Brexit crisis
Ruling class divisions won’t help the working class

The British ruling class is in a mess over Brexit. Two and a half months before the March 29 deadline, parliament finally had its ‘meaningful’ vote on the Withdrawal Agreement, which lost by a record 230 votes. It’s not just parliament that is divided on the question, so are both the Tory and Labour parties. Parliament is vying for more government powers (eg Speaker Bercow allowing an amendment to insist the PM hold an in/out referendum and both main parties firmly in favour of remaining in the EU, should it hold an in/out referendum and both main parties promised to honour the result. Something has changed since the Major government was plagued by the Eurosceptic “bastards” making things difficult but never able to fundamentally change the policy of remaining in the EU. Since then we have seen the growth of right wing populism on an international scale with its strongly nationali- st, anti-immigration and “anti-dilute” ideology. These are all clearly bourgeois themes that have been used by governments of left as well as right. How could such a thing occur in a previously stable bourgeoisie with a reputation for control of its political apparatus? For The Economist “The crisis in which Britain finds itself in large part re- flects the problems and contradictions within the idea of Brexit itself” (19.1.19). But this hardly explains why it has exposed itself to these problems and contradictions, why the Cameron government, which despite the divisions in the Tory party was firmly in favour of remaining in the EU, should hold an in/out referendum and both main parties promised to honour the result. Something has changed since the Major government was plagued by the Eurosceptic “bastards” making things difficult but never able to fundamentally change the policy of remaining in the EU. Since then we have seen the growth of right wing populism on an international scale with its strongly nationali- st, anti-immigration and “anti-dilute” ideology. These are all clearly bourgeois themes that have been used by governments of left as well as right (such as the Blair government’s condemnation of “Nagis” asylum seekers and May’s infamous “hostile environment” for immigrants) but the populist forces are irrational and disruptive as we see with the current Italian populist government, the Trump presidency and Brexit. In France popul- ism has heavily influenced the Yellow Vest pro- tests. Populism has taken the form of Brexit and UKIP in Britain, and found a substantial echo in the Tory and Labour parties, because of the divi- sions that had already opened up during the UK’s decline from a global imperialism to a second rate imperialist power over the last hundred years (see ‘Report on the British situation’ pages 4 and 5). If the ruling class is heading for the Scylla of Brexit it is above all because of its efforts to avoid the Charybdis of populism. Ruling class forced onto rocks of Brexit by populist tide
Everyone can criticise May’s Withdrawal Agreement. Brexiters don’t like it aligning UK regulations to the EU to avoid a hard Irish bor- der - some of them would be happy with no deal; Corbyn wants it to do the impossible, keep in a customs union with the EU while also avoiding the free movement of labour; some Remainers want to have a new “people’s vote” in the hope of overturning Brexit. Yvette Cooper is calling for a delay so government and parliament can agree a deal. Some of the hard Brexiters such as Rees-Mogg have been making noises about possibly supporting a new deal. But unless it crashes out with no deal the final settlement is not up to Brit- ain, but the 27 EU countries.

Uncertainty reigns throughout the bourgeoisie. Businesses want certainty so they can prepare. NHS departments are discussing how they will manage the supply of medication. The CHI is warning a no deal Brexit would lead to an 8% loss in GDP, and its director general, C Fairburn, said “At my meetings at Davos there is a recogni- tion that the causes of vulnerability of the global economy now include Brexit” (Guardian 24.1.19). She went on to note that it is leading to a ques- tioning of the UK’s global brand, and emphasised the need to rule out no deal to protect investment and jobs. Businesses, including the NHS, need the post-Brexit immigration model to continue to allow the immigration of workers from the EU earning less than £30,000.
The importance of keeping the Irish border open, insisted on by the EU, which is causing so much consternation to Brexiters who don’t want to be aligned to EU rules, is one of the pillars of the Good Friday Agreement. Since power sharing has broken down for months as the DUP and Sinn Fein cannot agree, the border is what remains in operation. As I’ve gone to remind everyone what is at stake, the New IRA set off a car bomb outside a court in Derry on 19 January. The problem of Brexit is widening divisions in both the Tory and Labour parties. If the strong Brexit wing among conservatives is obvious, we should not forget that in 2016 there was a vote of no confidence in Jeremy Corbyn by the parliamen- tary LP because he was such a reluctant Remainer, and was widely blamed for the referendum result. The divisions in the LP were widely thought to threaten its unity in 2016 and the 2017 election only reconciled the PLP to put up with Corbyn temporarily. The difficulties in the LP should not surprise us when we look at what is happening across Europe with the Socialist Parties in France and Spain being largely eclipsed by France Insou- mise and Podemos respectively. Nor when we see the poor showing of the Germain SP after years in a grand coalition with Angela Merkel.

One of the reasons Theresa May has consistently given for ruling out a second referendum, despite the impasse of the Brexit deal, the weak- ening of the UK’s economy and standing in the world, and the likelihood of a change of opinion, is essentially the fear that it would stir up a loss of confidence in democracy and thus open the door to a populist-influenced social unrest. Divisions used against the working class
While the government is more immediately afraid of populism, it is the “executive organ” of a capitalist class that can never forget the threat posed by the working class. We saw this when the PLP was temporarily reconciled to Jeremy Cor- byn after the better than expected election result, showing he could mobilise a number of young proletarians who were previously disaffected with politics. It is shown by Theresa May, after losing the vote on the Brexit agreement, being at pains to try to meet all important political figures to dis- cuss the next steps, including TUC general secre- tary Frances O’Grady and leaders of Unite, GMB and Unison. Not that the unions speak for the working class – they don’t. They play the role of understanding the mood of the workers, just how far they can be pushed in the imposition of austerity and lay-offs before they react, and of keeping any struggles within safe legal boundaries. The fact that they have been consulted, and that May was so keen to emphasise the need to keep workers’ rights, is evidence that the bourgeoisie has not forgotten about its gravestiger, in spite of its more immediate concern with populism. It would be a great mistake, however, to think that the disarray in the ruling class in the face of populism is helpful to the working class. Right
The one-state solution

The new trend among some Leftist circles is the idea of one, bi-national state of Israel-Palestine, a state which will provide ‘self-determination’ for the two nations. This idea is becoming popular in the radical milieu that express its despair of the possibility of resolving the question of Palestine. However, the ‘self-determination’ slogan is deceptive. In the epoch of imperialism and global capitalism, self-determination for the working class means the establishment of a bourgeois regime. From the point of view of the working class, the building of a bourgeois state is a dead-end in terms of the class struggle.

Besides the fact that calling for self-determination within capitalism constitutes a risky illusion in the bourgeois order, it brings about a situation in which the working class is not differentiated from the national bourgeoisie. In this situation, there is a split in the working class along national lines. Revolutionaries in countries in which the proletariat exists and is capable of revolutionary action can only satisfy the call for ‘self-determination’.

Furthermore, to support the ‘right for self-determination’ within the framework of the bourgeoisie, in line with the interests of the national bourgeoisie, is at odds with the working class’ interests. The one-state solution in the framework of the state of Israel-Palestine is a solution for the national bourgeoisie to ensure its interests. Therefore, the ‘right for self-determination’ within the capitalist framework is at the service of the bourgeoisie. The working class has to resist this illusion.

The coming elections in Israel: a class perspective

The current Left parties in the Israeli political system do not differ from other parties across Europe and the US in the sense that they defend the capitalist order and spread illusions regarding the possibility of solving the national question within capitalism. They defend an order in decay, an order that can never be achieved. However, this call reflects the belief that the establishment of one socialist state, namely a nation-state with socialist characteristics, based on the right for self-determination of the ‘oppressed’ people, namely the Palestinians. This distinction between ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’ contradicts the revolutionary project that aims at empowering the working class; it blurs the class differences between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The unity of the masses will be achieved only upon the basis of proletarian revolution.

Which way forward?

There are calls among these or these Leftists to vote for various parties – liberals, reformists, and social democrats – in order to prevent Israeli bourgeois democracy from being crushed by fascism. However, this call reflects the belief in the epoch of imperialism, the bourgeois democracy is a genuine democratic regime and not a sheer illusion. The masses do wish to see an Israeli bourgeois democracy that will enable them to participate in the decision-making process. However, the working class needs its own revolutionary party that will carry forward the communist programme; however, the game suggested by some reformists and Stalinists, namely, to participate in the bourgeois parliament and thus to wait until the revolution will come from nowhere, is false and deceptive.

The mystification of bourgeois democracy stems from a false analysis made by those who firmly believe in notions like ‘citizenship’. In fact, a true society is a society where the true democracy of the proletariat, to be achieved by proletarian revolution. This assertion doesn’t mean that the revolution is close or nearing; it requires the conscious intervention of the proletariat. However, with illusions about working in bourgeois parliament.

This analysis is not designed to call the working class in Israel/Palestine to spoil their ballots but rather to get organized in a united revolutionary party based on a communist programme. The only way to get rid of capitalism as well as of nationalism, and the only way to get rid of fascism, is to have the fatherland and therefore must be united to build their future in a communist society.

Continued from page 8

Trump, the Middle East and the convulsions of US imperialism

Recent expressions of US foreign policy, particularly but not only in the Middle East, show the impact of populism, exemplified in the Trump presidency, and the consequent strengthening globally of the bourgeoisie, and of itself, unpredictability, chaos and open divisions within the ruling class.

The recent examples of Trump’s phone calls and tweets illustrate the issue: in a phone call to President Erdogan of Turkey in mid-December on the matter of Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, Trump reportedly told him “You know, you won’t be able to keep the peace, you’ll be leaving” (Christian Science Monitor, 16.1.19). Then in a tweet on January 13, Trump said that he had told “President Erdogan of Turkey that if he continues with his plans to build the ‘Kurdish wall’...” (CNN, 14.1.19). Two days later, in a January 16 phone call to Erdogan, Trump reaffirmed the Syrian pull-out and offered Erdogan a 32 kilometre “safe” zone along the Syrian border (Middle East Eye, 17.1.19) along with an increase in Turkish-US trade, Ambvalence, mixed-messages, inconherence and confusion reign in Washington and beyond, and the Kurdish political parties involved are taking the economic and security consequences as a result of a seemingly unending siege by both Israel and Egypt.

Divisions between Trump and the US military establishment

President Trump’s demagogic foreign policy of “retror of behind walls” and “America First” are aimed at his electoral base and beyond, where people are not keen on endless foreign wars, showing the persistence of the “Vietnam Syndrome” which Trump is using for his own advantage. Following the disarray of US imperialism in the Middle East (and Afghanistan), a realignment of US forces has some support among the military as long as it is aimed at its leadership or their programme. The US neo-conservative trend that for Israel and Palestine, and which its leadership and its territories, is capable of revolutionary action, not by those who support the ‘right for self-determination’ within the capitalist order means in practice that aims at empowering the working class; it be achieved only upon the basis of proletarian revolution.

Apart from Isis, the ex-al-Qaida is now an individual terrorist group, which can launch what it does best - terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare. Apart from Isis, the ex-al-Qaida forces of Hayy’et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have strengthened considerably in Idlib, making them an even more formidable force in the region.

The deep divisions between Trump and the US military have been exposed by the resignations of Mattis and McGurck, amongst others, and the greatest disquiet of other elements of the US state who want to maintain pressure on Russia and China, and these divisions exist both within the US administration and between the US and its allies in the west. The latter were shocked by Trump’s announcement on the Syrian withdrawal - a point he has put forward before he was even elected - leaving the Kurdish forces, exposed, vulnerable and weakened.

It’s not just in relation to the Middle East that there are divisions and confusion and worries among its allies. They extend further, with various factions and states suspecting that the US is dropping its guard against Russia. This is combined with great uneasiness over the future of NATO and growing concerns about “what’s coming next?” as US disengagement from the Middle East seems to be becoming a geopolitical reality. One thing that certainly seems to be coming next from Trump is a new US-space based missile system that he is insisting must be paid for as part of a “fair burden-sharing with our allies... all of these wealthy countries” (The Hill, 17.1.19).

This retreat, and the policy of walking away from existing missile and nuclear treaties, seems to be symbolic of “America First” – echoed in its own way by Putin’s Russia and Erdogan’s Turkey - and a withdrawal behind the walls of “Fortress Ameri- ca” in order to avoid the growing international space race generated by US imperialism in the first place. It’s a long time since, in the representative form of US Secretary of State Pompeo, whose statements have also been mixed-messages, incoherence and confusion and contradictions exist with Trump saying that “The US is backing Turkey” (NY Times, 22.1.19), The Israeli bombings are however aimed at its interests and unintended consequences are also features of decomposing capitalism. Consequences are also features of decomposing capitalism.

2. Israel wants Iran’s project for a “Shia Crescent” through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea. Trump wants to destroy the forces of Iran and the rest of the region. Israel has been exposed by the resignations of Defence Secretary James Mattis at the end of last year, also in protest against the President’s decisions, further shows the profound divisions within the administration.

The Syrian withdrawal, already begun before the New Year, is a logistical nightmare and potentially disastrous for the US forces, and the decision to abandon the US “victory” over Isis was precipitous to say the least and it has virtually invited attacks on US coalition forces of air bases by Isis. The US is now, yet again, faced with the fact that its military have been exposed by the resignations of its wars and the overall weakening of the US and the most influential of its allies, namely the US military.

The deep divisions between Trump and the US military have been exposed by the resignations of Mattis and McGurck, amongst others, and the greatest disquiet of other elements of the US state who want to maintain pressure on Russia and China, and these divisions exist both within the US administration and between the US and its allies in the west. The latter were shocked by Trump’s announcement on the Syrian withdrawal - a point he has put forward before he was even elected - leaving the Kurdish forces, exposed, vulnerable and weakened.

In the last few weeks, amidst this whole swamp, there have been a few shafts of light: the high school students who came out in struggle against the reform of the baccalaureate (without the Mar- xist perspective) and the high school students couldn’t be greater. Baboon, 21.3.19

Continued from page 3

“Yellow Vest” movement

In an Isis attack in Manbij mid-January: “we have to get out” but “there is no plan for what’s com- ing next” (New York, Post, 21.1.19).

McGurck also played down the idea of a Turkish “replacement” saying this was not “a viable plan”. The resignation of Defence Secretary James Mattis at the end of last year, also in protest against the President’s decisions, further shows the profound divisions within the administration.

The Syrian withdrawal, already begun before the New Year, is a logistical nightmare and potentially disastrous for the US forces, and the decision to abandon the US “victory” over Isis was precipitous to say the least and it has virtually invited attacks on US coalition forces of air bases by Isis. The US is now, yet again, faced with the fact that its military have been exposed by the resignations of Defense Secretary James Mattis at the end of last year, also in protest against the President’s decisions, further shows the profound divisions within the administration.

The deep divisions between Trump and the US military have been exposed by the resignations of Mattis and McGurck, amongst others, and the greatest disquiet of other elements of the US state who want to maintain pressure on Russia and China, and these divisions exist both within the US administration and between the US and its allies in the west. The latter were shocked by Trump’s announcement on the Syrian withdrawal - a point he has put forward before he was even elected - leaving the Kurdish forces, exposed, vulnerable and weakened.

In the last few weeks, amidst this whole swamp, there have been a few shafts of light: the high school students who came out in struggle against the reform of the baccalaureate (without the Marxist perspective) and the high school students couldn’t be greater.
Can the “Yellow Vest” movement open the way to the class struggle?

We are publishing here large extracts from a reader’s letter which, while welcoming the overall success of the “yellow vest” movement, points out that nothing good for the proletariat can come out of this improvised movement. The letter’s author touches on extremely important aspects of the proletarian struggle: what is the working class doing in its struggles? It’s only through a broad, open and animated debate that we can elaborate deeper responses, participate in the development of class consciousness, arm ourselves with the weapons of the class struggle, listen to our readers to write to us, to formulate their criticisms, their agreements or their questions. For the proletariat. This is the spirit in which we are replying to this letter.

Reader’s letter

I have gone through various statements of position including those of the leftist groups with which I have made contact. The differences are obvious right away, but this comparison is used to justify their unproved position. We can recognise, as your leaflet does, that the spontaneous outbreak of these blockades emerged in the course of a social anger that is very diverse, if not contradictory, expressing the inter-classist nature of the movement and its “classless” character, which is not classically agree with your critique about this.

On this bone I’d like to comment on: “The idea of a trap laid for the workers. What meaning should we give to this term “trap”? A trap represents an organisation that prepares and organises it. But we see nothing of that sort here.”

In the leaflet the idea that the working class is being prevented from struggling...

What can be the political difficulties of the working class?

In a few lines this letter poses a central question: “What meaning should we give to this term “trap”? A trap presupposes an organisation that prepares and organises it. But we see nothing of that sort here.”

It’s quite true that this movement was spontaneous. A young entrepreneur was unable to sell his business, so he launched a petition against the increase in petrol prices. Then a lorry driver, dressed up in a yellow vest, went and blocked the Porte d’Orléans department, causing roads to be blocked. Through a whole chain of clicks, these two crises of anger were propagated everywhere, and this was a general feeling of being fed up throughout the population.

So this was not a trap laid by the bourgeoisie, its state, its parties, its unions or its media; it was a movement which was a trap for the workers because of its inter-classist nature. Because in an inter-classist movement where the workers (employed, students, pensioners, unemployed) are distiled as individual citizens in a milieu made up of all the other layers of society (petty bourgeoisie, peasants, artisans), the social aspirations stimulation of working class unity is one of the major ingredients in the current weakness of the proletariat, a weakness which creates favourable soil for the explosion of inter-classist anger which has no perspective. In fact, the bourgeoisie is exploiting the weakness of the working class to try to drive it further into the ground. The working class has contented itself with giving rise to a movement at the international level, since the 1890s (Rosa Luxembourg masterfully described this process in her book The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions). The mass strike in Russia in 1905 was preceded by a deep process of rising proletarian struggle, of developing consciousness and organisation. But we see nothing of this sort here.

Today, we are not seeing any of this. As we saw above, the working class is going through major difficulties: it is in a temporary social layer states of the petty bourgeoisie, drowned in the interclassist explosion of inter-classist anger which has no perspective. It’s quite true that the bourgeoisie is exploiting the weakness of the working class trying to drive it further into the ground. The working class has contented itself with giving rise to a movement at the international level, since the 1890s (Rosa Luxembourg masterfully described this process in her book The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions). The mass strike in Russia in 1905 was preceded by a deep process of rising proletarian struggle, of developing consciousness and organisation. But we see nothing of this sort here.

Here again, is it possible to conceive of an autonomous class struggle as a precondition for a significant movement? Doesn’t the class struggle become autonomous in the course of the movement itself?

Even if I share the critique of the content and methods of the movement, I remain open to the possibility of an evolution. You noted the spontaneous way in which these blockades emerged, and some are showing a concern for their struggle of these intermediate layers were dominant.

What is the cause of the political difficulties of the working class?

In a few lines this letter poses a central question: “What meaning should we give to this term “trap”? A trap presupposes an organisation that prepares and organises it. But we see nothing of that sort here.”

What meaning should we give to this term “trap”? A trap presupposes an organisation that prepares and organises it. But we see nothing of that sort here.

“An anger that has been prepared and organised into a movement” is a red flag that is being waved in front of us. The trouble is that in the leaflet the idea that the working class is being prevented from struggling...

The Yellow Vests, a springboard for the class struggle?

“Doesn’t the class struggle become autonomous in the course of the movement itself?” Even if I share the critique of the content and methods of the movement, I remain open to the possibility of an evolution. You noted the spontaneous way in which these blockades emerged, and some are showing a concern for their struggle of these intermediate layers were dominant.

The Yellow Vests, a springboard for the class struggle?

In a few lines this letter poses a central question: “What meaning should we give to this term “trap”? A trap presupposes an organisation that prepares and organises it. But we see nothing of that sort here.”

What meaning should we give to this term “trap”? A trap presupposes an organisation that prepares and organises it. But we see nothing of that sort here.

This is the spirit in which we are replying to this letter. But we see nothing of this sort here.
This report on the national situation in the UK was adopted by a recent general meeting. Its aim is to examine the historical background to the present national situation and so explain the role of the British bourgeoisie. The whole text can be found on our website. This extract focuses more directly on the long decline of British imperialism since the Second World War.

The true depth of the historical earthquake that has been shaking British imperialism can only be fully understood by placing it in its international context. The Resolution on the International Situation of the 18th Congress of the ICC and of the Theses on Decomposition and drew out the following points:

- Decadent capitalism has entered into a specific phase - the ultimate phase - of its history, the one in which decomposition becomes a factor, if not the dominating factor, of contemporary life.
- This process of decomposition of society is irreversible.
- There is, along with the refugee crisis and the development of terrorism, one of the most striking expressions of the decomposition phase.
- There is a mixture of a deliberate policy to dislodge the world's economic and imperialist leaders and a proliferation of a plethora of different groups, in particular by greater exploitation of the Empire (exports to the empire in the 1930s were double those of the beginning of the century, as British capital exported its wealth to the rest of the world in order to buy commodities its own industry could no longer produce). This marked the end of British imperialism as a world power, and an undermining of its economy. 
- The rise of populism has a common element that is the deep crisis of capitalism.
- The British bourgeoisie, in the late 50s and early 60s, was faced with the US's insistence that the British open up their economy, and with the opening up and destruction of the empire, that is, the end of British imperialism's ability to use the Commonwealth as an economic and imperialist support. This marked the end of British imperialism as a world power, and an undermining of its economy.
- The main differences were over whether to maintain the Empire or to open up and destroy it. The Labour Party had always been very hostile views towards Germany. When this was undermined by the decision of the US to no longer provide military support to the British/French/Israeli aggressors, and by the fiasco of Suez, it was unable to defend its interests militarily.
- This situation removed the basis of the consistent national strategy which the state had followed since 1945. Now the British bourgeoisie was faced with difficult choices about how to defend its national interest in a world where it was not a secondary power, and whose economic and imperial interests pushed it increasingly towards the Commonwealth. The main Commonwealth countries now rejected this approach and instead turned to Europe. This was firmly underlined by the decision of the Commonwealth to have an independent foreign policy, by the Commonwealth increased the in 1970.

The British bourgeoisie may still peddle the myth of the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the US, but it is nothing but a fig leaf to hide the true depth of the crisis. Attlee’s Labour Government to have an independent foreign policy, by the Commonwealth increased the in 1970. The British bourgeoisie, in the late 50s and early 60s, was faced with the US's insistence that the British open up their economy, and with the opening up and destruction of the empire, that is, the end of British imperialism's ability to use the Commonwealth as an economic and imperialist support. This marked the end of British imperialism as a world power, and an undermining of its economy.

The rise of populism has a common element that is the deep crisis of capitalism. The British bourgeoisie, in the late 50s and early 60s, was faced with the US's insistence that the British open up their economy, and with the opening up and destruction of the empire, that is, the end of British imperialism's ability to use the Commonwealth as an economic and imperialist support. This marked the end of British imperialism as a world power, and an undermining of its economy.

This was firmly underlined by the decision of Attlee’s Labour Government to have an independent foreign policy, and to join the Common Market. Even if the British bourgeoisie had wanted to maintain its independence, the US would not have allowed it. All of which reinforced tensions. The US wanted Britain in Europe because it would serve to counter the ambitions of Germany and France, but also in order to try and bolster the declining British economy as a potential market for its goods.
Continued from page 4

The emergence of populism in the UK

It is thus in the background of historical decline and divisions about how to deal with this decline that the growth of populism and its destabilising effect is to be understood. An initial phase of divisions have become dominant factors in the state's efforts to control its political apparatus due to the very nature of the political composition of the state. The disaster of Brexit underlines the historical paradox facing British state capitalism: its ability to continue to function as a political apparatus, in a state of division and being undermined by capitalism's own rotting entrails - by decomposition and its political and social manifestations such as the fall of populism.

This paradox is further deepened by the fact that the policies of the bourgeois state have themselves contributed to the growth of this political chimera that feeds on all the anti-social characteristics of capitalism.

The populism in Britain had been the centre of a new wave of populist imperialist regimes even before the extension of the EU into Eastern Europe and the Balkans in order to draw in countries that were historically antagonistic towards German imperialism and with whom British imperialism could try to contain and limit German capitalism's dominance.

This aspect of British imperialist policy took a serious blow with the debacle of Afghanistan and Iraq wars. It exposed that British imperialism even more weakened as an imperialist power. “British imperialism will find it very difficult to find the political and economic resources necessary to regain the power it has lost. At a practical level, the scale of the cuts in the defence budget means that it will be less able to intervene. The current anti-cuts movement should seek to expose this reality, in the hope that it reveals the almost comical decision to build aircraft carriers without any aircraft. At the strategic level, the government should take the opportunity to acknowledge the reality of American power in the world and German domination in Europe. While the growing power of the US is a threat to China and to a lesser extent other emerging countries like India, the US is now the only economic power in the world and transparently more efficient than Europe.”

The EU countries to support the war produced hostility, whilst its retreat from Afghanistan and Iraq was particularly powerful impact in Britain. The EU did not look such a pillar of economic and financial stability. This helped to feed the rise of a faction of the Labour Party, led by a Liberal, that advocated the growth of the view that sees withdrawal from the EU as inevitable, and that the British Nationalists, including the likes of UKIP but the attempt to force through a referendum on Europe last year revealed that it exists.
In November 2018 the two main groups of the Communist Tendency – the Communist Workers Organisation, held meetings in London on the centenary of the German revolution – and in preparation for the inevitable class conflicts of the future. If – despite their many weaknesses – the Spartacist group was fundamentally playing the role of a fraction within the SPD, whose long dynamic of development could never be removed from the daily reality of war and class struggle. On the contrary, there is no question that the Spartacists did “raise the banner” of the class struggle against the war. Within the SPD the Spartakusbund had its own organisational structure, published its own newspaper, put out many leaflets and was able, along with some of the most radical elements in the class (in particular the “Revolutionary Shop Stewards” or “Obleute” in the industries) to call for demonstrations which regrouped thousands of workers. This distinct organisational structure was retained as a precondition for the Spartacists entering the USPD almost 3 years after the beginning of the war in April 1917, following the mass expulsion of the Spartacists within the SPD. These events, as Liebknecht put it, “in order to drive it forward, to have a platform for our position, to bring the question of war in its true light, to understand for a radical phraseologist, but it is no good for the workers to think that they really ought to consider the USPD to be a centrist movement and not a party of the bourgeoisie”. In sum, therefore, not only was it not possible to build a situation of the left in the late 20s and 30s after their expulsion from the SPD, but it can even be said that the conditions that the CPs had passed over to the enemy. Thus a part of the CWO’s criticism of the Spartacists was that they were too early to perceive the isolation of the old party and the fine between a ship like a rat when it begins to take in water: Revolutionaries know for a fact that the quicker the class situation, the quicker the class can get to work for the movement which would break out, sooner or later, against the war. And the class situation is so state saturated in localism made this task all the more urgent”.

The real tasks of a revolutionary fraction

We are in agreement that the period up to 1914 was too long a time for our position, that there is a need for a party, and whether centralisation within the party, or a federative line could still operate within the party, the CWO in December 1913 had 300,000 members”.

It is certainly true that the Bolsheviks were in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement in the years 1914-19. On the question of war, the Bolshevik delegation to Zimmerwald defended a different attitude to the war. The Spartacists: they, along with the German “left radicals”, raised the slogan “transform the imperialist war into a civil war”. This delegation showed a tendency to make concessions to pacifism. In their actual practice in a revolutionary situation, the Bolsheviks were able to analyse the balance of class forces with great lucidity and

Reply to the CWO on the question of the Left fractions

In an internal discussion text on the nature of the revolutionary situation and for the Spartacist Comittee (PCd’I) which went into exile in the 1920s. They had seen the party they founded they wanted founded over by the Second International. They had taken the so-called “anti-Communist line” of the Communist International (even though the Left still had the support of the majority of the Left party). This line was to quash all that this meant that the Third International had absolutely broken with the interna- tional social democracy had stood for and against the growth of opportunism, that the party should pose the question that August 1914 was “a mark of the disunity of the existing revolutionaries alone, but was dependent on a much wider and deeper process of maturation in the long-term.

Bolsheviks and Spartacists

The CWO presentation at the meeting and the subsequent article lays great stress on the contrast between the Bolsheviks and the Spartacists. In Russia the Bolsheviks were estimated at only 8000 – 10,000 in number at the start of 1917 but they were present in almost every town or city and, more significantly, deeply embedded in the working class. Thus when the revolutionary movement arose they were not only able to give a lead but grew inside it. Workers had called spontaneously in February 1917 for a Congress and the soviets’ and this party in most estimates now had the habit of deserting a ship like a rat when it begins to take in water: Revolutionaries know for a fact that the quicker the class situation, the quicker the class can get to work for the movement which would break out, sooner or later, against the war. And the class situation is so state saturated in localism made this task all the more urgent”.

The real tasks of a revolutionary fraction

We are in agreement that the period up to 1914 was too long a time for our position, that there is a need for a party, and whether centralisation within the party, or a federative line could still operate within the party, the CWO in December 1913 had 300,000 members”.}

1. The CWO is the British affiliate of the International Communist Tendency: a comrade from their German group, a very persistent correspondent, whom one may say, was hard at work and for a brief moment threatened to extend the political power of the working class from Russia to western Europe – it was a mark of the destiny of the existing revolution was in agreement that the entire party had been integrated into the new world order, so precisely because - contrast to what some anarchists claim - social democracy had not been bourgeois from the beginning, the reason of why August 1914 gave rise to a huge battle within the party, to a flood of reactions against the betrayal, many of them confused and inadequate, founded by centrist and pacifist conceptions, but still expressing at root a proletarian internationalist reaction against war. The clearest, most deter- minate and historically conscious of the Spartacists. And as long as this battle continued, as long as the various oppositions to the new of revolutionaries alone, but was dependent on a much wider and deeper process of maturation in the long-term.

Bolsheviks and Spartacists

The CWO presentation at the meeting and the subsequent article lays great stress on the contrast between the Bolsheviks and the Spartacists. In Russia the Bolsheviks were estimated at only 8000 – 10,000 in number at the start of 1917 but they were present in almost every town or city and, more significantly, deeply embedded in the working class. Thus when the revolutionary movement arose they were not only able to give a lead but grew inside it. Workers had called spontaneously in February 1917 for a Congress and the soviets’ and this party in most estimates now had the habit of deserting a ship like a rat when it begins to take in water: Revolutionaries know for a fact that the quicker the class situation, the quicker the class can get to work for the movement which would break out, sooner or later, against the war. And the class situation is so state saturated in localism made this task all the more urgent”.

The real tasks of a revolutionary fraction

We are in agreement that the period up to 1914 was too long a time for our position, that there is a need for a party, and whether centralisation within the party, or a federative line could still operate within the party, the CWO in December 1913 had 300,000 members”.

It is certainly true that the Bolsheviks were in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement in the years 1914-19. On the question of war, the Bolshevik delegation to Zimmerwald defended a different attitude to the war. The Spartacists: they, along with the German “left radicals”, raised the slogan “transform the imperialist war into a civil war”. This delegation showed a tendency to make concessions to pacifism. In their actual practice in a revolutionary situation, the Bolsheviks were able to analyse the balance of class forces with great lucidity and
thus play a key role at decisive moments: in July, when it was necessary to avoid the provocations of the bourgeoisie who were trying to draw revolutionary workers into a premature military con

I

foundations in October, when Lenin insisted that the conditions for the insurrection had definitely ripened and it had become vital to strike before the moment passed. This was in tragic contrast to the young German Communist Party which made the monumental error of taking the bourgeoisie’s bait in January 1918. This is to say, the Bolsheviks in Berlin, in so small a mea-

sure because the Spartacist leader Liebknecht broke party discipline in pushing for an immedi-

cate transition from revolution to counter-revolution.

However, the capacity of the Bolsheviks to play this role cannot be reduced to the notion of be

coming the “definitive” party in the class. It was above all the product of a long struggle for political and organi-

sation within the Russian Social Demo-

cratic Labour Party, which made it possible for the Bolsheviks to grasp what was really at stake only after the February uprising, even if it required a determined struggle inside the party to clouse out a very strong tendency towards support for bour-

geois democracy and a “definitive” position in the war – this was the whole meaning of the debates around Lenin’s April Theses. The fact that the Bolsheviks came out of this debate strengthened and more determined to fight for Soviet power was made possible by two essential factors: on the one hand, their organisational solidity, which made it possible to maintain the unity of the party despite the very sharp divergences that appeared within it during the revolutionary process; and on the other, the fact that, from the beginning, the party had made very clear what it was not yet as clear as it became after 1917 – was always based on the principle of class independence from the bourgeoisie, in contrast to the other main ten-

dency in Russian social democracy, the Menshe-

viks. But what all this really points to is that in the years between the birth of Bolshevism and the outbreak of the revolution, the Bolsheviks had themselves carried out the central tasks of a revo-

lutionary faction in the Russian party and the Second International.

The Bolsheviks’ rigour on organisational and programmatic issues was one side of this capac-

ity to make the transition from fraction to party; the other side was the rapid maturation within the Russian proletariat as a whole. This was a pro-

letariat which was far less vulnerable to reformist illusions than its class brothers and sisters in Ger-

many: both at the level of their living conditions, and of the political conditions imposed by the Tsarist regime, they struggle necessarily took on an explosive and revolutionary character which, in a sense, already indicated the circumstances that would face the working class in the most ad-

vanced countries in the new epoch of decadence. This was a proletariat which, largely denied the possibility of building mass defensive organisa-

tions inside the old system, gave rise in 1905 to the soviet form of organisation and gained an in-

extricably valuable foretaste of what it means to make a revolution. It must also be remembered that the Russian proletariat faced a much weaker bourgeoisie, whereas the German workers would be catapulted into revolutionary struggles against a powerful ruling class which knew it could count on the support of the SPD and the trade unions as well as that of the international bourgeoisie. From this point of view, we can better understand why the question is not reducible to a kind of physi-

cal presence of revolutionaries within the work-

ing class, however important that is. The German social democrats certainly had a huge presence within the working class, in all areas of life – economic, political, cultural. The problem was that this influence within the class was increas-

ingly geared towards the German and thus neutralising the class struggle. The key difference between the SPD and the Bolsheviks was in the latter’s capacity to maintain and develop the self-

autonomy of the proletariat.

Finally, to really understand the contrast between the Bolsheviks and the Spartacists, to go deeper into the immense problems confronting the com-

munist minority during the revolutionary wave after 1917, we must integrate the particular situa-

tions pertaining to this or that country into a wider international vision. The Second International did indeed fall apart in 1914. Faced with the betrayal of substantial parts of its national components, it simply did not have the foundations for a new International, even if the conditions for its formation had not yet come to-

gather. The late formation of the Communist In-

ternational - and its accompanying programmatic weaknesses - was to be a major handicap not only for the German revolution, but for the Russian revolution and the whole revolutionary wave. We will come back to this in other articles. We have argued that the prior work of the left frac-

tions is an indispensable basis for the formation of the party on a solid basis. But we also have to recog-

nise that, in the early part of the 20th century, when the danger of opportunism within the social dem-

ocratic parties was becoming increasingly evident, the left factions who continued to move towards integration into the politics of the bourge-

oisie were shielded by the federal structure of the Second International. This was an Internation-


al which largely functioned as a kind of co-ordi-

nating centre for a collection of national parties. There was solidarity and cooperation between the different left currents (for example, when Lenin and Luxemburg worked together to draft the Basel resolution on war in the International Congress of 1912), but there was never an internationally centralised faction which could develop a coher-

ent policy in all countries, a unified response to all the dramatic changes that were being brought about by capitalism’s passage to an epoch of wars and revolutions.

Today’s revolutionary groups are not literally fractions in the sense of being an organic part of a former workers’ party, but they will not be able to prepare the ground for the party of tomorrow if they fail to understand what we can learn from the historical contribution of the left factions.

Amos, January 2019

France: Police violence, riots, urban guerrillas, looting... The real cause of chaos and violence is capitalism!

The “Yellow Vest” movement: the proletariat must respond to the attacks of capital on its own class terrain!

Our comrade Elisabeth has left us (obituary)

November 11, 1918, wasn’t “War, never again” - it was an armistice to save capitalism and prepare for new wars

The hidden legacy of the left of capital (part one): A false vision of the working class

South Africa: From the election of president Nelson Mandela in 1994 to 2014

Mexico, October 1968: The massacre at Three Cultures Square, Tlatelolco, shows the real face of capitalism

ICC books and pamphlets on the history of the workers’ movement

The Italian Communist Left

Dutch and German Communist Left

Communism is not a nice idea but a material necessity

Unions against the working class

Communist organisations and class consciousness

Donations

Unlike the bourgeois press, revolutionary publications such as World Revolution have no advertising revenue, no chains of news agents and no millionaire backers. We rely on the support of our sympathisers, and those who, while they might not agree with all aspects of our politics, see the importance of the intervention of a communist press.

Recent donations include:

At public meeting

£18

O

£10

Bookshops selling ICC press

Contact the ICC

Write to the following addresses without mentioning the name:

COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL PO Box 25, NIT, Farsadabad, 12100 Haryana, INDIA.

World Revolution BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX, GREAT BRITAIN

Write by e-mail to the following addresses:

From Great Britain: use wk@internationalism.org

From India use India@internationalism.org

From the rest of the world use international@internationalism.org

http://www.internationalism.org

International Review

Revolution in Germany: 100 years ago the proletariat made the bourgeoisie tremble

Report on imperialist tensions

(June 2018)

Fifty years since May 68: The advances and retreats in the class struggle since 1968

ICC public meetings on May 68: Did May 68 really mark the end of almost 50 years of counter-revolution

Communism is on the agenda of history: Castoriadis, Munis and the problem of breaking with Trotskyism (part 1)

The world revolution is humanity’s only future

International Community

Manifesto on the October revolution, Russia 1917

100 years after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers: how the bourgeoisie tries to hide the break-down of capitalism

Our comrade Elisabeth has left us (obituary)

November 11, 1918, wasn’t “War, never again” - it was an armistice to save capitalism and prepare for new wars

The hidden legacy of the left of capital (part one): A false vision of the working class

South Africa: From the election of president Nelson Mandela in 1994 to 2014

Mexico, October 1968: The massacre at Three Cultures Square, Tlatelolco, shows the real face of capitalism

ICC online

Life of the ICC

Recent donations include:

At public meeting

£18

O

£10
The coming elections in Israel: a class perspective

The early general elections in Israel, to be held in April 2019, will be marked by the instability of a coalition government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to call for early elections and having the expected decision of Israel’s attorney-general to accuse Netanyahu of bribery and fraud, a factor that contributed to his decision to initiate early elections, the Zionist regime faces terrible economic and political crises.

In this increasingly poisonous atmosphere, we can only welcome the appearance of an article on workers of the country feel incapable of coping with their poor economic situation. Thus, 20 per cent of the population lives in poverty and the country is one of the most unequal societies in the West. In political terms, Israel is challenged by the growth of the anti-Zionist forces in the Arab world and Gaza that resist the Israeli occupation forces. Its Southern border is unstable due to continued threats from the Hamas Islamic militants to advance armed forces near the separation fence; these militants launch missiles against the Israeli population in the South and dig tunnels in order to attack the Israeli army. In the Northern border, Israel is busy with ongoing military attacks on bases of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards in Syria. In addition, the Israeli forces and Hezbollah are closer than ever to another war. Supported by the US administration, Israel is carrying out aggressive policies on its borders in order to bring about the domination of Gaza in Palestine, which faces a terrible humanitarian situation due to the Israeli blockade and drive the Iranian militias out of Syria (it fears that these latter might aid Hezbollah in a future war).

This situation of the Israeli regime in the Middle East, the instability, and occupation by the US, and Palestinian masses. The problem of the Israeli occupation plays a central role in the politics of the country. While the political right desires to intensify the occupation and colonization, the political left desires to forward already dead Two-State solution in which a small Palestinian Bantustan state will be established alongside Israel. While there is a great desire among the masses to see the end of this bloody conflict, the right prospers as it spreads radical chauvinism and postracial nationalism in order to split the working class along national lines. The leftists suggest nothing but a solution based on the international order in which the capitalist system will continue to oppress the masses and exploit them. With no genuine alternative to more than 100 years of bloody conflict, nationalism flourishes and chauvinism continues to foil any change to real reconciliation between the Israeli workers and their Palestinian counterparts.

The absence of a revolutionary party which would stand up for this perspective. We would argue that this is one of the main factors to prevent the development in which the working class, all over the world, will be able to stop this war and the country’s military aggressiveness, and at the same time will accept the capital- worker opposition which has been established among the Israeli workers and Palestinian workers on a class basis, leading towards a proletarian revolution against all the exploiting classes. The comrades quite rightly call for the formation of a revolutionary party which would stand for this perspective. We would argue that this is our political task at the present time in order to establish a party which would bring about the revolution in which the working class will overthrow the exploiting classes and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of forming a revolutionary party which would bring about the revolution in which the working class will overthrow the exploiting classes and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, is a major objective of the present phase of class struggle and the main objective of the present stage of the international revolution.

Political positions of the ICC

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

* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a deca- dence social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, war, world reconstruction and new crises. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution, the desperate hope.

* 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 Commune had been proved a failure, the period of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and won a rapid degeneration. Stalinitism was not the product of the October revolution in Russia, but the outcome of a historical period of decay.

* The Stalinist regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc were called ‘socialist’ and ‘communist’. This is a baseless sham, and the deciphered form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only defend itself through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* All the nationalist ideologies – ‘national in- dependence’, the right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a reality for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, these divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiting masters.

* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. ‘Democracy’, a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

* The struggle of the bourgeoisie is equally re- actionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialists’ and ‘Communists’ parties (now ex-Communist) the leftist political parties, with their apparatus of police, agents (official and unofficial) constitute the legal left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘peace’ movements and ‘left modernism’ is an attempt – and ‘unipartite’ strategy of the bourgeoisie, to open the eyes of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the revolutionary struggle of the working class.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether ‘official’ or ‘mink and file’, serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

* In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its ex- tensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy. The working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of its extensions, and in order to carry out this combat, the whole economy.

Our ACTIVITY

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

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

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

Our ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary or- ganisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its revolutionary organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the Communist League of Marx and Engels (1847-51), the three Internationals (the International Working- men’s Association, 1868-72, the Socialist International, 1888-1914, the Communist International, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian Lefts.