals. WR, 11.1.14

Peace does not reign in Mali! On the contrary, French imperialism is getting more and more dragged into the chaos there. But at the same time France has decided to intervene in the nearby Central African Republic, in order, it claims, to "protect" the population and "re-establish order and allow an improvement in the humanitarian situation". The media have been showing images of the massacres taking place in the CAR, with the US state department talking about a "pre-genocidal" situation. But the press doesn't talk about the responsibility of France in the explosion of this barbarism, even though France has long been an active factor in the crimes committed in its former colonies and spheres of influence (the Rwandan genocide being a prime example!).

Regarding Mali, contrary to the lying statements by François Hollande, there has been no "victory over the terrorist groups". France has certainly obliged the Malian cliques to organise 'free and democratic' elections (presidential last August and legislative in November) in order to "restore the Malian state and ensure peace", but this propaganda is at total variance with the facts.

Radio silence on the new war in Mali

"Why commit 1500 soldiers to this 'reconquest' of North Mali? Supplemented by some elements of the Malian army and the UN African force whose French officers deplore 'their lack of fighting spirit and their mediocre equipment'. Finally, what a bizarre idea to have baptised this new French engagement 'Operation Hydra', referring to the seven-headed serpent whose heads grow back after being chopped off... In fact, combat planes have been intervening regularly and there have been some tough battles near Gao and the border with Niger... in Bamako, when Admiral Guillard (head of the French forces) talked shop with general Marc Fourcaud, commander of the French expeditionary force, he carefully avoided fixing a date for the end of their intervention: 'we need to increase our adaptability, imagination and vigilance in the face of an enemy that is willing to fight to the end'. That's another way of saying that this is not 'a simple counter-terrorist action' as claimed by Jean-Yves Le Drian, minister of defence" (*Le Canard enchaîné*, 30.10.13).

"Despite the presence of thousands of French

1. http://en.internationalism.org/wr/274_france_rwanda.htm

and African soldiers and the efforts to track them down, the terrorist groups have carried out three murderous attacks since September 2013. Particularly elaborate was the raid on 23 October at Tessalit in the north east of Mali, against the Chadian soldiers of the integrated UN mission for the stabilisation of Mali (Minusma); this tells us a great deal about the capacity for resistance of Aqmi and Mujao" (*Courrier international* 7-13.11.13)

To this can be added a series of murderous clashes between the Malian army and the nationalist forces of the NMLA over control of the town of Kidal, not counting the bloody hostage-taking and suicide bombings which regularly hit the civilian population.

All this confirms that in Mali there is still a brutal war going on between the Islamist gangs and the gangs acting in defence of order and democracy, all of them hungry for blood and economic gain, all of them cynically sowing death and desolation among the populations of the Sahel.

Hollande and French imperialism dive into the Central African quagmire

Since March 2013, the Central African Republic has been sinking into nightmarish disorder, following the military coup piloted by a coalition of rebels calling itself the Seleka, which ousted former president François Bozizé, who also came to power in a putsch. He was replaced by Michael Djotodia². Once in power, the armed groups got down to murder, rape, pillage of resources like gold and diamonds and all kinds of rackets. To escape this monstrous carnage, hundreds of thousands of people have had to leave their homes and take refuge either in the forest or in neighbouring countries. But it's not just the former rebels, now in power, who are sowing terror – the partisans of the former president are doing the same³. All this is happening under the indifferent gaze of hundreds of French soldiers who have limited themselves to counting the dead. No doubt haunted by the 'Rwandan experience', when it was accused of complicity in the genocide, French imperialism has launched itself into a new intervention in Central Africa.

"It's just a matter of days; France will launch a military operation in the Central African Republic. 'A precise operation, limited in time, aimed at re-establishing order and allowing an improvement'. Since this article was written, Djotodia has himself resigned, prompting new disorders in the capital. 3. This conflict has taken on an inter-religious form because the Seleka is mainly Muslim and has been carrying out atrocities against Christians. This led to the formation of the "anti-balaka", Christian militias who have in turn been attacking Muslims and destroying mosques.

ment of the humanitarian situation' indicated a source from the ministry of defence" (*Le Monde* 23.11.13)

At the time of writing, the French government has announced that it will be sending another 1000 troops to reinforce the 400 already there.

The criminal responsibilities of France in Central Africa

"This is a country which Paris knows well, the best as well as the worst. It is almost a caricature of what used to be called 'Françafrique'. A state where France made and unmade regimes, replacing dictators escaping its control with others more malleable. In recent months we have seen the mysterious visits to Bangui by Claude Guéant and Jean-Christophe Mitterand, two figures of a moribund 'Françafrique'" (*Le Monde* 28.11.13)



The French gendarme has again set out on the road to Bangui to re-establish its neo-colonial order, but contrary to the big lies of the Hollande government, this is not to "allow an improvement of the humanitarian situation" or because of the "extraordinary exactions" going on there. Because just a year ago the French authorities were averting their eyes from some "abominable acts" in the CAR and there has been a grand media silence about them up to now. And for good reason. The French government is not at all at ease denouncing the massacres and mutilations being suffered by the population of the CAR. Let's not forget that François Bozizé, who came to power in 2003 via a coup directed from afar by Paris, was overthrown at the end of March 2012 by a coalition of armed groups (the 'Seleka') covertly supported by France. In reality, French imperialism made use of these armed gangs to get rid of the former 'dictator' who had been getting away from their control:

"Jakob Zuma didn't hesitate for a moment to rush to the aid of Central African president François Bozizé when the latter, threatened by an armed rebellion, appealed to him in December 2012. The

fact that Bozizé has been abandoned by France and is supported in a rather ambiguous way by his Francophone neighbours – which are seen as so many neo-colonies by Pretoria – increased South Africa's determination to intervene. In one week, 400 soldiers from the South African Defence Forces (SANDF) were transported to Bangui. Installed in local police stations but also in Bossembele and Bossangoa in the centre of the country, they have had no contact either with the multinational African forces on the spot, or with the UN, or with the French contingent. Jakob Zuma doesn't have to report to anyone. And the big Chinese firms, who have been operating in secret in the north east of the CAR, where there are much-sought after oil reserves, are not complaining. They are counting on South African protection to make their first searches". (*Jeune Afrique*, 10.03.13)

Here we see the real reason for the abandonment of ex-President Bozizé: he betrayed his French masters by getting into bed with South Africa, a declared rival of France behind whom, barely concealed, stands China, a redoubtable rival for the oil resources of the country. However, given the 'defence agreements' between France and the CAR (which among other things allows a permanent French military presence in the CAR), Hollande should have supported Bozizé when he appealed to him. Instead of that, the French president decided to 'punish' his former dictator friend by all possible means, which included permitting the advance of the blood-soaked Séléka gangs towards the presidential palace, which had previously been surrounded by hundreds of French troops.

We can measure the cynicism of François Hollande when he now says that "there have been some abominable actions in the Central African Republic. There's chaos, serious and extraordinary exactions. We have to act".

This is the hypocritical language aimed at camouflaging and justifying the abominable crimes which the former colonial power is ready to commit in the CAR, at masking its complicity with the various murderous gangs who are ravaging the country.

Clearly the Hollande government doesn't give a damn about what happens to the populations of Central Africa, Mali, or elsewhere. What it does care about is defending the interests of the national capital in one of the last bastions of French imperialism, the Sahel, a highly strategic zone replete with raw materials, in the face of the other imperialist sharks challenging for influence in the region.

Amina 29.11.13

Continued from page 2

The spying game

role of Special Branch, ex-agent Annie Machon in "Spies, Lies and Whistleblowers" writes about how this agency constantly spied on groups like the Socialist Workers' Party, Militant Tendency and the CPGB. She adds that in the time before computerised spying took off, MI5 had more than a million personal files (PFs) on people some of them written in long-hand. A file was even made up for a school pupil who had written to the CPGB for information for his school project; he was labelled "a communist sympathiser".

Arrogant and confident after their success over the miners, the police, from chief constables downwards, engineered a major conspiracy over their deadly role in the manslaughter of 96 people at Hillsborough football stadium in April 1989. The conspiracy extended across the whole state including the NHS, local councils, the media with its police-induced slanders and innuendo, local and national politicians, the Football Association and others. Then there's the infiltration of police spies into mainly innocuous protests, again showing how fragile the state is, paranoid and intolerant of its citizens who think that they have demo-

cratic 'rights'. The ruling class' complete lack of scruples was shown in the way the police used the names of dead children in order to do their dirty work, including inciting provocations and having sex with the women that they duped - "raped by the state" indeed. And there are the death squads and the slanders of innocent victims and the conspiracies following their murders: the electrician Charles de Menezes and the paper-seller Ian Tomlinson. There are also what appear to be the cold-blooded killings of Azelle Rodney in April 2005, and Mark Duggan more recently. There are many more examples, too numerous to mention here, of how the police get away with murder. The state is everywhere and the police and security services are its main agents. And all this violence, violation and abuse is happening in democratic Britain where, increasingly, any form of protest is deemed illegal by the state and its police.

None of this is peculiar to Britain: spying and state repression are natural to the rule of capital, and they can only be strengthened by the descent of the system into crisis and chaos. In the face of this, calls for 'transparency' and the 'right to know'

are just feeble attempts to shore up the democratic system. No amount of transparency can alter the general tendency to the fortress state. Only the class struggle of the exploited can obstruct the repressive power of the state and open the way to its ultimate destruction. Baboon 24/12/13

This article is a contribution by a sympathiser of the ICC.

1914 'commemoration'

Right and left justify imperialist war

The year of 'commemorating' the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War began with a controversy between Right and Left which illustrates rather well how both wings of the ruling class intend us to understand the significance of the 1914-18 war.

In an article in the *Daily Mail* (where else?), education secretary Michael Gove gave it to us straight. Denouncing "left wing academics", TV shows like *Blackadder* and *The Monocled Mutineer* and the musical *Oh What a Lovely War!* for belittling Britain and denigrating patriotism, Gove insists that for all its attendant horrors, the Great War was "plainly a just war"¹. Picking up the torch from a weighty tome by Max Hastings published last year², Gove insists that the real cause of the war was aggressive Prussian militarism and that it was right to resist it. Or as Hastings put it in an article in the *Mail* last summer, the purpose of the 1914 commemorations should be "to explain to a new generation that World War One was critical to the freedom of Western Europe".

Gove's article was criticised both in the lead and in an editorial in the *Observer* of 5 January, while in the same edition space was given to the shadow education spokesman Tristram Hunt, a cultured historian who has written a rather sympathetic biography of Engels. Hunt's article was entitled 'Using history for politicking is tawdry, Mr Gove'³, and its central theme is that while Gove is sowing political divisions by attacking the Left, the commemorations should be a time for national reflection that will lead to an "understanding of the meaning and memory of the First World War". Hunt insists that "contrary to the assertions of Michael Gove and the *Daily Mail*, the left needs no lessons on 'the virtues of patriotism, honour and courage'". He lays particular emphasis on the role of ordinary working class people in the conduct of the war:

"Appeals by trade union leaders to oppose German aggression, particularly against Belgium, led more than 250,000 of their members to enlist by Christmas 1914, with 25% of miners volunteering before conscription. Typical was John Ward, one of my predecessors as MP for Stoke-on-Trent and the leader of the Navvies' Union. To 'fight Prussianism', he raised three pioneer battalions from his members and, commissioned as a colonel by Lord Kitchener, led them to battle in France, Italy and Russia".

Hunt also reminds us of the important changes brought about by the war – the vote was extended to all working class men and to women over 30 in 1918, "culture and technology at all levels were transformed by the war and colonial frontiers redrawn, with Irish independence signposting the future decline of empire".

Hunt doesn't agree with Gove's one-sided view that the war was all the fault of the Kaiser and "Prussianism", citing other historians who have shown the rather sordid role played by Russia and Serbia in the outbreak of the conflict. Rather significantly, British imperialism's equally sordid role is not analysed. But Hunt does argue that it's futile to play the "First World War blame game". His main concern is not to look into the origins of the war but to contribute to a national commemoration that will "reflect and embrace the multiple histories that the war evinces – from the Royal British Legion to the National Union of Railwaymen to the Indian, Ethiopian and Australian servicemen fighting for the empire". No doubt there will be room in Hunt's multicultural war effort for the pacifists and conscientious objectors too.

In sum, while the right sows divisions, what Hunt calls the Left stands for national unity. The working class has its role to play, but only as part of this patriotic union.

The working class against imperialist war

In an attempt to show that he's not at all soft on Prussian aggression, Hunt provides us with a rather interesting quote from Kaiser Wilhelm, a word of advice to Chancellor von Bulow in 1905: "First cow the socialists, behead them and make them harmless, with a bloodbath if necessary, and then make war abroad. But not before and not both together".

Hunt uses this quote to back up his argument about the patriotism of the left: "The British left responded to such fascism by largely supporting the war effort". Leaving aside the sloppy characterisation of the Kaiser's policy as "fascism", what this quote reveals above all is the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie – its understanding that it could only go to war if the working class movement had first been "cowed" or "beheaded". This applied to every national section of the ruling class, not only the German. But the Kaiser's proposed bloodbath proved unnecessary precisely because the ancestors of today's 'left' – the dominant right wing of the socialist parties of the day – were the product of a long period of internal degeneration in the workers' movement, and when the call came in 1914 they proved to be no less patriotic than the official representatives of empire. And Hunt is quite right to highlight the crucial role played by the trade unions – again, in every country – in the mobilisation for war.

This insidious process of degeneration and ultimate betrayal by its own organisations left the working class totally disoriented at the outbreak of war and prey to the nationalist hysteria that made the mobilisation for war possible. The bloodbath of the trenches quickly followed. But the defeat was not total. A minority of the workers' movement – such as the Bolsheviks in Russia and the Spartacists in Germany – kept the flag of internationalism flying against the national flags of the ruling class. And eventually the heightened exploitation in the factories, the spread of hunger and the pointless massacre on the battlefields gave rise to growing discontent, expressing itself from 1916 on in strikes, mutinies, the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils and revolution in Russia and Germany, which forced the ruling classes to bring the war to a hasty conclusion so that they could unite against the revolutionary menace.

When the working class forgot its international interests and succumbed to the myth of national unity, it was led off to the slaughter. When it remembered that it has no country, that its enemy is capitalist exploitation in all countries, the war machine was paralysed and a window was opened on a new world where nations, states, and imperialist wars are a relic of the prehistoric past. That is the "understanding", the fundamental lesson, that we should draw from 1914. **Amos 5/1/14**

Postscript

After this article was written the *Guardian* published further articles about this controversy, both of them taking up positions well to the left of Tristram Hunt. In a spirited defence of the truth contained in the humour of *Blackadder Goes Forth*⁴, Stuart Jeffries takes Hunt to task for being a bit of a wimp and having his eye on the next election, lamenting that he wasn't enough of a "lion" to stick up for *Blackadder's* view of the conduct of the war as a "toff-hobbled martial shambles" and for the arguments of various left wing historians who have shown the causes of the war in the imperial ambitions of all the Great Powers of the day, not just Germany. He also takes issue with Hunt's assertion that the British left in the main supported the war, citing the case of

4. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/06/blackadder-michael-gove-historians-first-world-war>



The sailor's mutiny in northern Germany in 1918 sparked the German revolution and helped end the war

Bertrand Russell who was a conscientious objector. But once again there's not a word about the working class resistance to the war – the strikes on the Clyde, the internationalist stance adopted by revolutionaries like Sylvia Pankhurst or John Mclean. And in the end Jeffries' alternative to Gove's uncritical patriotism is a more conscious, considered patriotism: "What Gove doesn't argue is the more interesting point that the very basis for British patriotism relies, not on accepting the historical narratives he believes in, but in part on the hard satirical work involved in undermining those myths. Let others take themselves seriously. Uncritical patriotism? Unreflective pride in the military? Unquestioning conviction that we're a force for good? Flags on the front lawn? What are we now, American?"

Seamus Milne then weighed into the debate with a much more intransigent title: 'First World War an imperial bloodbath that's a warning, not a noble cause'⁵. The article is quite explicit about the nature of the 1914-18 war and in rejecting Gove's apologetics about the war as a defence of western democracy:

"This is all preposterous nonsense. Unlike the second world war, the bloodbath of 1914-18 was not a just war. It was a savage industrial slaughter perpetrated by a gang of predatory imperial powers, locked in a deadly struggle to capture and carve up territories, markets and resources.

5. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/08/first-world-war-imperial-bloodbath-warning-noble-cause>

Continued from page 8

From junk food to famine: a system that poisons and starves

this means that looking for solutions at the local and individual level leads, in the short or medium term, to an impasse. Acting as a responsible and well informed 'citizen', that's to say as an individual, can never give a solution to the immense waste that capitalism generates. The search for 'individual' or 'local' solutions carries the illusion that there could be an immediate response to the contradictions of capitalism. As we have seen the reasons are profoundly historical and political. The real fight must be carried out at this level. "Now the propagandists of capital call on us to 'improve our eating habits', to 'reduce weight' in order to prevent, to eliminate the 'junk food' in the schools... Not a word on raising wages! Nothing to ameliorate the material conditions of the oppressed! They talk about habits, seasonal food, or congenital illness... But they hide the real cause of humanity's worsening nutrition: the crisis of a system that exists only for profit."¹⁰ **Enkidu, 25/10/13**

10. 'Mexique: l'obésité, nouveau visage de la misère sous le capitalisme', on the ICC website June 2010.

Germany was the rising industrial power and colonial Johnny-come-lately of the time, seeking its place in the sun from the British and French empires. The war erupted directly from the fight for imperial dominance in the Balkans, as Austria-Hungary and Russia scrapped for the pickings from the crumbling Ottoman empire. All the ruling elites of Europe, tied together in a deathly quadrille of unstable alliances, shared the blame for the murderous barbarism they oversaw. The idea that Britain and its allies were defending liberal democracy, let alone international law or the rights of small nations, is simply absurd."

Any genuine marxist could endorse this view. Except for the brief phrase slipped into the first paragraph: "unlike the second world war, the bloodbath of 1914-18 was not a just war". But in this phrase is the fundamental dividing line between the mouthpieces of the left wing of the bourgeoisie and revolutionary internationalists, for whom, just like the first world war, the second world war was also "a savage industrial slaughter perpetrated by a gang of predatory imperial powers, locked in a deadly struggle to capture and carve up territories, markets and resources". Indeed, it was fought by the same powers who confronted each other in the first bloodbath, and this indicates that the war was in essence a resumption of the first, which had been 'interrupted' by the revolutions of 1917 and 1918. Once the 'Bolshevik danger' had been eliminated, once the world working class had been defeated by the combined forces of social democracy, Stalinism and fascism, the way was opened for the unfinished business of 1918 to be concluded, by even more horrible forms of barbarism than during the first, where the majority of victims were not soldiers but civilians, subjected to the multiple holocausts of Auschwitz, Stalingrad, Dresden and Hiroshima.

The idea that the Second World War was a just war unlike the first is a key element of ruling class ideology. The argument that the need to oppose Hitler meant that this was no longer an imperialist war, or that it had suddenly become permissible to fight for some of the contending imperialist powers against others, was above all the speciality of the left – the Labourites, Stalinists and Trotskyists – who played the same role of recruiting sergeants in 1939-45 as the right wing socialists in 1914-18. **Amos 11/1/14**

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2. *Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914*

3. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/04/first-world-war-michael-gove-left-bashing-history>

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The thread with the most views in the recent period was started by Lem, who posed a question about when the counter-revolution was completed in Russia. This led to a further discussion about whether the October revolution was bourgeois or proletarian in the first place, with LBird defending the first position, and Leo and others the second, as in this exchange:

LBird: That's fair enough, Leo. You think that the revolution was proletarian.

I'm merely pointing out that other Marxists think that it wasn't. Including me.

Leo: Sure, of course. I'm not saying that marxists can't think the Russian Revolution was bourgeois. I think they would be mistaken, but I wouldn't say they aren't marxists because they do so.

LBird: The best way to carry the discussion forward (for the world proletariat, if not for those who look to Bolshevism) is to examine what we mean by 'proletarian revolution'. If one *defines* 'proletarian revolution' to be 'a revolution carried out by the class conscious majority of proletarians' (ie. following Marx, that the emancipation of the class must be the act of the class itself), then clearly 1917 was not a 'proletarian revolution'.

Leo: I disagree, based on the same definition.

LBird: Firstly, the proletariat was a very minor class (the peasantry was the vast majority)

Leo: The proletariat wasn't the biggest class in Russia as a whole, it might be argued. Yet it wasn't a minor class in Moscow, Petrograd and other cities, it was in fact the major class. Can the proletariat in the cities not make a revolution just because there is a countryside in the country? By this approach, one can't claim to defend the idea of a world revolution but a Western revolution.

LBird: Secondly, the proletariat did not contain a Communist majority, even within itself (never mind a majority within the entire society).

Leo: Didn't it? By October there was a communist majority in the Soviets which is, in my opinion, the place to look at if we are inquiring on whether the proletariat had a communist majority or not...

And in contrast there is an extract of Baboon's blog on imperialism:

In order to kick this off I'm submitting here a post I made earlier on libcom regarding a discussion about the role of French imperialism in the Rwandan genocide of 1994:

I don't think that the 1994 slaughter in Rwanda and the primary role of French imperialism in promoting it can be underestimated. The context of this slaughter and the French role in it was the imperialist push of the United States and Britain in the post-eastern bloc collapse and capitalism's "New World Order", ie the role of the US in trying to keep its bloc under control in the face of its former enemy's economic and military implosion. Examples of this by no means smoothly coordinated military push by US imperialism in the face of the weakening of the Nato bloc was the Iraq war of 1992, the "humanitarian" intervention in ex-Yugoslavia in 1992 and various manoeuvres on the African continent which included developments of American and British "influence", which themselves included US training of the Tutsi militias of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. France, which was presenting itself to the world at the time as the pacifist and thoughtful alternative to the aggressive warlike Anglo duo, had already been training its Hutu killers for a number of years (Patrick de Saint Exupery, a journalist for "Figaro" and author of "L'inouvable: la France au Rwanda" - see "Le Monde Diplomatique", March 2004). Rwanda was part of a geo-strategic game between the US, Britain and France within imperialism's "new world order" (Tony Blair went on to use the 1994 Rwandan war to promote the "benign" Anglo-US intervention against Saddam's Hussein Iraq in 2003).

The "secure humanitarian zone" created by the French in the west of Rwanda at the time became the lair of all the extremist groups and representatives of the Hutu governing apparatus ("Le Monde Diplomatique", March 2004).

Exact numbers killed and legal definitions of a genocide can be a source of confusion and avoidance of the real underlying issues. Numbers seem pointless when the only difference between a Hutu

and a Tutsi is the ID card that they happen to be carrying or not. So called ethnic divisions are often just a cover for imperialist slaughter and also provide a western-backed alibi that is racially suggestive that these "ethnicities" are only warring savages and need the civilising forces of the west. But as we saw in Rwanda - and we constantly see elsewhere - these "civilising" forces are the most brutal and depraved and actively play up or create these "ethnic" divisions. You can see it today with South Sudan, capitalism's newest nation that has immediately imploded into a heap of warfare and decomposition. It's "ethnic" the western press tell us - yet of the 70 groups that lived more or less peacefully in the region together there is no word for "tribe". This was and is an imperialist construct in a country set up by Britain around a century ago in order to confront French, German and Italian interests in the region and recently involving France, Britain and the US again confronting each other with the tinsel of Hollywood and the Church of England also put to imperialist use. And all this over what was called "the first genocide of the 21st century" and the slaughter of up to 400,000 (according to NGO's) in Darfur ("Jeune Afrique", 1-14/4/2007). And this time in Sudan, apart from the usual suspects, China, which is becoming militarily adventurous on the continent, is also involved.

I also think that it is important to put the murderous crimes of Stalinism alongside those of fascism rather than oppose one against the other in some sort of political game over body counts. It's important to do this in order to show that Nazi Germany was not some sort of evil aberration from capitalism but an expression of it, with its own specificities at a particular time - as was Stalinism. And I think that it's further important, against those that support the "lesser evil", to clearly state that the murderous crimes of democracy dwarf those of Nazism and Stalinism put together and continue to do so to this day.

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From junk food to famine a system that poisons and starves, part 2

In the first part of this article we saw that the bourgeoisie gives spurious explanations to justify the persistence of malnutrition and famines. They seek to clear the capitalist system of responsibility for all the food catastrophes by blaming individuals or pointing the finger at this or that boss, this or that enterprise, using the age old tactic of finding a scapegoat. In this second article we will see to what extent this barbaric system, by encouraging waste and looting, is destructive.

The food crises which mark the development of capitalist production have been accentuated with the system's entry into decadence, and even more so in the present period of it rotting on its feet, of decomposition, often taking *qualitatively* different characteristics. And even if capitalism has always poisoned, starved and destroyed the environment, today, in seeking to exploit every last part of the world for its profit, its destructiveness has extended its ravages to the whole planet, which means that this system today threatens the very survival of the human race.

The absurdity of overproduction

By separating the use value of goods from their exchange value capitalism has historically cut humanity out of the very goal of productive activity. Does agriculture aim at the satisfaction of human needs? Well, in capitalism the answer is "no"! It is simply the production of commodities whose content and quality don't matter so long as they find a place on the world market and allows the cheaper reproduction of labour power.

And with the decadence of capitalism production has been intensified to the detriment of quality. This is the harsh reality we observe in the development of agriculture since the Second World War until the present time. Following the war the watchword was: produce, produce and produce! In most of the developed countries agribusiness has seen its capacity to produce increase at an astonishing pace. The spread of agricultural machinery and chemical products was very great. In the decades 1960-1980 the intensification of agriculture was known by the misleading name of the "green revolution". There was no consideration for ecology there! It was, in reality, a question of producing the maximum for the least cost, without much regard for the resulting quality, to face the sharper competition. But the contradictions of a system in decline could only accumulate and so increase overproduction. Produce, produce ...

but sell to whom? To the hungry? Certainly not! Lacking sufficient solvent markets the goods were very often destroyed or decayed where they lay.¹

Millions of people die of starvation in Africa and Asia, growing masses have to depend on charities in the developed countries, while numerous producers are constrained to destroy part of their product to respect their "quotas" or artificially maintain their prices.

The descent of the capitalist system into its historic crisis makes the problem worse still. On the basis of the chronic economic crisis investors greedy for profit seek to place their capital into profitable food securities (like rice or cereal), speculating and playing the market like a casino without any scruples, leaving a growing part of the world population to starve: "To give a few particularly clear figures, the price of maize has quadrupled since summer 2007, the price of grain has doubled since the beginning of 2008, and in general food prices have increased by 60% in two years in the poorer countries"². For populations in a precarious situation as in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Indonesia or the Philippines, this rise has become quite simply unbearable and has ended up provoking hunger riots at the time of what is today called the "2007-08 world food price crisis"³. In a cynical farce the same scenario, exacerbated by the high use of food crops for the production of biofuel (soya, corn, rapeseed, sugar cane), was repeated in 2010, dragging the poorest into even more extreme misery.

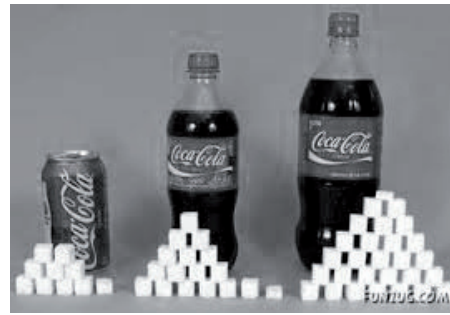
Capitalism poisons and kills

Alongside the tragedy that it reserves for the populations of the 'third world', capitalism has not forgotten the exploited in the 'developed' countries. While agricultural production has grown considerably over the last decades, allowing the global reduction in the percentage of malnourished people, we must look at the disastrous

1. Following bad commercial strategies, linked to the rise in the Indian embargo on its rice: "Thailand has lost its rank as the world's premier exporter and the country has accumulated the equivalent of one year's consumption. Hangars of the former Bangkok airport were used to stock the rice that no-one knew where to put to prevent it decaying" ("Thailand stifled by its rice", *Le Monde* 24 June 2013).

2. *International Review* 134, 'Food crisis, hunger riots, only the proletarian class struggle can put an end to famine'.

3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007%E2%80%9308_world_food_price_crisis



results. The extreme intensification of agriculture with massive and uncontrolled use of chemicals has considerably depleted the soils to the extent that the nutritional value of its products and their vitamin content has been equally depleted.⁴ Recent studies tend to show a direct correlation between the utilisation of herbicides, pesticides and fungicides in crops and the obvious increase in the number of cancers and neurodegenerative diseases.⁵ Furthermore the use of sweeteners like aspartame (E951 on the labels) or glutamate in the food industry, like the spread of food dyes, has shown itself to be very harmful to health. An experiment on rats showed that it destroys nerve cells.⁶ We are not going to make a list of all the harmful substances present in our food, as that would take pages and pages.

"It is all a question of the dose", we are told. But no study has made public or completed to show the cumulative effects of these different "doses" ingested in the same product day after day. We only have to note some of the effects of nuclear irradiation of our food: such as after the Chernobyl accident with the explosion of thyroid cancers, malformation in the population of the region following the ingestion of contaminated food. It is the same with sea food in Japan today since Fukushima. The murderous character of capitalism has well and truly taken a new dimension. To generate profit, capitalism can make its exploited swallow anything.

Echoing Engels' approach in *The condition of the working class in England*, let us recall some

4. "In the period 1961 to 1999, the use of nitrogenous and phosphate fertilisers increased by 638% and 203%, respectively, while the production of pesticides increased by 854%." *Global Food Report*, p 13, http://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/reports/Global_Food_Report.pdf?sfvrsn=0

5. See journalist Marie Monique Robin's *Notre poison quotidien*.

6. Idem.

organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

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

* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

* The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

* The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active

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

facts which show the way present day capitalism shows its concern for the health of those it exploits: "In December 2002, the affair of the relabelling of boxes of infant formula milk that had reached its use by date. The multinational illegally imported the milk from Uruguay to put it on sale in Colombia.... El Tiempo, Saturday 7 December remarked that 'to the 200 tons of milk seized, ... can be added another 120 tons seized while in the process of relabelling to appear as if it had been produced inside the country and to hide the fact that it had passed the date fit for human consumption'."⁷

Among the numerous adulterated products of capitalism we find for example Norwegian salmon which, like battery hens, is full of antibiotics and even dyes to respond to the demands of the market. The concentration of drugs in their bodies is enough to make farmed salmon into a monstrous mutant species with deformed heads or notched fins.... But because a minister in the country owns several farms and firmly holds the *omerta* code of silence, academics have been ousted for pointing out the carcinogenic danger, even the toxicity of farmed salmon. To this we should add the tons of pollutants which are found in the sea, the PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls, used as coolants) in the rivers, radioactive waste whether buried or not.⁸ ... This is without taking account of the harm from heavy metals, dioxins, asbestos carried in our food and on our tables. Water and the products of the sea, the air we breathe, the animal products we eat and cultivated land are deeply impregnated with all these sources of contamination.

There is plenty to be indignant about in this permanent food crisis across the planet, where some are starving and others are poisoned.

The anger of those who fight the aberrations of this system is profoundly justified. But, at the same time, "Controlling and reducing the level of wastage is frequently beyond the capability of the individual farmer, distributor or consumer, since it depends on market philosophies, security of power supply, quality of roads and the presence or absence of transport hubs."⁹ Ultimately

7. Christian Jacquiau, *Les coulisses du commerce équitable*, p.142. Our translation.

8. *Le Monde* 7 August 2013 reminds us that at Fukushima 300 tons of contaminated water is released into the Pacific every day.

9. *Global Food Report*, p18.

Continued on page 6

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 satiated 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

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*.