



world revolution

workers of the world, unite!

Biden presidency: The US and world capitalism on the road to nowhere

The Trump administration had already caused a series of humiliating but lethal fiascos for the US bourgeoisie – not least by actively worsening the Covid pandemic 2020 - but there was always hope among the saner factions of the American ruling class that having an incompetent narcissist in supreme power was only a passing nightmare, from which they would soon awake. But the electoral victory of the Democratic Party wasn't the landslide that was hoped for – either for the new administration of Joe Biden or for the new Congress.

Worse still, a televised riot took place in the Capitol, the sacred venue of US democracy, incited by the outgoing head of state who rejected the official, validated, results of the presidential election! A mob attempted to violently prevent the democratic succession, encouraged by the sitting president himself – as in a banana republic as George W Bush recognised. Truly it is a politically defining moment in the decomposition of world capitalism. The populist self-harming of the UK through Brexit may look merely absurd to other countries, because Britain is a secondary power, but the threat of instability represented by the insurrection on Capitol Hill of the US has caused shock and fear throughout the international bourgeoisie.

The subsequent attempt to impeach Trump for a second time may well fail again, and in any case it will galvanise the millions of his supporters in the population, including a large part of the Republican party.

The inauguration of the new President on January 20th, usually an occasion for a show of national unity and reconciliation, won't be: Trump will not attend, contrary to the custom with outgoing presidents, and Washington DC will be under military lockdown to prevent further armed resistance from Trump supporters. The perspective then is not the smooth, long term re-establishment of traditional democratic order and ideology by a Biden administration, but an accentuation - of an increasingly violent nature – of the divisions between classical bourgeois democracy and populism, the latter not disappearing with the end of the Trump regime.

The US – from the world's biggest superpower to the epicentre of decomposition

Since 1945 US democracy has been the flagship of world capitalism. Having played a decisive role



In preparation for the inauguration, Washington is under military occupation

in the Allied victory in World War II, and making a major contribution to reducing Europe and Japan to ruins, it was then able to drag the world out of the rubble and reconstruct it in its own image during the Cold War. In 1989, with the defeat and disintegration of the rival totalitarian Russian bloc, the US seemed to be at the apex of its global dominance and prestige. George Bush Snr announced the coming of a New World Order after the collapse of the Russian bloc in 1989. Washington thought it could maintain its supremacy by preventing any new power emerging as a serious contender for its world leadership. But instead, the assertion of its military superiority has accelerated a world disorder with a series of pyrrhic victories (Kuwait, the Balkans in the 1990s) and expensive foreign policy failures in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. The US has increasingly undermined the alliances on which its former world leadership rested and this has encouraged other powers to act on their own account.

Moreover US power and wealth has been unable to attenuate the increasing convulsions of the world economy: the spark of the 2008 crisis emanated from Wall Street and engulfed the US and the world in the most serious downturn since the open crisis re-emerged in 1967.

The social and political consequences of these

US reverses, and the absence of alternatives, is that the divisions and disarray in the bourgeois state, and in the population generally, has been increased, leading to the growing discredit of the established political norms of the US democratic political system.

The previous presidencies of Bush and Obama failed to forge a lasting consensus for the traditional democratic order among the population as a whole. Trump's 'solution' to this problem was not to resolve this disunity but to accentuate it even more with a raucous and incoherent policy of vandalism that further shredded the political consensus domestically and ripped up military and economic agreements with its former allies on the world stage. All this was done under the banner of 'America First' - but in reality it served to increase the USA's loss of status.

In a word, the ongoing political crisis of US democracy, symbolised by the storming of the Capitol, complements the chaotic and self-destructive consequences of US imperialist policy and makes it clearer that the still-strongest world power is at the centre of, and the major player in, the decomposition of world capitalism at all levels.

China can't fill the vacuum

China, despite its increasing economic and military power, won't be able to fill the vacuum of world leadership created by the disorientation of the US. Not least because the latter is still capable of and determined to prevent the growth of Chinese influence as a major objective with or without Trump. For example one of the plans of the Biden Administration will be to step up this anti-China policy with the formation of a D10, an alliance of the democratic powers (the G7 plus South Korea, India, and Australia). The role this will play in the worsening of imperialist tensions need hardly be explained.

But these tensions cannot be channelled into the formation of new blocs for obvious reasons. The worsening decomposition of capitalism makes the possibility of a generalised world war increasingly unlikely.

The dangers for the working class

In 1989 we predicted that the new period of the decomposition of capitalism would bring increased difficulties for the proletariat.

The recent events in the US vindicate this prediction again.

The most important of these in relation to the

present US situation is the danger that sections of the working class will be mobilised behind the increasingly violent contests of the opposing factions of the bourgeoisie, ie, not just on the electoral terrain but in the streets. Parts of the working class can be misled into choosing between populism and the defence of democracy, the two false alternatives offered by capitalist exploitation.

Connected to this is the fact that in the present situation other layers of the non-exploiting population are increasingly propelled into political action by a whole series of factors: the effects of the economic crisis, the worsening of the ecological catastrophe, the strengthening of state repression and its racist nature, which leads them to act as a conduit for bourgeois campaigns such as the Black Lives Matter movement, or as a medium for inter-classist struggles.

Nevertheless the working class internationally in the period of decomposition has not been defeated as in the manner of the 1930s. Its reserves of combativity remain intact and the further economic attacks on its living standards that are coming - which will include the bill for the economic damage done by the Covid pandemic - will oblige the proletariat to respond on its class terrain.

The challenge for revolutionary organisations

The revolutionary organisation has a limited but very important role to play in the current situation because, while it has little influence yet, and even for a lengthy period to come, the situation of the working class as a whole is nevertheless bringing

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British capitalism clobbered by Covid and Brexit

World-wide there have more than 100 million cases of Covid-19, with a death toll of at least 2 million and still rising. This is the impact of the pandemic at the human level, with overwhelmed hospitals, lives on hold during lockdown, people in isolation and greater poverty, the whole uncertainty of the situation, even with the arrival of the vaccines, and the unpredictability and incompetence of many governments’ policies.

For capitalism the effect of the health crisis is keenly felt at the level of the economy. The IMF has estimated that the global economy shrank by 4.4% in 2020 and that the decline was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s. While this is a blow for capitalism internationally, it has also had a massive effect on the working class. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has estimated that workers world-wide have lost as much as £2.7 trillion in earnings.

While every major country has been affected, the crisis has not had a uniform impact. The UK for example, with more than 100,000 deaths, has one of the highest coronavirus death rates in the world and, throughout 2020, the shadow of Brexit hung over the economy, with negotiations continuing for months until the British bourgeoisie finally broke the “shackles” of the EU at the start of 2021. The combination of pandemic and Brexit is hitting a country that already had one of the weakest recoveries from the 2008 financial crisis.

Recession, deficit and unemployment.

Measured by the fluctuations of GDP the British economy is probably already in a double-dip recession, its first since the 1970s. In the second quarter of the current financial year British GDP fell 19%, the biggest fall in history. Even after some months of growth it is currently estimated that the economy is still 8.5% below its pre-pandemic level. The IMF estimates a 10% contraction in the UK economy for last year, the largest decline of any of the G7. Whatever the final measure, it’s not been since the Great Frost of 1709, when Britain’s GDP dropped by 13% (and did not fully recover for another 10 years) that the economy has experienced anything similar.

As for government debt, the figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that UK government borrowing was the highest ever for December as spending went up in response to the coronavirus and a fall in tax receipts. *“Borrowing reached £34.1bn last month, about £28bn more than the same month a year ago. The increase took the government’s budget deficit ... to nearly £271bn for the first nine months of the financial year, a rise of more than £212bn compared with the same period last year. The Office for Budget Responsibility ... has estimated borrowing will hit £394bn by the end of the financial year in March, which would be the highest peacetime deficit in history. Borrowing is already higher than during the worst of the 2008 financial crisis.... December’s borrowing pushed the national debt – the sum total of every deficit – to £2.1tn at the end of December, or about 99.4% of gross domestic product (GDP), the highest debt ratio since 1962.”* (Guardian 22/1/21).

In 2019, the IMF already pointed out that the level of corporate debt in the UK was so high that almost 40% of it would not be able to survive in the event of a recession just half as deep as 2007-2008. During this Covid-19 crisis hospitality has been particularly badly affected and there are warnings that tens of thousands of pubs, restaurants, bars and hotels could disappear. Apart from furlough the government has adopted various measures and implemented various schemes to keep businesses afloat. Like any other state capitalist measures (generally supported by the left and leftists as “socialist”), sooner or later someone will have to pay, and that means the working class in the first place. If for example, Covid-19 rescue schemes are wound up it could mean that some 1.8 million firms in the UK are at risk of insolvency, 336,000 of them at high risk of going bust. Whenever furlough is removed there is no saying which industries will be capable of reviving.

Before the government’s U-turn in December to

extend furlough there were a record number of redundancies, with around 370.000 people made redundant in the period August-October 2020 alone. Predictions of hundreds of thousands of jobs being at risk with the end of furlough are common.

Since November 2020 the number of jobs on furlough has doubled to about 5 million. These 5 million are not currently employed. The predictions for the period after the furlough scheme is wound down is that unemployment will peak at 7.5%, 2.6 million people. In February 2020, before the advent of the pandemic, the official unemployment figure was 4%. According these official figures the unemployment rate rose to 5% in the three months to the end of November 2020, representing more than 1.7 million people –the highest level since August 2016. But the real figures for unemployment are much higher than the official figures indicate. At least 300,000 out-of-work people are estimated not to appear in the figures (even though other evidence points to their existence), and many have given up claiming to be unemployed because of discouragement. Of those not benefitting from the furlough scheme millions are struggling to get by on Universal Credit. So, when you read that unemployment in the UK has reached the highest level for more than four years, it’s certainly much higher.

Brexit means more taxes and barriers to trade

Even before the final deal was concluded between Britain and the EU in December the thousands of lorries stranded in Kent were a telling foretaste that Brexit would not mean frictionless

trade. As 2021 began businesses were reporting hold-ups to supplies and customers reported extra customs duties, Value Added Tax (VAT) and other additional charges on things they had bought from within the EU. There might initially be a no-tariff agreement with the EU but there are significant non-tariff barriers to trade with the EU. The leader of the Liberal Democrats said *“This is the only trade deal in history that erects trade barriers, not remove them. It leaves Britain with a trade border both in the North Sea/English Channel and the Irish Sea. It means an end to frictionless trade with the EU and requires a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy and numerous joint committees to oversee its functioning”*. When the deal was done there were hardly any measures agreed to reduce the need for customs checks and control.

On top of that, the agreed deal does not include services, which account for 80% of the UK economy, with 12% going to the EU. All we know is that negotiations will continue. This shows that the government’s celebration of a ‘great’ deal is delusional as none of the outstanding problems will be easily managed and resolved in the short term.

According to the analysis of Moody’s (the credit ratings agency), the Christmas Eve deal is skewed in the EU’s favour.

The British government’s estimate suggests that, with the agreed deal between the EU and the UK, the output will only be 5% lower in 15 years. Economists at Citigroup however think that the UK economy will produce 2% to 2.5% less in 2021 than if it hadn’t left the EU and if had extended its links with the EU. In general, they

Labour divisions underline bourgeoisie’s growing loss of control

The British Conservative government’s disastrously incompetent handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, its incoherent undertaking of the Brexit negotiations, its U-turns over the health crisis, the economic crisis and growing conflicts with the EU, have not been met with an oppositional onslaught by the Labour Party. The British bourgeoisie has been losing control of its political apparatus and one of Labour’s historic roles is to pose as an alternative to a government that has pursued populist policies that have undermined the effective functioning of British state capitalism. It has largely failed to take up the task.

Certainly, Starmer has declared that Labour is a pro-American party, its foreign affairs spokesperson has said that President Biden is an inspiration, and the shadow chancellor, Anneliese Dodds, has made a major speech in which she contrasted at length Labour’s commitment to being a responsible government, with sensible fiscal policies, and the importance of establishing a “resilient” economy, as opposed to the irresponsibility of the Tories. However, the divisions within Labour’s ranks have grown with a wave of expulsions and suspensions as the pro- and anti-Corbyn factions come into conflict.

When Labour massively lost the 2019 election it started an inquest into the reasons for the defeat, looking for someone to blame. Its incoherence over Brexit, the row over anti-Semitism, and its neglect of traditionally Labour-voting areas were all cited. It wasn’t until April that it decided to replace Corbyn by Starmer. One of his earliest attempts to stamp his authority on the party came with the sacking of Rebecca Long-Bailey for negative remarks she had made about the Israeli state. Far from trying to avoid conflict over the question of anti-Semitism, Starmer accepted the report of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which investigated anti-Semitism in the party, in its entirety, and made it clear that no criticisms of its conclusions would be allowed. Corbyn was suspended from the party for expressing reservations. He has been reinstated to the party, but not to the parliamentary fraction. The Labour Party leadership then banned local parties from passing any motions of solidarity with Corbyn, although this has not stopped the protests about the treat-

ment of the ex-leader and those who have been expelled. Corbyn is now going to establish a Project for Peace and Justice, a faction that will defend the policies that Starmer is trying to distance himself from. The divisions within the Labour Party mirror the divisions throughout the British bourgeoisie. Similarly, with the unions, some have rallied to Starmer, and some have remained loyal to Corbyn.

Johnson won the 2019 election with his promise to Get Brexit Done. In the year that followed, the negotiations with the EU stumbled on with the prospect of no deal resulting. After many Tory concessions, and the sacking of Dominic Cummings, who was considered to be an obstacle to an agreement, a deal was finally agreed on Christmas Eve. When it came to a parliamentary vote Starmer insisted that Labour MPs support the deal, while voicing some limited criticisms. 36 Labour MPs abstained and one voted against. Because of the feebleness of the opposition, it was no surprise that, as the first opinion polls of 2021 appeared, that Labour and the Tories were neck and neck, despite a year of government incompetence, U-turns and irresponsibility.

At a time when social decomposition is accelerating and as an expression of the bourgeoisie’s loss of control of its political apparatus, Labour is riven with divisions and is not presenting itself as a coherent opposition, despite Starmer’s attempts to appear as a figure of sanity against the chaos of Johnson’s government. As the Labour purges continue, groups like the Socialist Workers Party are saying that people should leave Labour, while other groups, embedded in the party, continue their perpetual work to stop Labour’s ‘drift to the right’.

Labour, once a party of the working class, changed camp and performed an important role for British capitalism during the First World War when it supported British imperialism and was part of the recruitment drive to enlist workers for the slaughter. When the Labour Party adopted its constitution in 1918, its famous Clause IV confirmed its commitment to the management of British state capitalism. Whether in government or opposition and regardless of whether its leader has come from right or left of the party, it has

expected the UK to be at least in a better position than it would have been under a ‘hard Brexit’ - in which the UK and EU would have used World Trade Organisation rules for trade. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on its turn has offered a more pessimistic outlook. It predicts that the British economy will grow by 3.5% less than if Britain had stayed in the EU.

One thing that optimistic forecasters are agreed upon is the idea that the UK economy will begin to recover once the vaccines are widely available. But with trade becoming costlier and tied up in “red tape”, with immigration decreasing, the impact of Brexit will have deep and prolonged effects and will reveal all the weaknesses of British capitalism. Nicholas Bloom, an economist at Stanford, said *“Brexit is like death by a thousand cuts.”* In comparison *“Covid is like being hit three times by a baseball bat. In the long run Brexit is seen as far worse.”*

The economic consequences of the pandemic are far-reaching, but the negative effects of Brexit will continue for the foreseeable future. Together they pose enormous problems for the bourgeoisie and the working class. Both are products of the period of decomposition, which is not a positive factor for either class. In the future we can expect the ruling class to mount an attack on the living conditions of the exploited class. A unified, conscious struggle in response, based around immediate defensive demands but opening up a perspective beyond them, is the only positive prospect for the working class. **Car 28/1/21**

continued to play an essential role in the British bourgeoisie’s political apparatus. In opposition it can pose as an alternative to the government, in government it pursues policies appropriate to the needs of capitalism. When the Labour Party is divided, the working class has no interest in supporting it, and revolutionaries warn workers not to support any of the squabbling factions. Instead, it is necessary to show how Labour acts against the interests of the working class and expose its role in the service of capital.

Back in the 1970s and 80s the bourgeoisie was able to deploy its parties in response to, or in anticipation of the struggles of the working class. With the decomposition of capitalism over the last 30 years, there has been a strong tendency for capital to lose control of its political machinery. In recent years, across Europe, as an expression of this tendency, we have seen many social democratic parties in decline and/or disarray. In Britain we are not only seeing the chaotic approach of the government but also a social democratic opposition which, because of its divisions, is having the greatest difficulty in fulfilling the role required of it by capital. **Car 28/1/21**

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as a panacea for the health crisis; above all it is presented to us by the ruling class today as the only means of beating the economic crisis and the accelerating deterioration of living conditions which everywhere are being aggravated. This campaign is trying to mask the impasse, the insurmountable contradictions, engendered by capitalist relations of production.

Because what is presently hitting humanity is not caused by bad luck but it is a product of a system at the end of its road whose decomposition threatens to drag us all down with it. Consequently, the negligence of the bourgeoisie is not the result of the incompetence of some leaders but of the incapacity of the dominant class to contain the effects of the decay of its system: this class can do nothing other than act in the defence of its own interests. And as long as such logic remains in place, humanity will not escape from the scourges that flow from it. **GD 6.1.21**

Anti-Covid vaccines: Health is just a commodity for capitalism

The article that follows was written before the current row between Britain and the EU over supplies of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. The EU, responding to AstraZeneca's delays in supplying the agreed quantities of its version of the vaccine, threatened to respond by restricting supplies of the Pfizer vaccine to the UK, by taking AstraZeneca to court, and by suspending its own rulings about trade with Northern Ireland. The British minister for vaccines, Nadhim Zahawi, hit back: "*Vaccine nationalism is the wrong way to go. No one is safe until we're all safe*".

Noble sentiments indeed. But as our article shows, "vaccine nationalism" is precisely the way that nations and companies are going because they cannot escape the laws of profitability and the sharpening tendency of "every man for himself" in international relations. Zahawi's own government is tireless in its rhetoric about safeguarding "the country" or "the British people" as if there could really be "Covid safety in a single country". The richer countries are racing ahead of the poorer countries in producing and distributing the vaccines among themselves. The pharmaceutical companies vie to be top dog on the vaccines market. Israel is hailed as a world leader in the number of citizens vaccinated, but accepts no legal responsibility for immunising the Palestinian non-citizens under its military occupation, while the Palestinian Authority insists on going its own way by ordering cheaper (and very poorly tested) Russian vaccines. No one is safe until we're all safe. But capitalism, a system which is genetically incapable of going beyond national competition, will never ensure that we can be kept safe from the succession of disasters it is visiting upon humanity.

When the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared in May 2020 that the vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 would be for the "world's public good", you could only believe that by clinging to illusions in the capacity of the capitalist world to play a positive role for humanity in the midst of an unprecedented world crisis. Similarly, calls for compulsory licensing² only show a naive utopianism.

In fact, there is nothing to lead one to think that the anti-Covid 19 vaccine would escape the laws of capitalism and their consequences: competition, races for markets, espionage, theft of technology, etc., even when it's a matter of saving millions of human lives. And for good reason, because the health crisis comes at a time when the world is prey to the decomposition of the capitalist system of production. The pandemic, while being the direct fruit of this process of decomposition, further contributes to its acceleration.

From the beginning of the sickness and the discovery of its infectious agent, a virus unknown up to now, the scientific community knew that only a vaccine could bring it under control. Elements of the pharmaceutical industry were happy to work in their own corners in the race to be the first to deliver the precious vaccine. But beyond the considerable commercial stakes for research laboratories and pharmaceutical groups, there was an evident political bonus for states able to access it.

Human health is a market...

From the first moments of the pandemic the war of vaccines began, just as it did in preceding epidemics or pandemics. There are numerous examples but we can cite two of them: Firstly AIDS.³ The battle began in the research for the agent responsible for this unknown illness. The teams of Luc Montagnier at the Pasteur institute were followed by those of Robert Gallo of the National

Cancer Institute in the United States. The driving force of these teams was evidently not to rapidly identify the agent in order to begin the fight against it, but to be the first to be able to claim property rights over it and take a step forward on future treatments and vaccines.

In January 1983, the French team won by a short head. But the war had only just begun and it really took off around the question of tests, where this time the Americans took their revenge. It was the Abbot Laboratory which positioned itself best in this promising market, potentially offering the possibility of providing billions of tests likely to be made around the world in a few years. The war of treatments then followed where the greatest contempt for human life was shown; France in particular was out for revenge after its defeat in the war of tests. As soon as the first hopes were raised around the drug Cyclosporine, the Health Minister at the time, Georgina Dufoix, publicly gave it the "French label", before seeing those hopes finally dashed by the first tests undertaken on the molecule. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Deputy General Secretary of Health announced the miracle solution of AZT while test results were still inconclusive.



These scandalous announcements incarnate the stark interests of these two competing states in addition to a total disinterest in the thousands of sick people who had put their hopes in a rapid treatment saving them from certain death. But each state only counted on the necessity to be the first in the race to lead the world.

The "blood contamination scandal" in France in the 1980's⁴ revealed that the state had sat on blood donor screenings of HIV and Hepatitis C for six months, while, as an American study showed, this technique was in place by late 1984. The "war of tests" and the obsession with budget cuts led to the maintenance of deliberately criminal practices of contaminated blood transfusions given to haemophiliacs and other patients in order to get rid of old stocks and make economies whatever the cost, provoking the death of thousands between 1984 and 1985.

Today, the war around the AIDS virus vaccine continues even if lack of profitability as a long-term treatment (lifelong in fact) dictates that research has slowed greatly under the impulse of austerity, leading states to scrape the bottom of the barrel by considerably reducing basic research budgets.

In 2019 in Africa, the situation was somewhat similar around the epidemic of the Ebola virus⁵ in a climate of accusations about the diversions of funds towards the Congolese leadership but also against the WHO regarding the choice of one vaccine over another. While the German laboratory, Merck, had proposed an efficient vaccine but in insufficient quantities, the American laboratory, Johnson & Johnson announced another, complementary to it but never tested on humans! The fight was on to introduce this newcomer with lobbying operations and other means of pressure.

The present situation goes along the same lines. While the grand speeches and announcements around international cooperation about creating a vaccine abound, while "good common sense" would have you think that the coming together of international forces of pharmaceutical research would bring about a more rapid and efficient result, reality is quite different. In November 2020

4. A scandal which affected at least tens of thousands of people in Canada, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Portugal, the USA and Britain where the state used the most Draconian measures in order to cover up its criminal responsibility.

5. See "RDC, the war of vaccines affects the fight against Ebola" on *lesoir.be*.

there were 259 proposed vaccines in the world, of which ten were in Phase 3 (the last phase before the drug is authorised prior to being put on the "market"). That's 259 teams each working in their own corner, keeping a wary eye out for the advances of others so as to not double up, and looking not for efficiency but for exclusivity of process. The first to make a move, Pfizer and BioNTech announced 90% efficiency for their vaccine. A few days later Russia announced an efficiency rate of... 92%. Moderna put its nose in front by announcing its vaccine's 94% efficiency. Never mind that, Pfizer declared that it had reviewed its calculations and announced a final efficiency rate of 95%! Who's the best? This cynical bidding-up, both chilling and appalling in the promotion and marketing of these products, while dozens of millions of victims' lives are at stake, sums up the deadly functioning of this rotten society.

... and an issue of war between states

Many denounce this race for the financial windfall that a future vaccine implies, but they are mistaken when they lay the blame at the feet of "Big Pharma", the few giant laboratories fighting each other over the health market. Also mistaken are



those that demand public authorities regulate the situation and "constrain" the industry to cooperate for the public good.

Because what is at stake here isn't the greed of some players but a logic which embraces the whole planet, all human activity: the logic of capitalism. Scientific research does not escape the laws of capitalism; it needs money to move forward and money only goes where profits can be expected: you only lend to the rich!

Should individual states bring in regulation in this world-wide free-for-all? But these same capitalist states are at the heart of such wrangles and are the first to direct research according to their own financial resources. In a world beset by imperialist rivalries, it is of course in the field of defense and armaments that research is the best funded. But the health sector is not exempt! After the September 11 attacks of 2001, the US authorities revised their strategies on vaccine research which up to then they had neglected, in order to finance research into the so-called "large-spectrum" vaccine capable of immunising against several viruses in the concern to combat a growing threat from bio-terrorism. In another vein, the very active Chinese health policy in Africa these last decades is animated solely by its imperialist interests⁶. Anything goes in getting a foothold and increasing its influence on the planet. China has been increasing its presence in Africa: investments, economic implantation, political and military support, "humanitarian" assistance and... health.

Today all states are behind their own laboratories and all are defending their own interests without the least concern for principles. With a constant contempt for the bloody consequences of the disease, states are fighting each other in order to get hold of the maximum number of vaccines, knowing that in this battle only the richest will do well out of it and that, consequently, the greater part of humanity will not have access to the vaccines, or very slowly at least. Last April, the COVAX platform was set-up, a multilateral platform dedicated to the purchase and distribution of future vaccines and promising equitable access for all. All state leaders have congratulated themselves over this cooperation. But, underhandedly, each of them has entered into bi-lateral agreements with laboratories in order to reserve their own doses. Whereas

6. China's health assistance to Africa: opportunism or altruism? Globalization and Health, Full Text (biomedcentral.com)

the industry aimed to produce four million doses from now to the end of 2021, the furtively made reservations amount to five billion, solely destined to a few countries: the United States, China, the European Union and some of the less wealthy countries trying to come out of their miserable lot, like Brazil for example.

Today only the British Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is available to COVAX, less costly than its competitors but whose proven efficiency up to now has not gone beyond 62%⁷. The poorest countries, notably lacking the necessary means for the conservation and transportation of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, will have to be content with what stocks Britain has left.

Capitalism's logic of death

In the meantime people die... and the bourgeoisie continues to be overwhelmed by events, continuing to react day-by-day, sometimes hour-by-hour with the same negligence, the same health and logistical shortages, the same irresponsibility it's shown with the two successive waves of the pandemic. At the very heart of the great industrial countries the vaccination campaign is severely hampered by logistical deficiencies in member countries of the EU, such as Germany where transportation and distribution of the vaccine has been disrupted in several towns following doubts about the temperature-controlled transport chain of thousands of doses that have been held up in Spain for example. In the United States, despite the impressive logistical mobilisation led by the army, "*There have been misfires*" according to the celebrated Dr. Fauci and only a little more than 4.2 million people have received the first dose of one of two vaccines authorised by the state (Pfizer and Moderna), far from the 20 million people vaccinated before the end of the year promised by Trump who left it up to the initiative of each state governor. And when the pandemic broke daily records for contamination and deaths in saturated hospitals⁸ (close to 21.5 million cases, more than 360,000 deaths to January 4 this year) those responsible for the programme, in order to increase the numbers involved in the campaign, raised the possibility of administering the vaccine in ... half doses!. The British decision to widen the gap between the administration of doses by some weeks is also quite irrational from an immunological point of view. Vaccination procedures are excessively slow and totally inadequate given the urgency and the crying needs created by an ever-mutating virus. In a caricature manner, France declared the last week of December to be "Operation Media" with televised vaccinations of some old ladies while dozens of millions of others waited until the end of January to receive their first injections, with unlikely excuses such as "it will take time to vaccinate the elderly". It is no secret in France that if some EHPAD (nursing homes) residents who were prioritised over health professionals, it is because that there weren't enough doses for the latter!

The latest "health scandals" only show, once again, the incapacity of capitalism to react otherwise than through "each for themselves", for the defence of its short-term interests, with unpreparedness and improvisation. In France this has ended up with a functioning that relies on the good will of pharmacies and doctors who are limiting logistical costs and setting up the strict minimum of super-freezers in hospital pharmacies and centralising transport in town pharmacies, who must organise themselves in order to then distribute the flasks in the establishments.

Under these conditions we are nowhere near the end of this health crisis. And after that, there will be others...

But the most fraudulent aspect of the campaign around vaccinations is that it is not just promoted

7. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)32661-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32661-1/fulltext). And see: "Covid-19: Why the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine authorised by the United Kingdom could change the deal".

8. In Los Angeles for example, the rationing of oxygen and beds in emergency departments is such that ambulances are asked to no longer transport some patients to hospital, i.e., those with cardiac arrest or those with a faint chance of survival.

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USA: the struggle of the workers’ movement against slavery and racism (Part 1)

The campaign around “Black Lives Matter” (BLM) has led many people to look for references in the history of the struggle against the oppression of and violence against black people. Among the most well-known black activists are Marcus Garvey, Malcom X, and Martin Luther King. But communists do not base their political orientation on activists fighting for equal rights within capitalism. For communists the goal of the struggle lies beyond the limits of the present mode of production. The real abolition of all forms of racial oppression can only be achieved through the fight of the international working class for communism. The crucial question is: what does that mean concretely, except for the fact that communists reject the anti-racist campaigns, which look for answers in the framework of bourgeois politics?

In order to be able to respond to this question we have to base ourselves on the theoretical achievements of marxism. Therefore we must examine how the political vanguard pf the workers’ movement conducted the theoretical-political combat with regard to the “Negro question” in the history the U.S. Why the U.S.? Because in the U.S. from the first days the workers’ movement faced the biggest obstacles to the unification of its struggle because of the racial ideology which had systematically presented black people as inferior to white people.

Against this background the workers’ movement in the U.S., throughout its history, has been challenged with working out a clear position on this question, and with taking the necessary steps to integrating black workers into the struggle of the whole working class. The first step was made in the second half of the 19th century, beginning with the “American Workers League” (AWL); the second step was made after 1901 by the “Socialist Party of America” (SPA); and the third was made by the different communist organisations after the founding of the Third International, to begin with the “Communist Party of the USA” (CPUSA).

On the basis of a critical examination of these theoretical-political positions, acquired in the course of the history of the marxist movement in the U.S., this short series intends to make a thorough critique of the positions of more recent political expressions of the workers’ movement, in particular those of the Trotskyist Left Opposition of the 1930s.

The marxist position on slavery in the U.S.

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels emphasized that as long as oppression exists anywhere in the world, nobody will be free: “*Now-a-days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class (the bourgeoisie) without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction and class struggles.*” (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*)

The first proletarian organisation in the U.S.A. to recognise that the abolition of slavery was a precondition for the emancipation of wage labour was the “American Workers’ League” (AWL), founded in 1852. One of its most prominent members was Joseph Weydemeyer. At a meeting of the AWL, on 1 March 1854, his proposed resolution was passed with the following sentence: “*Whereas, this [Nebraska] bill authorizes the further extension of slavery; we have protested, do now protest and shall continue to protest most emphatically against both white and black slavery*” (Karl Obermann, *Joseph Weydemeyer, Pioneer of American Socialism*; <https://www.redstarpublishers.org/Weydemeyer.pdf>)

In 1863, one year before the founding of the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA), workers in Great Britain expressed their support for the abolition of the slavery, as they rallied in London and Lancashire and drafted letters and other declarations of support for the Union side in the American Civil War. Under the slogan “all for one, and one for all” they remained steadfast in their support for the struggle against the any government “founded on human slavery”. The meeting in London, which was attended by 3000 workers, passed a resolution declaring that “*the cause of labour and liberty is one all over the world*”.

Nearly twenty years after the publication of the

Communist Manifesto Marx repeated, in different words, his position on the impossibility of freedom for all if some are still oppressed. In his letter to François Lafargue he wrote that with regard to the “Negro question” “*Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded*”. (12 November 1866) This idea became the inspiration for one of the most famous ideas of the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) in the expression of its solidarity with the oppressed in the world, in particular with the black slaves in the New World: as long as the labour of the Negroes is so shamefully exploited, that of the whites will never be emancipated either.

Marx and Engels stressed the “revolutionising” influence of the American Civil War on the development of the workers’ movement in the US. Even if they did not characterize it as a revolutionary war, they believed that it really advanced the cause of the working class, and opened the perspective for a united struggle of the workers, black and white alike. “*In the States themselves, an independent working class movement, looked upon with an evil eye by your old parties and their professional politicians, has since that date sprung into life*”. (“IWMA: Address to the nation labor union of the United States”; May 12, 1869; <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/iwma/documents/1869/us-labor.htm>)

Chattel slavery in the “New World”

Slavery existed already in the U.S. before the first ship with black slaves arrived in 1619. Under British colonial rule “*so-called ‘persistent rogues’ were banished to ‘parts beyond the seas’, which meant that tens of thousands of men, women and children (...) were simply rounded up and shipped off to work in the tobacco fields of Virginia, where many were worked to death or tortured if they tried to escape. The largest single group were convicts; (...) who could be granted royal mercy in exchange for transportation to the colonies.*” (“Notes on the early class struggle in America - Part I”; <https://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201303/6529/notes-early-class-struggle-america-part-i>)

Just like the white slaves, the first black people to arrive in U.S. were indentured slaves - persons bound to an employer for a limited number of years. But in less than one hundred years after the arrival of the first 20 blacks, the British colonial rule inaugurated a barbaric system of chattel slavery. Chattel slaves were not thought of as people, but as objects, as property, like livestock. This system was much worse than the slave systems that normally existed in previous centuries. The final stage of the establishment of chattel slavery in all the British colonies was concluded in 1750.

Under the specific conditions of chattel slavery “*The methods the bourgeoisie used to control its growing black slave army [were] refined into a system of much greater and more sophisticated barbarity, specifically designed to ensure the slaves’ psychological destruction, demeaning, degrading and humiliating them in every way to prevent them from identifying with their own interests against their exploiters.*” (“Notes on the early class struggle in America - Part I”; <https://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201303/6529/notes-early-class-struggle-america-part-i>)

While chattel slavery was generalised in the course of the seventeenth century, Marx linked the introduction of chattel slavery to the development of the cotton industry on a massive scale. “*Whilst the cotton industry introduced child slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world.*” (Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, Chapter XXXI: “Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist”)

Chattel slavery was mainly introduced where the labour done was relatively simple, but extremely labour-intensive, requiring field hands to spend long hours bending over plants under the blazing hot sun. It was most common on plantations based on the large-scale growing of a single crop, like sugar and cotton, in which output was based on

economies of scale. Systems of labour, such as the gang system (continuous work at the same pace throughout the day), were to become prominent on large plantations where field hands were monitored and worked with factory-like precision.

But the economics of slavery could only exist for centuries by means of a whole culture of control with political, social, and ideological formulations to hold dominance over the enslaved blacks and to keep the indentured whites in line. To accomplish the subjugation of the slaves to the system of chattel slavery the slave-owner used “*the discipline of hard labor, the breakup of the slave family, the lulling effects of religion (...), the creation of disunity among slaves by separating them into field slaves and more privileged house slaves, and finally the power of law and the immediate power of the overseer to invoke whipping, burning, mutilation, and death.*” (Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*; Chapter 2: “Drawing the Color Line”; <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinncolorline.html>)

The ideological justification of black chattel slavery

Given the fact that black Africans were subjugated by white Europeans, the most obvious culture of control was along colour-oriented lines. “*Slavery could survive*”, wrote Winthrop Jordan, “*only if the Negro were a man set apart; he simply had to be different if slavery were to exist at all*”. (Cited by: Harold M. Baron; “The Demand for Black Labor: Historical Notes on the Political Economy of Racism”; <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:89216/pdf/>) “New World” slavery thus wedded skin colour to class in ways never seen before.

Slavery in the ancient and the early medieval world was not based on racial but on religious distinctions.

The shift from religion to colour as justification emerged in European thinking after 1450, beginning with the Spanish and Portuguese. As late as the 17th century, slavery in North America still did not automatically mean black slavery since there were also 100.000s indentured white slaves deported to the U.S. It was only in 1680s and 1690s that the British began to specify that Africans were doomed to a slave existence because of their colour. For this cause they no longer emphasised their religion and begin to call themselves white, emphasising division by colour.

To justify the forcible enslavement of Africans in the “New World”, racism - the ideology that marked people as inferior by observable differences such as skin colour - was fashioned. “*Pre-existing derogatory imagery of darkness, barbarism, and heathenism*”, wrote Winthrop Jordan, “*was adapted to formulate the psychology and doctrines of modern racism.*” (Cited by: Harold M. Baron, “The Demand for Black Labor, Historical Notes on the Political Economy of Racism”; <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:89216/pdf/>) And with one purpose only: the debasement and the dehumanisation of black people. Black people had to be seen as inferior to white people and so deserved to be slaves. The colour of their skin became a brand that kept them, and all of their children, enslaved for generations.

At the end of the 18th century, when voices for the abolition of slavery began to be raised, pseudo-scientific racism was even called upon to justify chattel slavery of black people. One of these voices was Thomas Jefferson, slave owner and the third president of the U.S. He called for science to determine the obvious “supremacy” of the white people, which was regarded as “*an extremely important stage in the evolution of scientific racism*”. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism_in_the_United_States) The stronger the forces voices for abolition, the more the Southern white ruling class deliberately fostered race hatred to prevent poor whites from identifying with black slaves.

The system of repression was thus not only physical, but also psychological. In the South, white wage slaves were pushed to see themselves as superior to chattel slaves while they were co-opted into policing the slave system. The black slaves on the other hand “*were impressed again and again with the idea of their own inferiority to ‘know their*

place’, to see blackness as a sign of subordination, to be awed by the power of the master; to merge their interest with the master’s, destroying their own individual needs”. (Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*; Chapter 2: “Drawing the Color Line”; <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinncolorline.html>)

The emotional and physical traumas of slavery were devastating. Generations of slavery had deprived the black people of their identity, their own language and their traditional way of life. Most often they didn’t know their date of birth and their own name. Instead they identified with and were given the name of their slave-owner. The consequences of this dehumanisation were not remedied overnight with the abolition of slavery on 1 January 1863. The legacy of race-based chattel slavery produced distinct trauma over many generations of black people in the U.S.

Segregation as a form of neo-slavery of the black people

Despite the victory of the Union over the Confederation of the South, the Civil War did not mean the end of the exploitation, oppression and terrorising of black people in the Southern States. For when slavery officially was abolished - by the Thirteenth Amendment of Lincoln - various forms of “neo-slavery” (“Slavery by Another Name”) and forced labour continued across the United States and its territories.



Colored National Labor Union Convention, 1869

One of these forms was convict labour, taking the place of slavery with shocking force. A new set of laws, called the Black Codes, made it possible to criminalise previously legal activity for African Americans, such as violating the prohibition of vagrancy. After being arrested, they were compelled to work without pay for the same white slave plantation owners, in the coalmines of Alabama, or in the famous “chain gangs” for the development of massive road projects. They were also forced to function as strike-breakers in the Alabama coal miners’ strike of 1894.

After the Civil War black people were subjected to what was known as the Jim Crow laws, a brutal system of segregation and discrimination. Under these laws, black people were still treated as second class citizens just as under the regime of “Apartheid” in South Africa. Whites could beat, rob, or even kill black people at will for minor infractions, which they actually did on a large scale. Under Jim Crow the reign of terror was firmly established with the widespread evolution of white supremacist militias, such as the KKK. The South became a prison-like landscape wherein surveillance, punishment, and policing forced the black body into a constant state of furtiveness and fugitivity.

“*The legal system of segregation protected and encouraged a parallel, supposedly ‘popular’ system (thanks mainly to the fanaticism of the white petty bourgeoisie) of aggression, collective killings, and systematic lynchings. The petty bourgeoisie, especially in the Southern States, but not only there, unleashed their destructive fury with metronome regularity to terrorise the proletarians of slave origin.*” (“Slavery and racism, tools of capitalist exploitation”; <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16886/slavery-and-racism-tools-capitalist-exploitation>). Actually the situation of black

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people under segregation was just as precarious as under the regime of enslavement. Racism and the rejection of others is a characteristic of all class societies, but in the case of the U.S. it is embedded in the bowels of society.

The workers’ organisations fighting the segregation of black workers

It is clear that the working class in the U.S. faced great obstacles in its struggle for unity. In 1935 W.E.B Du Bois would write that *“The theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest.”*

(Du Bois; “Black Reconstruction in America”; Cited in: *A History of Reconstruction after the Civil War*; 4 May 2019; <https://brewminate.com/a-history-of-reconstruction-after-the-civil-war/>)

The first attempt after the Civil War to close the gap between white and black workers came from Friedrich Adolph Sorge after the founding of the Central Committee of the North American section of the International Workingmen’s Association in December 1870. The American sections of the IWA defended the principle of racial equality, allowed black workers to participate in their rallies and set up a special committee to organize black workers into trade unions. In September 1871 the New York Section of the IWA organized a demonstration of 20,000 workers, including a company of black workers, supporting the combatants of the Paris Commune and demanding an eight-hour day.

In 1866 the first national union federation, the “National Labour Union” (NLU), was organised. Its founding convention unanimously urged the organisation of all workers into the unions: *“all workingmen be included within its rank, without regard to race or nationality”*. The second convention, in 1867, already decided to integrate the demand for the abolition of the system of convict labour. The NLU gained the admiration of Karl Marx and after harsh debates it actually accepted black unions in 1869, but only in the form of separate unions that could be affiliated with the NLU.

In 1869 the African Americans, who were denied full access to the NLU, came together to form the Colored National Labor Union (CNLU). The CNLU welcomed all workers no matter what race, gender, or occupation. Isaac Myers, who was appointed as their president, stated that the CNLU was a *“safeguard for the colored man”*. And about the segregated groups he said: *“for real success separate organization is not the real answers. The white and colored must come together and work together. (...) The day has passed for the establishment of organizations based upon color.”* (<https://enacademic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/3931900>)

In the end, as both the CNLU and the NLU began to decline, they paved the way for the “Knights of Labor”.

The “Knights of Labour” became a mass organisation in 1881 (after developing from a “secret society” founded in 1869). Intended to overcome the limitations of craft unions, the organization was designed to include all those who toiled with their hands. Under the slogan, *“an injury to one is the concern of all”*, it unfurled the banner of workers’ unity and aspired to unite all wage-earners into a single organisation regardless of skill, race, or sex. The Knights organised tens of thousands of black workers, although not without a struggle against segregation within the organisation. Thus, it had to tolerate the segregation of assemblies in the South.

With these first efforts the unification of the struggle between the black and the white workers was still far from being achieved.

In the second part we will take a closer look at the theoretical and political struggle that took place in the political parties of the proletariat in the first two decades of the 20th century and how these parties, in particular the Socialist Party of America, were able to enrich and deepen the acquisitions developed since the AWL of Weydemeyer. **Dennis 23.1.21**

The “Swedish Strategy” and the fiction of the Welfare State

The International media always try to depict Sweden as a “paradise on earth”, a Welfare State with almost total equality among the citizens. Nothing could be further from the truth. For more than three decades, privatisations and outsourcing of schools, hospitals, GP surgeries, as well as other sectors, like care for the elderly, has created a situation where the health sector has suffered from increased cuts. The corona crisis has clearly shown the cracks in this illusion. Today, the number of hospital beds in Sweden has decreased to one of the lowest levels in Europe.

Just as in the rest of the world, the development of the corona crisis in Sweden gives us a clear illustration of decomposing capitalist society in general, as well as of the criminal negligence of the bourgeoisie. Because Sweden has been regarded as a model for the “Welfare State” historically, the present crisis is the last nail in the coffin of this illusion.

Today, when Sweden is in the middle of the second wave of the pandemic, the chaos is increasing, with hospitals and Intensive Care Units overburdened. More than half a million have been infected by the virus and more than 10,000 dead in a population of around 10 million, spread over a vast geographical area. This is a clear contrast to countries like Norway and Finland, despite geographical similarities. The so called “Swedish strategy” with lesser restrictions and lock-downs, has certainly not spared the population. Today, the chaos is accelerating. The state and government are blaming the regions, responsible for providing health care, and the regions are blaming the local councils. In the midst of this stand the health workers, who just a couple of months ago were threatened by new lay-offs, when the first wave ended in the summer.

The roots of the present situation are to be found in the continuous slaughter of the health sector in Sweden since the 1990s. The process of “de-regulation” and privatisation of hospitals, all over the country but especially in Stockholm, has meant continuous cuts in hospital beds and staff. Protests among hospital workers and the local population have been common, especially in the North where local hospitals have been closed, where all kinds of patients, including pregnant women, must travel long distances to get to the nearest hospital.

The same development has been seen with the pharmacies, which has meant that essential stocks of medicines had disappeared from hospitals and pharmacies, largely due to the privatisation of the former state pharmacy monopoly (and a proliferation of private pharmacies), leading to disappearance of vital medications. The same development

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Biden presidency: The US and world capitalism on the road to nowhere

a small minority to revolutionary class positions, notably in the US itself.

The successful work of transmission to this minority rests on a number of needs. Significant in the present context is the combination, on the one hand, of a long term programmatic rigour and clarity, linked on the other hand to the ability of the organisation to have a coherent, developing analysis of the entire world situation: its historical setting and perspectives.

The world situation over the past year has increasingly broken new records in the putrefaction of world capitalism - the covid pandemic, the economic crisis, the political crisis in the US, the ecological catastrophe, the plight of refugees, the destitution of ever-larger parts of the world population. The dynamic of chaos is speeding up and becoming more unpredictable, offering new, more frequent challenges to our analyses and requiring an ability to change and adapt them according to this acceleration without forgetting our fundamentals. **ICC, 16.01.2021**

can be seen with the national stocks of essential medicines for crisis situations – this disappeared around the millennium.

At the same time, the situation in the elderly care sector has been worsening for decades (this has been the responsibility of the local councils since the beginning of the 1990s) and there have been lots of “scandals” in the media, often focusing on the situation in privatised nursing homes where basic hygiene routines have been neglected because of the overburdening of the workers. Many workers in these institutions have a precarious work situation, are called in at short notice and do not have a steady sickness insurance – so they can’t stay home if they are sick.

In fact, during the autumn 2019, massive protests took place in the hospitals in Stockholm after an announcement of major staffing cuts (doctors and nurses), protests that were gaining sympathy from the general public, both in Stockholm and in the rest of the country.

This was the situation in Sweden in the beginning of the year when the corona virus hit the country. The state and the responsible authorities, the regions (greater councils) and local councils were totally unprepared for the outbreak. Basically, there was no preparation, no stocks of medicine, masks or shields, no possibilities for testing and tracing.

Was there a conscious Swedish strategy?

The Swedish authorities’ strategy of avoiding lockdown has been both criticised and hailed in the rest of the world. In the beginning, the epidemiologists thought that there would not be any risk of the virus spreading outside Asia, then they discussed –behind closed doors– the possibility of acquiring a “herd immunity” in the population on the basis of models of influenza viruses (something they later denied) and adopted the policy of “recommendations” instead of “restrictions”. The Swedish Strategy has been marked by a certain ‘scientific arrogance’: “We are doing it right and the rest of the world is doing it wrong”. The main spokesman for this policy, former state epidemiologist Johan Giesecke, talked about “allowing” the virus to pass through the population– although

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Report of an ICC contact meeting

humanity depends? It will be necessary in future public meetings to return to the great historical struggles of the workers’ movement such as the Paris Commune in 1871, the 1917 revolution in Russia or, closer to home, the biggest workers’ strike in France in May 1968.

On the immediate situation several speakers asked the question: where is the class struggle? One participant pointed out that, despite the worsening of the pandemic, *“the working class has not been fooled”*. For another participant, *“the CGT [a French union confederation] has played its role in diverting the interests of the working class”*. Finally, another intervention stressed that *“on 18 November there was a strike at the Ministry of National Education. In the hospital sector strikes took place too”*. For this comrade, movements have arisen, but they cannot develop at the moment. On the current dynamics of the class struggle, despite the concerns present in the discussion, this very important aspect could not be sufficiently developed, for lack of time.

We need to return to these issues in subsequent discussions. We call on all those who wish to do so to read our numerous articles on our website and in the printed press. It is obvious that we should not underestimate the profound impact of the acceleration of decomposition on the working class. Likewise, it is essential to be able to analyse and understand the general dynamics of the class struggle in the present historical period. These are all concerns and points of view that we propose to discuss in our next sessions.

The November meeting involved a very rich discussion with a collective dynamic of debate, despite the fact that it took place online. The willingness and ability of the participants to listen and

he never talked about “herd immunity”. He was later got rid of because it turned out that he was, at the same time, on the payroll for advising certain “interested” corporations...

This whole approach led to a massive spread of the virus, especially in the care homes, and the workers were blamed. Those who were most exposed, such as bus and taxi drivers, had no protection and the virus spread rapidly in the immigrant communities in the suburbs. The authorities talked about “lack of information” and problems of housing, but no measures were taken to protect these workers. The main theme of this so-called strategy is that you, yourself, have the responsibility and it is your own fault if you get infected!

Now the authorities are trying to blame each another – the government blames the greater councils, and vice versa. Scientific experts openly criticise the Public Health Authority and the state epidemiologist for not recommending masks. As in the rest of the world, to “work from home” is only possible for professionals and a minority of employees, while the majority of the working class must use overcrowded public transport systems to go to work.

The myth of the Welfare State

Sweden has always been seen as an example of a smooth functioning Welfare State, with a history of social reforms, high levels of public spending and high levels of “trust” in authority and government. The corona crisis has revealed massive cracks in this façade, due to decades of cutting down and privatisations in the public sector. The cynicism of the Swedish bourgeoisie towards the elderly population reminds us of the dark side of the Swedish modernity project, when cynical experiments and sterilisation programmes were carried out until the 70s. The “Swedish strategy” has proved to be another cruel experiment. Today, all parts of the national bourgeoisie are happy about the good effects of the Swedish strategy for the Swedish economy – at the same time as unemployment is peaking at unprecedented levels. As usual, it is the working class that takes the blow, both at the level of disease and death, and on the level of attacks on its living conditions.

Svensson January 2021

respond to each other with seriousness and responsibility must be underlined. At the end of the meeting, the participants stated that they were very satisfied with the discussion. All of them expressed their willingness to continue it.

- A number of comrades explicitly wished to develop the debate on the following themes:
- How can we distinguish the period of decadence of capitalism from its ultimate phase which is decomposition?
- Why do nations use state capitalism?
- Can capitalism go beyond the national framework?
- How can we understand the tendency to strengthen state totalitarianism and the tendency for the bourgeois class to lose control?
- How serious is the global economic crisis today and what are its repercussions in the life of the working class?
- To what extent does the brutal acceleration of the decomposition of capitalism affect the working class?

The ICC welcomes the concerns of the participants during the meeting. We have begun to develop the analyses of the ICC on the central issues addressed. However, as requested by the participants, the ICC will ensure that we continue the discussion on these themes during our next sessions.

We also encourage all our readers to send us letters expressing their questions, analyses and queries on all subjects of concern to them. We will publish these letters from readers, together with our response if necessary, so that the debate can also continue through the press.

The ICC warmly thanks all the participants who animated the November meeting and will tell them the date of the next one. **Albin 28/12/20**

Strike of agribusiness workers in Peru

The living conditions of agricultural workers

Following the introduction of the agrarian Reform implemented by the military government at the end of the 1960s¹, in the mid-1990s there began a process of transferring the ownership of land into the hands of a number of bourgeois industrial companies, which have, since then, dedicated it to the lucrative business of exporting fruit and vegetables to the North American and European markets. The largest of these companies are located in the north (La Libertad, Lambayeque, Ancash) and in the south (Ica) of Lima, and these agrarian capitalists currently own almost half a million hectares of land and water in those areas, and enjoy rich financial incentives and tax breaks granted by successive governments.

Peruvian agribusiness has become the poster child and flagship of the Peruvian economy (traditionally monopolised by mining) and it now generates the biggest profits with the help of financial incentives and juicy tax breaks from the state. The workers who work in these factories and on the land are migrants from the surrounding villages, and with the boom in the agricultural sector, the demand for labour increased. So many workers were hired that the bourgeoisie talked about Ica being a “model region with full employment”, a kind of economic showcase that the rest of the country should aim to copy. However, such propaganda from the state and the agrobusiness corporations could not hide the oppressive conditions of exploitation of the agricultural workers.

These workers are paid poverty wages of 39 soles (12 euros) or less per day; no CTS support² or bonuses; there is continued pressure and blackmail to boost productivity and production quotas and long working days that last from 3 am until late at night; they work under a burning hot sun and the work is physically demanding and harmful to health; they suffer mistreatment by foremen who bark orders at them and are made to work in silence to prevent them from supporting and showing solidarity to each other. With the increased demand for labour power, even children are hired for the harvesting and, of course, the threat of dismissal or loss of pay hangs over them if any complaints are raised against these miserable working conditions.

The agrarian strike in the current Peruvian political situation

Since the departure of Pedro Pablo Kuczynski at the end of 2017, four presidents to date have passed through Congress. The penultimate one was in position for just a week. In addition, the current “transitional government”, which has not yet completed its first month in office, has already had three interior ministers. The corruption that spreads uncontrolled like a cancer eating away at bourgeois institutions is “denounced” continually in the media, and is little more than an aggravated expression of the historical phase of decomposition of the capitalist system³. And all the while, as this happens, the profits of big Peruvian capital continue increasing, reaching levels that see

their rich financiers with no reason to have regrets about the unfolding pandemic.

However, with this situation dragging on, on top of the economic and social impact of the pandemic and the failure to introduce new health measures to stem the tide of the contagion, and then the bourgeois factions at war with each other in the congress ending in the departure of former president Martin Vizcarra, it proved to be the final straw that broke the camel’s back. An explosion of social outrage culminated on 14 November with the death of two young people and there was increased pressure on the government leaders, who would have, if needed, not hesitated to take more lives. It was in this atmosphere of protest and resistance that the agrarian strike emerged. All the indications were that they chose this moment to raise their demands as things were already coming to the boil. Moreover, although the capitalist system is mired in the economic crisis and the Peruvian bourgeoisie does not escape its effects, it has been able, to date, to keep some control over the social situation.

It is true that one of the dominant tendencies of decomposing capitalism is for the bourgeoisie to lose control over its political apparatus; however, the bourgeoisie was quick to see that it could end up in a similar situation to that as in other countries, such as Chile⁴. So, the inflexible attitude taken under the short-lived government of Merino, gave way to a government of a more “conciliatory” kind, one more “attentive to the demands of the people”. Yet, instead of proposing a Constituent Assembly or a reform of the Constitution, as an immediate palliative, the idea put forward was to wait until the next year’s elections, to let the “transitional government” complete its business successfully. So, right now, this government is selling the lie that the workers’ demands will be listened to and that there will be some recompense for the injustices committed.

Some evidence of this is in the repeal of the Agrarian Promotion Law, and, in order to prevent social unrest led by the workers, the Congress gave its approval to refunds to contributions to the pension system (ONP), it passed a law to formalise collective taxes, as well as taking the decision to remove parliamentary immunity, a bourgeois political approach that emerged long before the arrival of the pandemic. There are other events in addition, such as the National Police reforms and the retirement of some of the police high command. This seems to indicate that the faction of the bourgeoisie which is now at the head of the state, and some of the parties in the Congress, are focusing their efforts on pursuing a populist strategy, in order to achieve successful participation and support for a new power structure in 2021’s elections. This shows that the bourgeois factions have been able to momentarily set aside their differences and act in a coordinated manner when the workers make their presence felt and the bourgeoisie’s economic interests and profits are threatened.

It also shows that their ideological weaponry and deceptions are not exhausted and that the workers must avoid falling into their traps, believing their promises. We must be aware that, in the end, the ruling class will not be able to resolve the serious social problems nor can it stop exploiting the proletariat; nor will it be able to avoid confrontations within its own ranks, as each faction will continue to defend its own privileges and power tooth and nail. Only the united organised action of the workers, putting into practice the methods of struggle fundamental to the workers’ movement, will put an end to this nightmare of decomposing capitalism.

The workers’ strike was fully on a class terrain

We can state that, unlike the citizen mobilisation in Lima, this strike of the workers of the agro-industrial enterprises had a clear class basis. The proletariat shows its strength and capabilities when it struggles directly against exploitation. The workers of Ica began by protesting against the un-



bearable and tormenting working conditions and they halted work and went on to the Pan-American Highway to make their voices heard.

The strengths:

- The strike is the main weapon of the workers’ struggle. This was understood by the workers on the various estates and in the companies when they organised a widespread stoppage and took their action onto the road. Likewise, the workers led the struggle directly with no intermediaries; giving form to various forms of self-organisation such as picket lines and communal fund raising. Inside Ica, the absence of trade unions meant there was no possibility of the strikers being subject to manoeuvres to deflect or derail the struggle as is practised by trade unionism.

- There was a strong class identity and a call to other workers to show solidarity and participate in the struggle. We heard things such as “*We, the workers, produce the wealth so ‘they’ can line their pockets*”; or “*down with exploitation*”, “*we want a pay increase*”, etc. This is in total contrast to the citizen’s mobilisations in Lima two weeks earlier, for example. All the workers’ demands and banners displayed slogans AGAINST CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION. There were no pro-democracy calls for “*a new constitution*”, “*Citizen’s rights*” or “*Defend our fatherland*” during the 5 days of workers’ struggle.

And despite the short duration of the strike, the workers of Ica received solidarity from their class brothers in the valleys of Moche and Viru in the North, who, in turn, came out on strike in their area where a heavy deployment of police led to one worker being killed.

The weaknesses:

- Despite the strong organised class instinct that marked the strike, the weaknesses that the world proletariat face today could also been seen in this struggle. For example, there were legalist and democratist illusions, a belief that the repeal of the Agrarian Promotion Law was a “victory” when in reality legal measures can never change the objective situation of capitalist wage labour and the class exploitation by the bourgeois state. Workers were not aware of this. The strike was not able to go beyond the stage of demands, which is a necessary first stage but not enough, which only highlights the current difficulties facing the international working class in the context of the serious problems that face the whole of oppressed humanity.

- There were some expressions of nationalism, with Peruvian flags on some of the barricades, but very few in comparison with those displayed in the patriotic orgy of the “citizen’s marches” in Lima.

Although these protests in the agricultural sector have the same political and social context, one of conflicts between the different factions of the bourgeoisie and the social and economic background of the pandemic, they are different from those that took place in the days around November 14. They have nothing at all to do with the hapless lament of the citizen’s movement and the resent-

ment of a petty bourgeoisie who feel squeezed and threatened by the crisis, and see themselves sliding deeper and deeper into poverty, like the other exploited strata that rest their hopes on an impossible “moral renewal” of the degenerate political elite.

The struggle of the proletariat is the antithesis of the whining of the whole body of journalists, intellectuals and politicians, who demand strong institutions “to restore order”, to suppress any demonstration of protest or rebellion of the population, by force of arms. Nor does its struggle resemble the desperate and sterile actions of terrorism or putschism, the methods favoured by the fanatical voluntarism of petty-bourgeois ideologies, that also imagines them imposing their own interests and taking control of the state to continue exploiting the workers. In the end, the final goal of the proletariat is to destroy the capitalist system, with all its institutions, not to change one executioner for another, one management for another, which would leave intact the machinery that perpetuates social misery and threatens the very existence of humanity.

State repression was not long in coming

At the time of writing, the agrarian workers have renewed their actions, this time to demand that the Congress throws out legislation proposing a new labour law. They blockaded the South Pan-American Highway for one day because their demands for a wage increase of 45% of the monthly salary that is 73 soles (23 euros) per day excluding bonuses and CTS were rejected. The strategy of the bourgeoisie is to draw the struggle into a bureaucratic labyrinth, until it is exhausted and the workers demoralised; and this is a well-used trick to lessen the impact of the workers’ initiative that will find the trade unions as willing accomplices.

While there has been some degree of self-organisation, there have also been weaknesses. There is a great determination to struggle, but there have been no assemblies and/or a strike committee to centralise the struggle. The negotiations have been entrusted to “leaders” and they have passively sat back and put things on hold for 15 days. When they heard that the Congress had not approved their demand for a wage increase, the workers immediately went out to ask why they were being cheated and they went back on strike.

The workers are now also calling for the dismissal of the current President and in the scuffles with the police 26 policemen were injured, with the Ministry of the Interior demanding that demonstrators clear the road and were warned of a possible “iron fist” response. In an act of provocation some infiltrators set an ambulance on fire in order to lay the blame on the protesters, part of a strategy, encouraged by the media, to turn the population at large against the protesters. Finally, the Sagasti government did unleash a brutal repression against the workers, smothering the communities in the surrounding areas in tear gas, even using firearms against the demonstrators and

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1. The government of General Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) presented itself as a “government of the people” with strong nationalist and popular demagogy
2. CTS: Compensación por Tiempo de Servicio (Compensation for Time of Service), provides some compensation for dismissal or termination of employment. It is a measly amount.
3. *The phase of capitalist society's decomposition is thus not simply the chronological continuation of those characterised by state capitalism and the permanent crisis. To the extent that contradictions and expressions of decadent capitalism that mark its successive phases do not disappear with time, but continue and deepen, the phase of decomposition appears as the result of an accumulation of all the characteristics of a moribund system, completing the 75-year death agony of a historically condemned mode of production. (...) But the signs of society's total lack of perspectives today are still more evident on the political and ideological level. We only need to consider: the incredible, and prosperous, corruption of the political apparatus, the deluge of scandals in most countries, as in Japan (where it is more and more difficult to distinguish the government apparatus from gangland) (...)* (“Theses on decomposition”; International Review no.107 - 4th quarter 2001; https://en.internationalism.org/ir/107_decomposition)
4. See “The dictatorship/democracy alternative is a dead-end” | International Communist Current (internationalism.org)

<http://www.internationalism.org>

Understanding the phase of decomposition: Report of an ICC contact meeting in France, November 2020

As 2020 drew to a close, the health crisis continued inexorably. As we have already affirmed, our organisation continues its intervention towards the proletariat and its most politicised minorities. Indeed, we must fight against the isolation and atomisation imposed on us by the bourgeoisie with lockdown measures and curfews. We therefore held an online meeting on 21 November 2020, following on from an earlier one that took place on 17 October. There were fourteen people present at the earlier meeting, who were very keen for the discussion to continue. In the November meeting there were 22 people present and participating in the discussion. The willingness to discuss with the ICC, to clarify and understand the evolution of the global and historical situation was thus confirmed by the growing number of participants. The dynamic of the discussion also strongly confirmed this willingness to discuss.

The participants' questions, queries, analyses, and points of view were not very different from those raised in the October meeting. However, the interventions showed that their concerns were addressed in a more in-depth and well-argued manner than during the previous meeting.

A very dynamic start to the discussion

The discussion began with two interventions on struggles in the health sector and on the lockdown, with a comrade putting forward the idea that only one third of the French support it. The same comrade also put forward the idea that it might not be in the interest of the working class to support the lockdown because it does not reduce poverty: *“The lockdown makes us poor. It strengthens the police state. And there would be no possibility of seeing the correlation between the number of deaths and the lockdown”*. Some participants replied that all the national bourgeoisies were forced to resort to the lockdown, which corresponds to measures against the epidemic worthy of the Middle Ages. Negligence, growing irresponsibility, an inability to manage the immediate situation on the part of the capitalist state were all elements that several participants pointed out.

The ICC intervened to state that the global situation was going through an acceleration of social decomposition and an economic crisis of a very serious and historically far-reaching nature. We reiterated that the pandemic and the lockdown are consequences of the decomposition that has deep-

ened brutally and violently. The whole of society is dramatically affected: the economic crisis, the life of the bourgeoisie, and the dynamics of the class struggle.

Therefore, a first part of the discussion focused on what the phase of decomposition of capitalism is. Many speakers supported this fundamental analysis of the ICC to characterise the historical period that has been underway for more than thirty years. Some comrades wanted to know why class societies in history had also experienced elements of decomposition, but not a phase of decomposition as in capitalism. These fundamental questions about the decadence and decomposition of capitalism are extremely important for the future of humanity and the historical struggle of the proletariat.

Understanding why this phase of decomposition is at the heart of decaying capitalist society was therefore an integral part of the discussion. The harmful and destructive effects on society were addressed against the background of the development of the pandemic and the responses of the bourgeoisie to the global health crisis and the major economic crisis that lies ahead. Several interventions showed the growing irrationality that is hitting the bourgeois class, especially in the health sector. They also identified the rise of “each against all” in the economic and trade war that is looming.

The central questions posed during this meeting

The question of the spectacular rise of “each against all” led to serious questions and interventions focussed on the following themes:

- Can capitalism go beyond the national framework?
- What is the significance of the questioning of multilateralism?
- What role does populism play in the tendency to disengage, particularly on the economic level?
- Does the increasing loss of control by capitalist states mean a weakening of state capitalism?
- What does the increased repression by capitalist states mean?
- What level of economic crisis will we experience? How will it affect the life and struggle of the proletariat?

The questions and interventions of the participants on these subjects were within the framework of the phase of decomposition of capitalism

and completely in line with the efforts of revolutionaries to understand the development of the historical situation. We clearly supported these types of political concerns. Indeed, all the interventions were concerned with the gravity of the evolution of the world situation. And in the first place about the consequences of this aggravation of the situation for the class struggle. Faced with the consequences of the aggravation of the harmful effects of decomposition, precarious and mass unemployment looming on the horizon, how will the proletariat be able to react? The ICC did not have the time to answer all these questions during the meeting.

However, as we developed in our interventions, an in-depth reflection on these subjects, is in continuity with the October meeting. On state capitalism, we emphasised that it did not develop in the ascendant period of capitalism, but only in its period of decadence. This tendency to the development of state capitalism has imposed itself on the whole bourgeois class all over the world. To understand why and in what forms this tendency could only be reinforced throughout the decadence of capitalism is a very important question for the future of the class struggle, its minorities and its revolutionary organisations. The capitalist state is the means par excellence to preserve the domination of the bourgeois class over all the strata of society and in particular over the working class.

The entry of capitalism into its period of decadence becomes an obstacle to the possible, necessary and harmonious development of human civilisation. The state must then inevitably take over the entire life of society in an increasingly totalitarian manner. The survival of capitalism itself is at stake. For example, as the crises of capitalism in the twentieth century have shown, it is the state that has provided the means to ensure that capitalism does not become paralysed. Likewise, the capitalist state is the permanent but also ultimate bulwark against any attempt at a revolutionary challenge to capitalist society. This is seen in the current historical situation with the reinforcement of the means of coercion and repression by the capitalist state.

One comrade intervened to show, above all, that in the face of the epidemic and the economic crisis, *“we leave the power to the state over our lives... we must try to wake people up... the danger of the virus is very low... Something is being hid-*

den from us”. This echoed another intervention which emphasised that power is in the hands of the big pharmaceutical companies. It is true that the bourgeois class is a class of liars. Marx had stressed that part of the dominant ideology, conveyed by the bourgeois class and its states, is the maintenance of its class rule. The bourgeoisie is undoubtedly the most machiavellian class of all the ruling classes in history.

But, in our view, these interventions require a deepening of the following questions: What is capitalism? What is the bourgeois state? What is state capitalism? It is normal that young elements in search of proletarian positions need to appropriate these fundamental questions from the heritage of the workers' movement. The ICC intervened to explain that the institutions that capitalism gradually acquired after the end of the Second World War and during the period called “globalisation” allowed the bourgeoisie to defer the development of the internal contradictions of the capitalist economy.

But the bourgeoisie has not been able to remove an impassable barrier for capitalism: the barrier of the nation-state. The international cooperation and other institutions that capitalism set up after World War II to limit as much as possible the fierce competition and permanent trade war have certainly been able to curb their most destructive effects until today. But the effects of the brutal acceleration of decomposition and the global economic crisis are now calling into question this capacity with all the effects this will have on the living conditions of the working class.

Another participant stated that: *“workers could refuse the lockdown”*. Another replied that *“the working class had no choice. If they had the choice, they wouldn't go on buses, subways, sources of viruses... It's the state that has an interest in having proletarians go to work, even in these conditions. The proletarians are simply obliged to go there in order to live”*. The working class lives in conditions imposed on it by the exploiting class and its state. It is only on its class terrain, through struggles defending its own interests and oriented towards the perspective of communist revolution, that the proletariat can oppose the bourgeoisie.

How does the working class defend itself as an exploited class? How can it assert itself concretely as a revolutionary class on which the future of

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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*.