Greek debt crisis

Capitalism means austerity, none of its parties oppose it

When the Greek government decided at short notice to call a referendum it was clear that the differences between the Syriza-led coalition and the IMF/EU/EC/ECB Troika were minimal. When it came to the referendum campaign the differences between No and Yes sides, despite much melodramatic language, were, therefore, also limited. Greek Finance Minister Varoufakis accused the Troika of trying to “humiliate” Greece. “Why have they forced us to close the banks?” To frighten people. And when it’s about spreading terror, that is known as terrorism.” (El Mundo 4/7/15) Syriza claim that the purpose of the referendum was to improve the negotiating position of the Greek state. Meanwhile, the proponents of the Yes vote warned of the disastrous consequences of an exit from the Eurozone and the possibilities of leaving the EU.

Both sides mobilised the population as so many atomised individuals blindly following the campaigns of the bourgeoisie. A Greek professor quoted in the New York Times (5/7/15) said “There is no discussion of the real issues … They are exaggerating the feelings of fear and agony and creating an atmosphere that makes it impossible for anyone to think clearly.” Thinking clearly is something that the bourgeoisie discourages at every opportunity. What it needs are millions trooping into polling stations to express their passivity in the face of the bourgeoisie’s economic attacks.

Negotiating austerity

When the coalition led by Syriza assumed office after January’s election it claimed that it would end austerity. Many naively believed that this was possible. The negotiations with the Troika were undertaken in an atmosphere of charge and counter-charge. However, as the June 30 deadline approached, when Greece would default if there was no agreement, many naively believed that this was possible. The negotiations with the Troika were aimed at improving the negotiating position of the Greek state. Many naively believed that this was possible.

On defence cuts there were initially no concessions made by Syriza at all. After all national defence is one of the central concerns of every capitalist state, whether led by a party of the left, right or centre. In the end what was offered by the Greek state was close to what was demanded by the Troika.

As far as the austerity experienced in Greece over the last five years is concerned the prospect is only for the situation to worsen. The US and the IMF might speak more of restructuring debt relief, the EC/ECB more of the particular measures that must be introduced, and Syriza more about the suffering of the Greek people. No one can offer any improvements in the actual conditions of life of those living in Greece. Both Yes and No campaigns, apart from describing the impossible horrors of supporting the other side, insisted that following them would restore Greek pride. Both sides posed things in terms of the Greek nation, the Greek people and the Greek economy. Nationalists tell us that Greek workers should be proud of the fact that the Greeks work among the longest hours in Europe, despite the fact that this shows them to be among the least productive. The quality of Greek agriculture is often extolled, and yet 70% of food consumed in Greece is imported. In the final analysis Greek capitalism has proven uncompetitive and has lost out to larger and stronger economies. The problems of the Greek economy are not due to the particular Hellenic problems of corruption and the non-payment of taxes (widespread though they are), but are an expression of the international crisis of decadent capitalism.

In reality in Greece there is no prospect for a resolution of unemployment, many taxes rise, wages and pensions will be further reduced, the age of retirement will go up to 67, and further public services will decline because of a lack of viability. In practice, for all their talk of opposition to austerity, Syriza have shown themselves in continuity with the governments of New Democracy and Pasok that preceded it.

Fomenting divisions within the working class

If the population in Greece has suffered the rigours of sustained austerity, it is not unique. The economic crisis of capitalism, as it worsens, always means the capitalist class will make the working class, and other non-exploiting strata of the population, pay … in reduced wages, lost jobs, higher prices, cut services, and ultimately in imperialist war. The anti-austerity rhetoric of parties such as Syriza is exposed as just so many words as soon as they are part of government.

But the working class does not only suffer from privation and pauperisation, it also faces capitalist’s ideology and its apparatus of democracy. In Greece, in the past there have been many general strikes against austerity, these have been very much initiated, controlled and divided by the rival union federations. Far from developing any sense of class identity or the possibility of autonomous action, the unions have pulled the workers into relying on factions in parliament and support for the parties of the left. In the past this meant the social democrats Pasok and the Greek Stalinists (KKE), more recently it’s meant Syriza.

The fierce polarisation of Greek bourgeoisie politics continues to draw in the working class. Coups and counter-coups in the 1920s and 30s, the dictatorship of Metaxas, the Civil War in the 1940s, the regime of the colonels (1967-74), the emergence of Pasok and New Democracy – all these past expressions of divisions within the ruling class have found workers rallied behind factions of the bourgeoisie rather than against it.

Although the question posed in the referendum was of Byzantine complexity, the answer was reduced to a choice between ΝΑΙ or ΟΧΙ (Yes or No). OXI is not a neutral term in modern Greek culture. Every 28 October in Greece is OXI Day, a national holiday celebrating the refusal of Metaxas of an ultimatum from the Axis powers and the entrance of Greece into the Second World War. In Greece today the political parties of the bourgeoisie compete to display their nationalist credentials. None of them can offer anything but further austerity and war.

It will be a great step forward for the working class when it realises that its interests are diametrically opposed to those of the bourgeoisie. In the past there have been political minorities in Greece that have defended the perspectives of working class revolution. During the 1940s the group around Agis Stinas defended an internationalist position against the Second World War. More recently there were internationalist voices during the social movements of 2009-2011. The way forward for the working class in Greece, even if it is not an immediate prospect, is to link its struggles with those of the world working class and to develop a truly internationalist and revolutionary perspective. Car 4/7/15
The loyalty opposition

The loyal opposition remains the election with renewed strength, whilst Labour is in a “historic crisis”, or so we are told. Labour is engulfed in a leadership crisis, with the hard left candidate in the shape of Jeremy Corbyn who is not seen as a serious contender. The other candidates are too closely linked to connect with the “core vote”, to deal more realistically with the question of immigration, to be open about the necessity to make more cuts, to be the party of the Centre etc. At a time when the working class is suffering huge attacks it seems strange that the left face of the capitalist state is seeking to distance itself even further from the class, but this is a well thought-out strategy to reinforce the proletariat’s loss of confidence in its ability to struggle against these attacks and to be able of an alternative. The whole New Labour project was based on reinforcing the disorientation in the working class following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, with its rejection of Labour’s old-fashioned “socialist policies”, and its emphasis on the democratic citizen and “the people”.

Since the election there have been some small expressions of discontent, such as the unexpect- 

A vital part of the British bourgeoisie’s attempt to counter the efforts of its historical European imperialist rival was to defend democracy itself. The EU referendum crystallised in the notorious ‘fit for work’ tests carried out by Atos, was a major PR disaster for the Coalition. The Tories have been forced to set itself up as the radical opposition to the austerity measure that Labour quietly accepted. As for UKIP, this populist bogeyman served its role in stoking up the anti-immigrant climate during the election: the others parties used them as a justification for making their own contribution to this position, but then cast Farage and Co. aside and left them in disarray. The BNP had suffered the same fate previously.

The election campaign has also served to continue the nationalist campaigns against questions such as should Scottish MPs vote on matters relating to England, or should there be an English assembly like in Scotland and Wales? During the election itself the threat of the SNP forming an al- liance with the Greens was a major threat. The election, like the Scottish referendum before it, has reinforced nationalist illusions in parts of the working class. In Scotland, which has a long his- tory of proletarian militancy, the working class is confronted with an openly nationalist party repre- senting itself as the radical alternative, as the only real opposition to the Tories. This democratic circus is not going to stop now the election is behind us. There is now the prospect of months of ceaseless campaigning around the referendum about European Union membership. Workers will be called on to see their interests as the same as those of the ruling class, and to throw their weight into this “decisive” historical vote. This will add further confusion and divi- sions as we are told we have to choose a side in this referendum, which will also stir up a new hor- nets’ nest of nationalism and xenophobia.

The idea of democracy as a British value is also a central theme in the whole anti-terrorism campaign. The politicians were falling over them- selves to stress that the threat was a matter of security mas- sacre of tourists in Tunisia to use the argument that in order to defend democracy it would be nec- essary to go beyond more draconian anti-terror laws and measures.

Imperialist interests

The referendum on European membership is not simply a democratic circus. It is also an important part of the British bourgeoisie’s attempt to counter the consequences of Labour’s welfare reforms were devastating. 52,599 benefit sanctions were inflicted on Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants in March 2016. This was twice the number from just two years earlier and more than the 31,124 sanction cases handed out by the Tories in September 2014…

In March 2010 the number of people on sick- ness benefits who had their benefits stopped for failure to carry out regular activity hit a record high of 120,000. This is just slightly below the 132,888 sanctions handed out to this group in September 2014…

To hear the current rhetoric from the TUC, you would think that mass benefit sanctions were a Tory invention. TUC General Secretary Fran- ces O’Grady recently released a statement saying ‘Under this government the sanctions system has become a cruel maze in which it is all too easy for claimants to lose cash for minor breaches of rules and random decisions’. This is in re- sponse to a report showing the desperate toll that sanctions were taking on lone parents and most importantly their children. As far back as 2008 the government’s own experts, the Social Secu- rity Advisory Committee, recommended that lone parents should not face sanctions. The Labour government rejected this advice”. (Johnnie Void, 8/3/15, posted on the TUC Void)

Cutting working class living standards, subject- ing proletarians to increased surveillance and re- pression, is not an ‘ideological’ choice of this or that government, but is inherent to capital for the state in its defence of the profitability of the national economy in the face of an irresolv- able contradiction between the requirements of other nation states. Capitalist profit and hu- man need are irreconcilably opposed. Melmoth 28/6/15


Brutal attacks on working class living standards will continue

Tory Chancellor George Osborne is set in the July Budget to announce details of the new phase of the Spending Review which will undoubtedly continue the vicious attacks on benefits which have continued to hit the very poorest sectors of the working class under Labour and Coalition governments.

David Cameron has hinted at a plan to raid Working Tax Credit Benefits. He justified these cuts by wanting to abolish the “mercy-go-round” of benefits paid to people in work. Cameron has clearly used the idea that the government has learnt the lessons of the debacle over Iraq. One of the central tasks of the Coalition government was to discredit the Labour Party and to cleverly use the idea that the government has army of the Social Democratic campaigns

The central theme of the current democratic campaign is to defend the referendum as a tool in disarray. The BNP had suffered the same fate previously.

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The election campaign has also served to con- continue the nationalist campaigns against questions such as should Scottish MPs vote on matters relating to England, or should there be an English assembly like in Scotland and Wales? During the election itself the threat of the SNP forming an al- liance with the Greens was a major threat. The election, like the Scottish referendum before it, has reinforced nationalist illusions in parts of the working class. In Scotland, which has a long his- tory of proletarian militancy, the working class is confronted with an openly nationalist party repre- senting itself as the radical alternative, as the only real opposition to the Tories. This democratic circus is not going to stop now the election is behind us. There is now the prospect of months of ceaseless campaigning around the referendum about European Union membership. Workers will be called on to see their interests as the same as those of the ruling class, and to throw their weight into this “decisive” historical vote. This will add further confusion and divi- sions as we are told we have to choose a side in this referendum, which will also stir up a new hor- nets’ nest of nationalism and xenophobia.

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Imperialist interests

The referendum on European membership is not simply a democratic circus. It is also an important part of the British bourgeoisie’s attempt to counter
Fragility of the British ‘recovery’

The British economy is growing. The latest GDP data shows a predicted growth of 2.4% for 2015 (for The Economist, 4.7.15). At the same time average pay in industry has increased by just 1.2% in the year to the end of March, in other words the fall in real wages has halted. However, this does not tell the whole story and the economy in both the UK and the world, despite having emerged from the deep recession of 2008, remains fragile.

Stagnating productivity

“Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it is almost everything”. Britain has become a low wage economy, with output per worker per hour lagging behind Italy and Canada, and way behind France, Germany and the USA. A US worker can do in 3 weeks what will take a worker in the UK a month. It was improving at approximately 1.75% a year, slightly faster than the rest of the group of 7 countries, until the start of the recession in 2007, since when productivity has stagnated in Britain although not in the other advanced countries, where the recovery is only partial.

Those sectors have seen either a very significant fall in productivity improvement, or a loss of productivity improvement that has continued. This is illustrated by the statistics (ONS) that has noted a 3.0% increase in hourly productivity in the first quarter of this year, or 1.3% in the year to the end of March.

What is the cause of this fragility? It is obvious as well that monotheism in the case of-breath:incidents/428014/Best-paid-UK-jobs-2014-Compare-pay-national-average.html

Fragility in the global economy

Britain is now not only on the international trade for its survival and therefore on the health of the world economy. “In 2015, the IMF says, for the first time every advanced economy will expand” (The Economist, 13.6.15) but hazards remain such as Greek debt and China’s shaky economy. Workers and slowing growth, as well as the Belarusian and Russian economies likely to shrink this year. “The danger is that, having used up their arsenal of economic and central bank Toolkit to fire the next recession.” It’s not that The Economist is predicting a recession on the horizon, but that they tend to come along regularly in capitalism and it is impossible to pin point one factor to explain why the economy has all of sudden become less efficient. Instead, he makes several conjectures. One is the slowdown in the amount of research and development undertaken by companies and the state since the 1970s compared with the immediate postwar period. As R&D affects on productivity has a long lag, what happened forty years ago may help to explain the fragility of the British economy.

Productivity is a problem for British national capital! It is something of an interminable mantra imprinted in the public sector, in the NHS and in our schools, and predicted to be an important concern in the budget. It makes it harder to complete public infrastructure projects it is driving down wages. There are dangers for the ruling class in imposing conditions of low pay, poor working conditions on a working class with strong traditions of struggle for too long, even when politicians of left and right have had some success with these conditions, and unemployment, poor housing, etc. on immigration.

Continued from page 8

Readers’ contribution

Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time

of Islam in taking power and giving rise to a new society (even if it immediately disappointed the masses). The Islamic State of Muhammad such as Abu Dharr, for following wealth and status and becoming like all the other kingdoms) was successful as Christianity could only be co-opted and sanitised by its enemies in the form of the Roman empire.

What does this all have to do with islam? The question to be posed then is what was it about monotheism that allowed it to be so closely connected to revolutionaries. Firstly monotheism in its original sense implied a rejection of the worldly powers. The connection between ‘having power over’ and being the ‘god’ of someone was much clearer to those living in the ancient world. Secondly, Christianity could not be co-opted or sanitised by its enemies in the form of the Roman empire. 

Therefore not only did monotheism originally entail a rejection of the power structures, but also an attempt at a critique of the increasingly alienated economic structures and practices of the time. If we look at this question historically we can see that the idea of a ‘Superbeing’ is extremely common throughout the world and in all stages and forms of human society; and indeed Allah was just such a ‘Superbeing’ recognised by the pre-Islamic Arab peoples as well as the Muslims. When then does monotheism as such, i.e. a conscious and vehement denunciation and denunciation of all other gods, only emerge at a certain point in history? It is precisely because it is only when the economic break up and fragmentation of the community had reached such a level that a symbol of a higher unity, one that goes beyond the tribal conception in it that aims to incorporate a programme of progress in the present epoch for this precise reason. IS’ vision is the most extreme expression of the idea of achieving their insane ideal is to force the whole world to gun point (including even the vast majority of Sunni Muslims whom they suppose to represent) to bow before them.


What is the meaning of the fragility of the recovery?

Any attempt to follow the evolution of the economy naturally uses the statistics produced by the bourgeois for its own purposes: to help manage state policy to defend the national capital, to provide information for capitalists trying to make decisions about the future. But this does not mean the economy is doing well or badly. On the other hand we are trying to follow the evolution of a decadent system, one in which the exploitative relations of production are in conflict with the forces of production, and most importantly the working class. It is not just a statistical exercise. The very survival of capitalism has always experienced even when it was vigorously expanding across the globe – but also the fragile and anemic recoveries or the various bubbles that follow in which the productive forces continue to be hindered. And all the while it is doing so in ways that damage both the environment and the health of the population and the working class in particular through pollution.

Alex  4.7.15


What does all this have to do with idolatry?

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The evolution of the proletarian class struggle in Britain has been fundamentally determined by the fact that Britain was the motherland of industrial capitalism, the first capitalist nation. From the first trade clubs and combinations of the late eighteenth century, the British proletariat pioneered the struggle to reverse the long period of downward mobility and exploitation of this period. The British proletariat evolved the form of organization most suited to this defensive struggle: the trade union. Even before the Theses were written, this was a heroic example to the workers of the whole world. But just as the global generalisation of capitalist relations of production was in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to leave Britain lagging behind younger, more vigorous capitalisms, so the political development of the British class movement in the 1880s was severely retarded by the very factors which had been a source of strength for the movement in an earlier period.

The text was written during one of the short periods of retreat in the class struggle which marked the period between 1908 and 1919. It predicts that the austerity measures then being introduced by the Labour government would predict that the working class – the conscious counter-attack at the same time examining the connection between this difficulty and the relatively weak tradition of revolutionary marxism in the UK. Subsequently, we have published a number of further articles which go deeper into this issue, but the basic approach in the Theses remains valid. Indeed, point 9 of the Theses could still be confidently written about the political milieu in Britain today: “...Sectarian rivalries between the different revolutionary groups; attachment to unembattled zones of class exceptions; above all the inability to understand the need for centralised organisation and political coherence to obstruct the efforts of the British revolutionaries...”

The main reason for this was the strength and stability of British capitalism to an ascent. The British bourgeoisie, having made its political revolution at a very early stage of its historic development, was able to make the peaceful containment of the class struggle: the shop stewards and militants of the workers' strikes to the revolts in the armed forces, for an 'industrial truce' for the duration of the war.

In reaction to the growing bourgeoisification of the craft-based trade unions, the essential continuity with the anti-political current which had grown up in the British workers' movement, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a considerable development of Syndicalist tendencies within the British working class. Syndicalist and industrial unionist ideas played an important part in the struggles which gave birth to unskilled workers' unions in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and in the process of amalgamation and centralization which led to the creation of big industrial unions in the 19th centuries: miners, railways, transport workers. The militancy of the syndicalist current was an important part of the struggle which swept the country between 1910 and 1914, and the influence of syndicalist ideas on the revolutionary minorities of the class could be seen in the programme of the De Leonist Socialist Labour Party, the emergence of a British section of the IWW, and the formation of syndicalist ideas into other socialist organizations. The shop stewards and workers' committee movement, the British Section of the World Socialist Organisation of the International, it was to be profoundly marred by the fact that Britain was a whole to break out of the limitations of a trade union and reformist tradition, and to face up to the revolution in Britain.
In the struggle for a coherent revo-

olutionary re-
volutionary wave, the working class was en-
terably self-limited by the fact that, within the context of a declining world revo-

olutionary wave, these delays could only function to paralyse the workers’ movement. This confrontation was narrowly avoided because the working class was still conscious of the class for decades.

16 Since 1972, there has been a defi-
nite decline in class combativ-
ity (with the exception of some large-scale outbursts - like the miners’ strike and the British coal strike wave of 1974) and certain localized strikes in which workers have achieved some autonomy from the trade union apparatus (e.g. the miners’ strike, 1974), or come directly up against the state (Glasgow firemen, 1973, Grunwick film workers etc. The left wing communists were isolated and on the run, the class movement was symbolised by charades like the Jarrow Hunger March, in which the workers were told that they ‘had never had it so good’. The class found itself caught up in the sheer impos-

sion of the bourgeoisie.

17 Even at its highest points, the new wave of class struggle in Britain has not given rise to another proletarian outburst. It has occurred in countries such as Spain, Argentina and Po-

land. This is in great part due to the strength of the democratic and trade union apparatus in which the British bourgeoisie, one of the most sophisticated and experienced ruling classes in the world, is still able to impress the proletariat. The continued im-

portance of the electoral circus, and more particu-

larly the Labour Party, as a means of sabotaging the class struggle, was demonstrated by the 1974 election which put an end to both the miners’ strike and the three-day week. And al-

though the majority of strikes are uncoordinated and are opposed by the trade unions, the state does not often make the control of the shop stewards who remain the indispensable ‘shock absorbers’ of the unions and thus of the state. But if the state could be made to ‘break’ the trade unions, it could be made to force them to work in its own interest. Although this is basically a reflection of the per-

sistence of sectional and localist illusions in the class, the active role of the shop stewards in dete-

rioration and containing the workers’ struggles must be recognized and denounced by revolutionaries; in the same way, the activities of the various left groups – Stalinists, Trotskyists, etc. - must be at-
tacked as so many ways of mystifying the class and diverting its struggle towards reactionary and petty-bourgeois ends (‘collective action’, the ‘right to work’, etc.).

18 If the struggle of the British pro-

letariat has in a general way been held back by democratic and trade union apparatus, the sector of the working class in Britain has felt able to begin the frontal attack on the bourgeoisie never tires of saying, is ‘just round the com-er’.

19 But since the crisis will not disap-

pear with the prayers of the bour-

geoisie, the proletariat will sooner or later be forced to realise the uselessness of going along with the system of the bourgeoisie. But since the crisis will not disappear, it will be forced to take up the struggle with greater intensity. It will be more organized, more aware of its interests and its tasks.

20 When this transition to a higher level of struggle does occur, it is bound to confront the trade union apparatus with considerable fury because of the identification of the unions with the whole regime of austerity which is currently being foisted on to the working class. The moment of the state apparatus will be the signal for the appearance in Britain of those radical forms of struggle which have already sprung up in other countries: mass assemblies, wildcat strikes etc.

21 In these deepening struggles, the proletariat in Britain will force the consciousness of the necessity to join together the struggles of all those who are suffering the brutal intensification of the crisis, and this despite the huge growth in unem-

ployment, that the trade union apparatus has come to power, pledged to the building of a ‘Wel- 

tish unionism, the sector of the working class in Ireland has been more particularly kept in line through the myopic understandings of national and re-

ligious chauvinism, and that Ireland’s struggle is not a sectional or local one.

History of the workers’ movement in Britain 5

self to deal with the strike - but also the so-called ‘workers’ organizations’, the trade unions and the Labour Party, which did everything they could to keep the strike within the bounds of a respectable ‘industrial dispute’. The Stalinists in the Labour Party meanwhile provided a ‘left’ cover for this counter-revolutionary concert. Despite the militant spirit of the workers, despite local attempts at self-organization and at raising the level of struggle, the class found itself caught up in the sheer impos-

sion of the bourgeoisie.

15 Despite the austerity of the post-

war years, the reconstruction wave gave workers a certain sense of achievement, of a pre-

cedented length. In Britain the temporary ex-

pansion of markets gave rise to all the illusions of a ‘recovery’ in conjunction with a period of at-

tendance at raising the level of struggle. The class found itself caught up in the sheer impos-

sion of the bourgeoisie.

14 Having learned its lessons from the 1917-23 revolutionary wave, the world bourgeoisie did all it could to make sure that the end of the 1939-45 war did not give rise to another proletarian outburst. It thus combined a savage repression of the isolated workers’ revolts that did occur (Italy, Germany, East Europe, Vietnam), with a series of concilia-

tary methods aimed at convincing the proletariat that its struggle against fascism had not been in vain. It became necessary to integrate the class into the system of the state": socialist realism, the official Stalinist apparatus came to power, pledged to the building of a ‘Wel-

tish State’ for the benefit of the working people. The weakness of the revolutionary movement in Britain, in conjunction with the momentary advantages won by Britain in the aftermath of the imperialist war, allowed the British bourgeoisie to avoid a catastrophic confrontation with the class in the 1920s. But in fact the war had effectively deprived British imperialism of its most powerful weapon. Lag-

ning far behind its more dynamic US rival, British capital was struck with considerable savagery by the 1921 world economic crisis. In this situation the British bourgeoisie had no alternative but to launch a massive counter-offensive against the proletariat, in order to regain a competitive posi-

tion on the world market. This attack - in the form of the trade union reform legislation and the further weakening of the left communists - was bound to lead to a new confrontation with a pro-

letariat that had not yet suffered the full effects of the economic and political crisis produced by the rise of the trade unions in Europe. This confrontation was narrowly avoided in 1921, due to the ‘betrayal’ of the Tripartite Alliance on ‘Black Friday’, and again in 1925 when the bourgeoisie retreated from a major clash in order to prepare its repressive forces (the so-called ‘Red Friday’ capitulation). Capital had used the trade union reform legislation against the working class.
Rosa Luxemburg belongs to the proletarian revolution, not to the social democrats

“The duration of the lifetime of revolutionaries is always shorter than that of those who surrounded them, they received their theories with the most savagery, the most furious hatred and the most utter contempt and enmity. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless innocents, to canonize them, so to say, and to construct from their spirit the “consolation” of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter; while at the same time, every one of their works is given a new twist, in substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it. Today, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labor movement concur in the “extermination of Marxism.” (Lenin, The State and Revolution, 1917)

January 15, 1919, Rosa Luxembourg was assassinated along with her comrade in combat Karl Liebknecht, by the Freikorps. These soldiers were under the orders of the minister Noske, a member of the SPD (German Social Democratic Party) who declared: “If a bloodhound is necessary, then I will be it!” It was the Socialist party in power who orchestrated the bloody repression of the workers’ insurrection in Berlin and assassinated not only the greatest figures of the international working movement, but also a “woman” and a “pacifist.” The very-well known campaign of the recuperation of Rosa Luxemburg in order to turn her into an “inoffensive icon” is a vast enterprise of propaganda. Whether they are conscious of it or not, those who participate in this sham fight against the revolution.

Today on blogs and forums, in bookshops and kiosks, throughout Europe and in the world, a new nauseous campaign has resurfaced in order to again distort the image of the militant Rosa Luxembourg. Thus, from television programmers, Rosa Luxembourg’s name appears under the sole title of a “woman” and a “pacifist.” The very-well known and acclaimed paper, Le Monde, published an article in September 2013, written by a certain Jean-Marc Daniel, a professor of ESCP Europe, with the very evocative title: “Rosa Luxembourg, marxist or pacifist?” This association of the words “marxist” and “pacifist” is gob-smacking: for the ruling bourgeoisie wants to turn her into an “inoffensive icon” is a vast enterprise of propaganda. Whether they are conscious of it or not, those who participate in this sham fight against the revolution.

The ICC has contributed to the first Korean edition of Rosa Luxembourg’s Junius Pamphlet, written 100 years ago in response to the carnage of the First World War. We are publishing extracts of the introduction in this paper, while the full text can be found on our website. In its 100 year ‘commemorations’ of the war, the ruling class and its propaganda machine offers us so many forms of propaganda. Whether they are conscious of it or not, there is also the campaign of the recuperation of Rosa Luxembourg in order to turn her into an “inoffensive icon” is a vast enterprise of propaganda. Whether they are conscious of it or not, those who participate in this sham fight against the revolution.

While Social Democracy in Germany called for support for the fatherland, Luxemburg insisted on condition that she is opposed to her comrades in the fight, to the Bolsheviks, to the Russian revolution, in short opposed to revolution. The recuperation of Rosa Luxembourg in order to turn her into an “inoffensive icon” is a vast enterprise of ideological distortion. It aims to inject the idea that the proletariat must fight to construct… not a global communist society but a “more democratic” society. After the odious propaganda of the Black Book of Communism, it is henceforth this idea of Luxembourg as the enemy of the Bolsheviks which is very seriously and officially taught in school programmes.

The stakes for the bourgeoisie today are to convince the most critical and recalcitrant elements that there is no other future than the defence of the democratic bourgeoisie. But behind this distortion there is also the campaign of the recuperation of Rosa Luxembourg by all sorts of democrats, with another unsaid objective, which is to discredit and demonise the real positions of revolutionary organisations. (Oipa, November 7 2014)


4. Marc Daniel, a professor of ESCP Europe, with the very evocative title: “Rosa Luxembourg, marxist or pacifist?” This association of the words “marxist” and “pacifist” is gob-smacking: for the ruling class “the real marxist” is one who abdicates from the revolutionary camp to reject any support of national wars of defence. “Every socialist policy that depends upon this determining historical milieu, that is willing to fix its policies in the world whole from the point of view of a single nation, is built upon a foundation of sand.” (Chapter 7)

The few months of war helped Rosa Luxembourg to grasp the new characteristics of this war, which would lead to the economic ruin of most of the participating countries.

After having analysed the new historical conditions of the workers movement, she developed a new phase notion in the laws and contradictions of capitalism itself, she underlined the subjective conditions for the unleashing of war. Her conclusion: without the trawl of the leadership of Social Democracy, the oldest and strongest workers’ party, and without the proclamation of social peace (i.e. the prohibition of strikes) in the factories, a pact which the trade unions signed with the capitalists, in short without the mobilisation of the working class for war through Social Democracy and the trade unions, the war could never have been begun.

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Often I do nothing else but think — think of human suffering. In this text I express the view that if capitalism continued to exist the very survival of humanity would be at risk. Humanity would have to face the fact that the war that it had fought was a great and terrible illusion. And she warned against the pacifist movement, which was not only for the period of the First World War but for all time. (p. 233)

The significance of the Junius pamphlet

As well as offering a historical-theoretical framework for understanding qualitatively new step taken by capitalism,Luxemburg’s pamphlet offered a political framework for the activities of revolutionaries. Its main ideas (the historical development of imperialism, the perspectives of the struggle, never prevented from pulling in the same direction - fighting for the overall view of the capitalist system, under the most adverse conditions of repression and exile.

The revolutionary spirit of Rosa Luxemburg during the war

In the face of this historic disaster for humanity, this betrayal by the former workers’ party, Rosa Luxemburg gave an example of the revolution of spirit, of an unwavering, determination and capacity to carry out theoretical-political analysis with a long-term view.

The unfolding of this unheard of level of barbarism and the betrayal of the party was a true shock for revolutionaries and led to a feeling of depression amongst some of them. Many revolutionaries in Germany were thrown into jail or driven into exile. Rosa Luxemburg herself was detained in jail for most of the war. Altogether she spent 3 years 4 months in jail during the 4 years 4 months of war. After having been thrown into prison in order to break her determination and to silence her, the reaction of Luxemburg was to fight back with the weapon of theory. She wrote the Anticritique, a reply to criticisms of her book The Accumulation of Capital. During her activities as a teacher at the German Social Democratic party school she had given courses on political economy. Now, in prison she wrote her Introduction to Political Economy and began to write her History of my Contemporary and translated his book into German. And it was from prison that she wrote her first analysis of the Russian Revolution, On the Russian Revolution, developing some first important points for a critique of the errors made by the proletariat in Russia.

Of course Luxemburg suffered from being locked-up in jail, but this could never break her will or undermine her morale. It is highly inspiring to read her notes and correspondence during her time in prison. The large variety of issues that she dealt with in prison and the series of letters on art and literature give testimony to an untamable, creative spirit. “Often I do nothing else but read and write from 6 in the morning until 9 in the evening”。

Faced with the moral bankruptcy of capitalism and the perspective of socialism or barbarism she not only flung herself into the most determined struggle, but she also maintained her courageous spirit even after the terrible loss of people who were very close to her. She preserved her strength through her theoretical efforts, her capacity to follow other passions (such as for drawing and for food and for the world) and through a large network of support from outside. She received food from outside of the prison (because of the bad health of her stomach, which required a special diet) and was repeatedly smuggled out of prison (sometimes with the connivance of the prison guards). While in prison she corresponded with a lot of comrades, gave them advice and supported them as best as she could from behind prison walls. No prison cell could be thick enough to silence her and to prevent her from offering her support to individual people, to her comrades and to the working class as a whole. Thus her voice could be heard” outside of the prison - politically and as a human being. The day she was released from prison some 1000 workers (many of them women) waited at the prison gate for her and accompanied her home.

Her time in prison was in continuity with her whole life. 

2. Letter from Rosa Luxemburg to Clara Zetkin, July 1, 1916.

The Accumulation of Capital

Rosa Luxemburg during the war

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2. Letter from Rosa Luxemburg to Clara Zetkin, July 1, 1916.
Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time!

By starting a new heading of ‘Readers’ Contribution’ on page 4 of the Reader’s Contribution, in our paper, we hope to encourage our readers and sympathisers to write texts and articles which can go into greater depth than is possible in our discussion forum, and so stimulate a longer term reflection. These articles, while being broadly based on proletarian politics, need not reveal the positions of the ICC, or may deal with issues on which the ICC does not have a collective view. The aim is two-fold. First, an explanation of what we mean: as an attempt to explore the historical origins of Islam and to stimulate the actions of the current ‘Islamic State’ against this background, it raises the question of what we mean by ‘idolatry’, and to which cultural practices and beliefs not only in the Islamic world, but also in the West, in the modern age, may have a similar meaning. We hope the reader will contribute to this, and can give rise to a fruitful confrontation of ideas. The complete version of this article appears on our website.

Recently there have been fresh reports of the cultural destruction wrought by the ISIS thugs in Iraq as these ‘brave monotheists’ cast down long dead idols of past civilizations. In the process destruction links to the time when Iraq was the cradle of civilization while making a handy profit on the black market with what they didn’t destroy. This cultural destruction and the attendant attitude of contempt for the past is not only reactionary but also completely in sync with what we can witness in our own times. The so-called ‘secular’ and ‘modern’ culture both Western, ‘modern’ and ‘secular’ and in the backward view of religious fundamentalism. After all no civilisation in history has been more cut off from the past and what has destroyed almost every other culture and social form in existence.

These ‘Islamic’ fanatics want to depict themselves as modern day heirs of Moses and Mohammed, casting down pagan idols, ignoring the fact that no one worships these idols anymore and haven’t done for over a thousand years. In actuality IS do nothing and can do nothing to oppose the real problem of idolatry in the modern world, because they serve the very same idols as the rest of the world bourgeoisie.

What is idolatry?

Many Marxist writers including Marx himself have pointed out the connection between our concept of alienation, fetishisation and reification with the older concept of idolatry. Erich Fromm, in his book Marx’s Concept of Man, makes the point particularly explicit when he says: ‘The origin of the term idolatry is of his first expression in Western thought in the Old Testament concept of idolatry. The essence of what Marx calls alienation is the idea that man worships many gods instead of only one. It is that the idols are the work of man’s own hands – they are things, and man bows down before things: worships which that he has created himself. In doing so he turns himself into a thing. He invests the external object with the value and glory which he assigns to his own life, and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he is in touch with himself only by the worship of the idol. He has be- come as primary social units, from the wealth of his own potentialities, and is in touch with himself only in the indirect way of submission to life frozen in the idols’ (Erich Fromm, Marx’s Concept of Man, 1961, page 39).

This is true of things which are not directly created by man as well, for example a natural object such as a tree, even an idea or experience such as success or love can become idols. This happens when they are fetishised and separated off from their true being which is always in connection with other beings and with being as a whole. This is the essence of fetishism, the giving of independent power and existence to something which is in reality a part of a whole or one aspect of a whole. The process of fetishisation is fundamentally the same as ‘deification’ because it involves cutting off and turning a partial aspect of reality into a ‘god’.

The expression of modern capitalism is perhaps the most idolatrous society to date, as it is pre-eminently the society of the ‘thing’. Not only in that it presents these elections as a real choice for the Arab masses (trotskyists, maoists and ex-maoists, who had not emerged to take control of the power and wealth of the newly emerging economic and social reality fore example Trotsky, Lenin, and Trotskyism, of which we have the proof which drew in support from all the oppressed strata of this social reality: the poor, women, orphans and oppressed for example, and which attacked the power and the sources of the wealth of the leading tribes such as the Qurash (the tribe Muhammad, although an orphan, belonged to).

Islamic painting itself from the start as a return to a previous way of being. Firstly this meant that Arabs should remember their own moral codes that had been lost in the rush towards individual success and economic ruthlessness. A ‘pagan’ morality of self interest and prideful contempt for the ‘weak’ became widespread as the emergence of Islamic morality really comes into play. The shift out of control. This is where the newness of the Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time! For the ‘weak’ became widespread as the emerg- ing relations of private property eroded the tribal principles based for caring for all members of the community. War and blood feuds had also got out of hand with the rise of the Islamic morality really comes into play. The shift out of control. This is where the newness of the Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time! For the ‘weak’ became widespread as the emerg- ing relations of private property eroded the tribal principles based for caring for all members of the community. War and blood feuds had also got out of hand with the rise of the Islamic morality really comes into play. The shift out of control. This is where the newness of the Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time!

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 deca- dent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crises. 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 histori- cal decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of the system.

* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. On the contrary, the economic crisis 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 revolution, its participation in the First World War 1914-18, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution. Stalinism was the degeneration of the Russian revolution. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution.

* The state systems which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc were called ‘socialist’ and identified with the triumph of a new social order. But their only purpose was to maintain the un- checked Bossism of the Communist Party. The new political system was not socialist, but was the monolithic political system, different from the one that existed in the socialist system. The new political system was not socialist, but was the monolithic political system, different from the one that existed in the socialist system.

* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in elections is a call to betray the only weapon 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 factors of the bourgeoisie are equally re- actionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now eox-Communist), the left wing of the advanced bourgeoisie, the so-called ‘official’ anarchists constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, the ‘united fronts’, the ‘united front of labour’, all forms which ignore the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smear and derail the genuine struggle for the class interests of the working class.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions formed in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increas- ing scale. The working class can only advance through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* All the nationalist ideologies – ‘national inde- pendence’, the ‘right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretence, 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, the bourgeoisie divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

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In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its ex- tension and organisation through the formation of assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

* Terrorism is 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 bour- geoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class struggle, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

* The revolutionary political organisation is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a final conflict with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to over- throw all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international unification of the workers’ councils, regrouping the entire 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 the capitalist state.

Continued on page 3