EU, Brexit, populism: Against nationalism in all its forms!

"The communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The workers have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got" (Communist Manifesto, 1848)

Capitalism, the system of exploitation which rules the planet, cannot maintain itself by force and violence alone. It cannot do without the power of ideology – the endless production of ideas which turn reality on its head and persuade the exploited that their best interests lie in lining up behind their own exploiters. Exactly a hundred years ago, hundreds of thousands of workers from Britain, France, Germany and other countries, at the Battle of the Somme, paid the ultimate price for believing the basic lie of the ruling class – that the workers should ‘fight for their country’, which could only mean fighting and dying for the interests of the ruling class. The horrible massacres of World War One proved once and for all that nationalism is the deadliest ideological enemy of the working class.

Today, after decades of attacks on living standards, of the break-up of industries and communities, of financial shocks and austerity packages, and of a whole series of defeated struggles, the working class is being subjected to a new tidal wave of nationalist poison in the form of the populist campaigns of Trump in the USA, Le Pen in France, the Brexiteers in Britain and many other central capitalist countries. These campaigns are openly basing themselves on the real disorientation and anger within the working class, on growing frustration about the lack of jobs, housing, healthcare, on widespread feelings of powerlessness in the face of impempional, global forces. But the very last thing these campaigns want workers to do is to think critically about the real causes of all these misfortunes. On the contrary, the function of populism is to divert any attempt to understand the complex and apparently mysterious social system that governs our lives and to come up with a far simpler solution: look for someone or something else to blame.

Blame the elites, they scream: the greedy bankers, the corrupt politicians, the shadowy bureaucrats who run the EU and tie us all up in red tape and regulations. And all these figures are indeed part of the ruling class and play their part in ramping up exploitation and destroying jobs and futures. But “blaming the elites” is a distortion of class consciousness, not the real thing, and the trick can be exposed by asking the question: who is peddling this new anti-elitism? And you only have to look at Donald Trump or the leaders of the Brexit campaign, or the mass media who support them, to see that this kind of anti-elitism is being sold by another part of the elite. In the 1930s, the Nazis used the same trick, scapegoating a sinister international elite of Jewish financiers for the devastating effects of the world economic crisis, and pulling workers behind a fraction of the ruling class which claimed to defend the true interests of the national economy. The Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels once said that the bigger the lie, the greater the chance of its success, and the claim to stand for the little guy against the elite, mouthed by politicians like the billionaire Trump, is a lie worthy of Goebbels himself.

But above all, the target of the new nationalism is not a section of the rich but the most oppressed layers of the working class itself, the most direct victims of capitalism’s economic crisis, its savage imperialist wars, its devastation of the environment – the mass of economic migrants and war refugees driven towards the central capitalist countries in search of a refuge from poverty and mass murder. Another “simple” solution offered by the populists: if we could stop them coming in, if we could kick them out, there would obviously be more to go around, a better chance for the “native” workers to find jobs and housing. But this apparent common sense obscures the fact that unemployment and homelessness are products of the workings of the world capitalist system, of “market forces” that cannot be blocked by walls or border guards, and that the migrants and refugees are being pushed by the same capitalist drive for profit which closes down factories in the old industrial regions and displaces whole sectors of production to the other side of the world where labour is cheaper.

Faced with a system of exploitation that is by nature planetary in its reach, the exploited can only defend themselves by uniting across all national divisions, by forming themselves into an international power against the international power of capital. And in direct opposition to this need is the tactic of divide and rule, which is used by all capitalist parties and factions, but which has been pushed to an extreme by the populists. When one group of workers sees the cause of their problems in other workers, when they see their interests being upheld by parties which call for tough measures against immigration, they give up the possibility of defending themselves, and they weaken the prospect of resistance by the working class as a whole.

False alternatives to populism

Behind the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the populists lies the very real threat of violence, of the pogrom. In countries like Greece and Hungary, the toxic hatred of ‘foreigners’, the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have engendered out and out fascist groupings that are willing to terrorise and murder migrants and refugees – the Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary, and the list could easily be extended. In Britain after the Brexit victory, there has been a real upsurge in racist attacks, threats and insults against Poles and other EU immigrants as well as against black and Asian people, as the most overtly racist currents in society feel that the time has come to emerge from their sewers.

But the example of Britain also shows that there is a false alternative to populism which remains on the side of the capitalist system. The chaotic political situation created by the Brexit vote (which we analyse in another article in this paper), the growing threat to immigrant workers, has led many well-meaning people to vote for the Remain camp, and in the wake of the referendum, to organise large demonstrations in favour of the EU.

British nationalism versus Euro nationalism: false alternative for the working class

Workers of the world, unite!
Growing difficulties for the bourgeoisie and for the working class

When 52% of those who voted in the UK referendum in June 2016 for the European Union chose the Brexit option it was not an isolated incident but another example of the rise of populism. You can see it in the support for Donald Trump in the battle for the US Presidency; in Germany with the rise of the parties of the Christian Democrats (Pegida and Alternative für Deutschland); in the recent presidential election in France, in which the parties of the Christian Democrats and Christian Democrats were eclipsed and the contest was between the Greens and the populist right; in France there is the continuing rise of the National Front, Marine Le Pen; in the European Union; and there’s also the governments of Poland and Hungary. For the same reason another player in the game that is the present, and it is based on opposition to elites and ‘the establishment’, on antigovernment and antiparty feelings, on the promises and right-wing austerity, all expressing a loss of confidence in the institutions of the capitalist state and not for a moment recognizing the revolutionary alternative of the working class.

In the ICC’s “Theses on Decomposition” (http://www.marxists.org), published in 1990, we wrote about “the bourgeoisie’s growing difficulty in controlling the evolution of the political situation and ‘the ruling class’ loss of control over the political evolution. The use of democracy has proven a very effective tool and ideology for the capitalist class, something in which the ruling class has become the most sophisticated.” Although the use of democracy has proven a very effective tool and ideology for the capitalist class, some countries are better than others in this regard. The inevitable result of the British ruling class has been to deepen the centrifugal forces. One other prospect opens up with the growth of populist parties, which have won in the referendum strongly in favour of remaining in the EU, and with the 2015 General Election in which the Labour Party in the Scottish National Party, the possibility of a further loss of control and the undermining of the political system. It’s a situation in a different political party, but a majority there also wanted to remain, which could cause further difficulties for the United Kingdom.

On the political level there will be realignments, but there’s no guarantee that there’ll be a return to the unambiguous certainties of Left/Right politics. Parliament has 40 years of EU legislation to examine in a short period. After its internal battles the Leave camp is going to work hard. There was a big split in the Tory Cabinet during the campaign, and, after the referendum, the Tory and Labour parties went for a further division in the Brexit camp. Of the two women who are candidates for the Conservative leadership, May was for the Remain side but now says that “Brexit means Brexit”, while Leadsom, in 2013, said leaving the EU would be a disaster for our economy, but campaigned to Leave in 2016. The 150,000 members of the Conservative Party who will decide on the next Prime Minister might not be a predictable electorate, any more than the Labour Party who will vote for Corbyn.

The situation in the Labour Party in a microcosm of the political difficulties faced by the bourgeoisie. Labour is not being called on to fulfil any important government function at present, but it does have an important oppositional role and needs to be ready for the future when ever the working class begins to stir. There is a gap between the MPs who don’t support Corbyn as leader and the membership who do. The unions are not united, but they too will contribute to the situation. There are two sections of the working class – above all, its tendency to drag the working class into a bunker where only you and your workers are saved, some groups have raised the slogan “No Borders”. This is a praiseworthy aim, but to get rid of borders you must get rid of the state, which means getting rid of the state you need to get rid of the social relations of exploitation which it protects. And all that requires a worldwide revolution of the exploited, establishing a new form of political power which dismantles the bourgeois state and begins to replace capitalist property for profit with commu nist production for universal need.

This goal seems immeasurably distant today, and the advancing decomposition of capitalist society – above all, its tendency to drag the working class into its own material and moral downfall – contains the danger that this perspective will be definitively lost. And yet it remains the only hope for a human future. And it is not a question of passively waiting for it to happen, like the Day of Judgement, the seeds of revolution lie in the revival of the class struggle, in returning to the path of resistance against attacks from right and left, in challenging the social relations of exploitation, in the fight for solidarity with all the exploited and the excluded, in the defence of our rights against all capitalist groups. This is the only struggle that can revive the perspective of a world community.

And what about the communists, that minority of the class which is still convinced by the perspective of a world human community? We have to recognise soberly that in the present situation we are swimming against the stream. And like previous revolutionary fractions which withstand the challenge of a tide of reaction or counter-revolution, we need to reject any compromising of principles learned from decades of class experience. We need to insist that there can be no support for any state or alliance of states, no concessions to nationalist ideology, no illusions that capitalist democracy provides a means of defending ourselves against capitalism. We refuse to participate in capitalist campaigns on one side or the other, precisely because we do aim to partici pate in the class struggle, and because the class struggle needs to become independent from all the forces of capitalism which seek to divert it or corrupt it. Against the present capitalist disarray which is currently reigning in our class, we need to engage in a serious theoretical effort to understand the situation we are in, and this is often complicated and unpredictable. Theoretical work is not an abstention from the class struggle, but as Marx put it in his theory, in Marx’s words, becomes a material force by gripping the masses.
Cleaning up the image of the democratic state

O

er the last few years in Britain, and es-

cially over the last few months, there has been a
trend of ‘independent’ inquiries, parliamen-
tary investigations (often televised live), police,
media investigations (often televised live) and
sort of scandals and injustices, some of which
go back decades. With several major inquiries in-
vestigations just starting up, those that have been
terminated or, like the report on the 2003
Iraq War just out, it appears that the state is “clean-
ing up its act”, and, last, but not least, it is
cleaning up its act, against the working class.

It is a big challenge for revolutionaries to analyse
the significance this whole phenomenon, and we
are only just beginning this work.

The Chilcot Inquiry into Britain’s role in the
2003 war in Iraq. After 7 years and ten million quid, the 2.6 million word Chilcot Report has
been released. There’s nothing surprising about
its conclusions. Tony Blair didn’t lie but it
doesn’t matter what he said, the whole war was based
on a mendacity that’s stock-in-trade for the whole
ruling class. The intelligence on the threat posed
by Saddam was “flawed” apparently but it can see
that it can clearly warned that the
war would increase the jihadist threat and increase
regional instability in the Middle East. In this sense
the family of one soldier killed in the war was go-
ing in the right direction in labelling Blair (and his
clique) as “the world’s worst terrorist”

Despite not being accused of lying, Blair does
come in for particular criticism in the report, and
was the only individual mentioned in the initial
occasion where he participated. Everyone talks of
it but it was the whole of the British bourgeoisie that
was overwhelmingly behind supporting the war of
the bourgeoisie. The cabinet, the civil service,
the military, the secret services, politicians of
all parties, all faithfully supported by the media as
it obediently danced to their lying tunes. The intelli-
gence that was acted upon was what was required
and made up by the British ruling class in order
to fulfil its imperialist interest covered by its
democratic façade. It’s not a question of individu-
als but of the state apparatus. All the individuals
involved in fomenting this war, from the civil ser-
vice to the defence cabinet, to the cabi
office, to the media, have all been promoted or are doing
very well in high-paid positions – including Tony
Blair himself and ‘Evoy’ to this day.

The lawyers arguing about ‘who lied’ deliberate-
ly avoid the point. Nari propaganda minister
Joseph Gobeblt, an admiral of the BBC, hit it on
the head: “The essential English leadership secret
does not depend on a particular intelligence....

English follow the principle that when one
lies, it should be a big lie and one should stick
to it. They keep their lies, even at the risk of
being caught in a lie. ‘Never allow your
tials will be learnt’ are just continuations of the
democratic lie. After around half-a-million Iraqis had been
crushed in the streets of Baghdad, the collapse of an
ISIS closely linked to the Iraq War and the role of
US and British intelligence, British imperialism
then pursued in the 2011 Libyan war with similar
ties, similar ruthlessness and similar results.

Chilcot can’t teach us anything because the
imperialist policies of Blair government are still the
70s, with many suffering sexual and physical
abuse. Along with the state, to which they belong,
these organisations were running a massive children's ring of sex slaves and cheap labour. The re-

der of the Jimmy Savile inquiry, where those that

support him have been promoted by the BBC
while those that flagged up his ‘institutionalised
abuse’ have been forced out, shows how meaning-
less are words like ‘Sorry’ and ‘Savile will be
learnt and that will certainly apply in the God-
dard attempt at ‘closure’, i.e., the whitewashing
of the state. And apart from anything else these
inquiries are a goldmine for the lawyers and other
parasitic layers. But the real underlying motive is
the strengthening of the state by presenting it as
ultimately clean, moral and democratic.

While making a show, in one circus after the
other, of its “clean hands” the British ruling class
continues its war against the working class and
the war against its rivals, backing torturers and
butchers while manipulating various elements of
terrorism to its own ends. When they are not fa-
cilitating the expression of terrorism they are us-
ing it. In this sense the British bourgeoisie are no
different from their counterparts everywhere, who
also have their own “clean hands” campaigns.

The bourgeoisie’s ideas about ending corrup-
tion and the recent London summit to this effect,
including all sorts of professional gangsters and
their chiques, was purely a跛hood, steeped in money from all sorts of ‘enterprises’,
and with its offshore networks, stands as probably
the most “corrupt” of all national capitals.

None of these expressions of capitalism: corrup-
tion, “mistakes,” “bad policing,” cover-ups, greed,
unemployment and fear at work, increased exploi-
tation, sexual slavery and abuse, none of these are
exceptions to capitalism which can be overturned
or even altered by any number of inquiries. These
are integral expressions of the whole system along
with the tendency to increased militarism and war.

There can be no fair capitalism just as there can
be no fair justice. The crimes of the state
system is profit, exploitation and militarism and
no inquiry can even begin to attenuate that. Nor can
we expect “learning lessons” from the Royal
Commission, which is going nowhere while the workers of both
social classes are suffering the irrationality of their system, do anything but follow its devasting course and try to manage its
rhythm. For this they have to continually swamp
the working class ideologically with all their vari-
os campaigns and “investigations”. For its part,
and as weak as it is at the moment, the working
class is the only force that is capable of posing a
new society but for this it has to fight for its own
interests and if it begins to do that we won’t be
seeing the bourgeoisie setting up inquiries into the
excesses of the capitalist state. Boxer, 7/7/16

(Endnotes)

a. For a deeper look at this question see: http://

b. The US itself is no stranger to ‘scandals’ and

(Endnotes)
Movement against the El Khomri law
Repression shows the true face of the democratic state!

A scene filmed on 24 March on a mobile phone shows how a police officer punched an elderly man in the face. This police holding a schoolboy on the ground and when the young boy got up a policeman pushed him violently to the ground. There is only one example among others. Police repression has in fact been ferocious throughout the movement against the law. It was approved by the French parliament in April, the State has been out to stop all forms of political action. As Marx emphasised: “It took both time and experience before the workers learnt to distinguish between political and economic demands and to understand and to transfer their attacks from the material instruments of production to the form of society which utilizes those instruments.”

‘Rioters/wreckers’, a phenomenon encouraged by decomposition
On the other hand, there was a number of political expressions which emerged during the 20th century and which have given in to blind violence in various forms. This was particularly the case after 1968, for example those in Italy inspired by ‘operaists’ ideologies’, or in West Germany among the many ‘autonomous’ tendencies. These currents expressed a lack of reflection and orientation about the means needed for a political confrontation with the bourgeois state. But here it is a question of a dynamic of traumatic Staliner counter-revolution, which has not yet received in recognising itself as a social power, as an autonomous social force, and thus its communist perspective. Disoriented, totally lacking in confidence in its own strength, the revolutionary has not succeeded in recognising its own identity and still its historic power. So it leaves the field free for all the imperatives of an ‘emergency law’ which are capable of temporarily and momentarily lacking any perspective for the future.

This largely explains the relative attraction among some of the young for the methods of the ‘autonomists’ and ‘insurrectionists’, or the success of hazy theories like those of the pamphlet ‘The Coming Insurrection’ by a certain ‘Invisible Committee’. In it we can read: “The offensive aiming to liberate territory from police occupation is already committed, and can count on inescapable reserves of resistance that these forces have united against themselves. The ‘social movements’ and the autonomous social struggles are capable of creating a massive second front which will be able to carry out a decisive thrust against the bourgeoisie, which in turn, in its reaction to the revolutionary perspective. The manifestations of violence at present are both the reflection of a weakness of the class struggle and the product of social decomposition, of a general atmosphere which gives free rein to behaviour typical of social layers who have no future, who are incapable of opposing the barbarity of capitalism with another perspective, apart from blind and nihilistic rage. Other actions by rebellious minorities (such as those of the Molotov cocktail attack, on 18 May, against two police officers in their car, on the margins of a rally), which are clearly products of a spirit of revenge, are also exploited to the hilt by the state and its press in order to denounce ‘anti-police hatred’. Throughout the existence of the workers’ movement it has been shown that the construction of a real balance of forces with its class enemy takes time; it is impossible to organise and lead the struggle. Such a situation can only further weaken consciousness by rebranding the main subtexts of the struggle.

What is a revolutionary perspective?
An authentic working class movement has nothing to do with the false alternative between containment by the official unions and ‘riotous’ actions which can only lead those who truly want to struggle, especially the youth in the demonstra-"
Union ‘radicalism’ helps impose attacks

massively as possible. The essence of this combat is the unification of struggles, uniting all, unem- ployed, unemployed, youth, old, retired, etc. And when the working class is able to mobilise on such a scale, it is capable of rallying all the other strata of society that are victims of the suffer- ing caused by this system. It is this mobilisation in large numbers, really taken control of by the workers themselves, which alone has the capacity to push back the state and the bourgeoisie. This is why the working class does not seek the badge of violence to create a balance of force against the ruling class, but bases itself first of all on its numbers and its unity. The proletarian struggle has nothing to do with the skirmishes filmed by journalists. Far from the instrumentalisation of violence that we see today, the historic and in- ternational combat of the working class rests on conscious and massive action. It consists of a vast project whose cultural and moral dimension con- tains in embryo the emancipation of humanity as a whole. As an exploited class the proletariat has no privileges to defend and only its chains to lose. For this reason the programme of the Spartacist League, written by Rosa Luxemburg, says in point 3 that: “the proletarian revolution requires no ter- ror for its aims; it hates and despises killing. It does not need these weapons because it does not combat individuals but institutions...” The work- ers’ struggle, with its spirit of association and soli- darity, anticipates the real human community of the future. Its way of organising is not that of a general staff which directs from the summit to the base, but takes the form of collective resistance that gives birth to innumerable creative initiatives: “The mass strike ... flows now like a broad hillside over the whole kingdom, and now di- vides into a gigantic network of narrow streams; now it bubbles forth from under the ground like a fresh spring and now is completely lost under the earth. Political and economic strikes, mass strikes and partial strikes, demonstrative strikes and fighting strikes, in individual towns, peaceful wage struggles and street massacres, barricade fighting – all these run through one another; run side by side, cross one another, flow in and out and one an- other – it is a never-ending series of non-stop organi- zation and action, the whole world is a living, un- ceasing, vast, operatic phenomena.” This living, liberating momentum is expressed in the mass strike, then in the forma- tion of workers’ councils, and finally leading to the insurrection and the world-wide taking of power by the proletariat. For the moment this perspec- tive is not within reach for the proletariat which is much too weak. Although it is not defeated, it does not have sufficient strength to affirm itself and first of all needs to become conscious of itself, to reconnect with its own experience and history. The revolution is not immediate and inevitable. A long and difficult road, littered with pitfalls, still remains to be travelled. A veritable and profound upheaval of thought has to happen before it is pos- sible to imagine the affirmation of a revolutionary perspective. EGWN, 26/8/16

“A trial of strength”! A “War of attrition”? “Ris- ing tension”?

These are the kind of terms the media has been using in the last few weeks to describe the appar- ent confrontation between the governments and the unions over the “El Khomri” labour law. The conflict has been presented in a spectacular way by the media. It even reached the point where, for a few hours, the government banned a union demo prior to allowing it after – something that hasn’t been seen for 50 years.

There has been real discontent against this attack on the working conditions of the entire working class. It has given rise to a relatively significant and large scale mobilisation and militancy during certain days of action. However, contrary to what the me- dia would have us believe, this militancy has not been seen in the majority of wage earners. Despite the images of blockades, of tyres burning on the roads, the strikes have very often been restricted to a minority and there has been little in the way of a growth of confidence, unity and conscious-

ness in the ranks of the working class. On the contrary: “these union parades, which consist of people trampling the streets and being bombarded with water by the workers under the auspices of the ‘El Khomri’ you are screwed’ or ‘Strike, strike, general strike!, without being able to discuss or build anything together, serve only to demoralise people and spread feelings of powerlessness!”

Many wage earners, high school and university students, and precarious or unemployed workers have asked questions about this, feeling that the omnipresence of the unions and their sterile days of action are not leading anywhere. But they have not been able to break out of the union nooses and develop an open, collective critique of union methods. And the Nuit Debout movement, which claims to offer a “space” for deeper reflection, “is leading us into a dead end and strengthening the most conformist outlooks. Worse than that, Nuit Debout is a vehicle for the most nauseating ideas, like the personalisation of the evils of so- ciety, blaming them on a few representatives like bankers and oligarchs”.

Among the youngest participants, there is the illusion that all this is an expression of the class war and that we are heading towards a new May 68, a mobilisation of the proletariat on a scale we haven’t seen for many years. But the government has shown no signs of retreating in the face of pressure from the streets, as it did in 2006 at the time of the fight against the CPE. Even if the So- cialist government has not been a picture of unity and coherence, the government and the unions, led by the CGT, have managed to work together to set up this confrontation, with the aim of manipulat- ing this struggle and giving it an “integral organi- zation.”

The focus of this strategy has been the growing “lyricalisation” of the CGT. Over several months

3. The CGT is the union linked to the Stalinist French Communist Party; the CFDT is closer to the Socialist Party and has come under a “Travail” influence.

the struggle against the pension reforms, is presented as the ultimate weapon against the bourgeoisie, a way of hitting it where it really hurts. But not only was this real level of paxilisation on the oil sector even more pathetic than in 2010, it has functioned as a powerful factor of division within the work- ing class. On the one hand you have some of the most mili- tant workers trapped behind makeshift barricades, cut off from the rest of their class and at the mercy of police repression; on the other hand, you have many workers who are feeling discontented but are waiting to see what will happen, hardly involved in the social movement and sometimes exasp- erated by the endless transport strikes and the petrol shortages.

The CGT and all the “combative” unions have not suddenly become “revolutionary” any more than they are fighting for the basic interests of the workers. With the decadence of the capitalist sys- tem, the trade unions, whose original reason for exist- ence (the reduction of capitalist exploitation) was already quite conservative, have become an essential cog of the state apparatus, with the task of managing the working class in the logic of negotiations, of sabotaging workers’ struggles and smothering the growth of a revolutionary consciousness. Their role is to divide the workers and undermine any mass movement which could lead to questioning the capitalist order. The current radicalism of the unions is aimed at making us for- get their direct complicity in the attacks that have been carried out by successive governments, and their involvement in the day-to-day management of exploitation in the factories and offices.

The essential complicity of the unions and the government doesn’t mean that there are no strug- gles for influence between various cliques. The concern is not to reject all the element of group influence but to differentiate it, to identify the key elements that can determine the direction of the struggle.
The lure of the strong man and the weakness of the working class

But the worst effect of having no perspective due to demoralisation is hoping that one person can alleviate poverty from poverty: hoping for a strongman and a “benevolent” dictator. This is no different from hoping for a all-powerful god to descend to earth to save those who have faith in him and punish those who do not. The class which mainly generates this mentality is the petty-bourgeoisie.

Generally we were not made of our analysis.

Different bourgeois “political analysts” admitted that the votes for Rodrigo Duterte are victories against the failures of the BS Aquino administration. In reply, what one doesn’t want to say is that the hatred and discontent of the people is against the whole system of bourgeois democracy that they have placed the dictatorship of Marcos Sr. in 1986. For the people, the failures and corruption of the democratic institutions has been exposed, and seen as no different from the Marcos Sr. dictatorship. They feel that the current situation is worse than during the time of the Marcos Sr. dictatorship.

Duterte regime: a government of the left of capital?

It is a question that he is a “socialist” and a “leftist”. He boasted that he will be the first leftist President of the Philippines and offer their support for his regime. And the front runner in this support is the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines and its legal organisations. Whatever the “socialism” of Duterte, it is certainly not scientific socialism or Marxism. For sure it is another brand of bourgeois “socialism” to deceive the masses and rescue the liars of the bourgeois against socialism/communism. The “socialism” of Duterte is state capitalism.

The failure of the Aquino regime can be seen before and during the campaign, it is clear that the essence of its programme of government is for the interests of the capital as well as of the working masses. In relation to this, he has threatened militant workers with strikes under his term or else he will kill them.

Worse, Duterte uses language (as well as the Bible) as a language to strengthen the fear of the masses. His expression of “federalism”, which seems to be based on the boil that the income of the local governments is bigger than that of the national government, is in reality closer to the concept of an “autonomy” of local municipalities in their own territories. For the communist organisation and revolutionaries in the Philippines, the Duterte regime is a radical defender of national capitalism but is still totally dependent on foreign capital.

Duterte regime: government of and by the capitalist class

The “broad” support of Duterte to stop corruption, criminality and drugs within the first 3-6 months of his presidency has a very strong appeal to the voters. This has a strong appeal among capitalists and the “middle class” who are the constant target of crime. Capitalists want a peaceful and smooth running business in order to accumulate more profits. That’s why, for the capitalists, workers’ strikes are just as much expressions of ‘class war’ as the plague of crime.

The new government cannot solve the problems of mass unemployment, low wages and widespread casualisation. In the midst of a worsening crisis of over-production, the main demand for the capitalists is to have a competitive edge against their rivals in a saturated world market. Protesting the cost of labour power through layoffs and precarious contracts is the only way to make their products cheaper than their rivals.

The essential solution of the regime is to strengthen state control over the life of society and to oblige the population to strictly follow the orders of the state through propaganda and repression.

Under the new regime factional struggles within the ruling class will intensify as the crisis of the system worsens. On the surface, most of the elected politicians from the other parties, especially from the ruling Liberal Party of Duterte’s predecesor, the Aquino regime, are now declaring their allegiance to the new government. But in reality every faction has its own agenda which they want to use to assert under the new administration. Furthermore, within the Duterte camp there are several factions competing for favour and positions: the drug war faction, the economic faction, the personal faction, warlords from Mindanao/Visayas, warlords from Luzon particularly the group around Cayetano, the Vice-Presidential candidate of Duterte.

Effects of capitalist decomposition on the consciousness of the Filipino masses

We also wrote in our article ‘Boycott the election’...

For almost 50 years the Filipino toiling masses witnessed the bankruptcy of both the guerrilla war of the Maosists and the promises of reform from every faction of the ruling class sitting in Malacañang Palace. In addition, the militarisation in the countryside of both the armed rebels and the state resulted in massive discrimination that creates a widening and increasing population of poor and unemployed people living in saturated slum areas in the cities. This situation is exploited by the crime syndicates. Hence, criminality from drugs, robbery and kidnapping and cat-napping increases year by year. Gang killings and gang rists, rape and other forms of violence are daily events in the cities. And increasingly, both the perpetrators and the victims are the young, even children.

Communist parties of the capital and provincial officials are protectors of these syndicates, this state itself has become totally unable to control crimes and violence. Therefore, the first thing to be affected by the decrease in criminality, particularly robbery and kidnapping, are the rich, the poor people also carry the burden of these crimes since most of the “soldiers” or the cannon-fodder of these syndicates come from the hungry and unemployed population.

Helplessness

There is a widespread feeling of helplessness among the population. Being atomised and isolated, they’re asking who can protect them. Behind this thinking is their expectation that the state must protect them. But the state is abandoning them. Helplessness and atomisation breed a long-term for a saviour, a person or group of persons that can save them from their misery, that is stronger than the sum of the atomised population. And this saviour must control the government since only government can control the syndicates.

This helplessness is a fertile ground for scapegoating and personalisation grows, the number of people who support physical elimination, by whatever means, of corrupt officials and criminals is increasing.

We can only see a bright future by rejecting all forms of nationalism. We cannot see the proletariat class struggle if we just look at the “national situation”. We should not forget that since 2006 our class brothers in Europe, some parts of the Central and East Europe and the USA have taken on fighting against decomposition through movements of solidarity (such as COPP in France, Indiguals in Spain, class struggle in Greece, Occupy movement in the USA). We should also remember that hundreds of thousands of our class brothers in China have launched widespread strikes.

We must persevere with theoretical clarification, organisational strengthening and militant interventions to prepare for the future struggles at the international level. We are not nationalists as we do not support any government party. We are proletarian internationalists.

Let us be reminded by the last paragraph of the Communist Manifesto: “The Communist Party must succeed in concealing their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forceful overthrow of the existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Commu- nist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.”

Internationalism

For us, what is important is to analyse and understand as communists why significant numbers of the population are ready to accept Duterte as dictator and “Godfather”. Analysis is crucial because in other countries, especially in Europe and the USA, ultra-rightist personalities who engage in tough-talking and bullying (the likes of Donald Trump) are gaining popularity. Significant numbers of the youth are also attracted to the violence and fanaticsm of ISIS.
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Migrants and refugees: victims of capitalist decline, Part 3: The Cold War

Belgian Congo and the presence of mercenaries led to many victims and many displaced. One could add to these examples, like that of Angola which had been ravaged by war since the first uprisings of its people in Luanda in 1961. After its independence in 1975, many years of wars followed between the forces of the ruling MPLA (Moss委组织 of Liberation of Angola, supported by Moscow) and the rebels of UNITA (supported by South Africa and the United States): not less than one million died and 4 million were displaced, including half a million refugees who ended up in camps. The many conflicts on this continent permanently destabilised entire regions such as West Africa or the strategic Great Lakes region. One could equally find examples in Central America, or in Asia, which saw many bloody guerrilla conflicts. The Russian intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 marked an acceleration of this infernal spiral, leading to the exodus of 6 million people, the largest refugee population in the world.

Nationalism and the mechanics of exportation

The new states or nations that emerged following large displacements were the direct product of imperialist divisions and power. They were the fruit of nationalism, expulsions and exclusion: in short, a pure product of the climate of war and political conflicts generated by decadent capitalism. The formation of these new states was a dead end that could only fuel destructive tensions. Thus the partition of India in 1947, then the creation of Bangladesh and Pakistan, forced more than 15 million people to be displaced on the Indian subcontinent.

The founding of the state of Israel in 1948, a real belligerent force, was also a significant example. This new state, growing from 750,000 to 1.9 million inhabitants in 1960, was from its birth the focus of an infernal spiral of wars that caused the growth of Palestinian refugee camps everywhere. In 1948, 800,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced and the Gaza strip gradually became a vast open-air camp. Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, Damascus, Amman, were transformed gradually into the capitals.

Similar problems of refugees and migrants were widely created across the planet. In China, millions of people were displaced, themselves victims of the ferocious Japanese oppression during the war. After the victory of the Maoist troops in 1949, some 2.2 million Chinese fled to Taiwan and 1 million to Hong Kong. China then made itself in relative autarky to try to make up for its economic backwardness. In the early 1960s, it then underwent a forced industrialisation and launched the policy of the “Great Leap Forward”, imprisoning its population in kind of national labour camps preventing any attempt at migration. This brutal policy of uprooting and repression practiced since the Mao era led to the growth of the concentration camps (laogai). Famine and repression was in effect deemed a “risk”, justifying its marginalisation. But this did not stop it from hiring cheap labour for the heaviest work, knowing labour was in effect deemed a “risk”, justifying its marginalisation. But this did not stop it from hiring cheap labour for the heaviest work, knowing that it could get rid of them overnight. The high turnover of these newly arrived workers allowed a frenzied and unscrupulous exploitation, particularly in the chemical and metallurgical industries. Between 1950 and 1973, nearly 10 million people migrated to Western Europe to meet its industrial needs.

This situation was inevitably exploited by the bourgeoisie to divide the workers and turn them against each other, to generate competition and distrust on both sides. With the recovery of workers’ struggles in 1968 and the waves of struggles that followed, these factors would feed the many divisive manoeuvres by the unions and the ideological campaigns of the bourgeoisie. On the one side, racial and xenophobic prejudices were encouraged; on the other, the class struggle was diverted by anti-racism, often used as a distraction to workers’ demands. In this way, poison was spread and foreigners became “undesirable”, or were portrayed as “profiteers” or “privileged”. All this would favor the growth of populist ideologies, facilitating the exportation which increased wholesale since the 1980s. WH (April 2016)

In the next and final article in this series we will cover the issue of migrants from the 1980s to the present.

2004:
5. Source: UNHCR (High Commissioner for Refugees), World Refugee Report
Migrants and refugees: victims of capitalist decline, Part 3: The Cold War

In the first article in this series, we gave a brief overview of the origins and function of the international arena. But we had ended the discussion between the Western and Eastern blocs. The months that followed the end of the war were marked by the expulsion of 13 million Germans from the Eastern countries and the exile of more than a million Russians, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Poles and Greeks, all fleeing the Stalinist regime. Ultimately, “Between 9 and 13 million people perished as a result of the policy of Allied imperialism between 1945-50. There were three main foci of this genocidal persecution.”

Firstly amongst a total of 13.3 million ethnic Germans expelled from Eastern parts of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary etc. were allowed by the Potsdam agreement. This ethnic cleansing was so inhuman that only 0.7 million arrived at their destination within the post-war borders of Germany, the rest “disappeared” in the most grievous circumstances.

Secondly amongst the German prisoners of war who died as a result of the starvation and diseased conditions of the allied camps - between 1.5 and 4 million.

Finally amongst the population in general who were put on rations of around 1000 calories per day guaranteeing slow starvation and sickness - 3.7 million died as a result.”

A great number of Jewish survivors did not live to see the end of the war because of the anti-Semitism, particularly in Poland (where new pogroms broke out such as at Kielce in 1946) and Central Europe. The frontiers of the Western democracies had been cleansed of Jews who were often housed in camps. In 1947 some sought to reach Palestine to escape hostility in the East and return to their former homes. They died in large numbers and were stopped by the British to be immediately interned in Cyprus. The aim was to deport and control all these populations to maintain capitalist order. In the same period the number of prisoners in the camps of the Gulag in the USSR exploded. Between 1946 and 1950, the population doubled to more than two million prisoners. A large number of refugees and migrants, or “displaced persons”, ended up in the camps to die. This new world of the Cold War shaped by the “victors of freedom” had created new fractures, brutal divisions tactic justifying population pockets of around 1000 calories per day guaranteeing slow starvation and sickness - 3.7 million died in the same period.

Since the beginning of the period of decolonisation, and especially in the 1980s when Cold War conflicts intensified and worsened, so-called “national liberation struggles” (in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East) were particularly murderous. Pushed to the geographical periphery of the major capitalist powers, these conflicts gave the illusion of an “era of peace” in Europe while the lasting wounds and forced displacement of millions of migrants appeared as so many “distant” tragedies (except for the old settlers coming from these regions and the nations directly affected). In Africa, since the end of the colonial era, there were many wars, some of them among the most murderous in the world. Throughout these conflicts, major powers like Great Britain or France (then acting as the Western bloc’s “gendarmerie of Africa” against the USSR) were widely involved militarily on the ground that the logic of the East/West blocs prevailed. For example, hardly had the Sudan gained its independence in 1956 than a terrible civil war would involve the colonial powers and thus be exploited by the blocs, leaving at least 2 million dead and more than 500,000 refugees, forced to seek asylum in neighbouring countries. Instability and war became a permanent feature. The terrible war in Biafra caused famines and epidemics, leaving at least 2 million dead and as many refugees. Between 1960 and 1965, the civil war in the former

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