



world revolution

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 comes back to parliament with plans 3 days after losing the vote, when it is not allowed in the normal rules); Jacob Rees-Mogg has proposed parliament should be suspended. 2 months before Brexit is due businesses are complaining about the uncertainty of what will happen and particularly if the country crashes out of the EU with no deal.

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 reflects 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 nationalist, anti-immigration and "anti-elitist" 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 "bogus" 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 populism has heavily influenced the Yellow Vest protests. 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 divisions 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 border – 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 Britain, 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 CBI is warning a no deal Brexit would lead to an 8% loss in GDP, and its director general, C Fairbairn, said "At my meetings at Davos there is a recognition 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 questioning 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 if on cue 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 Brexiter wing among conservatives is obvious, we should not forget that in 2016 there was a vote of

no confidence in Jeremy Corbyn by the parliamentary 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 Insoumise and Podemos respectively. Nor when we see the poor showing of the German 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 weakening 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 Corbyn 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 discuss the next steps, including TUC general secretary 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 gravedigger, 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

now there is a historically low level of strikes and the proletariat is finding it very difficult even to recognise itself as a class. It risks falling for and being divided along the lines of the various ideologies put forward by the ruling class. None of these ideologies, for Brexit or Remain, for referendums or parliament, have anything to offer the working class. Whichever way Brexit goes, the world economic crisis will continue to deepen, and in response all factions of the bourgeoisie will be obliged to press ahead with austerity and new attacks – and they will no doubt be blamed on the referendum result even if very similar attacks are being imposed on workers elsewhere, either inside or outside the EU.

For the workers to resist attacks they must unite and struggle together. Capital can only divide us: Brexiteer against Remainer; 'white working class' in the North against more 'cosmopolitan' workers in London; old against young who have to live with the consequences of the vote; 'native' against immigrant. Let us not forget that both Labour and Tory parties are in favour of limiting immigration to those needed by capital, and both are quite capable of blaming lack of health services and schools on the newcomers after running them down for decades. Above all we must not be caught up in campaigns for or against populism.

The danger of being caught up in populism is evident in its open nationalism and obvious will to divide workers between 'native' and immigrant – for example UKIP's poster showing immigrants in Europe to frighten people into voting Leave.

Continued on page 5

Inside this issue

Trump, the Middle East and the convulsions of US imperialism	2
Can the "Yellow Vest" movement open the way to the class struggle?	3
Report on national situation: Brexit and the historic decline of British imperialism	4/5
Public meetings on German revolution: Reply to the CWO on the question of the left fractions	6
<i>Life of the ICC</i>	7
The coming elections in Israel: a class perspective	8

Australia A\$2.25, Canada C\$1.50, Europe €1.3, India 10 rupees, Japan ¥300 USA 90¢

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 global tendencies of every man for himself, unpredictability, chaos and open divisions within the ruling class.

Three 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 US withdrawal from Syria, Trump reportedly told him “*You know what? It’s yours. I’m leaving*” (*Christian Science Monitor*, 16.1.19). Then in a tweet on January 12, Trump said that he “*would devastate Turkey economically if they hit the Kurds*” (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. Ambivalence, mixed-messages, incoherence and confusion reign in Washington and beyond, and the Kurdish question remains unresolved, a running sore between Washington and Ankara. Secretary of State Pompeo, whose statements have also been contradictory depending on what country he is in, said that Kurdish forces must be protected while Iranian forces must be expelled from Syria. A further factor here is that any major gain of Turkey over Kurdish-held territory would be against the interests of Tehran and Damascus, demonstrating that war can only come from war, particularly in any vacuum left in the Middle East.

Trump’s approach to US foreign policy is at odds with most of a US military establishment that tends to take a more global perspective of the Pax Americana, including a greater concern for its allies rather than the contempt shown to them by the President. Trump’s obsession with Iran is becoming more dangerous and divisive and Secretary of Defence Bolton’s war-like comments against Iran on his aborted trip to Turkey earlier

in the month were reportedly denounced through US embassies around the world. The Khashoggi killing has exposed the “deal-maker’s” relationship with Saudi Arabia and that of the latter with Israel, where Trump has also encouraged the most belligerent elements, giving Netanyahu the green light to ramp up the pressure on Hezbollah and bomb Iranian targets in Syria’. Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital is another sop to its right wing which can only further increase the region’s tensions, while the great peace “master-plan” for Israel and Palestine of Trump and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, has yet to see the light of day; and all the while the Gaza Strip becomes more and more uninhabitable 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 “retreat behind walls” and “America First” are aimed at his electoral base and beyond, where workers are not keen on endless foreign wars, showing the persistence of the “Vietnam Syndrome” which Trump is using for his own advantage. Following the disasters of US imperialism in the Middle East (and Afghanistan), a realignment of US forces has some support among the military and wider layers of the US bourgeoisie, but not necessarily using the same methods as Trump. This president personifies the global dynamic

1. Israel wants to stop Iran’s project for a “Shia Crescent” through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea. Trump attacks the former with sanctions and Israel, increasingly and openly, with bombs and missiles onto its forces and bases around Damascus. There’s not a clear division of labour here and confusion and contradictions exist with Trump saying that Iran could “*do what it likes in Syria*” (*The Times*, 22.1.19). The Israeli bombings are however a major escalation and unintended, uncontrollable consequences are also features of decomposing capitalism.

in the phase of the decomposition of capitalism which has deepened since the break-up of the blocs in 1989: the development of the centrifugal tendencies of “each for themselves”, unpredictability, the fortress mentality, the sudden abrogation of international treaties and protocols, etc. Within this irrationality, there’s a certain “logic” to Trump’s actions which responds to the failures of its wars and the overall weakening of the US in the Middle East and elsewhere. Giving up on Syria and a rapprochement with Erdogan - the latter a sort of mirror-image of Trump - fits into this logic. But the implementation of this policy has been typical Trump: ill-thought out, inconsistent, contradictory and individualist. Regarding the Syrian pull-out, Brett McGurk, Washington envoy to the US anti-Isis coalition, said after resigning and after four US Special Forces were killed in an Isis attack in Manbij mid-January: “*we have to get out*” but “*there is not a plan for what’s coming next*” (New York Post, 20.1.19). McGurk 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 very dangerous for US lives. Trump’s announcement of “victory” over Isis was precipitous to say the least and it has virtually invited attacks on US and coalition forces by Isis. Isis is far from beaten and while its territory has been greatly reduced it still holds large fortified tracts from which it can launch what it does best - terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare. Apart from Isis, the ex-al-Qaida forces of Hay’et Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have strengthened considerably in Idlib, making them another significant factor in the game.

The deep divisions between Trump and the US military have been exposed by the resignations of Mattis and McGurk, amongst others, and the great

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 their position, which also supports Kurdish forces, exposed, vulnerable and weakened.

It’s not just in relation to the Middle East that there are divisions within the US administration 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 uncertainties around 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 America” in order to avoid the growing international breakdown and chaos, much of which has been generated by US imperialism in the first place. It’s a long time since, in the representative form of President George Bush, the USA declared on 11.9.90, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, that we were moving into “... *peace. An era in which the nations of the world... can prosper and live in harmony*”. Instead of which we find ourselves in a world that’s sinking deeper into economic crisis, spreading warfare, irrationality and instability of which the Trump presidency is hugely symbolic. The stakes for the working class couldn’t be greater. **Baboon, 23.1.19**

Continued from page 8

The coming elections in Israel: a class perspective

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 prospect to build two independent nation states in Palestine. However, the ‘self-determination’ slogan is deceiving. In the epoch of imperialism and the decadence of capitalism, the demand for self-determination means the establishment of a bourgeois regime. From the point of view of the working class, the idea of building 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 cannot be satisfied with the call for ‘self-determination.’

Furthermore, to support the ‘right for self-determination’ is to claim that this very right stands in contrast with the interests of the national bourgeoisie. This position contradicts the reality in Palestine as the bourgeoisies can only benefit from a situation of unified capitalist economy in one state. The interest of the Israeli and Palestinian proletariats is their unification along class lines; nationalism and the reactionary call for self-determination constitutes a weapon in the hands of the national bourgeoisie that wish to prevent the working class from achieving socialism. To this we should add the fact that in the epoch of imperialism, the struggle for national independence cannot be successful as capitalism seeks to destroy the nation- states as well as their economies and build a world market through the process of colo-

nization. The radical impulse to return to the age in which it was possible to build truly independent nation-states is utopian and even reactionary.

Thus, the call for the establishment of one state of Palestine within the capitalist order means in fact a call for the bourgeoisie to build another capitalist country in which the working class will be oppressed and incapable of defending its rights against the capitalist ruling class. There is however a tiny minority, mainly Trotskyist groups, that call for the establishment of one socialist state of Palestine, 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 those Leftists to vote for various parties – liberals, reformists, Stalinists or Trotskyists – in order to save the Israeli bourgeois democracy from being crushed by fascism. However, this call reflects the belief that, in the epoch of imperialism, the bourgeois democracy is a genuine democratic regime and not a sheer illusion. The masses do wish to see a democracy and the fascists do want to destroy the remnants of bourgeois democracy. Nonetheless, the idea that fascism will not triumph if bourgeois-democratic/liberal parties will win the general elections is not only an illusion but also a political strategy that reduces the power of the working class as a revolutionary agent. Fascism is to be defeated by the masses in direct and independent revolutionary action, not by those who support capitalism or defend it.

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 suffers from its death agonies. These parties cannot rally the masses around them as the proletariat despises them and do not trust either their leadership or their programme. The proletariat 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, in a class society the only true democracy, i.e. the rule of the proletariat, is 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 parliaments, the workers won’t be emancipated.

This analysis is not aimed to call the working class in Israel/Palestine to spoil their ballots but rather to get organized in a unified revolutionary party based on a communist programme. The only way to get rid of capitalism as well as of nationalism and wars passes through revolution. Workers have no fatherland and therefore must be united together to build their future in a communist society. **DS**

Continued from page 3

“Yellow Vest” movement

In the last few weeks, amidst this whole swamp, there have been a few shafts of light: the high school students came out in struggle against the reform of the baccalauriat (without the *Marseillaise* and the Tricolore), not for themselves directly, but in solidarity with future pupils who will experience a much degraded education. At the same time, university students mobilised to oppose increasing fees for foreign students and raised the slogan “Solidarity with the immigrants”. The anger of the young educated generation – who are mainly future workers – is a sharp response both to the iniquitous measures of the government and the anti-immigrant slogans raised by the Yellow Vests. Solidarity is key to the strength of the working class.

The proletariat has momentarily lost its class identity. It has been cut off from its history and its experience. But it is still there, still alive. In its depths, reflection about the lack of perspective offered by capitalist society continues, especially among the most conscious and combative elements. Driven by the aggravation of the economic crisis, not yet conscious of its own strength, not yet confident in its capacity for self-organisation, the proletariat will be obliged to engage in the combat for the defence of its own living conditions.

Faced with the momentary paralysis of the class struggle, revolutionaries have to be patient, not fear isolation, all kinds of criticisms and misunderstandings. They have to unmask all the enemies of the proletariat, all the ideological traps and dead-ends, in order to participate, to the maximum of their still limited forces, in the real development of consciousness within the working class, with the conviction that only the class struggle can provide a perspective for the future of humanity.

Révolution Internationale, 24.12.18

Can the “Yellow Vest” movement open the way to the class struggle?

We are publishing here large extracts from a reader who, while welcoming the overall approach of the leaflet on the Yellow Vest movement distributed by our section in France¹, also criticises certain of our positions, in particular the idea that nothing good for the proletariat can come out of this inter-classist movement. These questions touch on extremely important aspects of the proletarian struggle: what is the working class, its struggle, its perspective. 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 theory. We thus encourage all our readers to write to us, to formulate their criticisms, their agreements or their questions in order to fuel a debate that is vital 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 who see this movement as a repeat of 1968. The differences are obvious right away, but this comparison is used to justify their unbridled support

We can recognise, as your leaflet does, that the spontaneous outbreak of these blockades expresses a very deep social anger. An anger that is very diverse, if not contradictory, expressing the inter-classist nature of the movement and its “citizen” or even nationalist expressions. I basically agree with your critique about this.

On three points there can be a discussion:

- **The idea of a trap laid for the workers.** 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.

There is also in the leaflet the idea that the working class is being prevented from struggling:

“This whole jolly scene, each with its particular credo, is occupying and patrolling the social terrain to prevent the workers from mobilising massively, from developing their autonomous struggle, their solidarity and unity against the attacks of the bourgeoisie”. Are the workers simply being “prevented” from openly struggling on their class terrain? Obviously not

This is indeed a mixed social movement, in which the balance of forces is not favourable to the working class and is giving a free hand to other strata out to defend their interests, which is hardly surprising today. In this sense, I agree with the passage that says *“The proletarians want to express their deep anger but they don't know how to struggle effectively to defend their living conditions against the growing attacks of the bourgeoisie and its government”*;

- **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 self-organisation, to function through real general assemblies, etc

Our reply

Starting from a shared observation of the Yellow Vest movement, characterised by *“an anger that is very diverse, if not contradictory, expressing the inter-classist nature of the movement and its ‘citizen’ or even nationalist expressions”*, this reader poses three important questions:

A trap for the workers?

Our leaflet asserts that this movement is a real trap for the workers. But the comrade says:

“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 from Seine-et-Marne launched on social media a petition against the increase in petrol prices. Then a lorry driver, dressed up in a yellow vest, from the same department, called for roads to be blocked. Through a whole chain of clicks, these two cries of anger were propagated everywhere, testifying to 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 diluted as individual citizens in a milieu made up of all the other layers of society (petty bourgeoisie, peasants, artisans), the social aspirations and methods of struggle of these intermediate layers were dominant.

This why the point of departure for the movement was the explosion of anger among self-employed lorry drivers, taxi drivers and small bosses from the PME², in response to the tax increase on petrol that served to penalise their enterprises. This is why the main means of action was the occupation of roundabouts and crossings, then of the “the most beautiful avenue in the world”, the Champs-Élysées, a hi-viz yellow vest on their backs, in order to “be seen”, to “be heard” and above all “to be recognised”. This is why the Tricolore flag, *La Marseillaise* and the references to the French revolution of 1789 were omnipresent alongside the shouting about “the people of France”. These are methods which in no way express a mobilisation of the working class on its own terrain, putting into question capitalist exploitation through demands such as wage rises, opposition to lay-offs etc.

Furthermore the methods of struggle of the working class were never expressed. The absence of strikes in the different sectors of the class or of general assemblies, in which the exploited can debate and draw out the aims of their struggle, clearly confirms this.

Even worse, the rotten terrain of populism and xenophobia gangrened a large part of the movement. We saw some of the most nauseating expressions of the current historic period. Like the appeals to strengthen anti-immigrant laws and even xenophobic actions. Over 90% of the sympathisers of Marie le Pen's Rassemblement National support the “Yellow Vests” and over 40% say that they are themselves taking part in the movement. This indeed is the snare that those workers who don the yellow vest are caught up in. This movement has been a real trap for them.

What are the causes of the political difficulties of the working class?

In a few lines this letter poses a central question: *“There is also in the leaflet the idea that the working class is being prevented from struggling... Are the workers simply being ‘prevented’ from openly struggling on their class terrain? Obviously not”.* What are the causes of the current political difficulties of the working class? The answer can't be found by taking a snapshot of the proletariat today – you have to examine the whole film of its history. So we can't reply fully here to this complex question³. We can simply insist on one point. We should not underestimate the permanent work of sabotage by the trade unions whose specific role for the past century has precisely been that of undermining the struggle in the workplace and the consciousness of the class.

A single example: just a few months before the Yellow Vest movement the trade unions organised the “stop-start strike of the railway workers” thousands of very militant workers engaged in numerous strike days, completely isolated, cut off from other sectors of the proletariat. And yet at the same time, in nursing homes for the



elderly, in the post office, in the day nurseries, the hospitals, in certain factories etc, struggles were breaking out on a regular basis, each sector in its own corner. Then the CGT issued the call for the “convergence of struggles”, a simulated unity consisting of marching in the street, one sector behind the next, each with its own slogan, its own corporate demand...and then going home without any common general assembly, without discussion, without solidarity in the struggle. These union movements, which are repeated year after year, have the sole function of spreading the poison of division, of despair, of powerlessness. So yes, the systematic sabotage 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 indeed been going through a very difficult period. Since 1989, with the campaigns on the collapse of Stalinism, which was identified with the so-called “failure of communism”, the proletariat has not been able to rediscover its class identity, to recognise itself as a revolutionary class. Unable to put forward the perspective of a society without exploitation, the exploited class remains very vulnerable, but above all extremely passive when it comes to the struggle. While large sectors of the proletariat have not recognised themselves in the popular revolt of the Yellow Vests, neither have these central sectors been able to mobilise themselves in a massive and unified way against the attacks of the government, on their own class terrain and with their own methods of struggle. However, despite these difficulties, the proletariat has not been defeated. Taking into account the general level of discontent and the new attacks to come, the great mass of the proletariat can still throw off its lethargy in the period ahead. The future still belongs to the class struggle.

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 self-organisation, to function through real general assemblies, etc”

Even if it started on a bad basis, could the Yellow Vest movement transform itself into something different, into an authentic movement of the working class? In favour of this thesis, you could point to the widening of the demands raised, since the rejection of the tax increase on petrol took a back seat to a broader protest against poverty and in favour of increased buying power. Furthermore, the sympathy for the movement in the population was certainly real. If the movement has never been massive (around 300,000 Yellow Vests at the high point) and while the majority of workers in the big plants and public sector remained spectators, it remains the case that it enjoyed a lot of popularity. Again in support of this thesis, there are historical precedents. Here are three, by no means the least of them: the Paris Commune of 1871 began as an explosion of anger that in appearance was nationalist and anti-Prussian; the mass strike in Russia in 1905

began under a religious banner, led by a priest, Father Gapon; May 1968 in France was initiated by a movement of students who, at the time, had often come out of the petty bourgeoisie. Each time, the working class was finally able to put itself at the head of the struggle, with its own methods, its forms of organisation, its strength. To paraphrase our reader, “the class struggle became autonomous by emerging as such during the movement itself”.

So could the Yellow Vest movement transform itself into something else, into a real workers' struggle? In fact, the comrade himself answers his own question in his letter: *“This is indeed a mixed social movement, in which the balance of forces is not favourable to the working class and is giving a free hand to other strata out to defend their interests, which is hardly surprising today”.*

But why is this? Because we are not in 1871, 1905, or 1968. In 1871, the Paris Commune was not an exception. In many regions of Europe, but particularly in France, the working class was in struggle and several “Communes” appeared. The mass strike in Russia in 1905 was preceded by a deep process of rising proletarian struggle, of developing consciousness and organisation, again at the international level, since the 1890s (Rosa Luxemburg masterfully described this process in her book *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*). May 68 broke out after a year marked by very important workers' struggles, particularly in the big factories in the west of France.

Today, we are not seeing any of this. As we saw above, the working class is going through major difficulties. It is not even conscious of its existence as a social class antagonistic to the bourgeoisie and distinct from intermediate social layers like the petty bourgeoisie. It has lost the memory of its own past and is not able to refer to its immense historical experience; it's even ashamed of it since the bourgeoisie is constantly equating the working class with an extinct species and equates the word “communism” with the barbarity of Stalinism.

In this situation, the Yellow Vest movement can in no way function as a kind of springboard or spark for an authentic struggle of the working class. On the contrary, the proletarians who have come out behind the slogans and methods of the petty bourgeoisie, drowned in the interclassist ideology of “citizenship”, diluted among all the other social strata, can only suffer the pressure of bourgeois democratism and nationalism.

In this sense it's fortunate that the majority of the working class has contented itself with giving platonic support and that the mass of proletarians have not participated in a movement that has no perspective. This reticence reveals that, leaving aside the sympathy for some of the demands about poverty, the working class has from the start been very circumspect about the fixation on taxes and about the methods used (occupation of roundabouts) and concerned and even disgusted by the immediate support that has come from the right and extreme right.

This distrust shows that, despite its difficulties in engaging in the struggle on its own terrain, the proletariat has not been crushed, defeated, or massively mobilised behind the putrid ideology of the petty bourgeoisie and behind populist, anti-immigrant xenophobia.

1. <http://fr.internationalism.org/content/9801/face-amisere-et-a-degradation-nos-conditions-vie-comment-lutter-faire-reculer>. A machine translation of this leaflet is available on our discussion forum: <http://en.internationalism.org/forum/16600/france-yellow-vest-protests-about-fuel-and-taxes-general>, post 15

2. PME: petit ou moyenne enterprise, small or medium enterprises

3. See for example “Why the proletariat has not yet overthrown capitalism”, *International Review* 103 and 104

Brexit and the historic decline of British imperialism

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 political mess afflicting 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 capitalism can only be fully understood by placing it in its international context. The Resolution on the International Situation adopted by the 22nd ICC Congress¹, updated 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 factor, decisive for the evolution of society.
- This process of decomposition of society is irreversible.
- Populism is, along with the refugee crisis and the development of terrorism, one of the most striking expressions of the decomposition phase.
- The rise of populism is not the result of a deliberate political will on the part of the dominant sectors of the bourgeoisie. It is an emanation of civil society that escapes the control of the bourgeoisie.
- The determining cause of this rise of populism is the inability of the proletariat to put forward its own response, its own alternative to the crisis of capitalism. In this situation of social impasse, the tendency to look to the past, to look for scapegoats responsible for the disaster, is becoming increasingly strong.
- The rise of populism has a common element that is present in most advanced countries: the profound loss of confidence in the ‘elites’ because of their inability to restore the health of the economy, to stem a steady rise in unemployment or poverty. This revolt against the current political leaders is a (reactionary) revolt that can in no way lead to an alternative perspective to capitalism.
- In the absence of a longer-term perspective of growth for the national economy, the living conditions of the natives can only be more or less stabilised by discriminating against everybody else.

In the period since the adoption of this resolution, the ICC has sought to deepen this analysis by placing this advance of decomposition within a broader historical framework. Central to this analysis has been the understanding that with the rise of populism we are seeing the terminal stages of the post-Second World War economic, imperialist and political structures. This is exemplified by the election of Trump and the political, economic and imperialist strategy of the fraction of US capital that he represents. This is a policy based on:

- the undermining of its main economic rivals (especially China) through trade wars;
- the support for the destabilisation of the EU through the encouragement of populist movements, Brexit etc, going so far as to call into question the World Trade Organisation (a pillar of post-war efforts to contain economic contradictions);
- the calling into question of NATO.

This attempt to overcome the USA’s economic and imperialist weaknesses by retreating behind the walls of the nation state, and doing all it can to undermine its rivals, is a direct challenge to the state capitalist policy of globalisation.

The main rivals of the US oppose this challenge. China, which has gained most from this policy, is presenting itself as the champion of globalisation. The EU has also benefited from, and is integrated into globalisation.

In this context of increasing struggles between the major powers over economic policy, the deepening of the economic crisis, along with imperialist tensions, will take on an even more chaotic character, threatening to throw world capital into

lethal economic convulsions (due to the collapse of international cooperation) and explosions of imperialist tensions that could lead to the destabilisation of more regions of the planet.

British capitalism has been thrown into this whirlpool of international instability, chaos and accelerating tensions. A second-rate power, in danger of being cut loose from its most important economic market, has been left to fend for itself in a world increasingly marked by an economic policy of ‘every man for himself’ and protectionism. At the imperialist level, its ability to manoeuvre against its rivals in Europe has been severely undermined, while its ‘special relationship’ with the US has gone, with Trump openly trying to undermine the British government.

The end of Empire

Brexit is a major step in the historic decline of British imperialism from superpower to a struggling second-rate power. To understand the depth of this fall it is worth briefly analysing this decline².

The period of decadence has seen the decline of British imperialism, the ascent of the US, and the challenges of German imperialism, as laid out clearly by *Bilan* and the articles on the ‘The History of British Imperialism’. From the beginning of the twentieth century to the mid-1950s British imperialism strove to slow down its decline, particularly by greater exploitation of the Empire (exports to the empire in the 1930s were double those of the beginning of the century, as British capitalism bled the empire dry to offload the impact of the depression). However, US imperialism made very clear to British imperialism that the price of saving its bacon in the Second World War was the opening up and destruction of the empire, that is, the end of British imperialism’s ability to use the empire as an economic and imperialist support. This marked the end of British imperialism as a world power, and an undermining of its economy.

This process of declining imperial and economic power did not happen overnight. Between 1945 and 1956 British imperialism tried to maintain its world power status by presenting Britain and its Empire/Commonwealth as a third global force. Labour and Tory administrations were consistent in their efforts to maintain a global role for British imperialism. This vision was the basis of the strategy towards Europe: that is, any developed relations with Europe had the aim of maintaining the UK’s global position. Churchill pushed the idea of a United States of Europe, but in the context of his idea of the three circles of power: the US, Britain and Europe. This was basically the idea that Attlee, Bevin and the rest of the Labour government defended. It was the agreed position of the state. The main differences were over whether to maintain the idea of Empire and the Commonwealth, and the various ideologies which went with these ideas. Churchill maintained the idea of the leading role of the Anglo-Saxon race, whilst Bevin dressed up his defence of the continuation of the Commonwealth with ‘socialist’ phrases. The idea of Britain’s role in a ‘United State of Europe’ was based on the assumption that the Commonwealth would also be involved in any such structures. Not surprisingly, the other European powers were not keen on subordinating their efforts to rebuild their economies to the interests of Britain and its empire.

This effort to maintain the Empire was constantly faced with the US’s insistence that the British open up the Commonwealth, i.e. subordinate it to US interests. The US also pushed for the British to be involved in Europe, as a counter-weight to France, and a possible emerging Germany, as well as to the Russian threat. The US also played off the other European powers against Britain. It supported the greater integration of the main economies. For the US, the idea of a ‘special relationship’ was a sop for the British to hide their humiliation. As one US diplomat pointed out, the US also had a ‘special

2. The following articles are essential reading for understanding the historical context: - *WR* 212 and 213 ‘Evolution of British imperialism’, reprinted from *Bilan*
- *IRs*17 and 19 ‘Britain since World War 2’
- *WR* 216 and 217 ‘History of British imperialism’

relationship’ with Germany which was even more important given its geographical position and its re-emerging industrial might.

The British bourgeoisie may still peddle the myth of the ‘special relationship’ but they know full well that it is nothing but a fig leaf to hide their decline and the increasing power and domination of the US.

This was firmly underlined by the decision of Attlee’s Labour Government to have an independent UK nuclear arsenal, and all the efforts the US made to stop this happening, or, once it had, to make sure that this arsenal would be subordinated to the US.

The dismantling of the Empire and its replacement with the Commonwealth increased the influence of the US on such important parts of the Commonwealth as Australia, New Zealand and Canada. These countries could see that Britain had to have closer relations with Europe and that this would have an impact on their dependence on the British market especially in agriculture. This pushed them towards the US. As did the need to defend their own imperialist interests: the Second World War had shown that British imperialism, on its own, was unable to defend its interests militarily.

After the Suez humiliation

This disentangling of the Commonwealth was strikingly confirmed during the Suez Crisis when Australia, New Zealand and Canada refused to offer military support to the British/French/Israeli adventure and sided with the US in its call for the ceasefire. This robbed the British bourgeoisie of any illusions it might still have had about using the Commonwealth to back up its efforts to remain a world power.

Thus, not only did Suez graphically illustrate to the British ruling class that the US would not support it uncritically but also, maybe more importantly, the main Commonwealth countries now understood that their best interests lay in supporting the US. In two world wars British imperialism had been dependent upon the support of the Empire/Commonwealth: now it was clear it was on its own. British imperialism by 1956 had been robbed of its Empire and seen the most important countries of the Commonwealth abandon it in time of crisis. Its illusions of being able to maintain its global role were brutally crushed.

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 the national interest in a world where it was now a secondary power, and whose economic and imperialist interests pushed it increasingly towards closer ties with Europe. Previously the British bourgeoisie had approached Europe as part of its global strategy; now it approached it as a visibly weakened power. This was at a time when the rest of Western Europe was undergoing the post-war ‘boom’, in part based on a greater economic and political cooperation. There were important parts of the bourgeoisie that had close ties to the Commonwealth and could see that closer relations with Europe meant loosening ties with the Commonwealth. The Labour Party had always been very hesitant and opposed to closer relations with Europe because they felt it made their management of the national capital more difficult. There was also a strong weight of suspicion of a re-emerging German imperialism across the state and its parties. Even these elements understood that greater integration with the booming European economies was vital to slowing down and perhaps reversing the dramatic weakening of the British economy, although they never wanted to be part of a federal Europe. The need to go to Europe cap in hand underlined to the whole bourgeoisie just how far British imperialism had plummeted in 60 years and was one of the greatest humiliations for British imperialism: it graphically displayed to the whole world the depths to which this once great power had fallen.

The British bourgeoisie, in the late 50s and early 60s, was thus faced with a multitude of rivals seeking to push it further down the imperialist pecking order. There were also strong resentments about

the loss of Empire, towards the US for bringing this about, towards the Germans as an historical rival, and towards French imperialism as one of the leading states of the Common Market (the EEC). To defend the national interest in this morass of historical and contemporary dynamics posed a huge challenge to British imperialism

The US drove home the weakened position of the British by putting enormous pressure on Britain to maintain its military commitments around the world (at a huge cost to a weakened economy) 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.

There were still parts of the bourgeoisie that strongly opposed the Common Market for various reasons: parts of the Labour Party due to their vision of a strongly centralised and ‘independent’ state, supported by the Commonwealth, as defended by Benn, Foot and other Labour lefts. In the Tory party there were those who had a similar vision of Britain and who could not accept the profoundly weakened position of British imperialism. Both of these factions cooperated closely in order to oppose the Common Market.

Once the entry into the Common Market was confirmed by the Referendum of 1975, the Labour government clearly stated British imperialism’s intentions to do all it could to defend its interests within Europe and to oppose all moves that might undermine its position. The Wilson/Callaghan government, for example, began the negotiations for a rebate. Thatcher continued this attitude and was able to do it with more intransigence due to the needs of the economy, with her image as the Iron Lady and her rhetoric of the Right in power. There was no real change of policy, it was simply down to a more ‘hard-line’ stance. However, when it served the national interest, Thatcher was willing to sign up to greater economic integration. Thatcher’s stance was not seen as being anti-European. In fact, the radicalisation of the Labour Party, under Foot, in the early 1980s, was to a large degree based on its opposition to the Common Market and thus Thatcher. Here we can see the British bourgeoisie using the long-term euro-scepticism of Foot, Benn etc to their own ends.

The fall of Thatcher in 1990 is integrally linked to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Thatcher had always been hostile to Germany. Her unlikely friendship with Mitterrand was linked to their mutual distrust of German imperialism. This hostility became increasingly open and counter-productive when she organised a symposium on Germany, at Chequers, just after the collapse. This brought together academics and others who clearly all had very hostile views towards Germany. When this meeting and its findings were exposed, this placed British imperialism in a very difficult situation faced with the inevitable re-unification of Germany and all that meant to the balance of power in Europe. Thatcher was given the boot by her own party.

Britain all at sea in the “new world order”

The deepening of decomposition marked by the collapse of the bloc system has been the historical context for the unfolding of the increasing difficulties of the British bourgeoisie in defending its imperialist interests internationally and in the EU. The instability of international relations, the widening imperialist chaos, the growing difficulties in managing the political game, mounting corruption of political life, all served to make the question of the relationship with the EU much more complicated. Thatcher could get away with ‘hand-bagging’ her way around Europe, in the national interest, when the blocs existed: all the bourgeoisies had a common enemy. Once the Russian threat went the common interest became more complex. Each national capital had to find its own way in this “new world order”.

1. *International Review* 159, <http://en.internationalism.org/international-review/201711/14435/22nd-icc-congress-resolution-international-class-struggle>

Continued from page 4

This unstable situation put into question the ability of the EU to stay together, but at the same time led to the strengthening of the tendency towards integration in order to counter these centrifugal forces. This situation placed British imperialism in a very difficult situation. No longer able to punch above its weight in Europe, it was faced with moves to greater integration in order to try and stabilise the EU. The national interest was best served by careful and subtle diplomacy in order to allow British imperialism to defend its interests. We see the policy of the Major government, appearing to be more pro-EU than Thatcher, but aimed at continuing the policy of limiting the ability of Germany and France to use the EU for their own ends.

New Labour maintained the same policy. The Labour Party's ability to look less anti-European than the openly faction-ridden Tory party enabled British imperialism to manoeuvre more easily in Europe. For example, the British state pushed for 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 domination of the EU.

This aspect of British imperialist policy took a serious blow with the debacles of Afghanistan and Iraq. British imperialism's efforts to get the main EU countries to support the war produced hostility, whilst its retreat from Afghanistan and Iraq with its tail between its legs left British Imperialism even more weakened as an imperialist power. *"British imperialism will find it very difficult to find a way out of the impasse and all but impossible 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 contradiction between its ambitions and this reality is revealed in the almost comic decision to build aircraft carriers without any aircraft. At the strategic and political level, it has to continue to acknowledge the reality of American power in the world and German domination in Europe. While the growing imperialist power of China and to a lesser extent other emerging countries like India offer new fields for action it is unlikely that the former will become a serious challenger to the US in the near future while the latter remains focussed on its regional ambitions. Moreover, the imperialist situation will continue to be characterised by great complexity since there is no real dynamic towards the formation of new blocs that would impose some order on the situation. The inescapable reality for Britain is that like most lesser powers it is dependent on grasping opportunities from the evolution of the situation that is shaped by greater or better positioned powers. Increasing the size of the special forces may enhance its ability to undertake covert operations but these can rarely gain more than tactical victories. In terms of developing networks beyond the major powers Britain has relatively little to offer such powers while the baggage it still carries from the days of empire and the legacy of its arrogance towards lesser powers and peoples that it retained even after the sun set on the empire is a hurdle to forging alliances of any duration or stability."* (Resolution on the National Situation, 19th Congress of WR, 2010)

This continued weakening of British Imperialism took place in the context of the 2008 economic crisis. Within the British bourgeoisie this added fuel to the long-standing historical divisions over Europe. The EU did not look such a pillar of economic stability. This helped to feed the rise of a faction of the bourgeoisie calling for an exit from the EU in the interest of the national economy: *"a significant development over the last few years has been the growth of the view that sees withdrawal from Europe as being in Britain's interests. A few years back this faction seemed largely restricted to the likes of UKIP but the attempt to force through a referendum on Europe last year revealed that it exists within part of the Tory party... While this points to the spread of incoherence within the bourgeoisie, since leaving Europe is likely to weaken Britain's economy, as well as leaving it more isolated on the imperialist stage, it is unclear how wide-spread these views are in the Tory party. We suggested at the time of the last election that the right is dominant in the party and in a recent update that the majority in the party is Eurosceptic; both points may be correct, but this does not imply they all want to leave Europe or that they agreed with last year's call for a referendum"* (ibid).

The emergence of populism in the UK

It is against this background of historical decline and divisions about how to deal with this decline that the growth of populism and its destabilising impact has to be understood. The already existing divisions have become dominant factors in the state's efforts to control its political apparatus due to the instability caused by the rise of populism.

The disaster of Brexit underlines the historical paradox facing British state capitalism: its ability to control its own political apparatus and the social situation is being undermined by capitalism's own rotting entrails - by decomposition and its political manifestation par excellence, populism.

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

The proletariat in Britain had been the centre of a well-coordinated strategy by the state to smash its main militant bastions and to break its confidence in itself, from the end of the 70s and throughout the 80s. The collapse of the US bloc and the international reflux in the class struggle had a particularly powerful impact in Britain on the back of the defeats of the miners, car workers, steel workers and others. This has led to a historically low level of workers' strikes throughout the last three decades. This has, in turn, generated an increasing sense of hopelessness and an idea of the pointlessness of trying to struggle.

The abandoning of whole regions of the country, especially in the north and in Wales has bred lumpenisation with the destruction of the local economies. This has led to cities, towns and estates being left to rot, with high levels of crime, poverty and despair, leaving them prey to the most poisonous ideologies

In this social situation of decomposition, the state under New Labour developed, along with the media, a sophisticated ideological campaign of demonisation and scapegoating of those on benefits, the disabled, immigrants. A 'reign of terror' was imposed around the social security system with increasingly more difficult criteria for receiving benefits. At the same time, ministers condemned those on benefits. In the media, the mocking and condemnation of the poor became popular entertainment. Systematic campaigns to generate Islamophobia were carried out in the context of the fear of terrorism. The whole social atmosphere has increasingly become a morass of scapegoating, hatred, ridicule and contempt.

Migration had also become a more prominent question. The Labour Party, through its support for the extension of the EU into Eastern Europe and the single market, used the influx of migrants looking for work to stir up divisions in the class, and as sources of cheap labour. The state was fully aware that the already chronic supply of housing, schools and health care was going to be impacted by its policy, but the ideological divisions of the class were a very powerful weapon to divert any reactions to the attacks into blaming migrants. To give legitimacy to these divisions Gordon Brown made promises of "British Jobs for British Workers" (an old slogan of the neo-Nazi National Front in the 1970s, and Moseley's fascists in the 1930s). The LibDem/Tory Coalition government continued these campaigns.

The power of the democratic mystification was also tarnished by the campaign that followed the collapse of the imperialist blocs. This emphasised that that now the ideas of Left and Right are old fashioned, it's the centre, the Third Way that's the way forward. This campaign reinforced the idea of the defeat of the working class and its disappearance as a social force, so that the political parties become the mouthpieces of an indistinguishable and distant political class with nothing to do with the everyday lives of the population, especially the working class. This bred a real cynicism.

This cynicism was greatly reinforced with a series of parliamentary scandals which exposed MPs lining their own pockets whilst the population was being told to accept austerity.

The sense of the parliamentary system being a remote and alien world with no real connection with people had been given further impetus by the way in which New Labour had ignored the mass protests against the Iraq war. These pacifist demonstrations were well-organised attacks on any real questioning of the war, but they also led to a deep sense that nothing could be done. This compounded the feeling within the proletariat that

strikes were no longer able to gain anything and there was nothing that could change the situation.

When UKIP emerged, it had a simple answer to all these problems: leave the EU. Its leader Farage appeared to be all that most politicians were not: blunt, politically incorrect, and condemning of the elite. Support for UKIP was fed by disillusionment in the established parties, in a context where the working class was not able to make its weight felt in society. Effective opposition to the main parties became identified with UKIP and its bizarre politics and behaviour,

UKIP and populism also played on a reactionary desire in the population faced with the increasing complexity of the world situation for a return to the 'good of days' - to find safety and comfort in the apparent stability of the past.

UKIP also tapped into a deep scepticism about Europe linked to this reactionary nostalgia, which saw membership of the EU as a constant reminder of the decline of British imperialism and its place in the world. The idea of 'making Britain great again' has a real weight as it did in the US Presidential campaign of 2016.

Continued from page 1

Ruling class divisions won't help the working class

Internationally we can see the same themes from AfD in Germany, Trump with his wall and "bad hombres" in the USA, the refusal of immigrants in Italy. We see the same themes in the Yellow Vest protests that started in France, a "popular revolt" that actually undermines the ability of workers to struggle: *"This 'popular revolt' of all the 'poor' of 'working France' who can't 'make ends meet' is not as such a proletarian movement, despite its sociological composition. The great majority of the 'gilet jaunes' are workers, paid, exploited and precarious with some not even affected by the SMIC (minimum wage), without counting the retired who don't have the right to the minimum pension. Living in isolated urban or rural areas, without public transport to get to work or children to school, these poor workers need a car and they are thus the first to be hit by the increase in petrol taxes and new technical requirements for their vehicles..."*

The explosion of the perfectly legitimate anger of the 'gilet jaunes' against the misery of their living conditions has been drowned in an inter-classist conglomeration of so-called free individual-citizens. The rejection of 'elites' and politics in general makes them particularly vulnerable to the most reactionary ideologies, notably extreme-right xenophobia. The history of the twentieth century has largely demonstrated that it is the

The referendum as a response to the populist tide

The rise of UKIP, which emboldened the Eurosceptic wing of the Tory Party, posed a real problem to the ruling class. How to limit the rise of the political "nutters" (as Prime Minister Cameron called them), because they were destabilising the British bourgeoisie's manoeuvrings around Europe? They posed the danger of the Tory party becoming infected with populism and increasingly destabilising the party. This was the reason the Cameron government took the decision to hold the referendum - in order to try and face down the rising tide of populism.

Within the bourgeoisie there was great unease about this tactic. For example, the then Chancellor George Osborne opposed the idea because he was convinced that the Remainers would lose. However, the Referendum went ahead. This led to the greatest political disaster for the British bourgeoisie since the Second World War, casting it adrift in an increasingly complex and dangerous world situation. ...

World Revolution, January 2019

International Communist Current Public Meeting

100 years since the foundation of the Communist International

Saturday March 9, 2019, 2pm-6pm
May Day Rooms
88 Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 1DH
Nearest tube: St Pauls

"The CI's foundation awakes unpleasant memories for the whole capitalist class and its zealous servants. In particular, it reminds them of their fright at the end of World War I, faced with the mounting and apparently unavoidable tide of the international revolutionary wave: the victorious proletarian revolution in Russia in October 1917; mutinies in the trenches; the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm and the hurried signature of an armistice in the face of mutinies and the revolt of the working masses in Germany; then the insurrection of German workers; the creation along Russian lines of republics of workers' councils in Bavaria and Hungary; the beginning of strikes among the working masses in Britain and Italy; mutinies in the fleet and army in France, as well as among some British military units refusing to intervene against Soviet Russia" ('1919: foundation of the Communist International', International Review 57).

The Communist International was formed in order to provide a clear political orientation to this massive upsurge of the class struggle, to point the way to the world-wide conquest of power by the working class. At this point in history, it was a very different organisation from what it later became with the isolation, degeneration and defeat of the revolution in Russia – a simple agency for the foreign policy of a Russian state in the process of integrating itself into the global imperialist system. Revolutionaries today must therefore recognise that the history of the CI is a vital part of their own history. But we are also faced with the task of understanding the weaknesses and failures of the International in order to construct the future world party on the clearest possible programmatic and organisational principles.

The ICC will outline its approach to this question, with the emphasis on developing a wide-ranging and in-depth discussion among everyone who attends.

Reply to the CWO on the question of the left fractions

In November 2018 the two main groups of the communist left in Britain, the ICC and the Communist Workers Organisation¹, held meetings in London on the centenary of the German revolution. From both meetings it was evident that there is fundamental agreement on a number of key points arising from this experience:

- The immense historical significance of the German revolution as a turning point in the world revolution which had begun in Russia, and the tragic consequences of its defeat: the isolation and degeneration of the revolution in Russia and the global triumph of the counter-revolution in its fascist, Stalinist and democratic forms, which paved the way to the Second World War;

- The irreversible treason of those parts of social democracy which rallied to the war effort of the ruling class, and then played a central role in the sabotage and repression of the revolution that arose in reaction to the carnage. In any future revolution, it will be the left factions of the bourgeoisie, the true heirs of Noske, Scheidemann and other bloodhounds of the counter-revolution, who will be used by capital as their last line of defence against the proletariat;

- The crucial importance of the struggle for a communist party to oppose the lies of the agents of the bourgeoisie and to put forward a clear and coherent revolutionary alternative. Such a party can only be centralised on a world scale since the revolution itself can only succeed on the world-wide arena. As the CWO put it in their article “The significance of the German revolution: Reflections on the CWO/ICT public meeting in London , November 17 2018”², “without a revolutionary working class nucleus around which a party can be built there is not the slightest possibility of a successful outcome of our struggle”.

And yet there were also definite disagreements between our two organisations, which emerged at the CWO meeting and were further debated at the ICC meeting the following week, which was attended by a member of the CWO³. These disagreements are raised in the CWO article just mentioned:

“Given the above scenario it was therefore surprising that a member of the Internationalist Communist Current (the only other organisation present in the meeting), and whose other comrades made positive contributions to the discussion, should pose the question that August 1914 was too early for the Internationale group to split from German Social Democracy. He surprisingly argued that August 1914 was not a definitive betrayal of the international workers’ movement.

He went to say that as the ICC and ICT both came from the tradition of the Italian Communist

Left that we should recognise that this was just like the members of the Communist Party of Italy (PCd’I) who went into exile in the 1920s. They had seen the party they founded taken over by the ‘centrists’ like Gramsci and Togliatti, with the support of the Communist International (even though the Left still had the support of the majority of the PCd’I). However as they had no clear evidence that this meant that the Third International had finally and irrevocably broken with the international revolution (and given the abrupt changes of policy of the Comintern this was a period of great confusion) they decided that they would form themselves into a ‘fraction’. The aim of the Fraction was either to persuade the Comintern to stick to revolutionary internationalism or, if that failed and the International did something which definitely showed that it had betrayed the working class, then the fraction should form the nucleus of a new party. In actual fact the Fraction did decide in 1935 that the Comintern had gone over to the other side of the class barricades (with the adoption of the Popular Front). However it was then divided between the followers of Vercesi, who now argued that the party could only be formed in conditions when it could win a mass following (similar to Luxemburg), and those who wanted to begin to build it in the 1930s. The issue was never resolved and the Fraction collapsed in 1939.

We replied that the two cases of Germany in 1914 and the Italian comrades in the 1920s were not the same. As the foregoing analysis shows, the SPD’s vote for war credits was a clear and obvious betrayal of the working class cause. And this judgement is not the product of hindsight. There were other socialists at the time (like Lenin, but not just him) who loudly said so. The need was for a new banner around which the revolutionary working class could rally. The sooner that banner was raised the quicker the revolutionaries could get to work to build for the movement which would break out, sooner or later, against the war. And the fact that Germany was a federal state saturated in localism made this task all the more urgent”.

The real tasks of a revolutionary fraction

We have quoted the CWO at length because we want to make sure our response deals accurately with their views. But in doing so, we will have to take up some important inaccuracies in the CWO’s account, regarding both certain historical elements and our own understanding of them.

To begin with, it is misleading to say that, for the ICC, “August 1914 was not a definitive betrayal of the international workers’ movement”. On the contrary: the capitulation of the majority social democrats, inside and outside parliament, was indeed a definite betrayal of everything that international social democracy had stood for and had voted on at major international congresses. It confirmed that the opportunist right wing of social democracy, against which militants like Luxemburg had been waging a determined struggle since before the end of the 19th century, had crossed the line into the enemy camp – a step from which there could be no turning back.

Our point however was that the betrayal of a substantial part of the organisation did not yet signify that the entire party had been integrated into the capitalist state; that precisely because - contrary to what some anarchists claim – social democracy had not been bourgeois from the beginning, the treason of 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, bounded by centrist and pacifist conceptions, but still expressing at root a proletarian internationalist reaction against war. The clearest, most determined and most famous amongst them were the Spartacists. And as long as this battle continued, as long as the various oppositions to the new official line could still operate within the party, the question of the fraction, of an organised, internal fight for the “soul” of the party - until either the purging of the traitors or the expulsion of the internationalists - was still entirely relevant⁴.

4. See in particular the articles on the German revolution in *International Review* 81,82 and 85:

In an internal discussion text on the nature of centrism, which we published in 2015, our comrade Marc Chirik gave a whole number of examples of the oppositional movement within the SPD after August 1914, both within parliament and in the party as a whole. The most determined expression of this reaction was provided by the group around Luxemburg and Liebknecht, who did not wait for the class to mobilise in massive numbers, but from the first day of the war began to organise their resistance in what later became the Spartakusbund and tried to regroup internationalist forces within the party around the slogan “don’t leave the party in the hands of the traitors”. Not long after this there was the decision of numerous deputies not to vote for further war credits; the resolutions from many local branches of the SPD that the leadership abandon the policy of the Union Sacrée; the formation of the “social democratic working collective” that would constitute the nucleus of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, the USPD; the publishing of leaflets and manifestos, and the calling of demonstrations against the war and in solidarity with Karl Liebknecht for his intransigent opposition to the militarism of the ruling class. For Marc this was a confirmation that

“what is not true even for the life of individual human beings is a total absurdity at the level of an historic movement such as that of the proletariat. Here the passage from life to death is not measured in seconds or even minutes but in years. The moment when a workers’ party signs its own death certificate and its actual, definitive death, are not the same thing. This is perhaps difficult to understand for a radical phraseologist, but it is quite understandable for a marxist who doesn’t have the habit of deserting a ship like a rat when it begins to take in water. Revolutionaries know the historical meaning of an organisation which the class has given birth to, and as long as it still contains a breath of life they fight in order to save it, to hold onto it for the class”⁵.

Neither is it true that the situation of the German revolutionaries in 1914 was fundamentally different from the comrades of the Italian left who decided to form a fraction to fight against the degeneration of the Communist Party of Italy in the 1920s. On the contrary: in both cases, you have a party that is being increasingly dominated by an openly bourgeois faction (social chauvinists in the SPD, Stalinists in the CP), and an opposition divided into a vacillating centre and a revolutionary left, which has rightly decided that, even if the tide is turning against the class, it remains an elementary duty to fight as long as possible for the real programme and traditions of the party as long as there is any proletarian life left in it. In contrast, the method of the CWO in describing the situation of the SPD in 1914 bears a curious resemblance to the old (essentially councilist) CWO position about the Bolsheviks and the Communist parties – that they were already totally bourgeois in 1921 and anyone who thought otherwise was basically an apologist for their subsequent crimes.

We could also take up the extremely simplistic presentation of the history of the debates within the Italian fraction up to 1939, but it would be better to come back to that in a separate article, since the CWO has recently republished an article by *Battaglia Comunista*⁶ on the question of fraction and party, with a long introduction by the CWO which voices many of their criticism of the ICC, not only on the question of the fraction and the party but also on our analysis of the world situation⁷. But one of the key points that emerge from both the *BC* article and the new introduction is the idea that a fraction is basically just a discussion circle which has little interest in intervening in the class struggle: as they put it at the end of the article on the public meeting, “*This is not a*

5. <http://en.internationalism.org/international-review/201508/13354/zimmerwald-and-centrist-currents-political-organisations-proletari>

6. Publication of the Internationalist Communist Party, the Italian affiliate of the ICT

7. In the meantime comrades can refer to a series of articles which we have published criticising the views of *Battaglia* and the CWO on the question of the fraction: see *International Reviews* 59, 61, 64, 65 (<http://en.internationalism.org/series/2042>.)

time for fractions or discussion circles. It is time to form nuclei of revolutionaries everywhere and for them to converge in the creation of an international and internationalist revolutionary party 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 degeneration accelerated dramatically towards a final point of rupture after the watershed of August 1914, then fraction work is clearly something very different from a retreat into academic debate 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 industrial centres) 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 opposition from the SPD. This decision was taken, as Liebknecht put it, “in order to drive it forward, to have a platform for our position, to be able to reach thousands of elements.” As Marc comments in his text: “It is more than doubtful if this strategy was valid at this moment, but one thing is clear: if such a question was posed for Luxemburg and Liebknecht, then it was because they rightly considered the USPD to be a centrist movement and not a party of the bourgeoisie”. In sum, the fraction work of the Spartacists continued whether inside or outside a larger party, as an independent force seeking to create the conditions for a new party purged of both bourgeois and centrist elements – just as it continued for the Italian left in the late 20s and 30s after their expulsion from the party and even after their recognition that the CPs had passed over to the enemy.

Thus a part of the CWO’s criticism of the Spartacists for staying too long in the old party is founded on this misconception of the role of a fraction as a discussion circle whose activity is in some sense opposed to the formation of revolutionary nuclei who prepare the ground for the future world party. On the contrary: that was precisely the concept of the fraction as elaborated by the Italian left. The difference lies elsewhere: in the recognition (shared by both Luxemburg and the Italian left) that the constitution of a new international party was not the product of the will of revolutionaries alone, but was dependent on a much wider and deeper process of maturation in the class.

Bolsheviks and Spartacists

The CWO presentation at the meeting and the subsequent article lays great stress on the contrast between the Spartacists and the Bolsheviks:

“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 importantly, embedded in the wider 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 ‘soviet power’ (based on the memory of 1905) but by the summer of 1917 it was clear that only one party supported ‘all power to the soviets’ and this party in most estimates now 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 much more rigorous position than that of the Spartacists: they, along with the German “left radicals”, raised the slogan “turn the imperialist war into a civil war”, whereas the Spartacist delegation showed a tendency to make concessions to pacifism. In their actual practise in a revolutionary situation, the Bolsheviks were able to analyse the balance of class forces with great lucidity and

The coming elections in Israel: a class perspective

At the end of December 2018, the Israeli novelist Amos Oz died at the age of 79. As well as being a distinguished writer of novels that chronicled the troubled history of the modern Israeli state, he was also a consistent critic of its increasingly militarist policies. In 1967, amid the euphoria of victory in the Six Day War, Oz was one of the few who warned of the morally corrupting influence that the occupation would bring to Israeli society. He advocated an immediate end to the occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. This view might have seemed radical at the time, but it was not long before it entered the mainstream, being at the heart of the Camp David accords in 2000.

In the era of unrestrained populism, however, even this moderate proposal seems utterly utopian. The right wing Netanyahu government in Israel, which has done all it can to scupper any progress towards the formation of a Palestinian state, is facing increasing pressure from those even further to the right who openly demand a “Greater Israel” - a one state solution which would certainly involve the mass deportation of Palestinian Arabs. Meanwhile the Palestinian national movement is increasingly dominated by Islamist factions who will settle for nothing less than the military destruction of the Zionist state, a solution which would no doubt demand another mass deportation - that of Israeli Jews.

In this increasingly poisonous atmosphere, we can only welcome the appearance of an article

which is one of the rare expressions of a genuinely internationalist standpoint emanating from inside Israel. The author of the article takes up the marxist position that all national struggles and slogans in the epoch of capitalist decline have become reactionary, and does not hesitate to argue that the only way out of the trap created by imperialism in Israel-Palestine is the unification of Israeli and Palestinian workers on a class basis, leading towards a proletarian revolution against all bourgeois states.

The comrade quite rightly calls for the formation of a revolutionary party which would stand for this perspective. We would argue that this is only possible as part of an international development in which the working class, above all in the main centres of world capital, is able to re-appropriate its historical project of communism. By the same token, it is more than probable that any durable unity between Israeli and Palestinian workers will only be possible as part of a world-wide revival of class struggle, of a movement which is able to push back the waves of nationalism and xenophobia that have been growing in strength everywhere in recent years, but which because of its particular history exert an added force in Israel-Palestine.

Nevertheless, the appearance of even a tiny minority advocating a proletarian alternative in the Middle East is a vitally important link to this revolutionary future, which is still possible and more than ever necessary. ICC

The early general elections in Israel, to be held in April 2019, will be marked by the instability of the Zionist state. The decision made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to call for early elections represents the dead- end in which the government in Tel Aviv is facing. Besides 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 economic terms, the Israeli working class feels an awful deterioration in terms of its living conditions as well as its ability to continue paying the price for decades of military occupation. The healthcare and education system are underfunded, the costs of consumer goods and services are rising, and many layers among the impoverished

workers of the country feel incapable of coping with their poor economic situation. Thus, 20 percent of the Israelis live in poverty and the country is one of the most unequal societies in the West.

In political terms, Israel is challenged by the Palestinian armed factions in the West Bank and Gaza that resist the Israeli occupation forces. Its Southern border is unstable due to continued attempts of the Hamas Islamic militants to advance armed resistance near the separation fence; the Islamic 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 aggres-

sive policies on its borders in order to bring down the Islamists in Gaza (the enclave faces a terrible humanitarian situation due to the Israeli blockade) and drive the Iranian militias out of Syria (it fears that the latter might aid Hezbollah in a future war).

This situation of the Israeli regime indicates its instability and ongoing crisis. Being an Apartheid state, Israel seeks to maintain a condition in which the working class will pay the price for the occupation and the country’s military aggressiveness, and at the same time will accept the capitalist way through which the government runs the economy. The Israeli ruling class, which fights the nationalist Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and is aided by right-populist and fascist leaders abroad, oppresses the masses in order to keep the Zionist colonization project alive. There are many Israeli workers and youth that are not ready anymore to accept the Israeli condition of national oppression and cruel capitalist exploitation. Some of them are already mobilized by the Israeli opposition parties against the Netanyahu government although these parties serve the Israeli bourgeois elite.

The lack of political alternative

The Israeli political system is fragmented and fragile. The political right parties are traditionally organized around the Likud party led by Prime Minister Netanyahu. However, even among the right parties that rule the country there are splits and crises. While the biggest political faction in the Knesset is the Likud, an ultra-chauvinist and neo-liberal formation that was established in 1973, there are other parties, smaller than the Likud, whose policies are far more nationalist and chauvinist. These parties carry forward policies that aim to form the Greater Israel from which the Palestinians will be driven out. The only ‘centrist’ political faction that joined the Netanyahu coalition was formed by some former Likud members. However, this faction collaborated with Netanyahu and the political right in pushing the country’s economy to the capitalist extreme.

The parties that constitute the opposition to Netanyahu are not homogeneous in terms of politics and ideology. Among them there are the Labour party whose opportunistic and social-chauvinist politics are distrusted by most of the Israelis and the small social-democratic and Zionist party



Meretz whose political electorate is narrow. The Palestinians in Israel are represented in a joint list of nationalist political parties in which the Stalinist Communist Party of Israel plays a central role. The problem of this Left-Center mishmash block is not just its heterogeneity in political terms but also consists in the fact that none of them propose a way forward to the Israeli and Arab working class. Neither the pseudo-Left Zionist factions nor the anti-Zionist Arab and Communist parties propose a way out of decades of occupation, brutal capitalism, austerity and ongoing social crises.

This situation is regrettable but understandable as Israel as a settler-state continues to colonize the 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 pseudo-left carries forward the 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 poisonous nationalism in order to split the working class along national lines. The pseudo-left suggests nothing but a solution based on the imperialist 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.

Continued on page 2

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 decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. 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 or the destruction of humanity.
- * 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 these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.
- * The statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ were just a particularly brutal 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 respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.
- * All the nationalist ideologies - ‘national independence’, ‘the right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.
- * 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.
- * All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-‘Communists’), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘anti-fascist fronts’ and ‘united fronts’, which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.
- * 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 ‘rank 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 their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.
- * Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it’s not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.
- * The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers’ councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.
- * The communist transformation of society by the workers’ councils does not mean ‘self-management’ or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.
- * The revolutionary political organisation constitutes 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.
- OUR 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 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 to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.
- OUR ORIGINS**
- The positions and activity of revolutionary 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 three Internationals (the *International Workingmen’s Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1884-1914, 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*.