



world revolution

Economic crisis No way out for the EU or capitalism

According to Olivier Blanchard, chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, the Eurozone – and the world economy – are in a very dangerous place. In April Blanchard warned that if Greece pulls out of the euro “it is possible that other Euro area economies would come under severe pressure as well, with a full-blown panic in financial markets. Under these circumstances, a break-up of the euro area could not be ruled out. This could cause major political shock that could aggravate economic stress to levels well above those after the Lehman collapse.” Such a shock, indeed, could “produce a major slump reminiscent of the 1930s”¹.

This is why, as predicted in a number of ‘expert’ circles, the EU has been obliged to approve a new bail out package and to initiate moves towards a greater centralisation of the Union. “EU leaders have agreed to use the eurozone’s planned bailout fund to directly support struggling banks, without adding to government debt.

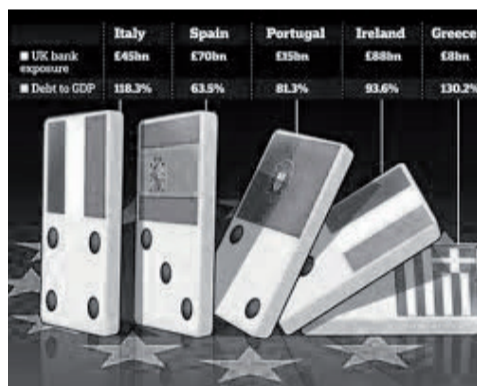
After 13 hours of talks, they also agreed to set up a joint banking supervisory body for the eurozone.

Spain and Italy put pressure on Germany to allow the bailout fund to buy government debt in the markets – a measure to contain borrowing costs”².

Although Germany has had to make policy concessions to struggling countries like Italy and Spain, it is at the forefront of a move towards greater EU centralisation. Thus Merkel told the German parliament that if countries want their debts guaranteed by centrally issued eurobonds, this would have to go with greater central control: “Joint liability can only happen when sufficient controls are in place.” This move towards centralisation was already part of the new deal with the decision to set up a joint banking supervisory body, but more ambitious plans are under review: “European authorities have also unveiled proposals such as the creation of a European treasury, which would have powers over national budgets. The 10-year plan is designed to strengthen the eurozone and prevent future crises, but critics say it

1. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2131141/Euro-currency-collapse-pressure-sovereign-debt-crisis-IMF-warns.html>

2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18620965>



will not address current debt problems”.

Merkel has also proposed that in future the president of the EU council should be centrally elected.

In sum, if Germany is to act as the lender of last resort for the whole eurozone, the countries of the zone would have to accept a growing role for German imperialism.

No way out for the EU or capital

Here we can see the fragility of the whole euro and EU projects. Faced with the economic crisis, there is a growing tendency for each country to try to look after its own interests, hastening the break up of the Union. Germany then steps in to try to control the immediate impact of the crisis, but its demands for greater hegemony sharpen national rivalries, again threatening the stability of the Union. Given the history of Europe over the last hundred years, the other main European powers, notably France and Britain, are not going to accept a German-dominated Europe.

But at the economic level as well, the measures being adopted by the bourgeoisie can do no more than slow down the slide towards disaster. As we argue in the article on page 4, the global crisis of overproduction has pushed the ruling class into an irresolvable dilemma: going for growth means piling up more debt, and this in turn only pumps up the pressures towards inflation and bankruptcy. Policies of rigour and austerity (and/or protectionism) aggravate the crisis by restricting purchasing power and thus makes the market contract even further.

The bourgeoisie is beginning to understand the gravity of the situation. It’s no longer worried about a ‘double dip recession’. It’s talking more and more openly about a 1930s-type depression. You can read how “Italy or Spain going bust could plunge Europe into an unprecedented economic catastrophe”, and how they fear intervention is being delayed as “only at one minute to midnight, with Europe staring into a horrific economic abyss, will political leaders be forced to act”³.

In fact, the depression has already arrived, and the situation is already worse than it was in the 1930s. In the 30s, there was a way out of the crisis: the adoption of state capitalist measures – whether in the shape of fascism, Stalinism or the New Deal – which brought some control over the economy. Today the crisis is precisely a crisis of state capitalism: all the attempts of the ruling class to manipulate the system through the state (especially the state policy of resort to debt) are exploding in its face.

Above all, in the 30s, the road to world war was open, because the working class was in a position of defeat following the failure of its revolutionary attempts after 1917. The push to war made it possible to absorb unemployment by creating a war economy; and the war itself made it possible to reorganise the world economy and launch the boom that lasted until the 1970s.

This option isn’t on the table today; following the collapse of the old bloc system, the imperialist world order has become increasingly multipolar. American leadership has become weaker and weaker. Opposition to German control of Europe is evidence that Europe will never be able to unite itself into a military bloc. Other rising or recovering powers like China and Russia also lack the ability to form a stable international alliance around themselves. In short the alliances needed to fight a world war are not in place. And if they were, the destruction unleashed by a third world war would make another ‘post war boom’ impossible.

Above all, the working class of the main capitalist countries is not in the same position of defeat as it was in the 1930s. For all its weaknesses and hesitations, it is showing an increasing willingness to reject the arguments of the rich and powerful, telling it to sacrifice its living standards ‘for the good of all’. In the last few years we have seen mass strikes in Bangladesh and Egypt, social revolts across the Middle East, Europe and the USA, protests against proposed cuts in pensions in France and the UK, student rebellions against increased costs of education in Britain, Italy, Canada...

But these struggles are still well below what is required by the objective situation confronting the exploited class. In Greece, we can see how workers’ living standards are being reduced in the most brutal manner: massive job cuts, wages, pensions and other benefits directly slashed, with the result that countless families who once could expect a modest living standard are dependent on food handouts when they are not actually living on the streets. In Greece, the shadows of the bread queue and the dole queue, which sum up the 1930s for many, is a painful reality, and one that is spreading to Spain, Portugal and all the other countries who are the first to be hit by the collapse of capitalism’s house of cards.

Faced with such attacks, workers can often hesitate, cowed by fear. They also have a whole barrage of ideology thrown at them – maybe we need to vote left and nationalise the banks, maybe we

Continued on page 3

Inside this issue

Divisions, scandals in the ruling class ... But they can still unite against the workers	2
London Olympics: tales of imperial cunning, austerity and repression	3
Patriotic circus	3
Eurozone crisis: no alternative to austerity	4
Spain: how can workers respond to an economy in dire straits?	5
Left in Greece offers no prospects	5
ICC Day of Discussion: What lessons can we draw from the social movements of 2011?	6
Meetings, subscriptions, pamphlets	7
Imperialist powers hover as Syria sinks into barbarism	8

Divisions, scandals in the ruling class...

But they can still unite against the workers

In the last week of June British banks again made headlines for their greed, dishonesty and incompetence. “*Royal Bank of Scotland couldn’t serve its customers because its computers failed; Barclays was fined £290m for trying to manipulate the money markets; other banks will soon be confessing to the same sin and paying their own hefty fines. And now RBS, Barclays, Lloyds and HSBC – the UK’s big four – are compensating small businesses who were hoodwinked into buying complex insurance that they did not need.*”¹

Politicians talked about the banking culture and how some aspects of it were ‘shocking’. What commentators, academics and other ‘experts’ never mention at such moments (and is the basis of any serious explanation of what is going on in the world) is that we all live in a class society; a society in which the ruling class exploits and controls the working class. The two classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat, stand opposed, each with its own interests and way of struggling.

The fundamental interest that unites the bourgeoisie is maintaining its domination and the capitalist system of exploitation that it is based on. However, there have historically always been divisions within the bourgeoisie, largely based on conflicting economic interests. There have also been differences over relations with other countries, what marxists analyse as imperialist rivalries. The last twenty or so years have seen the bourgeoisie around the world facing a range of increasing pressures. These come from the economic stresses that continue to break out into open crisis, from the proliferation of conflicts that followed the break-up of the Russian and American imperialist blocs, and from the challenge of maintaining social order. In short, the contradictions that have always run through capitalism have become more acute.

The working class cannot take advantage of the divisions in the ranks of ruling class. In part this is because the bourgeoisie maintains its greatest level of unity against the working class – history has shown that it can put aside the most intense rivalry to save its collective skin – and in part because the working class is not yet acting as a united, class-conscious force.

Why is it important to examine the life of the ruling class? The answer is for the same reasons that the bourgeoisie keeps a close eye on the working class: to be able to wage the class struggle as effectively as possible. Analysing how the ruling class acts and the relations and tensions within it can help us to understand the evolution of the economic situation, the conflicts between nations and the strategies used to maintain social order.

The growing difficulty in managing the economy

Underlying all of the difficulties facing the ruling class lies the question of the economy. Today the difficulties are plain to see, but they are only the culmination of structural problems going back decades. Since the end of the Second World War two approaches have succeeded each other. From the end of the war until the late 1970s Keynesianism dominated economic thinking with state intervention used to manage the business cycle by stimulating demand in the troughs through the use of deficit spending. This approach ended in Britain during the 1970s amid economic stagnation, rising inflation and increasing unemployment.

It was replaced by an approach generally referred to now as neo-liberalism, although at the time it was more usually described in Britain as Thatcherism. This approach is popularly associated with the privatisation of state owned industries, sales of council houses, legislation to control the unions and so on. It was supposed to allow the economic laws of capitalism to operate more freely and the short-lived economic ‘booms’ of the late 1980s and 1990s seemed to show it was effective. In reality, these ‘booms’ were based on the increased exploitation of the working class, and an increase in state and private debt.

The failure of neo-liberalism, like Keynesianism before it, was brutally exposed by the eco-

omic crisis that exploded in 2008. The initial response of the bourgeoisie was to throw money at the problem to contain the crisis that seemed to be ripping the financial sector apart. It could not stop the crisis from spreading. The bourgeoisie’s response contains elements that can be seen as Keynesian, such as the various ways money has been created and injected into the economy, and others more associated with neo-liberalism, notably in the measures required by the IMF in return for bailouts. In short, the bourgeoisie does not know which way to turn. The only policy that it is agreed on is attacking the working class.

The ruling class in Britain has followed the international trend, with a little bit of Keynes, some neo-liberalism and a lot of attacks on the working class. The LibCon Coalition proclaimed that the economy would be rebalanced away from dependence on the financial sector and that manufacturing would lead the way out of the crisis. This approach failed. Manufacturing went back into recession over a year ago and the balance of Britain’s trade in goods across the world being almost totally negative. What remains are austerity measures to reduce state debt. The only rebalancing of the economy going on is the forcing down of the living standards of the working class in order to protect profits.

Labour has no disagreement with this last point, other than claiming to want to do it more slowly. Milliband and Balls have begun to associate themselves with the call for policies to promote ‘growth’ following the election of Hollande in France, but have no real disagreements. Their ‘opposition’ is principally designed to fool those who distrust the Tories.

However, a significant development over the last few years has been the growth of the view that sees withdrawal from Europe as being in Britain’s interests. A few years back this faction seemed largely restricted to the likes of UKIP, but the attempt to force through a referendum on Europe last year revealed that it exists within part of the Tory party. The assertion of control by Cameron, while effective, seems to have left a legacy of bitterness within parts of the right, which snipe at the concessions made to the LibDems and call for real Tory policies. This could be seen in the alternative Queen’s Speech published on the Conservative Home website, which had the backing of 20 MPs including David Davis and John Redwood. There was also the attack by Nadine Dorries on Cameron and Osborne as two arrogant posh boys who don’t know the price of milk, and who subsequently said that she is close to UKIP.

While this points to some incoherence within the bourgeoisie, since leaving Europe is likely to weaken Britain’s economy, as well as leaving it more isolated on the imperialist stage, it is unclear how widespread these views are in the Tory party. Following the 2010 election the right became more dominant in the party, and many Tory MPs are openly Eurosceptic, but this does not imply they all want to leave Europe or that they agreed with last year’s call for a referendum. This suggests that those openly attacking the government are currently a small minority: no one associated themselves with Dorries’ attack.

The recent budget showed the level of challenges facing the ruling class in imposing austerity but, as have argued² the handling was relatively skilful since the headlines generated by the cut in the 50% top tax rate, the granny tax and pasty tax allowed the more serious attacks, such as the move towards localised pay, to go through without remark.

Divisions over imperialist policy

In previous articles in *World Revolution* we have shown the significant role that divisions over imperialist strategy have played in the life of the bourgeoisie over the last 20 years.³ One of the reasons New Labour came to power was that it was more united than the Tories in defending the aim of developing a strategy that was subservient neither to the US nor Germany. That this is a continuing debate within the bourgeoisie is evident

from the shift of the Blair government after 9/11 and of the Tories under Cameron. Cameron has seemed contradictory, sometimes appearing very Eurosceptic, sometimes committed to the line of a more ‘independent Britain’. ‘Debates’ within the bourgeoisie are pursued as much through intrigue and deception as discussion.

We situated the campaign launched against the Murdoch empire last year within this framework, arguing: “*Murdoch’s support of US imperialism and strong Eurosceptic views... helped reinforce powerful, pre-existing conflicts within the British ruling class and was increasingly at odds with post-Blair UK imperialist policy...which was to try to play a more independent role following the fiascos of the Afghan/Iraq wars which left the UK weakened.*”⁴ The struggles to cut him down united disparate parts of the British state and media and the current Leveson Inquiry originated as part of this effort. However, Leveson’s remit to look at relations between the press and the police and politicians suggests it is also part of wider efforts to enforce discipline within the bourgeoisie and, by doing so relatively openly, to continue the campaign about restoring the reputation of democracy that seemed to be the primary purpose of the scandal over MPs expenses.

The Labour Party and the LibDems were fairly quick to jump on the anti-Murdoch bandwagon but the Tories have been more divided. Cameron’s main argument is that politicians across the spectrum allowed themselves to get too close to the media in general and by doing so to water-down the specific criticism of Murdoch and the responsibility of his own party, including himself. The same concerns seem to have been behind the decision by the Tories on the Culture, Media and Sports Committee not to support the recent report that accused News International of wilful blindness and declared that Rupert Murdoch was not a fit person to run a major international company. Few have been as outspoken as the Education Secretary Michael Gove (who worked for years on the Murdoch-owned *Times*) who described Rupert Murdoch as “*one of the most impressive and significant figures of the last 50 years*”. In contrast, ex-Prime Minister John Major had no qualms in sticking the knife in when he stated that Murdoch had tried to get him to change Tory party policy over Europe at the time of 1997 election or risk losing the support of the Murdoch press. Major’s government was almost torn apart by the actions of the Eurosceptics, so it is no surprise that he seemed to relish getting his own back.

An interesting current development is the Leveson Inquiry’s role in seeming to put pressure on Cameron, notably through the recent revelations about the contact between Jeremy Hunt and NI, and between Cameron and senior figures such as Rebecca Brookes. The revelations about Hunt were the result of a direct demand by the Inquiry for the emails relating to him. However, NI itself has been a source of some of the information with material being passed to the police by its internal investigation, which raises the possibility that Murdoch is also exacting some revenge for being humiliated.

This may not seem a very direct way to have an argument about imperialist policy, but the need to maintain the façade that Britain is a steadfast defender of peace and co-operation around the world requires it to hide the reality. The fact is that the struggle over imperialist policy has gone on for some two decades and is unresolved. The fact that Cameron gives different messages in his speeches expresses traditional British pragmatism at one level, while, at another, it expresses the historical dilemma of British imperialism arising from the fact that it is a declining power.

Electoral and democratic strategy

One of the first priorities of the ruling class in most ‘developed’ countries is to maintain the democratic game, to draw workers into the drama of the false alternatives. All the campaigns to clean up politics are part of this. While these risk further discrediting politicians and politics, and so feeding already existing apathy and disgust, in

the current stage of the class struggle in Britain such disgust is unlikely to be widely transformed into militant struggle. For the minority that begin to question mainstream politics, the far left and right effectively absorb and contain much of this anger, although the likes of UKIP also express the growth of irrationality within the bourgeoisie. The overall impact of the ‘clean-up politics’ campaigns is to keep the majority of the working class within the framework of politics as defined by the bourgeoisie.

The current electoral line-up still suits the needs of the bourgeoisie. The Coalition suffered some battering in the recent local elections because of its attacks on the working class. The LibDems are seen as unprincipled and the Tories as unreformed. The Coalition still promotes the idea that dealing with the economic crisis is more important than party squabbles. In their speeches after the local elections Cameron and Clegg played to this, acknowledging that they would both like to lead a government in which their party had a majority but that they had to deal with the reality of the situation and work in the national interest.

In opposition all that Milliband offers is a slight variation on what is in the ‘national interest’. However, after only two years out of office the Labour Party is beginning to be presented as a viable party of government. This reflects two factors, firstly that there is no particular need for Labour to be in opposition to contain a rising tide of working class anger and militancy. Red Ed has turned out to be rather pale and the most Labour feels it necessary to do is to call for a slightly more restrained austerity with a little dash of ‘growth’. Secondly, that the volatility of the situation makes it prudent for the bourgeoisie to keep its options open.

Containing the working class

The bourgeoisie’s overall strategy to control the working class is based on the principle of divide and rule. It seeks to prevent working class unity and to prevent the proletariat from seeing itself as a class. Over the last few decades the bourgeoisie has introduced its attacks piecemeal, scapegoating the unemployed, the young, single mothers, asylum seekers etc. It has been able to contain and defeat the immediate response of the working class but has found it far more difficult to contain the spread of disaffection and disengagement although, other than in a small minority, this is not accompanied by a questioning of society.

Today, the main challenge for the ruling class is to introduce the scale of attacks required by the severity of the crisis without provoking a response from the working class that escapes control.

Overall, the bourgeoisie has so far succeeded in this. There is a low level of struggle and the unions have maintained a firm grip, corralling anger into a few one day strikes that have not only divided public sector workers from private sector workers but also divided the public sector itself. The tendency that exists to challenge the unions, while an expression of global developments, remains limited and unrepeated.

Not every manoeuvre works out as planned however. The attempt to reprise Thatcher’s confrontation with the unions over the threatened tanker drivers strike and to turn it into Cameron’s “miners’ strike moment”, as some in the Tory party described it, while successful in whipping up some public panic and creating artificial shortages, ended in the farce of calls for the population to store petrol in the home and tragedy when someone followed this advice.

This does not mean that the bourgeoisie has everything sewn up. The objective conditions for the development of the class struggle continue to develop internationally because the bourgeoisie is unable to contain the crisis and has to increase the scale and extent of the attacks on the working class. The subjective conditions, of a willingness to struggle, recognition of the necessity of class unity and consciousness of what workers are struggling against and struggling for can be seen here and there. While limited at present by a range of factors, including the actions of the ruling class, the development internationally over the last few years confirm that the bourgeoisie cannot rest easy in their beds. **North 23/06/12**

1. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/nils-pratley-on-finance/2012/jun/29/banking-scandal-black-week?newsfeed=true>

2. See “All budgets are for millionaires”, *WR* 353.

3. For example, see “Britain: economic crisis and imperialist dead-ends” in *WR* 340.

4. “Murdoch scandal: The lies of the rich and famous”, *WR* 347.

London Olympics Tales of imperial cunning, austerity and repression

This year is the third time that London has staged the Olympic Games, and each occasion has shown something about the changing state of capitalist society.

The dominance of a global power

The 1908 Olympics were originally going to be held in Rome; however, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in April 1906 meant that resources were needed for the reconstruction of Naples. As a global power, with an empire covering nearly a quarter of the world's land area and a fifth of the world's population, the UK was in a position to take on the Games at short notice.

In ten months it was possible to organise the finance, find a site and build a state-of-the-art stadium. Financially, costs amounted to about £15,000 and receipts were £21,377. The first London Olympics made a profit, and in that sense were a success. What *The Times* (27/7/1908) regretted was that "The perfect harmony which every one wished for has been marred by certain regrettable disputes and protests and objections to the judges' rulings. In many newspapers, the whole world over, national feeling has run riot, and accusation and counter-accusation have been freely bandied about." This is hardly surprising, bearing in mind the growing conflicts between nations as imperialism became capitalism's only way of functioning, from the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, and all the antagonisms that led up to the First World War.

In 1908 the judges were all British and there was a complaint from the US team, on average, every day. It started with a refusal to dip the American flag to the King at the opening ceremony and continued throughout the events. In the tug-of-war the Americans complained about the heavy service boots of the team from the Liverpool police. When their protest was dismissed the US withdrew from the event. Or, in the 400 metres, the British officials decided that the final would be re-run because a US runner had elbowed a British runner. The US boycotted the re-run. In the end the UK team won more gold, silver and bronze medals than all other countries. Against teams from 22 countries, involving 2000 competitors overall, the UK won more medals, 146, than it has in any other modern Olympics. As *The Times* (13/7/1908) had said in advance "This year it may be hoped that we shall do our foreign competitors the compliment of showing them that we have not lost our cunning."

The austerity games

In the forty years that passed before the London Olympics of 1948 a lot had changed for British imperialism. The Allied imperialisms of Britain, Russia and the US had won the Second World War, but the US was now dominant in the West, with Britain in a far more secondary position.

Britain had been uncertain about taking on the Olympics. With a devastated economy, with rationing (including food, petrol and clothing) being more severe than during the war, with high unemployment, widespread homelessness and many workers' strikes, the UK was desperate for the US funds it received from the Marshall Plan, but not clear what impact the Olympics would have.

Only a month before the Olympics began there was an unofficial London dockers' strike during which newly conscripted troops were drafted into the docks. For the first time a government used powers introduced by the 1920 Emergency Powers Act to confront the strike. This was not the only time that workers came up against the austerity regime of the post-war Labour government.

There had at least been two years of preparation for the Games. Although no new venues were built the forced labour of German prisoners of war was used on some construction projects, including the road leading to Wembley Stadium.

Not for nothing have the 1948 Games become known as the Austerity Olympics. Other countries were encouraged to bring their own food, although

competitors were allowed rations increased to the level of miners'. Male competitors were put up in RAF camps, female in London colleges. British competitors had to buy or make their own kit.

With 4000 competitors from 59 countries, the 1948 Olympics cost £732,268 (coming in under budget) and took receipts of £761,688. It made a modest profit, but the UK only came 12th in the medals table, and everyone knew the US was going to come first before the Games had started.

Debt and repression

Although some countries have claimed to have broken even, or made a profit, for example the dubious claims of Beijing in 2008, the Olympics have been a financial disaster for most recent venues taking them on. Montreal's debt was so great that they didn't finally pay it off until nearly 30 years after they held the Games in 1976. The original budget for the Athens 2004 Olympics was \$1.6 billion: the final public cost estimate as much as \$16 billion, with most venues now abandoned or barely-used and millions still needed for upkeep and security. It's clear that the Olympic Games were one of the factors that contributed to the scale of the crisis of the Greek economy.

For London 2012 the initial budget estimate was for £2.37bn, but, in the seven years since the

bid was won, the guesses on the final figure have ranged from 4 times to as much as 10 times the original cost. The government is currently claiming to be £476 million under a £9.3bn budget. But if you factor in running costs (for an event that, after all, has not yet happened) it will cost at least £12.2 billion.

Not that the organisers are not planning to do everything to recoup the expenditure. The prices for admission, food, drink, and everything else to do with Olympic venues, are mostly outrageous, even for an expensive capital city. And the interests of the official sponsors are being very fiercely guarded. There are very strict rules on "ambush advertising", that is, the display of anything (including items of personal clothing) that includes the name of a company that is not an official sponsor.

But the area where it seems that London2012 is keenest to break records is in repression. On the busiest days there will be 12,000 police on duty. There will be 13,500 military personnel available, rather more than the number of 9500 British troops in Afghanistan. It's also planned to have 13,300 private security guards. They will spend a few days training with troops. A spokesman for the security firm involved said "part of the venue training was to 'align values' between the

two groups, so games spectators had the same security experience with military and private guards" (*Financial Times* 24/5/12).

On top of this there have been well publicised plans to install a high velocity surface-to-air missile system on half a dozen residential block near to the main Olympic site. Presumably this is intended to blow planes out of the sky over a heavily populated residential area. 'Experts' have warned that southern European anarchists might be co-ordinating their activities, "although there is no specific intelligence of a planned attack" (*Telegraph* 21/6/12).

The organisers of the London Olympics, in conjunction with the British state, seem to have thought of everything. Although they might not be able to cope, the Home Office intends to do security checks on all the anticipated 380,000 athletes, officials, workers and media personnel in any way connected with the Olympics. There will be special Games Lanes on roads that will be reserved for Games-accredited vehicles. You will be fined £135 if you stray into one of these lanes. When entering venues you will be searched and not allowed to take any water past security. It will be against the rules to tweet, share on Facebook or in any other way share photos of events.

There will be more than 200 countries represented in the London Olympics, and the organisers will be doing everything to provide a setting suitable for the usual orgy of nationalism, and an advertising opportunity for Coca Cola, McDonalds, Panasonic, Samsung, Visa, General Electric, Procter and Gamble, BMW, EDF, UPS and all the rest of the gang.

That has become the menu for the modern Olympics: nationalism and commerce. Meanwhile, in the preparation for London2012, the local council for the area where the Olympic Stadium is situated, Newham, has tried to 'relocate' 500 families to Stoke-on-Trent, 150 miles away. Local tenants are being evicted so that private landlords can let properties at massively inflated rents. The Olympics are supposed to be an inspiration for young people. Newham has the youngest age structure in England and Wales, with the highest proportion of children under the age of one. It also has the largest average household size, the highest rates of benefit reciprocity in London, as well as high rates of ill health and premature death. For children living in the shadow of this year's Olympics their future is not going to be improved by the spectacle of the battle for medals. **Car 25/6/12**

The patriotic circus

Over the past two months the British ruling class has subjected us to a slurry of nationalism, patriotism, the 'pride in being British', with Union Jacks and the Cross of St. George rammed down our throats and up our arses. The media, newspapers, TV and radio have not paused for a moment in the task of telling us that, regardless of wealth, social status or class we should all be proud to be British.

We have to be honest and say that this campaign (because it is a deliberate campaign on the part of the bourgeoisie) has had a certain success. Thousands have turned out at the different events; hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent on celebrating the Queen's Jubilee and billions in hosting the Olympic Games.

For the Queen's Diamond Jubilee the royal presence was paraded around the country, and maximum press coverage was given to street parties and the waving of flags, especially by children. This was all supposed to generate nostalgia for 1952, culminating in Her Majesty graciously opening up Buckingham Palace for a star-studded concert. Soon after that we had the Euro 2012 football: cue blokes dressed in crusader gear and an ad campaign proclaiming 'we're not supporting a team, we're supporting a nation'. We Brits could be united in suffering, knowing that the England team would inevitably be knocked out (but we all know that losing well is also an aspect of 'Britishness'). Now we are preparing for the third course of this patriotic feast in the run-up to the London Olympics with the Olympic torch travelling around the country.

The reality behind this circus did filter through from time to time. First there was the scandal around the group of jobseekers bussed to London to act as crowd stewards on the day of the royal flotilla. Deprived of proper accommodation, protective clothing and food (and, of course, wages), this incident couldn't have been a clearer indictment of the slave labour conditions increasingly being imposed on the unemployed through 'workfare' and similar schemes.

And then at the end of June, after the grandiose celebration of inherited wealth and status, we had David Cameron speechifying against the 'culture of entitlement', castigating people for having too many children when they're on benefits and generally preparing the ideological ground for phase two of the 'reform' of the social security budget. Cameron outlined plans to strip housing benefit from the under-25s, to introduce further time-lim-

its on unemployment pay, and to restrict hand-outs for those with large numbers of children. According to Cameron, this 'culture of entitlement' is creating deep social divisions – which apparently are not at all caused by the widening material gap between the 'entitled' few at the top and the growing majority at the bottom. No, the real division is between what Cameron calls 'hard working people who do the right thing' and the benefit scroungers living off their labour: in other words, between the employed and the unemployed fractions of the working class.

Class struggle poops the party

However, in spite of this massive campaign of patriotism, what Marx called the 'old mole' of history, the class struggle, has not disappeared. In June, at the Coryton Oil Refinery in Essex we saw running battles with pickets fighting with the police. 180 workers are to be laid off from the Swiss owned Petroplus Company. This fightback has included workers from the Lindsey and Grangemouth sites.

In Essex, also at the end of June and in response to cuts to frontline services we saw firefighters begin the first of a series of 5 strikes in a long running dispute with the Essex fire authority.

On the London Buses we saw 33 routes disrupted by one day strikes, with crews striking over bonuses for the period of the Olympics. London Underground Tube drivers have also been in action over the payment of Olympic bonuses.

On the same day as the first London bus drivers' strike, there was a national 'industrial action' by doctors over the issue of pensions – an event that you don't see very often.

These are all small, dispersed struggles, dominated by the sectional viewpoint promoted by the trade unions. But they are still significant because they took place in the face of a massive campaign to subsume us into the 'nation'. That they happened at all is testament to the fact that we are part of a class – the working class – which is by definition international, because it is everywhere faced with the same system of exploitation. A system now in deep crisis; and in the near future we are going to be engulfed in it to the same degree as our class brothers and sisters in Greece, Spain and Italy. Then our rulers will expect us to make immense sacrifice for the good of the nation; indeed they already are doing this. In response we can only rely on our class struggle, our class identity, our class consciousness. **Melmoth 30/06/12**

Continued from page 1

Economic crisis No way out for the EU or capitalism

should vote right and blame it all on the immigrants. There are the unions, actively sterilising their response, as we have seen with the succession of one day general strikes in Greece, Spain and Portugal, the endless public sector 'days of action' in the UK.

All these ideologies try to keep alive the hope that something can be preserved inside the present system. The crisis of the system, now shaking all the structures set up to manage it, will argue very persuasively that it cannot. **WR 30/6/12**



Crisis in the Eurozone

The bourgeoisie has no alternative to austerity

Since 2008, and the beginning of the present phase of the crisis, growing austerity has developed everywhere. This policy was supposed to reduce the debts and re-launch growth. And then, like a rabbit out of a magician's hat, a new alternative was flourished which was supposed to cure all ills. It was called recovery. It is called for throughout the press, the television and radio. There's a real magic to it: growth could come back and generalised debt reduced. The debt could be "monetised", i.e. paid off by printing money. What does this jargon of the bourgeois specialists mean? In reality, a few quite simple questions are posed: why this sudden turnaround by the great majority of the leaders of the Eurozone? What is the reality of this policy? Has generalised austerity finished? Will the crisis continue to deepen or not in the near future?

Austerity only generates recession

In Greece, Ireland, Italy, and most dramatically in recent weeks Spain, the population has been attacked on all sides during the last few years. Workers at work, the unemployed, youth, the retired, each and everyone has seen their quality of life collapse. Hospitals, schools and all the public services have been butchered. The political justification of this economic war against all the exploited was clear. Listen to all the governments that were in power and they said 'accept these sacrifices today: reduce state and public debt while lowering the cost of labour in order to sell the goods produced more easily and thus growth will be re-launched'. Despite the struggles that developed in reaction to this policy, which looks at the working class like a sheep to be mercilessly fleeced, austerity continued to accelerate. But, to the great confusion of the capitalist class, so did the crisis.

Since 2008, the GDP of the Eurozone has remained around the same and close to 8900 billion euros. On the other hand total public and private debt has continued to accelerate and has now reached 8000 billion euros. It is incredible to see that all the wealth created through a year of labour practically corresponds to the existing debt, and we are only talking about the official part which is recognised as such. Worse than this for the bourgeoisie is that the economy has now settled into recession. In 2012, Germany alone could show a small 0.5% growth. For the other countries of the zone the collapse is evident. In Greece and Spain activity is rapidly retreating and mass unemployment is an established fact. Debt is exploding and practically out of control in these countries – at the very moment when their GDP is collapsing. As for France, which is just managing to avoid the worst, it is now paying its state employees by borrowing money on what is called the financial markets.

So, the bourgeoisie is simply verifying a fact which has been evident for a long time: generalised austerity and the crisis of credit leads to recession and the deepening of debt. What to do then?

An apparently brilliant idea: recovery

The current debates within the bourgeoisie are basically still those that have been going on since 2008: how and when will we be able to repay the debt? But now an idea is being presented as if it were new. In order to repay the debt, it will be necessary to create wealth. It was just a matter of thinking about it. This idea, which has existed at least since the economic crisis of the 1930s, has come to the surface once again. We could ask why it wasn't thought of earlier, for example after 2008 when the bottomless pit of debt made its most spectacular appearance?

How do you revive growth? That's the question which is haunting the bourgeois class. For some, it is necessary to make production in the Eurozone more competitive and thus lower the cost of the goods produced. To put it bluntly, it is necessary to lower wages in order to effectively compete with Chinese, Indian, or Brazilian production, or with the countries of central Europe for example, and thus prevent production being moved abroad. Claiming to revive activity through the sharper competitive edge thus obtained would be laughable if it didn't involve such suffering for the working class.

For others, the states of the Eurozone should directly take charge of the recovery of growth. The idea is the following: since banks close to bankruptcy cannot lend enough, either to businesses or individuals, it is the state which has to directly take command. From here would come road construction, high-speed rail lines, etc. The companies concerned would get to work, hire wage earners and so participate in re-launching growth. The problem is the following: where does the extra money come from that must be invested for such a result? Once the funds are used from existing sources, which represent about 450 billion euros, there has to be recourse to further debts taken on by states already at risk of bankruptcy. At present, in the western countries, in order to produce a euro of wealth, it is necessary to go into debt for 8 extra euros. In other words, a recovery plan has to take into account a debt which increases eight times more quickly than the GDP. But goods produced are not goods sold. How much supplementary credit will it be necessary to distribute to bleed-dry "consumers" so that they can buy these goods? This is absurd and unrealistic. The capital engaged has become too significant for the profit to be made. Given that capitalism can no longer deal with its current levels of debt, how will it be able to do it in the scenario described here? How does it prevent the public deficits exploding and the financial markets demanding exorbitant interest rates in order to continue lending to states? Behind all the ideological and media campaigns at present, this so-called recovery will have to make do with funds presently available and not yet utilised, which can only have a marginal effect on activity.

Monetisation and mutualisation of the debt is indispensable but ultimately unmanageable

The new president of France, Monsieur Hollande, has joined in with many other leaders in the Eurozone, except Germany of course, in singing a new tune which is supposed to fill us with hope. The title of this song that he hopes will become popular is: monetisation and mutualisation of the debt. Which if nothing else is very poetic. Quite simply monetisation means the printing of money. The central bank is in charge of it and takes in exchange acknowledgements of the debts of the state or the banks, and in general that guarantees the obligations. Mutualisation means that all states of the Eurozone take collective responsibility for the debt. The states that are in less difficulty pay for those in more difficulty.

When enough wealth is no longer created and such wealth is no longer sold in order to prevent debt dragging the system into the abyss, the financial markets gradually turn away. A recovery without real effect and ending in a still greater debt makes borrowers more and more rare and borrowing more and more dear. Then comes the time to tap the savings banks, the first stage of the monetisation of the debt to come. The state becomes a thief on a grand scale. The increase in taxes of all sorts and compulsory loans have their effect. This borrowing is evaluated as a percentage of taxes paid by everyone. It must be repaid after a certain period and that gives rise to interest payments. It is this that they are currently looking into in France as for the whole Eurozone. A responsibility for the

state to pay us back tomorrow with the money that it no longer possesses today! It is quite evident that faced with the vast ocean of debt all this can only be a droplet. This however feeds into the austerity that we are already suffering from.

But again the general alert is out. Greece and Spain are sounding the alarm. Only a few months after the Central European Bank injected 1000 billion around the banks, the whole public financial system is wavering.

For 2012 alone in the Eurozone, and so as to be able to face up to the part of this debt whose payment is now due, it will be necessary to find between 1500 and 4000 billion euros. These figures have nothing to do with reality of course since the Bank of Spain alone is claiming 23 billion. The sums are enormous and out of capitalism's reach. There only remains a road full of pitfalls for capital in its attempts to avoid immediate bankruptcy. In mid-June, Greece holds new elections. If a party refusing the austerity of the Eurozone comes to power in this country, the exit of Greece from the Eurozone is a possibility. For the population in Greece this would mean a return to their original money and a devaluation of the drachma by about 50%. This country would sink into autarky and misery. Which changes nothing much of the fate that awaits it. On the other hand, the bill for the banks and for the central bank of the Eurozone will be pricey. In the accounts of the banks there are still many acknowledgements of Greek debt, close to 300 billion euros. But the fundamental question is not that. If the Eurozone is powerless to keep Greece inside it, what will happen with Spain, Italy, etc?

The monetisation of the debt or the moment the bill is due

And now it's Spain's turn: all its banks in real bankruptcy and its regions all financially unmanageable. The mouthful is enormous, too big to swallow. The financial markets and all these institutions which get together the private money available in the world are not mistaken when they claim still more interest to lend to this country. Presently, the rate over a ten-year state debt is approaching 7%. This rate is the maximum that the state can bear; above it, it can no longer borrow. Mario Rajoy, in a devious manner, appealed for help from the Central European Bank. The latter turned a deaf ear. The Spanish government then announced that it was going to try to finance its banks by going to the market. Soon after that Spain's banks were given a very substantial lifeline of 100 billion euros. But all this is very odd. Banks in the world have to lend money to the insolvent Spanish state so that it can lend to its insolvent banks which, in exchange, will return with acknowledgements of insolvent debt. The absurdity is total, the impasse manifest.

Then, at one moment or another, it will be necessary for at least part of the debt to be monetised and mutualised. Paper money will have to be created that Germany will guarantee in part with the wealth that it produces. The Gross National Product of Germany will authorise a certain degree of money creation. Germany impoverishes itself and slows down the general impoverishment of Europe. Why does it do this? Quite simply because it sells a great part of its goods in this zone.

Monetisation of the debt, a recognition of impotence

Monetising part of the debt shows in reality that capitalism can no longer develop, even on the basis of credit. This is the official moment when capitalism tells us: "I am going to create money that is progressively losing its value so that my debt will not explode immediately. I would like to invest it better; create wealth and sell, but I can no longer do so. The debt is too immense. It has me by the throat... quick - paper money, more paper money, and then I can gain some time".

Money, including credit, should represent the wealth produced and the production that will be sold at a profit. For decades, growth has been maintained with credits which they have said would be repaid one day. When? No-one knows. This deadline is always pushed away in time. The wealth produced in ten years is already destroyed

in production and sale today. What remains except for debts and still more debts?

Monetisation is the triumph of fictitious capital to the detriment of real capital, capital which contains real wealth within it. To create massive amounts of money in order to buy your own debt comes down to the destruction of capital. That provokes galloping inflation of prices, despite the recession. This path also leads to austerity. Because how can you survive if the price of goods is going up every day?

And if monetisation and mutualisation hadn't taken place?

Can capitalism accelerate its own descent into hell? And if Germany was to refuse monetisation thus paralysing the European Central Bank? No-one can totally dismiss such a possibility even if it would lead to a collective suicide. For some months, the German bourgeoisie has made some well-informed calculations in order to evaluate the costs of the break-up of the Eurozone, or of financing it outright. In both cases, in time, the bill is too much and unsupportable, but in the short term, what is the most terrifying perspective?

In any case, Germany will demand austerity. For German capital austerity is the hope that through a reduction in the acceleration of public debt, the slate will be a little cleaner. In reality all this is only a tragic illusion which means that proletarians everywhere will face increasingly uncertain living conditions.

The impasse for capitalism at this point is so great that it wants to launch a recovery of the economy at the same time as increasing austerity; to embark upon massive money creation while also reducing debt. Capitalism is becoming mad. It is losing its direction. It no longer knows now how to go forward nor how to manoeuvre in order to avoid the dangerous reefs that surround it on all sides. The Eurozone has never been in such a dangerous crisis. The months to come will be those of great economic tempests which will lead to still more devastating shipwrecks, demonstrating the generalised bankruptcy of world capitalism. **Rossi (May 30).**

Continued from page 8

Syria sinks into barbarism

trained than Gaddafi's. In sum the western powers risk getting bogged down in a real mess in Syria and beyond, just like they have been in Afghanistan and Iraq; and in contrast to Libya there is no danger of valuable oil reserves falling into the wrong hands, since Syria is not blessed with any oil at all. The social and political repercussions of another theatre of war opening up for the big powers in this ravaged region are, for the moment at least, too uncertain to make the risk worthwhile. Turkey as well, despite being most directly threatened by the consequences of the humanitarian disaster in Syria, is also playing its cards with some caution at the moment.

There is a kind of imperialist stalemate over Syria, and meanwhile the deaths pile up. This is not to say that a western military intervention would prevent them from happening. As we can see from the experience in Iraq and Afghanistan (and Libya, where there is also an aftermath of conflict spreading into a number of neighbouring countries³), the consequences of western military intervention are anything but humanitarian. Even when it would suit their imperialist interests to impose a certain order over the situation and thus minimise some areas of conflict, the result in all these cases has been to accelerate the tendency towards disorder and chaotic violence. Like the economic crisis which is now facing capitalism like an unassailable wall, the proliferation of wars and imperialist tensions across the planet testify that capitalism has become a total dead-end for humanity. **Amos 27/6/12**

3. see <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201205/4893/mali-coup-d-etat-which-increases-chaos>

Spain: how can workers respond to an economy in dire straits?

The working class in Spain is facing particularly harsh austerity measures. The explosive economic crisis is making the social situation equally tense. The past year's struggles in response have often been an inspiration to others. In particular the 15M movement of the Indignados followed the Arab Spring and in turn inspired struggle in Greece and the USA, for example. The anniversary of the 15M and the events surrounding it was followed by the start of a strike by 8,000 miners, mainly in Asturias, against the withdrawal of EU coalmining subsidies which will totally undermine the industry, threatening 40,000 jobs in a country that already has 24% unemployment overall and where half those under 25 are without jobs. This article aims to contribute to the discussion on what we can learn from both the anniversary of 15M and from the miners' strike.

The difficulties of struggling when they plan to lay you off

The Asturian miners have a proud tradition in the working class, notably in the revolt of 1934, and it is no surprise to see their determined response with a strike that started on 31 May. There can be no denying their courage as they have set up numerous road blocks with tyres and logs, used improvised weapons to repulse the Civil Guard who came to clear one of these on highway N-360, and stood up to beatings, arrests and rubber bullets when they went to Madrid. All this has clearly been an inspiration to contributors on libcom (<http://libcom.org/news/coal-mines-ignite-asturias-10062012?page=1>) and from the ICT (<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2012-06-19/the-struggle-of-the-asturian-miners>).

This is very reminiscent of the miners' strike in Britain in 1984/5, when this militant sector, deeply respected and in many ways carrying the hopes of the whole working class, engaged in a courageous and bitter strike, and engaged in numerous confrontations with the police when faced with unprecedented levels of repression. Like the Spanish miners they faced plans to close many mines in a period of high unemployment. It ended in a defeat that weighed heavily on the working class in Britain in the following two decades.

In the discussion on libcom Fingers Malone raised the difficulty the Spanish miners face due to the nature of the attack that will essentially close their industry: "just striking by itself wouldn't get them anywhere". He sees this as a reason for mounting the road blocks as well as the desperate measure of occupying the mine underground in conditions that are unhealthy as well as unpleasant. But does this take them any further in effective struggle? In our view the problem is not just that striking by itself is insufficient, but that struggling by themselves, isolated from other sectors of the working class, puts them into a weak position faced with the might of the state and is likely to lead to defeat. The general strike of 18th June organised by the unions (CCOO and UGT) and the left (PCE and PSOE) was certainly not going to break their isolation, confined as it was to the areas and industries affected by the cut in subsidy. And their demand for a 'plan for coal' in Spain, reminiscent of the NUM slogan 'coal not dole', is clearly going to increase the strike's isolation.

In this sense the slogan "we are not indignant, we are pissed off" actually epitomises the limitations of the struggle, with its illusions in their strength as miners capable of fighting off the Civil Guard. In some ways the miners see themselves as expressing a more radical position than that of the Indignados, which was one of the key struggles in the past year, not just in Spain but internationally. But for all their sense of class identity, the isolation of the Asturian miners is a key weakness that could result in a significant set-back for the struggle as a whole.

One year on, what is left from 15M?

However much difficulty the bourgeoisie have in managing the economy we should never underestimate their experience in confronting the working class – as shown by their isolation of the miners, and the union-organised general strike of 29 March (see *WR* 353) which was followed im-

mediately by the announcement of a further 27 billion euros of cuts.

Their 'celebration' of the anniversary of 15M is another example, a parody of the original events designed to erase, or at least completely distort, the memory of the original events – just when we need to reflect on, discuss and inwardly digest the lessons of this experience. This year the events were called by a cartel of leftist and union organisations, and not the assemblies, which no longer exist, and they have emphasised the democratic and reformist view of the 'citizen' as opposed to the working class.

The false alternatives offered by the right wing PP government and by the left complement each other very well. The former has aggressively threatened repression, and accused the Indignados of being a 'submarine' for the PSOE. Meanwhile the PSOE, which a year ago misrepresented the 15M movement as petty bourgeois, no-hopers, like a dog walking on its hind legs, now welcomes it as a 'triumph', with a great future and a weight in society. The bourgeoisie always denigrate a real movement, but they also love to glorify its memory when they can turn it into an empty shell.

The anniversary demonstrations were massive, but not as large as at the height of the movement in June, July and October last year. Assemblies were revived in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Valencia, Alicante and elsewhere. However, if the assemblies were greeted with interest and curiosity on the Saturday, they were gradually deserted afterwards, and there was no strength in the movement to resist the control by leftist organisations – people preferred to drift away. Nevertheless there were signs of working class life: massive participation by the young; a healthy and joyful atmosphere; and some good contributions to discussion. In Madrid there was a good discussion on the question of health; voices were raised to support what we have called the proletarian wing of the movement, even if they were less confident than last year. But overall the movement could not break out of the shackles imposed by the bourgeoisie, and it remained a caricature of the 15M, with the air of a day out at the weekend before returning to daily life.

The perspective for the working class

The social movements that took place in 2011 were a very intense experience for the working class with their international dimension, the use of the streets, the assemblies at the heart of the movement where lively debates were held (see 'From indignation to hope' in *WR* 353). In Spain there were massive mobilisations in the education sector in Madrid and Barcelona, in health in Barcelona as well as the young in Valencia. The union strike on 29 March and the miners' strike are also important experiences to reflect on. (See 'General strike in Spain: radical minorities call for independent workers' action' in *WR* 353).

Our comrades in Spain have noted that after all these experiences there is a feeling of the movement being checked, of its weakness and the difficulty of developing a struggle that is sufficient for the gravity of the situation and the level of the attacks. This process of questioning is absolutely essential, a vital contribution to the development of understanding in the working class that will prepare the ground for a response that is both a broader movement and goes deeper in putting capitalism itself into question.

There is a growing recognition that capitalism is a bankrupt system, that it has no future, that after five years of crisis the ruling class has no answer and that the system needs to be replaced. For instance at one assembly in Valencia, a woman spoke up to support an ICC contribution arguing that the 15M movement had a revolutionary and a reformist wing and that we need to support the former. But there is also a search for immediate answers or actions, which can lead to sterile or even ridiculous proposals, such as the notion that if we all withdraw our funds from the nationalised Bankia it will "really hit capitalism".

So, while the question of the need to replace capitalism is raised, there is also the difficulty in seeing how this can be done, and also a hope that

perhaps the bankruptcy of the system can be reversed. Here the left and extreme left put forward all sorts of 'solutions' to reform capitalism, such as taxing the rich, eliminating corruption, nationalisation, etc. In fact the centre and right can even join in with these 'radical' campaigns on corruption and tax avoidance.

It is vital to avoid the trap of reformist alternatives. It is equally vital that disgust with politicians

as a whole, and the lies of the left in particular, does not tempt us to retreat into local and isolated groups suspicious of all outsiders. Only by avoiding these traps can we advance the process of reflection on the crisis of capitalism, the need to overthrow it, and how the working class can take its struggle forward, all of which is essential to the preparation of future struggles. **Alex, 30.6.12**

The left in Greece offers no prospects for the working class

After June's election in Greece, President Obama hailed the result as an opportunity for a new government to "continue on the path of reform and do so in a way that also offers the prospects for the Greek people to succeed and prosper."

This has a very hollow ring as the new coalition is politically little different to the coalition that ruled from last November to the elections in May. It was the coalition that replaced Georges Papandreou that accepted the conditions for the most recent 130bn Euro bailout. It was the coalition that intensified the already harsh austerity measures. In the latest election New Democracy and PASOK, the parties that had ruled Greece between them since 1974, stoked up fears that funds would dry up and that an economy already in deep crisis, five years into recession (with a population already suffering severe deprivations) was facing an even worse catastrophe. And they're still in power, with the assistance of a small left-wing party, rather than a small right-wing party.

However, after Prime Minister Samaras had finally named all the figures in the new government, there was a slight change of tune. The coalition parties agreed that they would like to renegotiate some aspects of their agreement with their international creditors. They want "two more years, up to 2016, to bring the public deficit under 3 percent of gross domestic product. This would allow the government to meet its fiscal targets without making further cuts to wages, pensions and the public investment programme. Instead, savings would be made from tackling corruption, waste, tax evasion and the shadow economy" (*Kathimerini* 24/6/12).

It will be interesting to see how much international sympathy there is to this approach. Pain, and more pain, is the prescribed remedy from the leaders of much of the Eurozone. Seeing as the main participants in the Greek government have been responsible for imposing all previous cuts, other European bourgeoisies are likely to wonder why they can't continue in the same vein. Although they will be aware that discontent can lead to militant action

Fear, anger and illusions

In the June election the turnout was down to 62.5 per cent. This is even lower than May's previous lowest ever figure of 65 per cent. Voting is considered mandatory in Greece, although abstention is not met with any legal sanctions. However, it's clear that more and more people see no prospect of any electoral outcome having a positive impact on their lives.

Of those who did vote, those over 55 tended to turn to New Democracy because it offered the illusions of stability and financial security. Those between 18 and 24 were attracted by Syriza as offering some sort of 'alternative'. In a survey of those who voted for the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn¹ in May, 60% said it was as a protest vote, with fewer than 30% actually wanting to get rid of immigrants. It might seem a strange way to protest, but in many ways no stranger than thinking that Syriza was different to the other left parties.

1. For more on Golden Dawn, as well as the wider context for the May elections in Greece see <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201205/4909/you-can-t-fight-austerity-through-elections>

Many Trotskyist groups were very enthusiastic about Syriza. While admitting that it is a party of reform rather than revolution they see it as the focus for resistance to austerity. Yet if you examine Syriza's pronouncements and the utterances of its leader, Alexis Tsipras, you will see a model of, in his own words (Reuters 19/6/12), "responsible opposition".

A commentator on Al Jazeera (18/6/12) wondered whether Syriza "may be privately grateful to escape the responsibilities of governing Greece at this desperate time." Certainly, in the coming period Syriza will be the focus for opposition to the new government. It will encourage the illusion that austerity can be less harsh. But "Tsipras signalled that Syriza would not call its supporters onto the streets to protest against the austerity measures" (Reuters 19/6/12). He thinks that resistance is not the priority of the moment and says "Our role is to be inside and outside parliament, applauding anything positive and condemning all that is negative and proposing alternatives" (ibid).

Tsipras, who wants fair taxation, a moratorium on debts, and favours certain 'structural reforms', puts Syriza in a very mainstream tradition. In an interview in *Time* magazine (31/5/12) he declared that the New Deal policy in 1930s America was an example to follow, "we will realise that Roosevelt was right and follow that path." And it's not just a nostalgia for a lost past; he is an admirer of current state capitalist institutions in the US. Analysing the problems in European monetary union he says it's partly down "to the lack of a Central Bank which can act as a Central Bank, as [the] Fed does in the USA and which — as a last resort — will be able to lend money to a country which faces problems in the markets."

In an article for the *Financial Times* (12/6/12) Tsipras wrote "Syriza is the only political movement in Greece today that can deliver economic, social and political stability for our country. ... Only Syriza can guarantee Greek stability because we do not carry the political baggage of the establishment parties that have brought Greece to the brink of ruin."

This demonstrates Syriza's concern for capitalist stability, and also that its appeal lies mainly in not being PASOK or New Democracy. They relate to the anger in the population, but with a specific goal "Greece needs courageous and decisive leaders who can use the rage of our people... as a weapon to negotiate for the benefit of the country" (Reuters 19/6/12). The dozen or so leftist groups that make up Syriza want to use the rage of the people ... as a weapon in negotiations for Greek capitalism. The main difference with the Samaras government is that the coalition relies on people's fears rather than their anger. **Car 25/6/12**

June issue of WR

Due to pressure of work and other factors, the June issue of World Revolution was delayed and combined with the July/August issue. We did however continue to update the website with new material.

Subscriptions will be extended to cover the issue that has been missed.

What lessons can we draw from the social movements of 2011?

We're publishing here extracts from the first presentation to the ICC Day of Discussion held in London on 23 June. Its focus is the significance and lessons of the social revolts of 2011. The other two presentations – on the origins of Islam and on art in ascendant and decadent capitalism – can be found on our website, and we will also publish write-ups of the discussions and if possible an audio version of the day's debates.

This was a very fruitful meeting. It was well-attended – around thirty people, including ICC comrades and members of three other political organisations (Communist Workers Organisation, Commune, Socialist Party of Great Britain). The discussion was extremely lively, serious, and wide-ranging, and took place in a very fraternal atmosphere; and there was a high level of participation, as evidenced by the fact that the presentations and write-ups have all been undertaken by non-ICC comrades.

At the end of the meeting we discussed various themes for future days of discussion and there were a lot of suggestions: ecology, the causes of the economic crisis, immigration, the relationship between anarchism and marxism. The next meeting will probably take place at the beginning of 2013, so that will give plenty of time to reflect on these (and no doubt other) suggestions and prepare for the debate.

ICC, July 2012

For many of us who've been around a long time, who've gone grey (if they've still have any hair at all!), the events of 2011 were, in part, a reminder of times gone by: of the barricades of May 68 in France; of the strikes and assemblies the following year – the so-called Hot Autumn in Italy in 1969; of the next year of massive strikes in Poland 1970 and those across the globe in Argentina and then, in Britain in 1972, when it seemed the whole working class was mobilised and on strike.

In what way did the events of 2011 recall the late 60s and early 70s?

First and foremost, the sheer, global extent – the internationalism – of them. And whereas, 40 years ago, this 'wave' of struggle rolled out from one country to the next over a matter of years, in 2011 it happened in just months – from Tunisia to Algeria; from Egypt to Bahrain, Libya; from Greece to Chile; from Israel to America to Spain, Portugal and Britain....

Secondly, the massive nature of the movements of 2011 – not tiny minorities of the population but large, angry, 'indignant' swathes, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, in total hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, taking to the streets and squares, talking politics and taking action and organising themselves to do so.

The media grouped these expressions under two headings – the 'Arab Spring' and the 'Occupy' movements. The ICC Statement¹, which is the basis for our discussion here today, aims to draw a 'provisional balance sheet' of what it calls the 'social movements' or 'social revolts' of 2011.

While as Marxists we insist on the central importance of 'the working class', or 'the proletariat', we recognise that this term, paradoxically, may include millions who've never had the opportunity to work in their lives – the unemployed children of workers, for example. We also insist that while the proletariat is the revolutionary class in capitalist society, and requires its political and organisational autonomy, other classes – in fact the vast majority of the population outside the ruling class – have absolutely nothing to gain from the status quo. To quote from the statement: *"There is no opposition between the class struggle of the modern proletariat and the profound needs of the social layers exploited by capitalist oppression. The struggle of the proletariat is not an egotistical or specific movement but the basis for what the Communist Manifesto called: the 'independent movement of the immense majority to the benefit of the immense majority'."*

Therefore, today, whatever labels we employ we're looking at the dynamic underlying and expressed by the movements in 2011.

The first dynamic cited by the statement is the economic crisis. It's 5 years into its current, 'open' phase. That means that whereas in the previous thirty years, people who talked about the crisis of capitalism were largely looked on as lunatics, today almost everyone can see and feel a real blockage in the functioning of the social order, from a massive rise in unemployment, prices, taxes and bank crashes to lower wages, benefits, services and pensions affecting millions upon millions

and confronting countless more with destitution and poverty. In 50 years capitalism's gone from a debt-fuelled 'you've never had it so good' to firms going under, to industries going under, to finance houses going under, to countries bankrupted, to the entire financial system under unprecedented stress and to the probable break-up of an institution like the EU. There is no 'recovery'. There is no light at the end of this particular tunnel. It's this dawning realisation, and the sordid, everyday reality that underpins it, that mobilised the masses in 2011.

The second dynamic, as already mentioned, is the international scope of this movement, its simultaneity in different countries, as well as the spread from country to country.

Importantly, this was a 'knowingly' international movement, to a degree 'conscious' of itself as such, despite all the national flags and undeniable patriotism you could see. Thus in Spain, *"solidarity with the workers of Greece was expressed by slogans such as 'Athens resists, Madrid rises up'". The Oakland strikers (USA, November, 2011) said 'Solidarity with the occupation movement world wide'. In Egypt it was agreed in the Cairo Declaration to support the movement in the United States. In New York, a poster says 'We're All Khaled Said' – the 28 year old whose murder by Egyptian security forces in 2010 sparked the Tahir Square events. In Israel they shouted 'Netanyahu, Mubarak, al-Assad are the same' and contacts were made with Palestinian workers."* When Occupy Wall Street protesters called for an international day of solidarity, 900 cities around the world participated. While the Spanish Indignados movement of May 15 to July 2011 was influenced by events in Greece and Egypt, it in turn influenced Greek protesters to a new round of demonstrations culminating in assemblies *"on the Indignados model"*. In France, Belgium, Mexico, Portugal, there have been regular assemblies, though smaller in scale.

The third dynamic was self-organisation. We see street demonstrations as a matter of routine all over the world: mainly called by unions and or political parties, the routes are announced, the police are informed; there are stewards, there are speeches ... We also know what riots are. We see crowds united in their alienation at football matches or pop concerts. What we saw in 2011, particularly at its highest points, was none of this: it was on a qualitatively different level.

As well as reclaiming the streets and public squares for themselves, and setting their own agendas, *"the masses involved in these movements have not limited themselves to passively shouting their displeasure. They have actively participated in organising assemblies. The mass assemblies have concretised the slogan of the First International (1864) 'The emancipation of the working class is the work of the workers themselves or it is nothing'. This is the continuation of the tradition of the workers' movement stretching back to the Paris Commune ... General assemblies and workers' councils are the genuine form of the struggle of the proletariat and the nucleus of a new form of society."*

So having arisen, spontaneously, the movements, with greater or lesser success, began to organise. The assemblies permitted attempts at dis-

ussion, clarification, and the wielding of action. They were an expression of and an active factor in pushing real solidarity: *"In Oakland the strike assembly has agreed to send pickets or to occupy any company or school that punishes employees or students in any way for taking part in the General Strike of the 2nd November"*. In Spain, as in Tahir Square, squads were formed to free those arrested by police. In Spain again, action authorised by the assemblies prevented police harassment of immigrants. In Pisa, Italy, in Greece, in Egypt, in Spain, occupations of empty buildings by the homeless; attempts to prevent evictions; the takeover of hospitals by staff. In Egypt, the self organisation of neighbourhoods against the looting of government thugs. In Greece, today, farmers from Crete continue to distribute their produce free to the impoverished of Athens.

In themselves such actions may or may not be considered remarkable, but taken in isolation, they're hardly 'revolutionary'. In the context of an international movement, however, it's different... They took place amidst widespread thirst for the acquisition of knowledge and exchange of views and information; discussions about the economy, the crisis, a questioning of the existing order. What is democracy? Do we need a revolution? What kind? Are we political or non-political? How best to organise?

The assemblies began to overcome divisions of employed and unemployed, of religion, of generations, of trade or region. In Spain, they attempted a coordination, a political centralisation; in the US, they attempted an extension, particularly towards the workers as at the port in Oakland where workers supported their call for a general strike. The situation in Egypt was transformed when the workers' strikes for their own demands meshed with the protests. As the statement says: *The influence of the working class on the consciousness expressed in these movements has been tangible, both in the slogans and the forms of organisation they have thrown up."* And *"All of which starkly contrasted with what is 'normal' in this society with its anguished sense of hopelessness and vulnerability."* As was widely heard in Tunisia: *"We are no longer afraid...."*

Weaknesses

If we spoke about certain similarities between the late '60s and 2011, we should begin this section by recalling that, back then, there was no doubt about the power of the working class or its strikes. It was self-evident. In 2011, it's different. The working class has had many experiences but it's undeniably harder to go on strike today; there have been many bitter defeats. The ruling class is better prepared.

Anyway... It's been said, by the ICC at least, that the refusal of the Indignados in Spain and the US Occupy movement to be rushed into defining their demands, to fix limits to their movement, to enter into 'negotiations' with the state are further positive signs of an emerging proletarian consciousness, extending in both depth and extent.

But what did the movements demand? Bread, freedom from repression; dignity: certainly. The removal of hated figures: evidently. But it's less clear the movements could be said to know where they were going, of what historical evolution they were part, even if we could see, here and there, banners proclaiming that 'the only future is revolution'. In Spain, the frequent call was for 'all power to the assemblies'. But how to achieve this, and what to do with this power, and against whom to wield it?

The old foe of the workers' movement – bourgeois democracy, 'real democracy now', the abstract and a-historical bourgeois democracy of atomised citizens regrouped behind 'their' state, in flagrant contradiction to the movements' actual internationalism – was very present and often unrecognised by the movement. To quote:

"If there is a growing number of people in the world who are convinced that capitalism is an obsolete system, that 'in order for humanity to survive, capitalism must be killed' there is also a tendency to reduce capitalism to a handful of 'bad guys' (unscrupulous financiers, ruthless dictators) when it is really a complex network of social rela-

tions that have to be attacked in their totality and not dissipated into a preoccupation with its many surface expressions (finance, speculation, the corruption of political-economic powers).

"While it is more than justified to reject the violence that capitalism has exuded from every pore (repression, terror and terrorism, moral barbarity), this system will however not be abolished by mere passive and citizen pressure...."

"...Although the slogan of 'we are the 99% against the 1%', which was so popular in the occupation movement in the United States, reveals the beginnings of an understanding of the bloody class divisions that affect us, the majority of participants in these protests saw themselves as 'active citizens' who want to be recognized within a society of 'free and equal citizens'."

"However, society is divided into classes: a capitalist class that has everything and produces nothing, and an exploited class -the proletariat- that produces everything but has less and less...."

"The social movement needs to join up with the struggle of the principle exploited class - the proletariat - who collectively produce the main riches and ensure the functioning of social life..."

And as an earlier ICC article says *"The working class has not yet presented itself in these events as an autonomous force capable of assuming the leadership of the movements, which have often taken the form of revolts by the whole non-exploiting population."*

What's left? What lessons?

The social movements, though they continue (see for example Quebec) are well past their peak: the crisis deepens; austerity accelerates; the unions try to mobilise the employed workers, the core of the proletariat, in sterile general strikes that are in fact anything but generalised and over which the workers have little control or influence at present. On the surface, nothing seems to have changed. And yet...

- There are politicised minorities, in Spain and elsewhere, determined to influence and link up with the main battalions of the working class; they are an immediate residue, a fruit of the movement. Already they are intervening towards the struggles of today in Spain, in the US. They are also facing a fight not to be dispersed, to keep in touch, to prepare for the next moment and to draw the lessons of the last.

Among these lessons, the experience of the attempted sabotage of the general assemblies by 'specialists', experts and 'working groups' which seek to seize the momentum and leadership of the movement – is a valuable lesson for the whole proletariat. Assemblies, in themselves are not enough: there's a political battle to be waged for their soul, for creators to have mastery and control over their own creations and to make the general assembly the sovereign organ of the struggle and to make delegates revocable and responsible to the whole, not the other way around.

Much has been made of the 'youth' of the 2011 movements, and it's true. This energetic 'youth' is largely the product of a decomposing capitalism which cannot hope to integrate them into production, and despite their inexperience of labour, they are in fact part of the reserve army of labour, the unemployed, and it's not accidental that the ICC used to write that the privileged terrain of the unemployed is the streets...

- On technology: much was made of Twitter, Facebook and mobile phones to link and organise the struggles, to spread news of them. Again, true. It was excellent to be able to participate, from the arse end of England, via the ICC discussion forum, to an intervention into an assembly in America. But I feel we should be wary about putting too much emphasis on the purely technological aspect which still requires the consciousness of a movement to control it. The proletarian movement requires real people on the ground. The revolution will not be a virtual affair.

In conclusion, it would be good to hear appreciations of the movement and to try and gauge whether what the ICC statement says is considered broadly correct, or if there should be different emphases and lessons. **KT June 2012**

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/iconline/201203/4766/statement-social-movements-2011>

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From a thread on the ICC discussion forum 'How to intervene in the class struggle'?

Soyonstout, an ICC sympathiser from the USA, on the experience of distributing a leaflet to workers involved in the strike at the Verizon communications company

"...If I was a non-communist worker on strike for the first time and my union had pretty much given me a narrative that they were under attack along with me and my pension, and some people came to our demonstration talking about how no union under any circumstances actually fights for its members and signed something saying they were communists--I would not really have any experience or information to go on, other than the fact that I'd heard the union say that the bosses and republicans want to destroy the unions, which is what these communists want too. I don't think I'm babying the working class in saying this because I think the working class in struggle needs specific ideas just as much as they need general ones. I don't think anyone is suggesting tricking the workers into deserting the union or self-organizing, or hiding our views of the unions, but rather that what is relevant about our views on the unions to workers on strike is precisely what they mean for how to go forward and fight better in the future.

The reason marxism has delineated itself from idealism and from utopian socialism is because it claims that the real concrete material interests of the working class go against of the logic of capitalism and compel the working class to struggle against capitalism in order to protect their real concrete material interests--if we can't present our ideas in a way that is relevant to their struggle and their concrete material interests, if we cannot make the general specific, then we fail in our tasks as a vanguard for the workers' struggle. What I mean to say is--if what we say about the unions is simple denunciation it doesn't speak to the struggle except abstractly and it doesn't connect to the specific ways in which the union's plan hinders solidarity and give specific examples of what would build solidarity and spread the struggle if the union's plan was abandoned. My personal opinion is that the leaflet did do this, but occasionally got into some abstract denunciation that may not have had much connection to workers' experience in the last 20 years (which is a long time), and that denunciations of false friends are better done after determining and enumerating the goals and perspectives for the struggle, what is at stake, and the extent to which what is being done can force the bosses to back off.

[...]

I think the question would be entirely different in a struggle in which the workers had begun self-organizing or attempted to break out of the union but were being drawn back in or losing steam and the union was taking it over again--at that point I think we could be much more forceful, but since this strike seems to have been rather top down in its beginnings and the prospects for self-organization and extension were small, we wondered what the most positive things that could be gained from the experience would be. If we were leafleting a demo, or a wildcat, assembly, etc. it would have been different I think than leafleting a fenced-in picket. I think we did good but I think our reflection was productive too and we can maybe do even better in the future..."

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Imperialist powers hover as Syria sinks into barbarism



The killing power of the modern state easily dwarfs the crimes of an individual mass murderer like Anders Breivik, currently on trial in Oslo for shooting scores of young people at a Labour youth summer camp. The Assad regime in Syria continues to demonstrate its capacity to sow terror on an industrial scale. Town after town is subjected to intense artillery bombardment and the population is trapped in homes or cellars, deprived of food and electricity for days, even weeks. Army snipers are installed on the rooftops, picking off anyone foolhardy enough to try and forage some food for their families. And when the town finally falls, whole families are wiped out in a more direct and personal way, either by regular soldiers, or more frequently – since so many soldiers have deserted the ranks of the army in disgust at what it was forcing them to do – by shadowy criminal gangs known as ‘Shabiha’ or ghosts. The two most well-known massacres of late took place in just such a fashion in Houla and Mazraat al-Qubair, but they are by no means the only examples.

With the most shameless arrogance, the mouthpieces of the regime justify these bloody sieges by claiming that ‘armed terrorist groups’ have taken hold of the town in question. Very often they even blame the more widely publicised slaughters of women and children as the work of these groups, acting presumably to throw discredit on the government.

The brazen nature of the crimes and lies of the Syrian government is not however the mark of a regime resting on strong foundations. Rather it reflects the desperation of a regime whose days are numbered.

Faced with the widespread protests which erupted against his rule in the wake of the other massive movements throughout North Africa and the Middle East, Bashar al-Assad tried to follow

in his father’s footsteps: in 1982 Hafez al-Assad was faced with another uprising, led by the Muslim Brotherhood and centred in the city of Hama. The regime sent in the army and carried out an atrocious butchery: the death toll has been estimated at anything between 17,000 and 40,000. The uprising was crushed and the Assad dynasty has been able to maintain a more or less uncontested grip over the country for the past two and a half decades.

The situation has changed since 1982

But a quick dose of the most ruthless terror no longer works in the same way, because history has moved on since the mid-80s. To begin with, the relative stability that resulted from the old two-bloc system (in which Syria was the USSR’s most consistent ally in the region) was undermined by the collapse of the eastern bloc and the consequent unravelling of the bloc led from Washington. This profound shift in ‘international relations’ opened the doors of the arena to a whole number of imperialisms, small, medium and large, who were no longer ruled from afar by either of the old superpowers. In the Middle East, Iran was already a troublemaking element before the fall of the blocs, and its ambitions have been strengthened considerably by the US-led invasion of Iraq. Under Saddam, Iraq had been a major counter-weight to Tehran’s position in the region, but after Saddam was toppled the country was crippled by internal disorder and is governed by a weak Shia faction that is highly susceptible to Iranian influence. Turkey, once a reliable ally of the US, has begun playing its own game, increasingly presenting itself as the champion of the Muslim Middle East. Even Israel has been more and more asserting its independence from its US paymasters – a reality which is currently being underlined by the voices in the Israeli state calling for an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, a move that the US is reluctant to endorse because of the huge risk of chaos that it would entail¹.

In this cauldron of national ambitions, what began as an unarmed popular protest against the Assad regime has very quickly turned into a proxy war between regional and global imperialist pow-

1. See the editorial to the current *International Review* (no. 149): <http://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/201206/4980/editorial-massacres-syria-iran-crisisthe-threat-imperialist-catacly>

ers. Iran, Syria’s main local ally in the region², has been standing firmly by the Assad regime, and there have been reports of Revolutionary Guards or other agents of the Islamic Republic working on the ground as accomplices in Assad’s campaign of terror. Assad has also continued to enjoy the protection of Russia and China, who have been active in the UN Security Council in blocking a series of resolutions condemning the Assad government or calling for sanctions against it. Russia has had to moderate its stance in the face of very sharp criticism, making its first timid criticisms of Assad’s massacres, but its support for a policy of ‘non-intervention’ boils down to making sure that the rebel forces don’t get arms while the official armed forces keep their gigantic arsenal. In fact, Hilary Clinton recently accused Russia of supplying the regime with attack helicopters – to which the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov replied that the helicopters were purely for ‘defensive’ purposes and, anyway, the west was covertly arming the rebels.

This was the first time the Russians have openly made this accusation, but it has been true for a long time. Once the opposition coalesced into a serious bourgeois political force around the Free Syria Army and the Syrian National Council, there have been shipments of arms from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Turkey, meanwhile, has done an about-face, ending its previously friendly relations with the Assad regime, condemning its inhumanity, and offering protection to refugees fleeing the slaughter. On the military level it has amassed considerable forces on its Syrian border; and, in the same speech condemning Moscow for supply-

2. The Assad regime has long based its power on a divide and rule policy, making full use of the various religious and ethnic divisions that have a long history in the country. In particular, it has rooted itself in the Alawite religious minority, maintaining its support among this group – which is considered heretical by many Muslims – through a combined policy of handing out perks and privileges and instilling a climate of fear about what would happen to members of the sect if their protectors were removed from power. For its part, the Iranian Mullahs, to lend theological weight to their pro-Syria foreign policy, appear to have accepted the Alawites as part of the Shia Muslim fold. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/16/minority-sect-syria-dictatorship?INTCMP=SRCH>. This article shows that while many of the Shabiha are drawn from the Alawite minority, there are others, perhaps a majority, who are increasingly concerned that they will be indiscriminately associated with Assad’s crimes.

ing Syria with helicopters, Clinton suggested that Syria’s massing of forces around Aleppo, close to the Turkish border, “could well be a red line for the Turks in terms of their strategic or national interests” (*Guardian* 13 June). Most recently, Syria’s shooting down of Turkish aircraft, including a military jet which had allegedly violated Syrian airspace, has further heightened tensions between Ankara and Damascus.

Imperialist stalemate

Thus, the policy of terror, far from strengthening Assad’s hold over the country, has embroiled it in an increasingly unpredictable imperialist conflict, which also has the effect of exacerbating the religious and ethnic divisions inside the country: just as the Iranians support the dominant Alawite minority, so the Saudis – and no doubt any number of freelance jihadist attracted to the conflict like the hyenas they are – aim to impose some kind of Sunni regime. There are further divisions between Christians and Muslims, Kurds and Arabs, all of which threaten to become too widespread and too bitter to be manipulated without plunging the country into an even more chaotic situation, on the model of Iraq.

As Syria heads in the direction of becoming a failed state, and UN sanctions and observation missions are revealed as powerless to halt the killing, there have been growing calls for a ‘humanitarian’ military intervention on the part of the western powers. After all, say its partisans, it ‘worked’ in Libya, where France and Britain led the charge to impose a ‘no-fly zone’ which effectively resulted in the victory of the rebels and the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime. But in the case of Syria, states like Britain, France and the US are being much more cautious, despite calling more loudly for Assad to go. There are a number of reasons for their hesitation: the geographical terrain in Syria is much less amenable to aerial warfare than Libya, with its vast expanses of desert. And while in his final days Gaddafi had become isolated internationally, Syria has much stronger ties with Russia, China and Iran. With Israel already goading the US into attacking Iran by threatening to do the job itself, an escalation of the war in Syria could also light the blue touch paper over Iran, with even more devastating consequences. Moreover, Assad’s army is far better equipped and

Continued on page 4

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 stultified 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*.