Middle East: capitalism is a growing threat to humanity

A few months ago, the world seemed to be taking a step towards a nuclear confrontation over North Korea, with Trump’s threats of “fire and fury” and North Korea’s Great Leader boasting of its capability for massive retaliation. Today the North and South Korean leaders are holding hands in public and promising an end to decades of hostility; Trump will hold his face-to-face meeting with Kim Jong-un on 12 June in Singapore.

Only weeks ago, there was talk of World War Three breaking out over the war in Syria, this time with Trump warning Russia that his smart missiles were on their way in response to the chemical weapons attack in Douma. The missiles were launched, no Russian military units were hit, and it's easy to succumb to panic in a world that looks increasingly out of control – and then to slip into complacency when our immediate fears are not realized or the killing fields slip down the news agendas. But in order to understand the real dangers posed by the present system and its wars, it's necessary to step back, to consider where we are in the unfolding of events on a historical and world-wide scale.

In the Juneus Pamphlet, written from prison in 1935, Rosa Luxemburg wrote that the world war signified that capitalist society was already sinking into barbarism. “The triumph of imperialism leads to the destruction of society, sporadically during a modern war, and forever, if the period of world wars that has just begun is allowed to take its damnable course to the last ultimate consequence”.

Luxemburg’s historical prediction was taken up by the Communist International formed in 1919: if the working class did not overthrow a capitalist system which had now entered its epoch of decay, the “Great War” would be followed by even greater, i.e. more destructive and barbaric wars, endangering the very survival of civilisation. And indeed this proved to be true: the defeat of the world revolutionary wave which broke out in reaction to the First World War opened the door to a stage and even more nightmarish conflict. And at the end of six years of butchery, in which civilian populations were the first target, the unleashing of the atomic bomb by the USA against Japan gave material form to the danger that future wars would lead to the extermination of humanity.

For the next four decades, we lived under the menacing shadow of a third world war between the nuclear-armed blocs that dominated the planet. But although this threat came close to being carried out – as over the Cuba crisis in 1962 for example – the very existence of the US and Russian blocs imposed a kind of discipline over the natural tendency of capitalism to operate as a war of each against all. This was one element that prevented local conflicts – which were usually proxy battles between the blocs – from spiralling out of control.

Another element was the fact, that following the world-wide revival of class struggle after 1968, the bourgeoisie did not have the working class in its pocket and was not sure of being able to march it off to war. In 1989-91, the Russian bloc collapsed faced with growing encirclement by the USA and inability of the model of state capitalism prevailing in the Russian bloc to adapt to the demands of the world economic crisis. The statesmen of the victorious US camp crowd that, with the “Viet” enemy out of the way, we would enter a new era of prosperity and peace. For ourselves, as revolutionaries, we insisted that capitalism would remain no less imperialist, no less militarist, but that the drive to war inscribed in the system would simply take a more chaotic and unpredictable form. And this too proved to be correct. And it is important to understand that this process, this plunge into military chaos, has worsened over the past three decades.

The rise of new challengers

In the first years of this new phase, the remaining superpower, aware that the demise of its Russian enemy would bring centrifugal tendencies in its own bloc, was still able to exert a certain discipline over its former allies. In the first Gulf War, for example, not only did its former subsidiaries (Britain, Germany, France, Japan, etc) join or support the US-led coalition against Saddam, it even had the backing of Gorbachev’s USSR and the regime in Syria. Very soon however, the cracks between the blocs – from spiralling out of control.

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Middle East capitalism is a growing threat to humanity

Between Turkey and the Kurds who have some common interests in the Middle East, and between the two powers in the future – the forces working in favour of destabilisation and disorder against both are growing. This raises the real possibility of a confrontation between the major powers, both of whose nuclear weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and both of which are increasingly committed to the use of chemical weapons – and possibly nuclear weapons – in the service of the ideology of the Shia-Sunni split, which has been going on for decades. This is one of the most important consequences of the “Islamic revolution” which undermined the traditional order of the west in the early years of the Russian Federation (from the start of the nationalist Russian revival), and which became an important part of the Federation but which risked becoming a player in the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Community (EEC) – states that were not participating in the bloc system. But even during this period there were signs of a more centrifugal tendency – most notably in the Lebanon and the “Islamic revolution” which undermined the Soviet Union’s domination of Iran, precipitating the Iran-Iraq war (where the west mainly backed Saddam Hussein, a Russian puppet, against Iran).

The definitive end of the bloc system has profoundly accelerated these centrifugal forces, and the war has brought them to a head. Thus within or around Syria we can see a number of contradictory battles taking place:

**Between Russia and Israel**

The recent Israeli air strikes against Iranian targets in Syria are in fact part of a continuous effort to stop the consolidation of Iran in the Syrian Islamic Republic, an effort that has become an additional direct challenge to the US. Syria, Iran, and Arab states such as Iraq, for example; but even in countries like Turkey, where the working class is strongest in areas where the working class has lived for centuries, the prospects for the socialist transformation of the world. That is the dilemma of world history, its inevitable ebb and flow, the crisis of capitalism, the possibility of a socialist revolution and then walk the talk against the Russians. This was one expression of the “discipline” of the working class, and of the impossibility of the working class to face up to two rivals on different levels and in different regions. Tensions between Russia and the US, which are at the heart of the US and Britain, have increased in a very visible manner recently. Thus, the isolation of the Putin regime, with its reliance on nationalist rhetoric and the military strength inherited from the “Soviet” era, was the product of a reaction against the post-Soviet period. Russia has become an additional direct challenge to the US. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria.

**Between Turkey and the Kurds**

The impact of political instability

There is no guarantee that the conflict will not continue for a long time. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria.

**Between Russia and Saudi Arabia**

During both world wars, the Middle East was an essential arena for the expansion of the US imperialism, and the US, as well as the US and Russia, have been quite comfortable with the current situation, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria. It seems that Israel continues to inform Russian forces in Syria, not least because the use of “conventional” weapons have a more or less symbolic character, and because the US and Russia have a common interest in the destruction of the Islamic State in Syria.
The British Labour Party harbours antissemitism, leading to a Chakrabarti Report in June 2016 called an "occasionally toxic atmosphere". Furthermore this is a longstanding and somewhat intermittent problem, related despite the recommendations of the report 2 years ago, despite Corbyn meeting with the Jewish Leadership Council and Board of Deputies in April, which they described as a missed opportunity, and despite the fact that it is has caused problems in recent years. So while we need to see what role the Labour Party plays for British capital.

What does the Labour Party do for capitalism?

Whatever we call it - 'broad church' - the Labour Party has different wings that play a greater or lesser part in the various functions it fulfills for the state. Often they loathe each other, but somehow the Labour Party manages to hang together much better than the Socialist Parties in France or Spain that have lost much of their influence to the more left wing France Insoumise and Podemos. Even the party and the trade unions were definitely integrated into the state during World War One, Labour's first real period in power. This has provided a safe means for the working class to express class discontent within the capitalist state, and to monitor that discontent. Whether the media make a scandal of some of this activity or not is not that significant, but it is carried out at all times, not just during periods of heightened class struggle as in the period between 1968 and 1989, but also in periods with low levels of class struggle as today, and even in periods in which the class has been defeated as in the 1950s and 1960s. Jeremy Corbyn is clearly on this wing of the Party, a politician who has often been seen on picket lines and demonstrations, and like others on the left of the party has often been called left-wing. However, they are not wanted in government. For instance his views on unilateral nuclear disarmament, which he has conveniently dropped following a vote by the Party. The other main role played by the Labour Party from the first half of the 20th century is as a creditable government, either to ensure the main parties alternate in government to give credibility to democracy, or in exceptional circumstances in coalition, as in World War Two. When the ruling class is in control of its political apparatus this works very well for it. In the 1980s the UK, like most of western Europe with the notable exception of France, put the right wing parties in power to impose austerity and privatisation, and the left in opposition took themantle of class struggle going on at the time. The left wing Michael Foot became leader of the Labour Party and hower unpopular Margaret Thatcher’s government became

50 years ago, May 1968

To mark the 50th anniversary of the struggles of 68, the ICC is holding a public meeting to discuss the meaning of these events.

Saturday 9th June, 11am-6pm
The Lucas Arms
254A Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8QY

Morning Session: The events of May 68, their context and significance

Fifty years is as far away from today as the Russian revolution was to the events of 68. That’s why the discussions of the meetings will be based on lines of what actually happened in May-June, from the agitation in the universities to the ten million popular uprisings in areas with a large Jewish population. On the day of the royal wedding, the Labour Party chose as one of its three new peers Martha Osamor, who had signed a letter two years ago denouncing the Lucas Arms as a meeting place for the poisoning of former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, and so seconded his lack of support for the missile attack on Syria following a gas attack on civilians. This has reminded the media of the factions of the ruling class just why they do not trust him as a potential PM. "He has voted against every military action proposed by the UK government during his 35 years in Parliament. He is also firmly opposed to air strikes in Syria in response to chemical attacks, arguing that it will escalate tensions..." (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politi- cals/43737547).

It is precisely this issue that makes the campaign against antisemitism perfect as a means to pursuie Corbyn. It hits him on his links with Hamas and Hizbollah, and with his Trotskyist supporter, and is intended to weaken this wing of the Labour Party and to induce the leader to distance himself from the left. It is something that a party that claims to oppose all forms of racism cannot openly tolerate.

The Labour Party is from top to bottom and from left to right a party of capitalism. It is always ready to take the reins of government, impose austerity and pursue Britain's imperialist policy. There is nothing to be gained from supporting one wing against the other. Alex, 19.5.18

Corbyn and Mr McDonnell is not the joke it might have seemed 18 months ago. Labour deprived the Conservatives of their majority in a general election last year. Polls now have the opposition snapping at the heels of the flagging Tories, who are hopelessly bogged down in Brexit negotiations.”

On the other hand, Corbyn has been expressing views that the Labour Party would have been happy to put on a back burner, not a leader of the opposition, alone to set a prime minister-in-waiting. First of all his express for a referendum on EU membership in its manifesto for the 2015 election, both of the divisions on this issue within the party and because of pressure from UKIP. The narrow vote in favour of Brexit was unexpected, and has thrown the bourgeoisie (Tories and Labour) into confusion because of the deep divisions on the issue and the fact that there was no agreed policy on what Brexit would mean. While the UK bourgeoisie has always had Euro sceptics in both major parties, it has been able to cope with this difference until faced with the current wave of populism. This development of populism, the anti-elitist anger that has led to the election of Trump in the USA and the growth of the Front National in France, expresses the decomposition of capitalism and not any struggle against it. It is therefore a hindrance for the development of working class struggle as well as causal problems for the ruling class.

Similarly, the LP had its leadership election after its defeat in 2015. Corbyn was not expected to win but was on the brink of a leadership crisis so that left wing views would also be represented in the campaign. However, he proved attractive to many Labour Party members and many new members who joined in order to vote for him, swelling the ranks of the party. Nevertheless, he was considered an uncertain government, and it was expected that if he lasted until the next election, Labour would lose disastrously and he would be gone. However, he was a good lights and he would go for discount and a gen eral, particularly among the young, and the Labour Party did much better in the 2017 election than expected. The result was that the left wing which has only recently voted no confidence in him, was partially reconciled to put up with his leadership for the time being. The new media campaign on antisemitism shows this in no longer the case. On the one hand, as the Economist, 19.5.18, put it, “the prospect of a far-left government led by Mr Corbyn and Mr McDonnell is not the joke it might have seemed 18 months ago. Labour deprived the Conservatives of their majority in a general election last year. Polls now have the opposition snapping at the heels of the flagging Tories, who are hopelessly bogged down in Brexit negotiations.”

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Sinking into the economic crisis

capitalism. In this way, the weight of private funds became more important than public funds in the financing of debt (public and private).

This does not mean that there was a lessening of the weight of the state (as the ‘liberals’ proclaimed), but rather there was a reply to the increasing need of state to 'immediate liquidity' which meant a massive mobilisation of all the available disposable capital.

The crisis of 2008 was perhaps the clearest demonstration that the most ubiquitous cure adopted by the capitalist system in the last few decades - the resort to debt - has also poisoned the patient, postponing the immediate impact of the crisis only to raise future convulsions to an even higher level. But it also shows that in the final analysis, this cure has been the systematic policy of the capitalist state. The credit bonanza which fuelled the housing boom prior to 2007, so often blamed on the greedy bankers, was in reality a policy decided and supported at the highest echelons of government, just as it was government which was responsible for the Iraq war and the whole torturing financial edifice in the wake of the crash. The fact that they have done this by getting approval for the current system in order to print money ("quantitative easing") is further evidence that capitalism can only react to its contradictions by making them worse.

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It is one thing to show that we were right to predict the total collapse of the world economy in 1969, and offer a framework to explain why this crisis would be long drawn out affair. It is a more difficult task to explain why the reemergence of the internationalclass struggle has also been vindicated. We will therefore devote a second part of this article to this problem, while a third part will look at what has become of the new revolutionary movement which was born out of the events of May-June 1968. Amos, March 2018

Antisemitism in the Labour Party

Difficulties in the bourgeoisie’s political apparatus

The British Labour Party harbours antissemitism, leading to a Chakrabarti Report in June 2016 called an “occasionally toxic atmosphere”. Furthermore this is a longstanding and somewhat intermittent problem, related despite the recommendations of the report 2 years ago, despite Corbyn meeting with the Jewish Leadership Council and Board of Deputies in April, which they described as a missed opportunity, and despite the fact that it is has caused problems in recent years. So while we need to see what role the Labour Party plays for British capital.
The two articles we are publishing in this issue of 1984 aim to provide a corrective to the distorted version of the events of May-June 1968 that has been put forward by the so-called “authoritarian left” and others. The project aimed at re-examining the authentic legacy of the events of May-June 1968 in France is an attempt to bring to light the fact that, contrary to what the revisionist historians and politicians have claimed, the events of May-June 1968 were not a “student revolt”, but a far more complex and revolutionary phenomenon that involved workers, youth, students, intellectuals, cultural workers, and others. The two articles we are publishing in this issue of 1984 aim to re-examine the authentic legacy of the events of May-June 1968 in France and to bring to light the fact that the events of May-June 1968 were not a “student revolt”, but a far more complex and revolutionary phenomenon that involved workers, youth, students, intellectuals, cultural workers, and others.

Against the lies about May 68!

No, May 68 is not a “specificité française”

No-one can deny that May 68 took place within a dynamic that was international. But in focusing on the innovative character of May-June 1968, one should also confirm that these are indeed the main mystifications about May 68. We are not talking about the lamentations of the right who bewail the slippery spirit of the 60s, and who talk about the “end of innocence” in France or the “return to order”. No, May 68 is not a “specificité française”. In reality, the wave of student unrest started in 1964, at Berkeley University in California, and spread to a number of countries in the 60s and 70s, including Scandinavia, Germany... France in 1967, reaching its heights in 1968, was one of the movements that spread to Latin America, the “Hot Autumn” of 1968, the ferocious repression of the students near Flins, Sandouville and le Mans. The entry into the struggle was then followed by a rise in purchasing power and a rise in the cost of living. The Grenelle Accords that the left and the unions celebrated as the “great victory of 1968” were the outcome of the government and unions working hand-in-hand to stop the movement and defeat the strikers. These accords brought in a rise in purchasing power much less than those gained in the preceding years. This is the reason why the workers immediately felt these accords as an insult. Coming to Renault Billancourt in 1968, the workers faced plenty of bousing and whistling and many union cards were torn up. On May 30, De Gaulle announced a major increase in oil prices.

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Sinking into the economic crisis

In issue number two of Revolution Internatio- nal, Situationist Internationalists asserted: “Understanding May” written by Marc Chirik, who had returned from over a decade of exile in Ven- eza to link up an active part in the “Events” of May 68 in France 1.

This article was a polemical response to the pamphlet ‘Enragés and Situationists’ in the Occupa- tion Movement published by the Situationist Internation- al. While recognising that the SI had introduced a new level of movement of May-June, it punctured their almost unlimited pre- tentiousness and self-regard, which led them to the frankly substituent conclusion that “the agita- tion uncalculated in June 1968 by the four or five revolutionary revolutionaries who were to constitute the enragés group was to lead, in five months, to the virtual liquidation of the state.” And that “never has an agitation undertaken by so small a number led in so short a time to such consequences”.

But the principal focus of this pamphlet was the un- derlying conceptions which provided the soil for this exaltation of ‘exemplary’ minorities – their ‘ideological capacity’.

...continued on page 4

And May 68 is not “a thing of the past”...

May 68 is presented as a movement of the period of prosperity. In other words it belongs to the past, and it can be safely dismissed as false! From 1967, the world economic situation began to deteriorate, opening the period of the perma- nent crisis that we’ve known since and convinc- ing that capitalism is a decadent system that it’s necessary to overthrow. May 68 confirmed that the proletariat was the revolutionary class, that it had the strength to organise itself and develop its consciousness through debate in autonomous gen- eral assemblies; that it could stand up against the established order and shake it in its roots. Above all, May 68 marked the end of 40 years of Stalinist counter-revolution! The important of this event should be underestimated. As the SI put it: “he had the opportunity on this occasion to show one of the traits of his character; which had nothing to do with that of a demagogue, but rather with that of a leader of the movement was going on, in the discussions but also in the struggles. He made his way forward, in a barricade with a group of young elements, having decided to hold out until morning against the police...” http://en.internationalism.org/ir/066/marc-02

The full libertarian strength in May 68 must be a source of inspiration for all those who are awakening to the idea that the working class has met many difficulties. The idea that the working class could stand up against the counter-revolution! The importance of this event unleashed in January 1968 by the four or five new-found interest in revolutionary politics was carried out by the working class. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle. The more immediate fruit of this new generation of the working class was the historic product of a whole period of resurgent class struggle.

revolution. Indeed, Marc’s article concludes that May 68 has “mobilised the strength of the workers” and that “it was this logic of repugnant the Marxist method which holds that massive and spontaneous outbursts of a revolutionary class may be con- nected to the objective situation of the capitalist economy.”

But against the SI’s notion that the “revolutionary events” of May-June had broken out against a capitalism that was “functioning well”, and that all “the progressive and principled elements” of the “bourgeois society” could be expected “to stand up against the revolutionary events” in the post leader to the uprising, Marc demonstrated that the movement had been preceded by a growing threat of unemployment and inflation, by a decrease in purchasing power and a “generalised prosperity” of the post-war period was coming to an end. And these signals were not limited to France but expressed themselves in various forms across the ‘developed’ world, notably in the devaluation of the pound sterling and the dollar crisis in the USA. He stressed that these were indeed only signs and symptoms, that “this is not yet an open economic crisis, first because we are only at the beginning of what we call the present crisis’ the state’s economy possesses a whole arsenal of means to slow down, and temporarily to attenuate the cri- sis’ most striking expressions”.

At the same time, repudiating the anarchist (and Situationist) idea that revolution is possible at any time, the SI put forward the idea that the revolutionary crisis is a necessary but not a sufficient condi- tion for the revolution, that profound changes in the subjective consciousnesses of the masses are necessary to produce a new social configuration. The “Ideological” economy, contrary to the affirmation of the Stalin- ism in 1929, who declared the opening of a “Third Period” when every revolutionary movement which revolutionised the masses against the counter-revolution and in the 1929 lash, when in reality the working class was experiencing the most profound defeat in its his- tory, the new generation of the working class was, of course, both (product and active factor).

May 68 was thus not yet the revolution, but it was revolutionary. The working class had taken a step that followed the defeat of the first world wide revolutionary wave had come to an end. “The full dimension of the movement was that of the most important reactions by the mass of workers to a de- teriorating world economic situation”.

The article does not go any further in examining the ac- tual events of 68, that is not its purpose. But it does give some indications about the consequences of the end of the counter-revolution (a period which has lasted not only 50 but 80 years), and its effects on the future unfolding of the class struggle. It meant that the new generation of the working class was now the most dynamic class in the world. It meant that a transition which had imprisoned it during the period pre- vious, above all Stalinism and anti-fascism; and it expelled the ‘bourgeois disease’ which entrenched them- selves towards another world today, unlike, in the 1930s, “capitalism disposers of fewer and fewer themes of mystification capable of mobiliz- ing the masses and sending them to the slaughter. The Russian myth is collapsing; the false choice of bourgeois democracy and totalitarianism, which was that of the world of mass movements which had risen steadily during the period of post- war prosperity. But, as we showed in our article ‘30 years of the open economic crisis’ written in 1999, the tendency towards the open crisis be- comes permanent as a permanent form of decadent capital- ism has become more evident in the entire period since 1968: today we are due an article on “30 years of the open economic crisis” which will re-study, in a global perspective, the long-term effects of the effects of the system’s contradictions. The ruling class from the 60s onwards did not make the same mistakes which had been made in the 1930s. Instead, an older and wider bourgeoisie maintained and strengthened the state capitalist in- terference in the economy which had enabled it to resist the crises of the 30s and which helped to sustain the post-war boom. This was evident with the first Keynesian responses to the reawakened crisis, which often took the form of nationalisa- tions and direct financial manipulations by the state, but, ideological fog notwithstanding, it has continued up in an altered form, through the period of ‘Reagamism’ and ‘neo-liberalism’, in which the state has tended to regulate many of its interventions with a view to in- creasing profitability and the competitive edge.

The 1999 article underlines the principal features of the crisis-ridden economy in these decades: the un- trammelled growth of speculation, as invest- ment in productive activity becomes increasingly unprofitable; the de-industrialisation of large parts of the area in 2009, as capital’s strategy is directed towards the ‘developing’ countries; and, by a large part both of the growth and the financial shocks of this whole period, capitalism’s collapse, is a failure to debt. And it shows that the crisis of capitalism is not only measured in unemployment figures or by falling wages – signs that the “glorious” crisis is a necessary but not a sufficient condi- tion for the revolution, that profound changes in the subjective consciousnesses of the masses are necessary to produce a new social configuration. The “Ideological” economy, contrary to the affirmation of the Stalin- ism in 1929, who declared the opening of a “Third Period” when every revolutionary movement which revolutionised the masses against the counter-revolution and in the 1929 lash, when in reality the working class was experiencing the most profound defeat in its his- tory, the new generation of the working class was, of course, both (product and active factor).

Furthermore, as a series of articles written in 2008, May 68 and the revolutionary perspective”, Marc had moved from a purely defensive reac- tion to a deteriorating economic situation. It also gave rise to an intense political ferment, to innumerable debates about the possibility of a new society, to serious attempts by young politi- cal refugees to constitute the enragés group was to lead, in five months, to the virtual liquidation of the state.” And that “never has an agitation undertaken by so small a number led in so short a time to such consequences”.

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4. International Review 96 and 97

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This article was written by a comrade of the ICC who works at a UK university and was originally printed in the UCU strikers newsletter. Although not in the UK or even eligible to join the pension scheme at the centre of the dispute, the comrade joined the strike in solidarity.

In February 2018, the University and College Union (UCU) launched industrial action across the university sector in the UK. The strike was called over changes to university pensions under the auspices of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), the pension scheme for academics and professional staff in the Higher Education sector. Members have claimed that this reduction in benefits was necessary to tackle the large deficit that the scheme is accruing.

The cuts are significant, with the headline figure suggesting an ‘average’ academic would lose £10,000 annually from their pension. This is especially the case in my institution, where militancy is weak. Staff are divided into three groups:

- UCU unions covers lower graded admin and manual workers, porters, cleaners, etc.
- UNISON covers technical staff.
- Unite covers technical staff.

- "professionally" graded administration staff.

Only a minority of staff are unionised and those outside are generally apathetic. Union is chronically weak, with on strike only once in all the time I’ve been there. Unite seems a bit more militant but, again, I’ve only ever known them to go on strike once.

UCU has a far more militant rhetoric (albeit by comparison) and has its main support in the academic community.

A new militancy was evident in this strike, with small and demoralising affairs, two events involving one or two-day actions. Any more is practically a revolution in comparison. Turnout at pickets is limited – many workers cross the picket line or stay at home, cut off from one another.

In contrast, this action was announced for 14 days over weeks. This essentially meant giving up three weeks’ pay over one, possibly two, pay packets – a considerable loss for even the better-off workers, but an eye-watering sum for the growing layer of low-paid, casualised staff in both administrative and academic functions.

Career academics in particular are in a strong position, having won the award by their students; having won the award, this signalled a real sense of anger and betrayal over the pensions issue. Over the years, staff have accepted a series of cuts to the pension scheme, often following demoralising small-scale industrial action.

1. This body is the employers’ association for the educational sector.

2. Where once Higher Education was about training for work, with a well-structured career path leading to promotion, this is now a job market, increasing dictatorial control from the centre, impossible workloads. etc. It cannot be denied that some of this can be explained as the systemic pressures that have already had a small room at the local level enjoyed an almost petit-bourgeois level of autonomy in their working lives, increasing proletarianisation.

3. However, the younger academics and students never experienced those halcyon days – their education has been an experience of continuing testing, growing financial pressure, and an uncertain job market. Early-career academics now face particularly harsh conditions. The rise of casual working is growing faster in higher education than in any other sector. Early-career academics have had to scrape together picket pots in order to maintain a minimal presence. This time, the first day of action saw large pickets, and over the course of the strike, even during the arctic winds of the winter, there were still lively gatherings.

4. This was then used against them by their supervisor as a reason to bring in ever-increasing grant money, with those failing to continually produce “world-leading” research and leged’ in comparison to workers of the same age.

5. In underway, making it impossible for bosses to predict who was going to turn up when. The activity in the resistance and militancy on the picket line was sustained, with cloying “acknowledging your hard work” comments from management to overcome the nature of the strike itself. Where once political and intellectual tempers to overcome the nature of the strike itself. Where once academic and leftist ideology. The ‘enemy’ was repeatedly framed as ‘neo-liberalism’ rather than capitalism, and the emphasis was on trying to form solutions within the capitalist system. Building strong unions, varying forms of Keynesianism, Jeremy Corbyn, etc, were all seen as offering, if not the solution to the sort of regime change needed, at least one guided in the current effluent of society. To a large extent, however, the meetings were dominated by what could best be described as a cry of torment, the academic as a worker or professional exposed to the brutal forces of the market.

6. This didn’t stop anger solidifying into a Trade Union campaign around the hashtag #ocapitalism. The next day of pickets was massive, even larger than the day before, and the pressure to win the strike by the age of 20 – but still lively gatherings.

7. Originally, the union had planned a picket on only the first day or so. The branch leaders were virtually astonished by the turn-out and quickly moved to organise further pickets for the rest of the week. Every strike day saw a picket and although numbers fluctuated, the main entrance always managed to attract a minimum of around 50 pickets, even during the arctic winds of the “winter of the deep freeze.”

8. The students were mainly drawn from the academic staff, with support functions a clear minority. There were also notable differences in turnout between disciplines, with arts, humanities and so-called ‘soft’ subjects more strongly represented than technical subjects.

9. Numbers were augmented by a significant number of students joining the picket line. Calls from the university to go to their lectures as usual. The student composition largely reflected that of the picketers, being weighted towards non-technical disciplines. The local “Socialist Students” society joined the line, setting up a food stall.

10. Further evidence of how the local branch had completely underestimated the support for the action was evident when the post-picket rally on 22nd April was attended by over 100 students Neyman to undertake an analysis of the likely future should they fail their degree, not to mention the emotional weight of debts in the current education system.

Natural, debt slavery and naked exploitation is the lot of most working-class children who “fall” in the current education system, and we should not forget that working-class students are still ‘privileged’ in comparison to workers of the same age.

Where once Higher Education was about training for work, with a well-structured career path leading to promotion, this is now a job market, increasing dictatorial control from the centre, impossible workloads. etc. It cannot be denied that some of this can be explained as the systemic pressures that have already had a small room at the local level enjoyed an almost petit-bourgeois level of autonomy in their working lives, increasing proletarianisation.

5. Academics also began to withdraw external examiner support for institutions that attempted to intimidate strikers, with the result that many in ingalling the hard work they had put in and became much more conciliatory towards striking workers. Threats of disciplinary action were dropped, with cloying “acknowledging your strong feelings”.

Students also launched occupations at several institutions, waging a highly effective campaign on social media that further helped dissolve the moral authority of the employers. It’s difficult for the powers that be to maintain credibility when students denied access to toilets posts pictures of bottles of urine online and female students lament the anaesthetics difficulties of felling toilets.

The union strikes back

As the strike progressed into March, the employers’ front appeared to be crumbling. One-by-one, branches around the country announced their rejection of the deal and within 24 hours it was dead in the water.

The striking continued, on the one hand a sense of victory in having beaten back the proposal about a complex matter of what would come next.

Victory, stalemate or defeat?

As the strikes ended, new negotiations were announced with the threat of another wave to come in the spring.

Very quickly, a new proposal was agreed between the UCU and UUK. The main thrust of this new agreement was a suspension of the attack on benefits in order for a new valuation of the pension to take place over the next couple of years, by an expert panel with more involvement from the union.

The proposal was put to ballot with a recommendation to accept, with a majority of 64% voting in favour.

At first glance, this looks like a victory, if only a temporary or one time. After all, the attack has been deferred, and some even the most far-fetched hope whatever to preserve current benefits or prevent a rise in contributions and, indeed, the union explicitly stated that any attempt to get guarantees on this (a “no detriment” agreement) was “unrealistic.” Everything now depends on the assessment that the newly appointed valuation panel makes concerning the health of the pension scheme.

Workers are now faced with the potential of having to go on the same struggle again a year or two down the line. And this time, the employers (or the union) won’t be caught by surprise at the strength of the strike.

Weaknesses in the struggle and lessons for the next

Despite the high participation represented by both the large pickets and the surge in members of the UCU, the strikers were still in a minority. Most of the support workers went into work, even

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those who had been called out, and around half the workforce. Although there were isolated inci-
cidences of other workers not crossing the picket line (Birkbeck library was disrupted by a brief ac-
tion by its union members), there doesn’t seem to have been a real dynamic for the struggle to extend to other workers.

In many ways, the stronger-than-expected turn-
out and its accompanying euphoria was itself a factor in damaging the struggle. While on the positive side it increased the strikes with a much-
needed burst of confidence, it also worked to prevent a self-critical spirit emerging. The elec-
tricity of the struggle prevented many from seeing the inherent weaknesses in its lack of extension.

The debatable victory may also lead to the il-
lusion that actions of this kind have an inherent strength. As discussed, the sheer length of the action will result in a significant financial loss for the most militant workers. It is essentially a strategy around a war of attrition – a struggle that, in the end, the workers will always lose. It’s almost cer-
tain that the prospect of another 14 days of lost wages weighed heavily on the minds of many union members when they voted to accept the deal.

The only way for workers to overcome this inher-
ent disadvantage is to spread the struggle. Had the strike been expanded not just in other University workers, far more pressure could have been brought to bear on the bosses.

Understanding the role of the unions

Using the anger of more militant workers in the union, the left has launched a campaign to get Saltly Hunt (UCU General Secretary) out of office by staging votes of no confidence.

This strategy enables the ruling class to frame the conflict between workers and union as a con-
{}
The young Karl Marx

Raoul Peck’s film, which has recently been released in Britain, provides us with much to think about on the bicentenary of Karl Marx’s birth, and we certainly recommend it to our readers. But as the following article shows, it still needs to be viewed with a critical eye…

This is a film that’s surprising because it seems to rehabilitate the character of Karl Marx. Surprisingly because in choosing to cover five years which preceded Marx’s emergence in Marx’s life – from 1833 to 1848 – Raoul Peck aims to break with the caricature of a solitary genius acting outside of the world of the workers. But does he actually achieve this? Without doubt the angle from which Raoul Peck deals with the life of Marx corrects somewhat the idea that Marx and Engels were inventors of abstract notions such as “class struggle”, “revolution” or “communism”. The film does show how these two men, who played a key role in the revolutionary movement, were won over to a cause that had been born well before them from the womb of the proletariat of the most industrialised countries of the 19th century. In this we think that the vision of Peck is totally different from that of the Marx who, not without a great deal of dishonesty, try to demonstrate that the works of Marx carry the germs of the Stalinist tragedy.

And yet this film doesn’t talk about the “development of providential hero”, which considerably weakens the attempt to show the political dimension of Marx, his contemporaneous role, as well as the decisive role that the proletariat will have to play in the transformation of society.

Moreover, Peck explicitly emphasises the decisive meeting and the unsuccessful collaboration between Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the rebellious son of an aristocratic family, who had been provided Marx’s eyes to the political potential of the working class and to the importance of political economy.

However the film doesn’t succeed in portraying this meeting, where the coldness of the formal introductions in Arnold Ruge’s drawing room suddenly gives way to declarations of mutual fascination and demonstrations in Arnold Ruge’s drawing room sudden meeting, where the coldness of the formal introduction engenders a split that was already a long time coming. In order to advance its combat, the working class has to play. They also understood that it was necessary to rid themselves of all idealism, all ethical, illusory and utopian speeches. It is this means to attain a superior stage of human society; that the working class needed a practical theory in order to understand the world which had engendered it, and to understand that its situation was not set in stone but transitory. What the film tries to show, with a certain fidelity, it seems to us, is the need for the working class to develop a revolutionary theory and the conviction to act upon it. On the other hand, the way in which the rapprochement between Marx and the League of the Just is shown contains the idea that Marx was ready to engage in intrigues, an aristocratic Marx playing on his intellectual nature in order to win the majority of the revolutionary avant-garde to his side. In this version of events, Marx and Engels seem almost to seduce the leaders of the League; they go out of their way to get into contact with them, not hesitating to exaggerate their closeness to Proudhon in order to extend the network of correspondence committees into the east of France. Contrary to the wooliness of the film’s treatment of this event, it was the League, under the aegis of its spokesman Joseph Moll, who invited Marx to join. In their Karl Marx: Man and Fighter, Boris Nicolaevsky and Otto Maenchten, “he explained in his own name and that of his comrades that they were convinced of the rightness of Marx’s views and agreed that they must shake off the old conspiratorial forms and...”

![Continued on page 7](image)

Political positions of the ICC

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

* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a deacon of social systems. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and depression. There is a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and depression. There is a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and depression. There is a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and depression.
* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in them is a call to participate in the reproduction of capitalist social relations, at the expense of the proletariat.
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* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once the repressive reaction of the victorious bourgeoisie had cost the revolutionaries dearly, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolution led to the participation of the left fractions in the B–23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its by-product.
* The state will always be the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to ‘organise the working class’ nor to ‘take power’ in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat’s combat.

**O UR ACTIVITY**

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

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

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

**OUR ORIGINS**

The positions and active political organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the Communist League of Marx and Engels (1847–52), the British Left, the International Workingmen’s Association, 1864–72, the Socialist International, 1889–1913 (the International, 1919–28), and the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920–30, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian Lefts.