Corbyn campaign
The great Labour tradition of defending capitalism

Despite it being anticipated in all the preceding polls, there were still many expressions of ‘surprise’ at the election of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour Party. Previous leaders Kinnock, Blair and Brown had all warned that the election of Corbyn would mean that Labour would lose the 2020 general election and could be out of power for a generation. After Corbyn’s speech to the Labour Party Conference he was accused of only speaking to the ‘activists’ and it was widely claimed that, under his leadership, Labour would only be a party of protest.

The elevation of Corbyn was not an accident, but it can only be understood in terms of the overall political needs of British capitalism.

The myth of anti-austerity
In the General Election in May the distinction between the varieties of austerity on offer from the major parties was even less clear than usual. Against the policies undertaken by the Conservative-LibDem Coalition, Labour offered little more than ‘Austerity Lite’. After the election Labour in parliament proceeded to support new cuts in welfare introduced by the new Tory government. It was against this background that Corbyn stood as an opponent of austerity who puts forward fairness and equality, along with growth and state intervention, as an alternative to the brutality of a government that favours the few, not the many.

Comparisons were justifiably made with the Greek populist government of Syriza. Syriza also advertises itself as being against austerity, although it should be recalled that, after winning a clear majority against the bailout conditions proposed by the ‘troika’, Syriza then accepted an even more stringent programme of austerity than had been agreed by previous governments of right and left. However, the idea that Corbyn’s emergence expresses a similar rejection of austerity as that trumpeted by Syriza, and by Podemos in Spain, remains popular. It is tied up with the notion that austerity is a political choice, and not something imposed on all capitalist governments by the reality of the capitalist economic crisis.

While state capitalism is at the heart of the governing regime of every country in the modern world, Corbyn and the shadow Chancellor John McDonnell have made explicit their commitment to the strengthening of the role of the capitalist state in all aspects of economic and social life in the UK. Plans for state investment, for ‘peoples’ quantitative easing’, for the nationalisation of banks, the re-nationalisation of the railways, and similar policies, show that the domination of capital in Britain is safe in their hands. It’s true that the shadow energy minister has said that Labour ‘don’t want to nationalise energy. We want to do something far more radical. We want to democratise it.” But this apparently means that ‘There should be nothing to stop every community in this country owning its own clean energy power station’ - which still seems to be a populist green variation on the same basic theme.

To prove that they are not ‘deficit deniers’, the new Corbyn leadership has signed up to Chancellor George Osborne’s fiscal charter and insists that Britain must ‘live within its means’. Corbyn and McDonnell have also appointed an economic advisory panel including Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz, fashionable author Thomas Piketty, and former Bank of England monetary policy committee member Danny Blanchflower, to provide ideas for the reforming of the role of the capitalist state. This can only mean minor modifications in an economic system that is based on the exploitation of the labour power of the working class.

At the level of British imperialism Corbyn has been much criticised for saying that, if he were to be Prime Minister, he would not use nuclear weapons. This should be put into context. In his speech to the Labour Conference he did say that “Britain does need strong, modern military and security forces” and that “British values ... are the fundamental reason why I love this country and its people.” There can be no challenging his patriotism. His support for “the authority of international law and international institutions” demonstrates a support for the imperialist set-up that is...
Once more on decadence: some questions for the ‘deniers’

"The social patriots of reform, like the Workers’ Dreadnought, are everywhere urging the capitalists to maintain the capitalist system; to prevent it from breaking down under the shock of its own contradictions has caused the growing influence of the Russian Revolution. The bourgeois social patriots, whether they call themselves a reformist or Socialist, are everywhere working against the Communist movement, and they are more dangerous to it than the aggres- sive capitalism because the reformists seek to introduce may open the capitalist regime going for some time to come. When the social patriots reformists come into power, they fight to stave off the workers’ revolution with as strong a de- termination as that displayed by the capitalists, and more effectively, because they understand the methods and tactics and something of the idealism of the working class. The British Labour Party, like the social patri- otic organisations of other countries, will, in the late decades dramatically re-affirmed the Com- munist Left’s analysis of the decadence of capital- ism and the inability of the system to overcome its fatal contradictions. But the evolution of the world capitalist system over the last five decades is testament to capitalism’s extraordinary capacity to adapt and survive – even if this can only mean storing up more problems for itself in the longer term. Just as Marx and Engels at times mistakenly believed capitalism was entering into its final crisis, revolu- tionaries have on occasions underestimated this capacity of capitalism or to foresee the possibility of an under-developed country like China indus- trialising quite so spectacularly."

But we should be cautious about making any forecasts. The return of capitalism’s open crisis in the late decades dramatically re-affirmed the Com- munist Left’s analysis of the decadence of capital- ism and the inability of the system to overcome its fatal contradictions. But the evolution of the world capitalist system over the last five decades is testament to capitalism’s extraordinary capacity to adapt and survive – even if this can only mean storing up more problems for itself in the longer term. Just as Marx and Engels at times mistakenly believed capitalism was entering into its final crisis, revolu- tionaries have on occasions underestimated this capacity of capitalism or to foresee the possibility of an under-developed country like China indus- trialising quite so spectacularly.7

We have now passed the milestone of 100 years of capitalist decadence. Despite massive waves of struggles especially in the late 60s and early 1970s, the proletariat has not yet been able to de- stroy decadent capitalism. But this failure of the working class to meet its ‘appointment with histo- ry’, especially in the revolutionary wave of 1917- 23, does not in any way invalidate the Marxist theory of capitalist decadence.

Some questions for the ‘deniers’

There seems to be common ground that capita- lism is a historically transitory system – al- though we probably disagree on whether it was ever progressive in the first place – and that a pro- lemmatic for capitalism has been both postponed and deferred. There also appears to be broad agreement that capitalism is a historically transitory system. But it is entirely unclear what theory the deniers use to determine this, given that they appear to reject the whole materialist conception of history as a suc- cession of modes of production which go through a phase of ascent and decline. Why is capitalism a historically transitory sys- tem? And if it is historically transient, what are the seeds of its destruction, the fatal contradictions that will – at least at some point in its develop- ment – lead to its historic crisis? And if it has no fatal contradictions – no built-in tendency towards overproduction, for example – why can it not prolong its life indefinitely? Are there any limits – geographic or other – to its ability to continue to create new markets for its own goods?

Are there any final limits to capitalism’s ability to adapt and survive – for example the degrada- tion of the planet to the point that it threatens the survival of humanity? If there are no limits, then it’s hard to see why the late capitalists of today who have succeeded the mid-century. 6 See ‘Understanding capitalism’s decadence, Part 4’, 2. 1917-23 was the late, led by the small group around Syl- via Pankhurst and the Workers’ Dreadnought, that was the decisive moment when the Labour Party to a workers’ revolution. After some initial hesitations in 1914 the Labour Party turned towards a ‘reformist’ rather than a capitalist party but it is very clear in denouncing its counter-revolutionary role for the capitalist state. 8 Is capitalism a global system, it enters into its last phase of capitalist ascendancy and ap- pears almost intuitively (solidarity and self-or- dinance) demands further elaboration to deepen what is essential: class identity, class conscious- ness (historical and international), the extension of the strategy, which help us to move towards the re-appropriation of revolutionary theory by the masses themselves.

A new front opened by Turkey and NATO will deepen imperialist chaos in the Middle East

Into this mix of irrationality, ethnic and religious rivalry over expanding imperial and the develop- ment of each for themselves, the weakening of US influence and reach has forced help to the latter to conclude a nuclear deal with Iran that has much wider consequences and implications.

70 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki

When one looks at the military situation of Japan at the time when Germany capitulated, we can see that the former was already virtually beaten. Its aviation, an essential arm of the Second World War, was almost finished, reduced to a small num- ber of machines generally piloted by a handful of adolescents who were as fanatical as they were inexperienced. The navy, merchant as well as military, was practically destroyed. Anti-aircraft defences covered only a small area of the sky, which explains why the B29s were able to carry out thousands of attacks throughout spring 1945 with practically no losses.

Greece: An attack against the whole working class!

Max Raphael and a Marxist perspective on art (Part 1)

In the struggle to form a Communist Party in Britain during the revolutionary wave of 1917-23, Britain is ‘decadent’ when there are so many signs that capitalism has continued to grow since 1914? We have seen how the labour movement has increased – for example the spectacular growth of China since the 1980s – but in general we can say that because capitalism is a global system, it enters into its last phase of capitalist ascendancy and appears almost intuitively (solidarity and self-ordination) demands further elaboration to deepen what is essential: class identity, class conscious- ness (historical and international), the extension of the strategy, which help us to move towards the re-appropriation of revolutionary theory by the masses themselves.

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Max Raphael and a Marxist perspective on art (Part 1)
We think the most important thing is to try to bring peace and stability to that part of the world. I don’t think there is an answer that can be achieved simply by taking more and more people in, because there are issues about the strain that the UK is under.

Shortly afterwards he announced that Britain would take a paltry 20,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees. It was an announcement that came after the UK had been compelled to take in families with children will be forced into the kind of treatment that I think the UK could take some more Syrian refugees were Yvette Cooper, at the time one of the Labour leadership candidates. Pointing to the scale of the humanitarian crisis she said “we seem paralysed to respond. We cannot carry on like this. It is immoral, it is cowardly and it is not the British way.

This is not a grand gesture. It is a test of British values. It is a test of how we see ourselves. We have to have the will and the determination to continue to the delays than to the deaths of migrants – 13 since late June – taking such a dangerous route, and there is very little sympathy for the utter misery suffered by thousands in the camp.

The British state keeps out the “swarms”

PM David Cameron responded to the situation created by the ferry strike by talking of “swarms” of asylum seekers and refugees. The answer being to “show that Britain is not a soft touch on asylum.” Landlords will have to check tenants’ documents proving their right to stay, and evict those living illegally - a policy already piloted in the Black Country. The withdrawal of all financial support for asylum seekers will be extended from adults to families with children, except for an appeal to the Home Office with evidence they are unable to find alternative accommodation. Now families with children will be forced with the kind of destitution already suffered by single adults deprived of housing benefit. In London, one government estate is offering an estimated £500 million contract to return failed asylum seekers, which could include some from Calais. 12,460 were forcibly removed last year.

On 20 August home secretary Teresa May visited Calais to organise the increased security with French minister of the interior, Bernard Cazeneuve: Britain is investing in fencing, CCTV, floodlighting, and infrared detection; France is putting in extra police search teams with dogs; Europe is increasing its guards, and a new integrated control room will coordinate all this security.

According to one view common in the media, it is those who really don’t get democracy yet, having grown up under Eastern European Stalinist regimes, who do not understand their responsibilities to the refugees: “The worst of Europe has been seen in Viktor Orbán, the pocket-Putin who serves as Hungary’s prime minister. Ignorant of history, Mr Orbán sees the refugees as a threat to European civilisation. His answer is to build a 175km razor wire fence. Sadly, he is not alone in his bigotry. The Slovakian government says it will welcome into the EU ‘swarms’ of asylum seekers. It will accept only non-Muslim refugees. There is something truly disgusting about former communist regimes welcoming into the EU ‘swarms of asylum seekers’ in protest against the door against refugees from other forms of tyranny.”

Britain’s own race-wise response, coming from the country that boasts the ‘Mother of Parliaments’, and from the mouths of politicians who never again will say into such a political or “politically incorrect” bigotry about non-Christians or non-Europeans, makes it harder to maintain this argument, except by saying Cameron is letting down the British tradition.

Camerons change of rhetoric

A dead toddler appeared on the front pages, one of 12 Syrians drowned trying to reach Kos, Cameron was shouted at in London for not doing enough to get more refugees in and then in France, where he appeared to be saying the door was open to the refugees. At the Eurotunnel and not a land border. The refugees around Calais returned to the news over the summer when striking French ferry workers blocked the entrance to the Eurotunnel, the queue of cars and lorries that people desperate to get to the British tried to climb onto. Others risked their lives trying to walk through the tunnel. Some nights up to 2,000 people were trying to get through the police lines and fencing. Although the British government has long finished the media continue to report delays on Eurotunnel and Eurostar due to migrants breaking into their terminal. This has led to the delays to the deaths of migrants. Eviction of those living illegally a policy already piloted in the Black Country.

The winner of the leadership contest, Jeremy Corbyn, sounds even more positive: “There’s a very large number of people going over to Calais in order to get into the UK. We should provide a welcome service, our education service, much of our industrial development in Britain, has been greatly helped by the work of people who have made their homes here, paid their taxes here, 1. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/uk/2015/08/uk-welcomes-migrant-families-20150816193149290.html 2. http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/12/jeremy-corbyn-britain-would-be-working-class-morals

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The great Labour tradition of defending capitalism

When we look at the number of refugees fleeing war, or even the economic migrants who are seeking somewhere to earn a living, we are presented with a political and ethical dilemma that can be safely divided between those that say we have to defend what we have, and those who say since we are better off we should be generous with our resources when others are in such a desperate situation. The former is represented by the present conservative government as well as UKIP and similar right wing populist organisations in Europe eg Pegida in Germany, although as the Labour government showed in 1968 they can do it.

Capitalism is the problem

As we show in the series of articles on the problem of refugees starting in this issue (page 4 and 5) capitalism is continually causing both economic migration and waves of refugees from imperialist war. It is the same capitalist system that has created both the better conditions in Europe and the wars elsewhere, just as it was responsible for get drawn into either side in this campaign. It is perfectly true that some of the more xenophobic comments are completely rewriting, such as Sun journalist Katie Hopkins likening refugees to cockroaches. Much more dangerous is the hypocrisy of the politicians who pretend compassion for refugees when it suits them while equally prepared to put up fences or change the law to keep them out when it doesn’t. It is the same principle that is the attempt to turn individual acts of kindness and solidarity shown to refugees, whether in Calais or arriving at German railway stations, into a symbol of an evil society. “We are all German, we are all hearted,” ‘German’ understands the problems faced by refugees. General feelings of solidarity with migrants and refugees can only be developed if they become part of a growing class solidarity among all those that capitalism exploits and oppresses.

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Labour’s long history as a pillar of support for refugees

Over the last hundred years the Labour Party has shown itself to be an essential part of capitalism’s mechanism, in government and opposition.

In 1914, alongside social democratic parties across Europe, Labour, along with the unions, came to the aid of British imperialism, acting as a recruiting officer for the First World War and standing against workers’ actions that would undermine the war effort. In the face of mutinies and the unrest that followed the war Labour acted as a police of responsibility; in 1918 it adopted a constitutional position with the explicit commitment to nationalisation and other state capitalist measures that had already characterised the management of social life during wartime. Against the aspirations of those who had been inspired by the revolution in Russia it offered stability, state control and order.

Throughout the inter-war period Labour offered ‘socialist planning’ against the anarchy of capitalist competition. In the 1930s, alongside Conservative mavericks like Winston Churchill, it stood against the appeasement and for prepa- ring for war. It was the Labour government of 1940-45,髮ing the Second World War was a key constant of the war-time Coalition which meant it could not win the next election. The government of Clement Attlee from 1945- 51 is often presented as a golden age for the La- bour Party. In practice it presided over a period of great austerity, where troops and states of emergency were used against striking workers, when the role of the state was reinforced in many areas of British culture, the role of the state was reinforced in many areas of economic and social life, when British imperialism continued to deploy its military forces and tried to develop nuclear weapons, and when Brit- ain was a loyal lieutenant in the American-domi- nated imperial bloc.

The subsequent Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan were able to replace Conservative administrations at key points in history. In 1974 Labour government was brought in against a wave of struggles, promoting illusions that it would be different to its predecessors. In fact, in the 1970s, Labour and the unions held down wages with the imposition of their Social Contract. Under Call- laghan the monetarist policies, the programme of cuts in public spending, that were later taken up by Margaret Thatcher. The strikes and demonstrations of the ‘winter of discontent’ of 1978-79 were against a Labour, not a Conserva- tive government.

In the 1980s Labour in opposition made ‘radical’ critiques of Thatcherism, providing a so-called ‘alternative’ at a time when workers were embark- ing on waves of massive struggles. Subsequently, the governments of Blair and Brown played their part in the management of the capitalist economy, although the governments of Blair and Brown were able to replace Conservative administrations at key points in history. In 1974 Labour government was brought in against a wave of struggles, promoting illusions that it would be different to its predecessors. In fact, in the 1970s, Labour and the unions held down wages with the imposition of their Social Contract. Under Callaghan the monetarist policies, the programme of cuts in public spending, that were later taken up by Margaret Thatcher. The strikes and demonstrations of the ‘winter of discontent’ of 1978-79 were against a Labour, not a Conservative government.

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Introduction to the series

Economic migration and refugees from war throughout the history of capitalism

From its ascendance ....

For thousands of years people have been forced to leave their homes because of military conflicts of nature such as floods, droughts, volcanoes etc. But these movements were not a permanent phenomenon and they mostly involved only a small part of the population. With the development of capitalism, with the cultivation of plants and the domestication of animals, humanity lived for thousands of years on the same spot. Under feudalism the peasants were attached to the land and serfs stayed, from the moment they were born until their death, on the same land, which belonged to their feudal lord. But, with the onset of capitalism around the fourteenth to fifteenth century this changed drastically.

Capitalism spread by conquest, by intense and massive violence across the globe. First in Europe, where enslavement drove self-sufficient peasants from communal land into the cities to work for wages. Marx described primitive accumulation and indenture in the following terms from the means of production: ... great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled as free and 'unattached' proletarians on the labour-market. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process” (Marx Capital Volume 3, Chapter 10).

The brutal and violent upheavals inherent in decadent capitalism, evoked here by Rosa Luxemburg, has been strikingly confirmed by the tragic fate of the peoples in the Sudan. In Sudan, millions of people have been subjected to imprisonment in camps, to displacement, deportation and liquidation in one of the most horrid forms of modern capitalism. The effects of the Sudan war have been to a large extent in the Sudanese population, the so-called ‘ethnic cleansing’ and forced migration. The 20th century was one of the most barbaric in history.

1914: a new era of violence against populations

The year 1914 and its chaotic tumult opened a whole spiral of violence. In the past of course wars led to massacres and oppression, but this was usually on a local scale, they didn’t result in mass exodus, the displacement of whole populations and the near-paradise obsession to control them on the part of the state. Modern warfare has become total war. It mobilizes, over a period of years, the entire population and the economic machines of the warring countries, reduces to ashes whole cities, slaughter, uprooting millions of human beings, hurls hundreds of millions into famine. Its effects are no longer limited to mere conquests, with their train of rape and pillage, but gigantic destructions across the whole globe. On top of the uprooting, the rural exodus brought about by the introduction of capitalist social relations, total war adds the militarization of the whole of civil society in the service of the battle fronts. This was a real qualitative leap. Populations of entire countries, and above all the youth, are forcibly displaced to become soldiers, compelled to engage in a communal bloodbath with those of their civil countries. The civilians at the rear are blled dry by the war effort and the first camps are made up of the prisoners from enemy nations.

The Armenian genocide and the persecution of minorities

This was the case for the Armenian populations, one of the most striking tragedies of the war, and seen as the first real genocide of the 20th century. Even during the 19th century, Armenian aspirations for independence, like that of the Greeks, resulted in persecution by the Ottomans. A political movement known as the “Young Turks”, which adopted an extremely nationalist Pan-Turkish ideology, intended to be an imperialist power. By struggling for the annexation of the Ottoman territories after the First World War was the result of the formation of new states in the Balkans and the liquidation of the Ottoman state. The Armenian genocide and the persecution of minorities were on a larger scale for the Armenians during the 1915 and the autumn of 1916. Having initially arrested a number of intellectuals, the rest of the Armenian population was systematically deport- ed and decimated en masse by the Turkish state. Women and children were transported in boats and many drowned around the coasts or were sold like slaves. The Baghdad railway was used to carry out massive deportations to the desert or to camps, some of which were already being used to exterminate people. A large number of Armenians died of thirst in the Mesopotamian desert. Those who managed to escape the massacre became impoverished. They were to make up a real diaspora (many for example went to the US where a sizeable community still exists). All this of course was very quickly forgotten by the ‘great democracies’ not long after this tragic event. And yet over a million Armenians had been killed.

Part 1: from the First World War to the victory of the counter-revolution

One thing is certain. The world war is a turning point...The tempo of development has received a considerable change. It is the period of barbarous capital- ism. The violence of the conflicts in the bosom of society, the enormities of the tasks that we overcome, the tragedy of awakening and eruption of expansion in mankind, the end of primitive social conditions and its absorption by primitive social forms... The human presence and the human role are everywhere, no longer just cytological but become long-lasting, if not permanent. From massive and almost unhampered, migration became filtered, selected and the demographic character of the working class was established in a way as capitalism needed the biggest, if not unlimited mobility for its commodities and free access to markets, it also imposes the biggest mobility and access to the work-force. Capitalism must be able to mobilise world labour power without restriction in order to utilise all productive forces of the globe – up to the limits imposed by a system of producing surplus value. This labour power, however, is in many cases rigidly bound by the traditional local social conditions of production. It must first be ‘set free’ in order to be enrolled in the active army of capital. The emancipation of labour power from primitive social conditions and its absorption by capitalist wage systems is one of the indispensable historical bases of capitalism.”

The 20th century was one of the most barbaric in history.

1. Indented labour means an emigrating worker signs a contract in his country of migration, according to which he is obligated to work for a capitalist in a foreign country. Between 1850 and 1930 this involved around 5 million Indians and 5-6 million people from other Asian countries – more than a million as 12 million people were indentured labourers.
2. A passage for a European migrant to the USA cost relatively little because it was not illegal.
to fortify their frontiers, conclude desperate mili-
tary alliances and carry out population exchanges which gave rise to sharpened divisions and forms of "ethnic cleansing". The Greek-Turkish con-
flict, which is often presented as the consequence of the spontaneous reaction of crowds of Turks, was highly orchestrated by the new state run by its
modem leader Mustapha Kemal Ataturk. The new
state he founded was to wage a long and murder-
ous war against the Greeks. During this conflict, the
Greeks also engaged in pillaging, with armed
civilian bands burning Turkish villages and com-
mittting all kinds of atrocities against their inhabi-
ants. Between 1920 and 1923 the Turkish forces
also carried out a whole number of cruel massa-
crages against Greeks and Armenians. From the be-
ginning there were wholesale transfers of popula-
tions, of Greeks who had been living in Turkey and
vice-versa, (1,300,000 Greeks left Turkey and
they had to cooperate. But in contrast to the vic-
torious countries, the bourgeoisie and especially
the petty bourgeoisie in the defeated countries like
Germany was to develop a deep feeling of having
been "stabbed in the back", of having been humiliated by the "enemy within". The drastic conditions of the Versailles Treaty precipitated the hunt for scapegoats, leading to the develop-
ment of anti-Semitism and a real man-hunt against
communists, who were also made responsible for everything that had gone wrong. The culminating point was the crushing of the Spartacist uprising
in Berlin in 1919 and the series of savage massacres
that followed: "The butchers set to work. Whole
buildings collapsed under artillery fire, burning
entire families in the ruins. Other proletarians fell
in front of their homes, in schools, in stables, shot
dead, beaten to death with clubs, pierced by bayo-
nets, most often denounced by anonymous inform-
ers. They were put up against the wall singly, in
two, in groups of three or more, or finished off
with a bullet in the back of the neck, in the middle of
the night, on the banks of the Spree. For weeks,
the river was throwing up corpses." 1
A succession of defeats for the working class was
punished by the murder of great figures of the
movement, the most celebrated being Rosa
Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. In the 1920s,
ferocious repression against any form of opposi-
tion was made all the easier because the Stalinist
counter-revolution was carrying out expulsions
and murders, creating labour camps and prisons,
the Gulags, hunting down revolutionaries and
systematically locking up workers suspected of
"defection".
In the framework of decadent capitalism and
of the counter-revolution, hatred of communism and
its assimilation with the ruthless Jew led to a
qualitative change in anti-Semitic pogroms. In
the 19th century, there had already been a series
of pogroms against the Jews, especially in Russia
after the annexation of Poland. Outbursts of vio-
lence against the Jews had already been recurrent
in Odessa in the early part of the 19th century. But
between 1881 and 1884 pogroms led to real mas-
sacres. Local populations were incited and encor-
egaged to pillage, rape and murder. In 1903 a terrible
series of pogroms struck the city of Kaluszyn, a
totally irrational and obscurantist manner, the
Jews were accused of practising ritual murders.
In the 19th century, the violence against the Jews was mostly inspired by the anti-
Semitism of the Tsarist ruling class, but at the beginning of the 20th century, there was a new upsurge of pogroms. During the
approximate time of war in Russia, thousands of Jews were massa-
crated by the White Armies, especially those led by
Denikin. Following these pogroms, our comrade
Curt, for example, had to leave Russia with part of his family (see International Review
65 and 66). During this period, pogroms in Russia came to be reckoned with. The
defeat of the proletariat in Germany gen-
85,000 Turks left Greece). In 1923, the Lausanne
Treaty put the seal on these violent measures with
a number of administrative procedures. Thousands
of Greeks and Turks were expelled through this
official exchange and good number of them died
during the course of this exodus. More generally,
in such conditions, with the displacement and
concentration of hungry populations across the
continent, it was not surprising that pathogenic in-
fected proliferations. Central and eastern Europe
was soon hit by typhus. But more spectacularly,
the world was swept by the "Spanish flu" which
claimed 40 to 50 million victims in populations
weakened by the years of war. Before that the
worst epidemic had been cholera in the 19th cen-
tury. You would have to go back to the Middle
Ages and the Black Death to find an epidemic on
such a scale (30% of the European population was
wiped out by the plague).
This whole barbaric reality was only possible
because the working class had been drained by
nationalism and soiled by patriotism. But faced
with these atrocious conditions, the proletariat
didn't raise its head, demonstrated that it was
able to contain the despotic war making and putting
an end to the carnage. It was after the mutinies of
1917 in Russia and with workers' uprisings in Germany
1918 and the revolutionary wave which began in
the two imperialist blocs controlled by the US and
its armed wing, would exert a bureaucratic
power from the very top of the state, there was a tightening of the war and in the name of the military needs
and security of the state, there was a tightening of
all foreigners under suspicion and to search. In
France for example, "the creation of identity cards
in 1917 was a real reversal of previous police and
administrative habits. Our mentalities have today
taken on board this individual whose physical
origins are no longer seen as such. It is not how
northern that the intervention of identity cards first emerged, with the "law on iden-
tance in a full-scale war" (PJ Deschotd and F
Huguenin, La République xenophobe, ed JC
Lamotte, 2008). On this point, armies recognized
the displacement of civilians – whether spontaneous or provoked – was a real threat, an "encumbrance" for
troop activity and military logistics. States thus
tried to give eviction orders, instrumentalising
Belgian refugees in Holland in 1914
Refugee crisis
Syria: Russian intervention escalates the chaos

385,000 Turks left Greece). In 1923, the Lausanne
Treaty put the seal on these violent measures with
a number of administrative procedures. Thousands
of Greeks and Turks were expelled through this
official exchange and good number of them died
during the course of this exodus. More generally,
in such conditions, with the displacement and
concentration of hungry populations across the
continent, it was not surprising that pathogenic in-
fected proliferations. Central and eastern Europe
was soon hit by typhus. But more spectacularly,
the world was swept by the "Spanish flu" which
claimed 40 to 50 million victims in populations
weakened by the years of war. Before that the
worst epidemic had been cholera in the 19th cen-
tury. You would have to go back to the Middle
Ages and the Black Death to find an epidemic on
such a scale (30% of the European population was
wiped out by the plague).
This whole barbaric reality was only possible
because the working class had been drained by
nationalism and soiled by patriotism. But faced
with these atrocious conditions, the proletariat
didn't raise its head, demonstrated that it was
able to contain the despotic war making and putting
an end to the carnage. It was after the mutinies of
1917 in Russia and with workers' uprisings in Germany
1918 and the revolutionary wave which began in
the two imperialist blocs controlled by the US and
its armed wing, would exert a bureaucratic
power from the very top of the state, there was a tightening of
the war and in the name of the military needs
and security of the state, there was a tightening of
all foreigners under suspicion and to search. In
France for example, "the creation of identity cards
in 1917 was a real reversal of previous police and
administrative habits. Our mentalities have today
taken on board this individual whose physical
origins are no longer seen as such. It is not how
northern that the intervention of identity cards first emerged, with the "law on iden-
tance in a full-scale war" (PJ Deschotd and F
Huguenin, La République xenophobe, ed JC
Lamotte, 2008). On this point, armies recognized
the displacement of civilians – whether spontaneous or provoked – was a real threat, an "encumbrance" for
troop activity and military logistics. States thus
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the two imperialist blocs controlled by the US and

1. Fritzck, Lamott, Schermei, Walden, Revolution et contre-révolution en Allemagne, 1918-1920, Ed Scimence
mursaire
On 10 October 2015, the ICC is organising a day-long public meeting in London on 10 October 2015: 1915, 1945: two rather contrasting anniversaries. The aim of the meeting and also give participants the opportunity to prepare comments and counter-arguments in advance.

1915, 1945: two rather contrasting anniversaries. In 1915, the First World War started. The conjunction of two world wars tell us about the historical epoch in which we live. For us, the barbarity of the Second World War makes the present epoch particularly in need of a clear understanding of the characteristics of the new epoch demands a patient work of theoretical elaboration, an ability to step back and reassess the whole situation in which we find ourselves on behalf of a definite political tendency within the class movement.

The Zimmerwald conference

Zimmerwald is a small town in Switzerland, and it was host to a small conference: 38 delegates from 12 countries - all the internationalists trans- ported to Switzerland by a combination of curiousity and fear, as well as a sense of duty. And even among these few, only a small minority defended a really revolutionary position against the war. The “class” or “correct” tendency, incanted in the likes of Kautsky and the future leaders of the USPD, was on the right at Zimmerwald. Kautsky had argued that the International, which had indeed collapsed in 1914, was not an instrument that could be used in war, but only in the revolutionary war, and demanded that the International should call for peace, appealing to the good sense of the world’s rulers rather than the class struggle. This position was represented in Switzerland by the Social Democrats, and by Luxemburg’s comrades in the Spartacus group, who were for the methods of class struggle, but who were against any annexationist goals of the struggle. Only the Bolsheviks around Lenin and some of the German groups stood for revolutionary methods and revolutionary goals: transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, the destruction of capitalism as the source of all wars.

Analysing imperialism

The result of the fierce debates at Zimmerwald was manifest to the proletarians of the world, which was in many ways a compromise between the left and the centre, since it did not take up the “revolutionary” revolutionaries. Nevertheless its ringing denunciation of the war and its call for class action against it still enabled it to articulate the anti-war position of the anti-war capitalists growing among the mass of the working class. And within two years the theoretical standpoint of the left was to be put into practice by the workers of Russia, whose revolt against the war led them to seize political power through the soviets.

But if Luxemburg and Lenin on the question of the goals of anti-war action, she had lent ahead of him when it came to providing a more general theoretical understanding of the organs of political action, and its consequences of one key element of the revolutionary programme. In a series of works published around 1915 or the beginning of 1916, Lenin laid the foundations of what there will be called – unlike the former “people of Marxism”, Kautsky – that imperialism was not a policy, whether good or evil, but a fact, a necessity, a whole new epoch in the history of the bourgeois economy, which had unified the whole of the world under the reign of capital, but in doing so had brought about poverty and conflict capitalism, but in doing so had brought about poverty and conflict.

The International Communist Current is organising a day-long public meeting in London on 10 October 2015: 1915, 1945: two rather contrasting anniversaries. The new film will show that the so-called ‘Good War’ of 1939-45 was in reality another imperialist war. The film ‘How the working class put an end to the First World War’ was shown at last year’s meeting. The new film, ‘How the working class put an end to the Second World War’, is being screened at the meeting.

The road to 1945

On 10 October 2015, the ICC is organising a day-long public meeting in London on 10 October 2015: 1915, 1945: two rather contrasting anniversaries. The film ‘How the working class put an end to the First World War’ was shown at last year’s meeting. The new film, ‘How the working class put an end to the Second World War’, is being screened at the meeting.

The struggle for internationalism needs political organisation

The example of Zimmerwald demonstrates that, for revolutionaries, the struggle against war takes place at three distinct but interconnected levels: the light of the past and of the perspectives for the future. Hence Lenin, at the outbreak of war, “re- treating” to the Zurich library to read Hegel in order to grasp the dialectic of social change, which can make what was valid in one period entirely reactionary in another. This reinforced Lenin’s ability to reply to the traitors and opportunists, those who used Marx’s words from a different period to justify, for example, their advocacy of a war to defeat Russian Czarism. The work of Lenin, Bukharin, Luxemburg, Pannekoek and others enabled the re-emerging political movement of the class to understand that a new epoch had dawned, one in which the class struggle would take on new forms and new methods to achieve directly revolutionary objectives;

- Propaganda and agitation: armed with a lucid theoretical framework, the internationalists of the new epoch avoided the siren calls of anti-fascism and thus incapable of standing against the march towards war. Rather than seriously examining the balance of forces between the classes and the programmatic changes demanded by the new epoch, Trotskyism in particular threw itself into an unprincipled quest for growth at any cost, culminating in the formation of an abortive Fourth International in 1938.

Class struggle did not cease during this dark period, and there was still a proletarian political

ICC public meeting

World wars, capitalist decline, and the internationalist response

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• 11am to 1 pm: We will be showing a new film produced by a close sympathiser, Mark Hayes, whose film ‘How the working class put an end to the First World War’ was shown at last year’s meeting. The new film, ‘How the working class put an end to the Second World War’, is being screened at the meeting.

- Propaganda and agitation: armed with a lucid theoretical framework, the internationalists of the new epoch avoided the siren calls of anti-fascism and thus incapable of standing against the march towards war. Rather than seriously examining the balance of forces between the classes and the programmatic changes demanded by the new epoch, Trotskyism in particular threw itself into an unprincipled quest for growth at any cost, culminating in the formation of an abortive Fourth International in 1938.

Class struggle did not cease during this dark period, and there was still a proletarian political
priority was to draw the lessons of past defeats and prepare the programmatic basis of the party of the future. The most decisive test for the political milieu of the party came in 1935. The initial military coup by Franco in July was halted by a real working class uprising, but this was ultimately a victory for the war, not a revolution, but a new step in the world-wide counter-revolution.

The Italian Fraction distinguished itself by its ability to situate the war in its real historical and global context, and to remain loyal to the needs of the class struggle against both capitalist camps. And even then the pressures of the period did not spare the Fraction, which suffered a serious split soon after the war began, with a minority enrolling in the militia of the POUM in Spain.

The outbreak of the war in 1939 increased these pressures, not only because of the brutal repression that revolutionaries faced under conditions of military occupation, but also because of the enormous force of imperialist ideology strengthened confusions within their own ranks: the Italian Fraction refused to align itself with the Trotskyist organisations and many of the anarchists were drawn into a rehearsal for the next imperialist world war, and prepare the programmatic basis of the party for the Trotskyists, the Stalin group in Greece, Münis in Spain and Mexico, the RKD in the Netherlands, and the Fratelli d’Italia in Switzerland. The Trotskyists had simultaneously declared for participation in the war to defend democracy and the “workers” state which they hoped to create from the councilist and anarchist traditions stuck to their internationalist principles. Although they did clung to the hope that the end of the war would bring about another revolutionary situation, as in 1917. And indeed there were some important class movements toward the end of the war, most notably in the factories of northern Italy in 1943, of which the ruling class to drop the Mussolini regime like a hot potato. This created a wave of short-sighted optimism among revolutionaries, especially comrades of the Italian left, many of whom had returned from exile to join the Partito Comunista Internazionalista which was formed in considerable haste from different oppositional groupings.

In a situation of considerable confusion it was again the French Fraction of the Communist Left (constituted in 1942) which was best able to carry on the political tradition of the Italian Fraction, now dissolved into the PCInt. Having initially thought that the strikes in Italy announced a change in the historic course, they soon understood that the bourgeoisie had learned the lessons of 1917 and was well prepared to prevent any re-run of the revolution at the end of the Second World War. The terror bombing of German cities, Churchill’s policy of “letting the Italians stew in their own juice” in 1943 – halting the advance of the allied armies from the south of Italy to allow the Nazis to reach the class movement in the north – expressed the ruthless determination of the bourgeoisie to wipe out the last sign of resistance to its rule in the potentially dangerous closing phase of the war. The French Fraction was able to understand that the formation of a party – in one single country, and in conditions where the defeat of the working class was being further exacerbated both by repression and the ideological poison of “Liberation” and the “victory of democracy” – was an opportunist error that could only result in a programmatic regression in relation to the gains made by the French revolution in the previous period. This was demonstrated by the concessions made by the new party – especially after the fusion with the groups in the world led by Bordiga in 1945 – as each vital issue as the nature of the class, the trade union and national questions, and even electoralism.

Against the activist attitudes of the new party, the French group (which took the name Gauche Communiste de France following the split with a tendency that aligned itself with the Italian Party) understood that the need for theoretical elaboration was still paramount, and in the post war period produced a considerable body of work analysing in its small groups of revolutionaries from the councilist and anarchist traditions stuck to their internationalist principles.

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Once more on decadence: some questions for the ‘deniers’

This article is contributed by a close sympathetic colleague, who participated in a number of recent online debates about the question of capitalist decadence.

Introduction

The ICC has commented more than once on the persistent tendency in the proletarian milieu – especially that part influenced by anarcho- – to reject the Marxist theory of capitalist decadence.1 This is to say that while the tendency is socially regressive, systemic, and that its overthrow is therefore both possible and necessary for humanity, you might be forgiven for thinking there would be some common ground on this; especially today, with the daily ubiquity of millions of people desperately trying to flee the barbaric waves of capitalism in the Middle East; wars which increasingly reveal the lack of any rational economic motive even from the point of view of imperialism... Instead, if a recent online discussion on libcom’s forum is anything to go by,2 at least in this milieu disputes about outright hostility to the whole Marxist theory of decadence, arguing that it is at best unnecessary to explain capitalism as a historically transitory mode of production, and at worst a purely ideological construct or pseudo-religious belief... We can fairly say that ‘deca-dence denial’ is a real phenomenon in the proletariat milieu today. Online discussions certainly have their weakness and this one generated as much heat as light in its day, so rather than go back over ‘who said what’ instead we want to focus on what seems to us to be the key questions to address: to restate the basic Marxist thesis that the ‘Marxist position on these questions; to briefly look at light at times, so rather than go back over ‘who said what’ instead we want to focus on what seems to us to be the key questions to address: to restate the basic Marxist thesis that the ‘Marxist position on these questions; to briefly look at light at times, so rather than go back over ‘who said what’ instead we want to focus on what seems to us to be the key questions to address: to restate the basic Marxist thesis that the ‘Marxist position on these questions; to briefly look at light at times, so rather than go back over ‘who said what’ instead we want to focus on what seems to us to be the key questions to address: to restate the basic Marxist thesis that the ‘Marxist position on these questions; to briefly look at light at times, so rather than go back over ‘who said what’ instead we want to focus on what seems to us to be the...