



# world revolution

## Neither right nor left have a solution to the economic crisis

Explaining why it decided to downgrade Britain's AAA credit rating, the credit agency Moody's tells us that Britain's "sluggish growth" will in all probability "extend into the second half of the decade", resulting in a "high and rising debt burden". And indeed, Britain's borrowing is already forecast to be £212 billion higher than planned over this parliament.

Britain is therefore facing not just a triple-dip recession, with the economy shrinking in five out of 10 quarters since the summer of 2010 but an out-and-out depression. Britain's poor performance is second only to Italy's among the countries of the G7. Investment in the UK economy is 15% below what it was before the open financial crash of 2007.

The human cost of these dry figures? A fall in living standards unprecedented since the 1920s. The average worker has lost around £4,000 in real wages over the past three years. In 2012, real wages are predicted to be no higher than their 1999 level. And although there has recently been a 7.8% fall in official unemployment figures, there has been an increase in involuntary part-time working and a sharp drop in productivity.

The government's response to this disaster? That the loss of the AAA rating, maintaining which was a central justification for the Coalition's austerity programme, only goes to show that we must press on regardless. The Tory-LibDem medicine is accelerating the patient's decline into depression and failing to shrink the UK's gigantic tumour of debt. And these wise doctors reply: 'more of the same'.

So the economic policies of the right are proving their utter worthlessness. And less and less people are fooled by the excuse that 'we are only making up for the 13 years of Labour misrule' which preceded the present Coalition.

All these points are taken from the article 'Osborne hasn't just failed – this is an economic disaster' by Seamus Milne, published in the Comment pages of *The Guardian* on 27 February. Milne is one of the most left-wing of *The Guardian's* regular commentators. His article demonstrates very clearly the bankruptcy of the government's economic solutions. But his 'alternative' programme no less clearly demonstrates the bankruptcy of capitalism's left wing.

"The shape of that alternative is clear enough: a large-scale public investment programme in housing, transport, education and green technology to drive recovery and fill the gap left by the private sector, underpinned by a boost to demand and financed through publicly-owned banks at the lowest interest rates for hundreds of years".

These apparently radical measures go hand in hand with a criticism of the hesitations of the

Labour Party. For Milne, Ed Miliband is faced with a "crucial choice", since the fall in living standards is greatly increasing Labour's chances of re-election: "So far Miliband has backed a limited stimulus, slower cuts and wider, if still hazy, economic reform. Given the Cameron Coalition's legacy and the cuts and tax rises it's planning well into the next parliament, the danger is that Labour could lock itself into continuing austerity in

a bid for credibility. As the experience of its sister parties in Europe has shown, that would be a calamity for Labour – but also for Britain".

It is arguments like these which show that Milne's starting point is a fundamental premise of bourgeois ideology: that capitalist social relations, and the political state which maintains them, are eternal, the only possible basis for organising human society.

### Tunisia, Egypt: the dead end of the 'Arab revolution'

With the so-called 'Arab revolutions' celebrating their second anniversary, the riots and mass demonstrations of the last few months and weeks in Egypt and Tunisia are a reminder that despite the departure of the dictators Ben Ali and Mubarak, nothing has been resolved. On the contrary, the economic situation has got worse, bringing growing unemployment, poverty and attacks on the working class. Meanwhile the reigning authoritarianism, the violence and repression being handed out to the demonstrators, is no different from what went on before.

#### Immense anger and courage....

Tunisia, where the young Mohammed Bouazizi's suicide unleashed the 'Arab spring' in 2011, is going through a deep social, economic and political crisis. The official unemployment rate is 17% and for months now there have been strikes in many sectors. The anger which has been expressed openly and massively on the streets of a number of towns in the last few weeks didn't come from nowhere. Back in December, unemployed youth clashed violently with the police in the town of Silihana, protesting against the austerity programme announced by president Moncef Marzouki. The repression and the wounding of 300 demonstrators, some of them by buck-shot, led to solidarity demonstrations in several other cities including the capital. The Tunisian president declared that "we don't just have one Silihana. I am afraid that this will be repeated in a number of regions".

More recently it was the murder of the secular opposition figure Chokri Belaïd which pushed the population into the street, while at his funeral 50,000 people called for "a new revolution" and demanded "bread, freedom and social justice", the



Demonstration for bread in Tunisia

main slogan of 2011. In a dozen towns there were attacks on the local police stations and the HQs of the Islamist party in power, Ennahda. The army was called in to control the mass demonstrations in Sidi Bouzid where the 'jasmine revolution' began two years ago.

To calm the situation and recuperate the movement, the UGTT, the national union confederation, called a general strike, the first for 35 years in Tunisia, while the government put on a show of changes at the top in anticipation of the legislative elections in June. At the moment, the tension seems to have died down but it is clear that the anger is not going away, especially since a promised loan from the IMF will involve new, drastic austerity measures.

In Egypt the situation is no better. The country has defaulted on its payments. Last October, the World Bank published a report which expressed its "disquiet" about the proliferation of strikes, with a record 300 in the first half of September. At the end of the year there were many anti-government demonstrations, in particular around the ref-

This is clear at the 'political' level: a solution to the economic disaster can be found by pushing the Labour Party further left and engaging in the alleged choice offered by parliamentary elections. The existing system of bourgeois democracy is not to be questioned.

And the state system which was born and has its being in the needs of the exploiting capitalist class is also proclaimed as the instrument which will defend the needs of the vast majority: public investment, public banks, Keynesian policies of stimulating demand. And all within the framework of 'Britain', of the nation state. These policies can all be summed up in the phrase: state capitalism.

So just as Cameron, faced with the slide into depression, advocates policies that can only make it slide faster, so Milne, like the TUC in its 'Alternative for Growth', advocates the same measures which provoked the 'debt crisis' in the first place: economic growth fuelled by vast injections of fictitious capital.

Neither the right or left wings of the official political spectrum are capable of admitting that today's economic depression is, just like the depression of the 1930s and the world wars that preceded and followed it, confirmation that capitalist social relation as such – the exploitation of wage labour, production for sale and profit, the division of the world into competing nation states armed to the teeth – have become an obstacle to human progress. Neither the right nor the left will admit that we are witnessing the bankruptcy not just of this government or that country, but of the capitalist phase of civilisation, and on a worldwide scale; that this civilisation has outlived its usefulness and its capacity to be reformed. This is why the only genuine 'alternative' is for the exploited of the world to struggle together against all attacks on their living standards, preparing the ground for a social revolution that will halt the accumulation of capital and replace it with a real human community – with communism. **Amos 2/3/13**

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# The development of British foreign policy under Cameron

David Cameron has had a busy start to the year. In early February he visited Libya and Algeria. A couple of weeks later he was in India with the largest trade delegation ever assembled by a British Prime Minister. Before that he had given the long-awaited speech on Europe in which he finally promised a referendum after the next election. What does all this tell us about British foreign policy?

Following the last election, in the resolution on the British Situation adopted by the Congress of World Revolution in the autumn of 2010,<sup>1</sup> we noted that the coalition government had already begun to explore how to escape from the impasse in foreign relations that was the result of the adventures of Blair. We identified two strands to this, firstly, an attempt to cultivate new relationships with countries such as Turkey and India, while still trying to balance between the US and Germany and, secondly, a more vigorous effort to build up trade to help the recovery from the economic crisis. In April last year, we noted that Britain had notched up a success with its intervention in Libya and that Cameron had effectively managed the European situation, both in terms of resisting proposals that would have affected the financial sector in Britain and in terms of keeping the Euro-sceptics in his party more or less in line.<sup>2</sup>

## The foundations of British foreign policy

The starting point for an understanding of British policy is the material interests of the ruling class. At the economic level, as we showed in *World Revolution* no. 353, Britain has strong trade links with Europe (its main partner) and the US (its most profitable partner) but also important links to the rest of the world. The present situation is one where there continue to be significant shifts, with Europe's share of global production (currently 25% according to Cameron's speech on Europe) set to decline significantly. China is continuing to increase its share as part of the wider shift of production from the old centres of production in Europe and the US and is likely to become the biggest producer in the world in the near future while India is predicted to move into third position. These developments have been underlined by the latest report on Britain's trade by the Office for National Statistics: "By area, there has been a shift in the pattern of the UK's trade over the past 10 years. In 2002, around 62% of the UK's exports went to the rest of the EU... 59% of our imports came from the EU. In 2012, those proportions had been reduced to 51% and 50% respectively... Trade with France also grew modestly over this period; at around one-quarter the rate of growth of trade with Germany, which became our largest trading partner (taking exports and imports together) in 2012, supplanting the United States."<sup>3</sup>

Within this shift the group of countries known as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) have a particular significance, with exports to the whole group increasing by 37.6% since 2008. This is led by exports to China, which have grown more than fivefold between 2001 and 2011,<sup>4</sup> while exports to India have also risen significantly.

The question of Europe also has a weight. While the danger of an immediate collapse of the Eurozone seems to be passing, the longer-term and more significant legacy is what the crisis reveals about the historic decline in Europe's status within the global economy.

Such economic factors do not translate in a straightforward manner into foreign policy. Rather, they help to shape the context within which that policy is developed.

At the imperialist level, some of the members of the BRICS have also assumed a greater sig-

nificance. Again, this is first and foremost the case with China, which is using its economic power to build up its global strategic weight and is aspiring to become a global power capable of challenging the US. The British ruling class is alive to these real and potential shifts in the global balance of power, while remaining pragmatic enough to know that it still has to take account of the US and Europe.

The consequence of these economic and geopolitical developments, which contribute to the uncertainty and complexity of the international situation that has developed since 1989, is that the interests of the British bourgeoisie currently seem to be best met by a policy of flexibility. The changing global situation offers the British bourgeoisie scope for action beyond the confines of recent years, although this in no way implies that it can escape its past and the historic decline of its power and status on the world stage.

## The economic dimension of foreign policy

The changing global economic context referred to above was at the heart of Cameron's speech on Europe: "The challenges come not from within the continent but outside it. From the surging economies in the east and south"; "The map of global influence is changing before our eyes"; "Taken as a whole, Europe's share of world output is projected to fall by almost a third in the next two decades."<sup>5</sup> It is important to acknowledge this reality. The shift in the global economy encapsulated in the term globalisation is real, albeit that it takes place in the period of decadence, which means that it unfolds in a different manner to capitalism in its period of ascendancy. In particular, the changes of recent years do not mean that capitalism has overcome its structural crisis or that it can do so. Indeed, it is the crisis that drives forward the global changes as capital moves restlessly around the world in the search for profit and as nations jostle for position in a world unbound from the ties of the old blocs.

In his speech Cameron put forward five principles "for a new European Union, fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century". The first two of these were competitiveness and flexibility: "Competitiveness demands flexibility, choice and openness – or Europe will fetch up in a no-man's land between the rising economies of Asia and market-driven North America."<sup>6</sup> What Cameron means by such 'competitiveness' and 'flexibility' can be seen in the changes in the labour market where significant steps have been taken over the last 30 or more years to reduce the cost of labour and make it fit in with the needs of capital. The result has been the increase in part time and temporary working, the replacement of higher paid jobs with lower paid ones, the changes in pensions, sick pay and other benefits that most of us have experienced in one form or another. It can also be seen in the relative freedom given to the financial sector with the easing of old regulations and the protection given to the largest institutions.

This is why Britain is unwilling to accept the constraints of the EU, in particular in relation to financial matters given the importance of this sector in generating profits (these may be fictitious at the level of the global economy, but they are fairly real for British capitalism – the price is paid elsewhere). It also makes Britain resistant to the social aspects of Europe that regulate labour and seem to reflect the dominance of the German economy, which has managed to retain a strong and productive manufacturing base in contrast to many other of the advanced economies. This makes it clear that Cameron's efforts to reshape Britain's relationship with Europe is not simply an expression of the weight of the Euro-sceptics in the Tory party but is part of the effort to maintain the freedom of action of British capital.

Cameron's call for greater flexibility also reflects the effort to build up links beyond Europe, which at the economic level means developing relationships with those countries that are gaining economic significance. As we noted above,

5. Taken from the text of Cameron's speech published on the Guardian website, 23/01/13  
6. Ibid.

Cameron marked the start of his premiership with efforts not just to drum up trade, something all Prime Ministers do, but also to build links with the rising economies in the East: "This was evident in the trip to India in July 2010 when a deal to sell military equipment was signed, and has been confirmed in the visit to China in November 2010 with the proposed signing of deals to supply the Chinese market, reportedly worth several billion pounds."<sup>7</sup>

Cameron has continued this effort with a significant number of trade missions around the world over the last two and a half years. In 2011 he visited Egypt and Kuwait and in 2012 Saudi Arabia (twice), Indonesia, Japan, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Brazil, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Oman. Much of this activity was directed towards selling arms, an area where Britain really does still play a global role. In 2011 Britain had 15% of the world export market for arms second only to the US. It is reported that the arms industry supports 300,000 jobs, but other estimates are much lower and the government has now stopped recording these statistics.

The visit to India in mid-February was just the latest of these missions, albeit the largest with over one hundred companies and other organisations accompanying Cameron. On arriving in India, he declared that he wanted Britain to be India's "partner of choice" and for the two countries to develop a "special relationship". He has set a target of doubling Britain's trade with India between 2010 and 2015 and seems on course to achieve this. According to the Export-Import Bank of India,<sup>8</sup> between 2006 and 2012 India's merchandise trade increased threefold, from \$252bn to \$794bn. Britain is the eighth most important destination for Indian exports, accounting for 2.89% of exports in April to September this year and the 21<sup>st</sup> largest source of imports. British statistics show exports and imports of both goods and service rising three or four fold over the last decade and roughly balancing each other. In 2011 exports of goods totalled £5.69bn and imports £6.09bn with the same figures for trade in services being £2.63bn and £2.45bn. To put this in context, exports of goods to India accounted for just 1.9% of total British exports and exports of services just 1.4% of the total.

One area where Britain hopes to do well is arms sales. So important is this that Cameron has had no qualms about announcing that part of the aid budget can be used to fund the military, with the usual hypocritical caveat that it would not be used to fund combat operations or equipment. India is a very tempting market and has been significantly increasing the amount it spends on armaments. A dozen firms linked to arms production were part of the trade mission that accompanied Cameron, including Rolls-Royce and BAE. Britain is not alone in these efforts. The week before Cameron's visit, President François Hollande of France had spent two days in India failing to finalise a deal worth \$14bn to sell French fighters. Cameron made no secret of his intention to persuade India to buy the Eurofighter Typhoon instead, commenting "I think the Typhoon is a superior aircraft".<sup>9</sup> However, India is aware of the strength of its position and had no hesitation in threatening to cancel a deal to sell helicopters agreed in 2010 because of allegations that bribes were paid to Indian government officials, or in applying pressure for Britain to relax its visa system.

## The strategic dimension of imperialist policy

Britain has experienced considerable difficulty in pursuing its strategic interests. There is no simple overlap between strategic and economic interests. For example, as we have just seen, Britain will not hesitate to snatch an arms deal with India from under the noses of the French despite the closer military co-operation since the last defence review.

As we mentioned at the start of this article, since

7. "Britain: economic crisis and imperialist dead-ends" in *World Revolution* no. 340.

8. Cited in a report on the *Guardian* website.

9. Quoted in "David Cameron seeks to recast 'special relationship' with India", *Guardian*, 19/02/13

coming to office Cameron has looked for ways to escape from the impasse that was the legacy of New Labour's more grandiose imperialist efforts. One aspect of this has been the closer military co-operation with France, which also has the effect of counter-balancing Germany's dominance in Europe (a dominance it has sought to advance on the back of the economic crisis, albeit with some genuine reservations about the cost of doing so). The successful intervention in Libya was the first fruit of this approach, although the increasing violence and factionalism has tarnished this somewhat. The recent intervention in Mali to support the French military action, and the visit to Algeria in the aftermath of the hostage crisis in January, were both opportunities seized to continue this effort. The intervention in Mali was obviously the more carefully planned of the two and, in addition to the logistical and training help that has been announced, it is quite possible that British special forces are on the ground. While Britain does not have the same historic interests in the region as France it certainly has some current economic interests in the Algerian energy resources, as well as a more general strategic interest in having a presence in a continent that is gaining in strategic importance. These are steps to help Britain reassert its claim to be a global player and this may explain why Cameron chose to echo Blair with talk of a generational struggle against terrorism, despite the evidence that the groups in Algeria and Mali have only limited links to al-Qaida and far more local aspirations.<sup>10</sup>

The visit to India was also about more than trade, since India has regional aspirations of its own and is part of the increasing imperialist tensions across Asia that are driven in particular by the growing international assertiveness of China.

This is not a break from the idea of the independent course which in our analysis has been defended by the majority of the British bourgeoisie over the last two or more decades. Rather it represents its adaptation and continuation within the current international situation. This situation has become more complex and more uncertain in recent years as a result of the economic crisis, the growth of imperialist rivalries and changes within the ruling class of some countries, notably those affected by the 'Arab spring' but also those, such as Mali, where the ruling faction is losing its grip. This complexity, while challenging and dangerous, also offers opportunities for a secondary power like Britain which, while it can no longer aspire to dominate any significant geographical area, can still draw on the strength of its military forces and the depth of its historical experience to try and carve out a niche for itself. There is nothing certain about this and Afghanistan and Iraq stand as warnings about having pretensions that no longer match reality. The British ruling class is still struggling to come to terms with these facts, even if Cameron has so far appeared more realistic than Blair. But then Blair also seemed quite realistic until 9/11.

## Differences within the British bourgeoisie

The flexibility of Britain's imperialist and global economic policy is an intelligent and pragmatic response to its situation, which, despite Cameron's successes, remains very difficult. But it also underlines the fact that there is significant scope for differences within the British bourgeoisie. In the 1990s we noted the existence of a pro-US faction within the British ruling class at the imperialist level and contrasted it with the independent line favoured by the majority. In hindsight, this was probably too simplistic an analysis, since the differences were probably more nuanced than being simply pro-US and anti-US and the factions more balanced than we assumed at the time. Today, it is clear that this debate continues and has been reinforced both by the failures under Blair and the changes in the international situation.

A division has now opened up over economic policy that did not seem to be there yesterday,

10. See "Al-Qaida: how great is the terrorism threat to the west now?", *Guardian*, 29/01/13.

# 'Marriage for everyone': only communist society can put an end to sexual discrimination

By announcing the forthcoming adoption of a law authorising gay marriage, the French government has provoked a series of mobilisations and media debates where everyone is asked to choose their camp: 'for' or 'against' gay marriage. The same thing has happened in other countries: in Britain David Cameron's proposal to legalise gay marriage has created deep divisions in both the Tory party and the Anglican Church (which had already been convulsed by the scandalously radical idea of allowing gay priests and women bishops).

## Homophobic demonstrations are an expression of capitalist decomposition

The repulsive demonstrations organised by various homophobic organisations like 'Civitas' or 'Famille de France' were shockingly large. If the fundamentalist Catholics, with their monkish garb and massive crucifixes were the main troops, the breadth of these mobilisations shows how far decaying capitalism is spreading irrationality, dehumanisation and the hatred of the 'other'. Under the cover of slogans about 'defending the family', the demonstrators hardly hid their racist and homophobic prejudices.

In the face of these manifestations of hatred and

collective delirium, organised in the name of an inhuman 'normality', the proletariat must affirm its attachment to sexual freedom, the respect for differences, but from the starting point of its own class struggle. Because the struggle for communism is not just a combat for bread to eat and for a roof over our heads. It is above all a combat for the emancipation of human beings, for "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (*Communist Manifesto*).

## Marriage serves the interests of the possessing class

A question remains however: will the legalisation of homosexual marriage take society towards greater sexual freedom? Leaving aside the idea that 'marriage for everyone' is a way of fighting against discrimination – insults, aggression, homophobic bosses won't unfortunately disappear with the wave of a magic wand – and all the waffle about 'human rights' and 'equality before the law' – the arguments used in favour of gay marriage reveal the reactionary nature of this new contract: the bourgeoisie, and especially its left parties, present gay marriage as a social advance which will allow people to benefit from the 'financial advantages' and 'rights of inheritance' enjoyed by heterosexual couples, in particular with regard to children who can only inherit from one of their parents. These arguments are a perfect illustration of the fact that marriage is nothing but a

money relation. As Marx put it in the *Communist Manifesto*: "On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie".

Of course many workers get married to sincerely express their love and to benefit from the meagre financial and administrative advantages that go with it. But marriage is an institution which is fundamentally linked to class societies. For the bourgeoisie, marriage has little to do with love. It is above all a contract for the conservation and transmission of private property.

"this marriage of convenience turns often enough into crassest prostitution-sometimes of both partners, but far more commonly of the woman, who only differs from the ordinary courtesan in that she does not let out her body on piece-work as a wage-worker, but sells it once and for all into slavery!"

This is the nature of the 'social progress' promised by the left: a reform based on the commodification of human beings and on capitalist production, a system which lies at the root of all the discriminations and all the harassment and pogrom-type behaviour towards gay people. **EI Generico 24/1/13**

1. Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In his work Engels makes a thorough historical critique of the family, and especially of the role of marriage in class societies.

From the ICC online forum thread:

## The false debate on gay marriage: Personal emancipation impossible under capitalism

"So yippee gays can now get married in England and Wales. Aren't they lucky? And what a triumph for Cameron and UK liberalism. It only remains now for all these newly weds to be able to find jobs, affordable housing, money to pay bills for food, water, power, transport and you name it, and everything in the garden will be rosy..."

And what about gays in Africa; will they be getting married? Well, you can be out to death for being gay in many African countries, so I doubt weddings will be all that popular. ... And Anglicans have been quick too, to embrace all manner of oddities like women priests and bishops, even gay and lesbian priests and bishops - as long as you don't actually "do it" - though it must be difficult to check! ... The Catholic church of Rome of course wouldn't touch gay sex with a barge pole, never mind something more responsive, and prefers to deal with sensitive personal matters like these, sub rosa, in private and away from prying eyes. ... Rome now has the additional and unforeseen embarrassment of concealing the real nature of the Magdalene Laundry scandals, through which scam the church was able to abuse and exploit the slave labour of hundreds of unfortunate young women ... with easy profits for the church.

But Henk is right. All the noise the bourgeoisie makes about it's hallowed and crippling institutions like marriage, and indeed the church itself, is just bluster disguising the fact that capitalism stinks and is decomposing and needs to be put down." (Fred)

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## Tunisia, Egypt: the dead end of the 'Arab revolution'

erendum organised by the Muslim Brotherhood to legitimate their hold on power. Since 25 January, the day of the second anniversary of the 'Egyptian revolution', the protests have widened. Day after day, thousands of demonstrators have denounced the living conditions imposed by the new government and called for Morsi to get out.

But once again it has been anger over repression which has lit the fuse. The announcement on 26 January of the death sentence against 21 supporters of the al-Masry football club in Port Saïd because of their involvement in the drama at the end of the match on 1 February 2012, where 77 people were killed<sup>1</sup>, sparked off a new wave of violence. The peaceful demonstrations called by the National Salvation Front, the main opposition force, resulted in scenes of urban guerrilla warfare. On the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> February, at Tahrir Square and in front of the presidential palace, thousands of demonstrators took part in a pitched battle with the forces of order. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February there were still thousands throwing stones and molotovs at the forces protecting the building. In one week, the violent repression of the demonstrations resulted in 60 deaths, 40 of them in Port Saïd. A

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/iconline/201202/4690/drama-port-said-egypt-police-provocation-aimed-entire-population>

Continued from page 2

with the Tory party largely dominated by the Euro-sceptics and a minority more and more openly calling for Britain to leave the EU. However, on the whole this is not an outright rejection of all things European but an expression of genuine differences of view about how Britain's economic interests can best be served. Even those who want to leave the EU still want to maintain strong trade and financial links, but they also want to be free to reinforce links elsewhere in the world. Cameron shares some of these aims but not the approach to realising them, possibly because he sees the risks in doing this: for all the changes referred to the current reality is that Europe is Britain's largest trade partner and is likely to remain so for some time. Thus, leaving the EU could have serious consequences.

In this light the promise, or threat, of a referendum on the EU is a way through the current pressures. On the one hand, it is a bargaining chip in

video showing a man whose clothes had been torn off him and was being beaten by the police further inflamed the demonstrators. Despite the curfews imposed by the regime, demonstrations took place in three towns along the Suez Canal. One demonstrator declared: "We are on the streets now because no one can force his words on us...we will not submit to the government".

In the town of Ismaïlia, apart from the marches, football matches were organised to defy the curfew, and the HQ of the Muslim Brotherhood was torched.

Faced with the extent of the anger, the police, fearing for their own safety, demonstrated in 10 provinces on 12 February, demanding that the government stop using them as instruments of repression in the troubles sweeping the country! In December, a number of them had already refused to confront the demonstrators in Cairo and had declared their solidarity with the protests.

## ...but without a perspective...

The themes which can be heard in all these demonstrations are "Ennahda, out!" and "Morsi, out!", just as, two years ago, it was "Ben Ali, out" and "Mubarak, out!". But while at the beginning of 2011 there was great hope for change, in a royal road to 'democratic' freedom, in 2013 the mood

negotiations with Europe, on the other, it is a bargaining chip to maintain the unity of the Tory party. Cameron was also quite explicit in his speech on Europe that he wants to delay the referendum to see how the crisis in the Eurozone is resolved: "A vote today between the status quo and leaving would be an entirely false choice. Now – while the EU is in flux, and when we don't know what the future holds and what sort of EU will emerge from the crisis – is not the right time to make such a momentous decision about the future of our country."

Nonetheless, the promise to hold a referendum has prompted a response from pro-Europeans, both from within the Tory party and from within big business, for whom the single market and the single currency is seen to be in their interests. There has also been a response from the US for whom the British presence within Europe acts as a counterweight to Germany. In short the question of Europe, like the wider questions of Britain's economic and imperialist future is not settled. **North, 28/02/13**

is of disenchantment and anger. However, at root, the same democratic illusions remain because they are strongly anchored in people's minds. This is maintained by a powerful ideological barrage which now points the finger at religious fanaticism as being the cause of the repression and the assassinations, when in fact this hides the continuity in the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie. We have seen this strikingly both in Tunisia and Egypt, where the regime has not hesitated to use repression against the popular demonstrations when it was powerless in the face of workers' strikes. Illusions will always be paid for in blood. After the departure of the 'secular' dictators, we've had religious leaders, 'democratically' imposing another dictatorship, this time justified by Sharia law. All the focus has been on this but it's the same old dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and its state, the same oppression of the population, the same exploitation of the working class.

The belief that you can change life by choosing this or that clique of the bourgeoisie is an illusion, and it paves the way for repression and state violence. This is particularly true in countries which for decades have been run by backward bourgeois factions, propped up by the developed countries. None of these factions have any viable perspective or any credible economic programme to offer, as we have seen from the coalitions that have come and gone in these two countries. Poverty has accelerated and generalised, with the agrarian crisis – and thus the food crisis – reaching unprecedented levels. It's not that these leaders are especially stupid, but the countries they run are in an impasse and this is a reflection of the dead-end reached by the whole world capitalist system.

"The people want another revolution" cried the young unemployed in Siliana. But if by 'revolution' you mean just changing the government or the regime, while waiting to be devoured alive by the next bunch in power, or if you focus merely on street battles against this or that bourgeois faction, when you are disorganised in the face of professional killers armed by the big powers, you are only preparing your own suicide.

That the populations of Tunisia and Egypt have raised their heads again is a result of the fact that there is a strong working class composition in both countries. We saw this clearly with the multiplication of strikes in 2011. But this is why it's all the more important for the working class not to get dragged into the clash between pro- and anti-

Islamists, pro- and anti-liberals. The continuation of the strikes shows the potential strength of the proletariat, its capacity to defend its living and working conditions, and we should welcome its enormous courage.

## ...unless the struggle develops in the central countries

But these struggles can't offer a real way forward if they remain isolated. In 1979 in Iran we saw a series of workers' strikes and revolts which also showed the strength of the proletarian reaction. But cooped up in the national context, and with an insufficient maturation of workers' struggles on a world scale, these movements succumbed to democratic illusions and got caught up in conflicts between bourgeois gangs. It is above all the proletariat in the west, because of its experience, its concentrated nature, which bears the responsibility for putting forward a real revolutionary perspective. The movements of the Indignados in Spain and Occupy in the US and Britain explicitly claimed continuity with the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, with their courage and determination. The slogan of the 'Arab spring', "we are not afraid", must indeed be a source of inspiration for the world proletariat. But it is the beacon of workers' assemblies in the heart of capitalism, responding to the attacks of capitalism in crisis, which can offer an alternative that aims at the radical overthrow of this system of exploitation which holds nothing in store for us but poverty and barbarity.

The working class should not minimise the real weight it has in society, both because of its place in production but also and above all because of what it represents for the future of the world. So while the workers of Egypt and Tunisia need to avoid being misled by the mirage of bourgeois democracy, the workers in the central countries can play a crucial role in showing the path through the desert. The proletarians of Europe have the longest experience of confronting the most sophisticated traps of bourgeois democracy. They have to gather the fruits of this historic experience and take their consciousness to a higher level. By developing their own struggles, by affirming themselves as a revolutionary class, they can break the isolation facing the desperate battles taking place across the planet and renew hope in a new world for the whole of humanity. **Wilma 15.2.13**

## The experience in the UK in the 1980s, part 2

The defeat of the miners and printers in Britain did not bring the wave of class struggles of that decade to a close. 1987 saw a nationwide strike of British Telecom workers. In February 1988, there was a real wave of struggles involving car workers, health workers, postal workers, seafarers, and others. Internationally the movement also continued, with important struggles in the education sector in Italy and among healthworkers in France.

These movements showed a number of signs of a process of maturation in the working class. The struggles in Italy and France, for example, saw the emergence of general assemblies and revocable committees to coordinate the struggle, and in several cases members of revolutionary organisations (the ICC and others) were elected as delegates.

There was also a small but potentially important development of organisation among unemployed workers. *WR 92* (March 1986) contained reports of our participation in meetings of unemployed committees in France Germany, and the UK.

In the strikes in Britain, there was less direct evidence of independent self-organisation, but there was certainly a growing distrust of the unions, and we saw some encouraging signs of workers taking charge of the extension of the struggle. For example, the nurses who sent large delegations to the car factories and bus garages and asked them to come out in solidarity.

A further expression of this process was the attempts by a minority of workers to form workplace-based struggle groups. In the last issue of *WR* we looked at the Picket group which appeared during the printers' strike, but the groups which emerged after 1987 went further than Picket in their attempts to break from the unions. In this issue we will return to the pages of our paper in the late 1980s to look at some examples of how we covered this phenomenon at the time

### From *WR 112*, March 1988

This issue of the paper contained articles on the February strike wave, but it also pointed to evidence of independent organising among a militant minority. *WR 110* had already published a letter from a postal worker in London on how the Union of Communication Workers collaborated with management in the imposition of 'Improved Working Methods'. This comrade was a sympathiser of the ICC and became involved in both the Communication Workers' Group and the Action Group for Workers' Unity. *WR 112* contained a letter from a Bristol postal worker who was also a member of the CWG. This letter, as we said at the time, showed "how the UCW attempts to deal with unofficial actions. Although this is a particular local example of what a union has done in a specific industry, it is typical of what workers experience in an epoch when unions can do nothing but serve the interests of capital. The issue of casual workers was brought up in the letter in *WR 110* and this is a classic example of the unions' attempt to sow divisions in the working class...."

### Letter from a postal worker

Dear comrades

As a postal worker in Bristol, I thought it might be of interest to outline our recent experience with the UCW.

The recent wave of wildcat strikes over the 'Xmas' bonus hit the main Bristol office on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It started with a 24 hour stoppage, and even as this local area union man was pleading to the press that it would go no further than the sorters at the main office, and not "spread" to people not "involved", it did.

Basically, by the mass meeting three days later, the dispute involved most grades – sorting, driving, part-time, catering etc, many of which had 'different' bonus schemes, or, like the part-time workers, none at all. Of course this wasn't about to lead to a more generalised struggle, but the UCW were going to make damn sure that it didn't! The fact that the strike was 'unofficial' forced the union to reveal its true nature – after all it was they who negotiated the bloody deal in the first place! So, the man from the UCW picks up the megaphone and his first words were "there will be no debate on this, I'll give you the facts, and then you

will vote on them". The following lack of 'debate', despite interventions to the contrary, included the method by which we were to return to work – so the vote was for a return to work. It then emerged that the trade union 'solidarity' that we had been thanked for had been very selective indeed! The union was in fact only interested in pickets stopping full UCW members from crossing the lines – temporary workers (after all only associate members of the union) were told to cross the line, to work twelve hour shifts (nice one!). This is the nub of the whole problem. The Bristol Area, unlike others, has reached a series of agreements with the bosses to use part-time workers, casuals and temporary workers. Then adding all this to the differences between the eleven different grades in the UCW, the idea of 'divide and rule' has been introduced by the union and now they can try and apply these differences to control discontent.

Anyhow, this sort of action by the UCW has opened up the eyes of many workers to the role of 'our union'

Yours  
Bristol Postal Worker

On the same page of *WR 112* we also published the founding statement of a 'Workers' Action Group' formed in a school in east London (the WAG later changed its name to Action Group for Workers' Unity).

### An action group for workers' unity

We have decided to form a Workers' Action Group because we recognise that

- faced with the growing attack on all workers being launched by the state (whether through central government, local councils or private employers)

- faced with a widening response to these attacks (Fords, NHS, ferries, mines, ILEA, etc) there is an increasing necessity for all workers to fight together, to forge a common front against this erosion of our living standards.

But in this school, as throughout the working class, workers are divided by job categories and union affiliations. These divisions can only undermine our collective strength, especially at a time when all of us – teachers, canteen workers, caretakers, technicians – are equally threatened by council job-cuts.

The two general meetings, open to all workers, that have been held in this school to discuss these cuts show that there is a real will amongst us to get together to discuss our common concerns. But such meetings can't confine themselves to discus-

sion alone. They must be able to make decisions and to organise effective actions in defence of our class interests.

The Workers' Action Group does not intend to take the place of such meetings or to try to become the 'representative' of the workers. Its aims will be:

- to regroup all those who see the need for workers' unity across the division of category, workplace or union

- to call for general meetings whenever there is a need for us to gather together

- to intervene on all the basic issues facing us, always insisting on the unity of workers' interests and the need for workers to organise themselves to defend them

- to form direct links with workers in other schools and workplaces in the area

- to provide a forum for discussion on the lessons and perspectives of the class struggle

(There follows an advertisement for a workplace meeting to discuss the strikes that were going on at the time this statement was put out)

*WR 113*, April 88, contained a more general assessment of this phenomenon:

### Towards workers' struggle groups

One of the fruits of the recent outburst of workers' struggles in Britain has been a small but significant development of efforts by militant minorities of workers to regroup outside of the unions or across union divisions in order to act on the wider struggle.

In *WR 112* we published the statement of a 'Workers' Action Group' formed by education workers in London's Waltham Forest. Subsequently this group, in which an ICC member participates, produced a leaflet in response to the various 'days of action' called by the unions last month around the question of the NHS. Having pointed out that the attack on health services wasn't the only attack workers faced, and that in February we saw "thousands and thousands of workers – healthworkers, car workers, seamen and others – entering directly into the struggle without any prearranged 'plan' by the trade union bureaucracy", the leaflet warns workers against the unions' attempts to create confusion and demoralisation in the class through a series of disorganised, symbolic marches and 24-hour strikes. It concludes by saying that "what workers really need to do at this time is to meet together across the boundaries of sector and union and discuss the real lessons of the February strikes and how to take them further next time". The leaflet was distributed to education and health workers in London!

The last two issues of *WR* also contain letters from postal workers, one in London and one in Bristol, describing the discontent in that sector and the efforts of the Union of Communication Workers to head it off. More recently the following letter was sent via *WR* to the London postal worker:

"Dear Bro/Sis, thanks for your letter, I am writing to you as a sympathiser of Wildcat and member of 'Communication Workers' Group'. The CWG is a group which has/is moved/moving away from rank-and-filism towards a more revolutionary perspective. In the most recent meeting it made clear

1. Subsequently *WR 119* published a second leaflet by WAG 'For a common fight against attacks in the public sector' and *WR 122* contained a review of the AGWU pamphlet *Sorting out the postal strike*, a balance sheet of the struggles in the post office written by the London postal worker who participated in the group.

### Relations between the ICC and the struggle groups of the time

As can be seen from the article in *WR 113*, our initial reaction to the CWG was positive. However, subsequent articles showed that we were not very clear about its basic nature: *WR 118* announced that the CWG had been recuperated by the rank-and-filists, then in *WR 119* we said that "recent meetings of this group and the latest issue of their bulletin have shown that this is not the case. While there are still those who want to create a rank and file union group (to work within the existing unions, or to create new ones, but 'not for the moment'), the life of the working class is still very much present in the group". Finally, in *WR 121* (February 1989), following the dissolution of the CWG, we changed position again and concluded that the CWG had been an expression of rank and file unionism from the beginning, although we saw the formation of a new group by the 'anti-union' comrades as a positive development.

To some extent these uncertainties reflected the real evolution of the CWG, which appeared to be breaking from trade unionism but foundered on the anarcho-syndicalism of the Direct Action Movement, resulting in a split, with the DAM and the anti-union tendency proving unable to work together, as can be seen from 'A brief history of the Communication Workers' Group' written by one of the 'anti-union' tendency and published below.

But there was also a problem with our view of anarcho-syndicalism, which, we argued, had in its entirety been in the camp of the bourgeoisie since the civil war in Spain. In particular, we saw the anarcho-syndicalists as no more than an 'extreme' expression of the rank-and file trade unionism which was developing as a response to the workers' growing distrust of the official unions<sup>2</sup>. And there is no doubt that the Direct Action Movement was indeed unclear about the danger of radical trade unionism and leftism in general. We had already come against both its ideology and its methods of debate in the Health Workers Action Group (see article below), while in another article we showed how the DAM had formed a united front with the Trotskyists at the Conference of Support Groups<sup>3</sup>. But we were also ignorant of the historical origins of the DAM, which, as we show in our more recent article 'Internationalist anarchism in the UK'<sup>4</sup>, came from a tendency which had taken an internationalist position against the Second World War; and although an understanding of this issue would not have altered our opposition to the DAM's trade unionist conceptions, it

2. *WR 109*, 'DAM: radical appendage of leftism'.

3. *WR 108*, 'National Conference of Support Groups: For workers' struggle groups against rank and file unionist recuperation'.

4. <http://en.internationalism.org/wr/344/brit-anarchy>

would certainly have led us to be more cautious about dismissing the group out of hand<sup>5</sup>.

In another history of this period, 'Death to Rank and filism!'<sup>6</sup> written in 1990 and republished on libcom, another member of the 'anti-union' tendency in CWG (the comrade from Bristol whose letter we published) argues that

- AGWU (which was the name later adopted by the WAG) was an ICC front
- that it (or the ICC) argued that it was counterrevolutionary to organise in one sector
- that both CWG and AGWU were in fact reformist/rank-and filist and would have ended up as alternate unions if they had been successful.

We think it's worthwhile responding to these accusations. First of all, the AGWU was not an ICC front. Formed in one workplace it was made up of one ICC member and three other employees who were very distant politically from the ICC. The group tried to expand to other elements in London workplaces and it's true that most of its participants – a postal worker, a bus worker, an unemployed comrade etc – were politically close to the ICC or were members, and we were unable to expand beyond that base. It's also true that we had very little prior experience of this kind of activity, and in our work towards the AGWU we made some errors based on the 'routines' of involvement in a communist political organisation (for example, we convinced the group that it should call a local meeting and argued that specific invitations be sent to other proletarian political groups, rather as if AGWU was itself a political organisation). This problem was not limited to the ICC however: the letter from the CWG comrade in *WR* 113 also tends to see the group as something that can base itself on a "revolutionary perspective".

Second, it has never been the ICC's position that organising in one sector is counter-revolutionary. The workplace is the natural starting point for workers to organise and this applies as much to general struggles as to groups of militants. But we certainly argued that it was necessary to go beyond the workplace or sector. Our view was that struggle groups should as much as possible organise on a local basis, establishing links between militants in different workplaces, rather than organising 'nationally' sector by sector, which seems to us to be the anarcho-syndicalist view.

Third, groups that organise to defend workers' interests in the defensive struggle are not 'reformist'. They correspond to the fact that the trade unions not only don't defend the revolutionary programme, they no longer even defend the immediate needs of the class. The author talks about forming workplace groups composed only of revolutionaries, and defending the revolutionary programme as the only guarantee against reformism, but there is no reason why communist groups of this kind should be based specifically on the workplace, since by their very nature they are obliged to analyse and respond to developments in the whole of social reality. Workplace struggle groups (or committees, as our French comrades prefer to call them) obey a different dynamic from the political organisation properly speaking.

\* \* \* \* \*

Despite the advances made in the late 80s, the class struggle came to a rather abrupt halt at the end of the decade and were followed by a long period of retreat during the 90s. In our view, a key element in this retreat was the spectacular collapse of the eastern bloc and the vast ideological campaigns which the ruling class unleashed around this historic turning point. Faced with these bourgeois political campaigns, the political gains made by the working class in the previous twenty years proved to be insufficient and it has taken a long time for new politicised minorities of the working class to emerge.

It was inevitable that during this phase of retreat, the development of struggle groups and committees also came to a halt. Such groups do not have the programmatic and organisational solidity which can enable them to maintain their activities through periods of class quiescence, although they can in some cases transform themselves into discussion circles with a longer term view of their activity.

In the last few years, however, as the class struggle has slowly regained its lost impetus, we have also seen the re-appearance of the phenomenon of struggle groups, and new debates among revolutionaries about how they should relate to such formations and more generally about the problem of intervention at the workplace and in the immediate struggles of the class. We will look at some of these experiences and debates in future articles. **Amos 28.2.13**

5. The DAM is the 'ancestor' of today's Solidarity Federation, which is in general more open to the influences of council communism and other radical critiques of the trade unions. And yet a reading of the DAM's pamphlet *DAM and the trade unions* (<http://www.libcom.org/tags/communication-workers-group>) confirms that the group was not 100% 'trade unionist', since it could argue that the official unions had become part of the state, a conclusion that even some of the most radical members of SolFed shy away from.

6. [www.libcom.org/library/death-rank-filism](http://www.libcom.org/library/death-rank-filism)

## Appendices

### 1. A brief history of the Communication Workers' Group, 1987-89

This article, written by one of the CWG's members, Devrim, was first published on libcom. If you go to <http://www.libcom.org/tags/communication-workers-group> you will also find a partial archive of the group's bulletins. Devrim was very active in the postal strikes of this period. He has remained a left communist ever since, and was for a while a militant of the ICC, playing a central role in the formation of our new section in Turkey.

The CWG group was formed in early 1987 by three members of DAM (Direct Action Movement- now SolFed) working in the London Post Office. It was in existence for over two years, and issued fifteen national bulletins, by the end publishing 8,000 an issue, and was involved in various strikes in the Post Office including the 1989 national strike.

Its formation was influenced by DAM's adoption of a 'Rank and File' strategy, by the number of young enthusiastic workers coming into DAM at the time (possibly as a result of the miners, and Wapping strikes), and to a certain extent through contacts with the remnants of what was left of what had been the SWP's rank and file movement (e.g. the Building Worker Group). At the time DAM launched groups in a few different industries, but I think that Communication Worker was the only one that actually took off. It adopted a set of aims, and principles, very much influenced by

the previous 'Rank and File' groups, but against the electoralism of the Broad Left (BLOC).

Its first publication was a 12 page A5 bulletin published in April 1987 during the Post Office-UCW (Union of Communication Workers, now CWU) pay talks. This was distributed within the Post Offices in London and nationally by DAM groups dropping them into postboxes. This was actually a very successful tactic, and got us quite a large number of contacts.

In one sense although it had contacts nationally, and the magazine was distributed across the country, CWG was never a national group. It was a magazine produced by a group in London, and with sympathisers in different cities, most of whom we never actually met, and a group in the Midlands. We did however travel to Bristol and the Midlands to hold meetings with sympathisers in those areas.

The group had lots of contacts in London espe-

cially amongst 'branch reps,' union officials who still worked, but did have some facility time, and attracted some new members, people's workmates as well as members of the ACF (Anarchist Communist Federation, now AF, who at the time had a very strong anti-union position, especially the members of CWG), and even a sympathiser of the ICC (International Communist Current).

As time went on, and the group became more prominent, people's positions began to diverge. Of the three original members, one remained with DAM, and was a traditional anarcho-syndicalist, one moved towards a group called 'Workers Power' (a Trotskyist grouping), and one joined 'Wildcat' (a left communist group, which has since plunged into 'primitivism'). Of course this gave rise to political disagreements especially within a very small core group.

The first of these was around the group's orientation towards the union with the member of 'Workers Power' insisting that we 'put pressure on the union leadership.' The left communists, the ACF, and the DAM people were all united against this so this led to the first resignation from the group. I think that the comrade went on to join the 'broad left'.

### 2. Rank and filism scuppers HWAG, WR 109

This article was the third and final article published in *WR* on the subject of the Health Workers Action Group<sup>7</sup>. Several members of WR who worked in the health sector took part in its meetings. It gives a clear account of the way that the DAM members within the group prevented any serious discussion of the trade union question. However, as we have already said, it suffers from the rather black and white approach encapsulated in the notion that the only two views contained within the group were the 'bourgeois' one and the 'ICC' one. In reality any workers' group will contain a variety of views on the trade union question. The clarity of the communist left and the bourgeois views of the Trotskyists and other leftists may constitute its two diametrically opposed poles, but between these two there may well be a number of ideas which express at worst confusion and, more positively, an effort to develop towards proletarian positions.

7. The two previous articles were 'For a health workers' struggle group' in *WR* 106 and 'Health Workers' Action Group' in *WR* 108.

On Tuesday 29 September the Health Workers' Action Group excluded militants defending ICC positions, with great 'concern' expressed that we might be wasting our time and theirs. The rank and filists in the majority were not prepared to publish articles taking a clear anti-union position, or even worse, from their point of view, putting forward alternative forms of organisation. In this they made clear they had no intention of participating in an open forum of discussion for workers, particularly those who are grappling with the problem of how to struggle despite union sabotage and isolation.

The HWAG was started at a meeting called by health workers in or around the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement with the aim of forging a "rank and file (ie trade unionist – WR note) organisation to fight for healthworkers' interests". However, the advert also said "Labour governments close as many hospitals as the Tories and both keep healthworkers' pay down. NUPE and COHSE don't oppose the exploitation but participate in it". All those who responded to this call expressed suspicion of the unions, but with two distinct views on how to approach the problem:

- the bourgeois view that workers cannot struggle without unions, and therefore that struggle and extension of struggle can only be organised through rank-and-file union groups;
- the ICC position that the immediate need of all struggles is to extend and unify and that the first obstacle to this is the trade unions.

At the first meeting militants from the ICC argued for the formation of a struggle group to discuss past and present struggles, particularly the issue of the unions and to intervene within them. At this meeting we successfully prevented the formation of a rank and file unionist group (see *WR*106), a leaflet was produced calling workers to another meeting:

"Some workers have been fighting back but their struggles remain isolated. The unions aren't defending us. We all need to get together to organise how best to win the struggle".

At the second meeting, however, a rank-and-filist platform 'Where we Stand' was adopted and was published in issue number one of the group's bulletin. A struggle group can certainly put forward demands rooted in the struggle – in response to a particular attack, or expressing a genuine discontent among the workers. But the HWAG demands were not rooted in a developing struggle: they were purely abstract, and included the leftist demand 'against privatisation'. Worst of all, 'Where

As the struggle in the Post Office developed in the run up to the national strike, the divergence between the anarcho-syndicalists and the ACF/left communists became greater. As the union constantly sabotaged the attempts by the workers to defend their living standards, the 'lefts' became more and more anti-union, and began to criticise the whole nature of trade unions whilst the anarcho-syndicalists continued to put forward their line of why we need a democratic union.

This tension finally came to a head after the 1989 national strike when the 'lefts' split from the anarcho-syndicalists and formed a new grouping, rather than haggle over the name, the Postal Workers Liaison Committee (PLC).

The anarcho-syndicalists did not continue to function as CWG, and the PLC, reduced to an even smaller group by people leaving the Post Office after the defeat of the strike, published three issues of its bulletin before dissolving itself over arguments over whether 'branch reps' should be allowed to join, and whether they should 'put pressure on the union leadership', both of these positions supported by an ex-member of *Solidarity* from the Midlands, who hadn't been in the original core (London) group. *Devrim, January 2007*

we Stand' said nothing about the need for the extension and unification of struggles. At this stage we were told by the convinced rank and filists that we must put disagreements in the bulletin and not waste the time of the meeting in such discussion.

The bulletin produced was criticised by the HWAG (see *WR* 108) because of its lack of contact with the class struggle, and a decision was taken that in future it should contain an account of the discussion in the group itself.

When we wrote articles proposing ways of organising outside and against the unions and criticising the demands in 'Where we Stand', we were excluded. At this meeting the rank-and-file unionists of the DAM, who make much noise about their opposition to the bureaucratic methods of Trotskyism, et al, conducted their manoeuvres with all the astuteness of experienced leftists. Their number one concern was to censor discussion, to prevent any expression of debate in the bulletin which they said must put forward a 'line' or look ridiculous.

Discussion of the real issues facing the class is indeed a danger to the rank-and-filists. Their task is to attract the growing numbers of workers who are disaffected with the unions, in order to win them back to left-wing opposition within the unions. But determined discussion of the role of unions in sabotaging struggles and of ways to extend them outside the unions will totally undermine the rank-and-filists' role.

A struggle group, on the other hand, must be open to all workers who want to draw lessons from past and present working class struggles in order to strengthen the movement of the future. And, as the experience of the HWAG shows, it is essential that such groups confront the ruling ideology in its extreme forms (leftism, rank-and-file unionism) in drawing these lessons.

Throughout the existence of the HWAG there has been a constant tension between the aim for a rank-and-filist group, and an attempt to keep the group alive as an open forum of discussion for the working class. In this case the group has become a rank-and-file organ, dead to the working class. But the experience of resisting rank-and-file unionist manoeuvres within it can and must become part of the raw material for the constitution of genuine struggle groups in the future. *AF (Nov 1987)*

# Barbarous gang rape in Delhi

We are publishing below an article by a close sympathiser of the ICC in India, responding to the notorious rape and murder of a young student in Delhi. It is followed by comments by two other women.

They decided to marry in February, 13. They were returning after enjoying a cinema show. They were waiting for transport on a city highway in Delhi. It was not dead of night. It was only 9.30 p.m. at that time. But just at that evening hour for metropolitan Delhi that heart rending, most pathetic, painful incident took place. They boarded an empty bus; just after getting on it they realized their mistake. But they had already been entrapped by the miscreants. There was no other way out. Six young miscreants got on the bus, beat the partner of the unfortunate girl severely and made him unconscious. Then all those beasts jumped on the helpless girl and sexually assaulted her one after another. Not only that. They struck forcefully the lower abdomen portion of her body with a heavy rod. This damaged seriously many organs in that portion. The inhuman activity did not stop there. The miscreants made her unconscious and tried to throw her out and kill her by running her over. However she was still alive, somehow enduring all such severe sexual and physical assaults. She was taken to a city hospital in a seriously injured and traumatized condition. After several days spent in the most advanced AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) and several surgical operations she was transferred to a hospital in Singapore in a most unstable condition. There the hapless girl passed away on 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2012.

Perhaps that extremely barbarous incident has violently upset the human essence of the inner world of everyone. As a member of the species Homo Sapiens I am also extremely pained, perturbed and saddened. As a woman I am being obsessed with a sense of tremendous helplessness and lack of security. Since 16<sup>th</sup> December for quite a number of days I turned my eyes willingly away from the TV set or the newspapers. As if I was trying to flee away from all this. Tears are welling up in the eyes while I am trying to write this. Again and again I am automatically seeing myself in the pathetic condition of that hapless medical student of 23 years. Her unarticulated messages of unlimited mental pain and trauma and protest against the assault seem to appear before me in the form of clearly visible material forms. I am trying to realize the depth of her pain and trauma. Many people are eager to see the photograph of that unfortunate victim of unlimited barbarism. I think of telling them to hold the mirror in front of their own faces. This will enable them to see her photograph.

Every moment our feeling, emotion and creativity is being raped. We cannot transmit the experience and education that we want to the students. We cannot build our life in the way we like. We cannot see the world with the form and content in which we want to see it. This constant suppression of feeling, desire and dream is nothing but another name of rape to me. After struggling against death for ten days the girl passed away. The central government adorned her posthumously with some well chosen and calculated adjectives to show its 'humanitarian' concern.

In the heart of Delhi, the Indian capital, hundreds of thousands of aggrieved people, particularly the youth, assembled in the streets spontaneously and demonstrated against this act of unimaginable barbarism. The demand for exemplary punishment for the culprits has been raised from all quarters. Maybe they will be punished very severely. A media hype will be launched by the government, its 'scholars' and 'experts'. TV channels will be involved in competition in holding talk shows, delivering some nice 'shoulds' and 'should nots'. All this will come to an end sooner or later. This heinous act of barbarism will culminate in 'his-

tory' one day. And that history will again be repeated, I believe.

Long accumulated anger and grievances burst out in the form of spontaneous, massive demonstrations in response to this incident. Lots of people participated in the silent candle light march and thus articulated their helplessness. Different types of reactions have also been expressed from various other quarters. The leader of the RSS (Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangha), an ultra rightist militia organization, has said that the western lifestyle of women is responsible for such incidents. A spiritual guru, Asharam Babu said "*she could have stopped the attack if she had chanted God's name and fallen on the feet of the attackers*". Last year an incident of rape took place in the Park Street area of Calcutta. At that time the government in West Bengal run by a woman chief minister remarked that the character of the woman who went out alone to celebrate the New Year at dead of night was bad.

But in any case there is no doubt that the incident is most contemptible and we cannot but denounce it thoroughly and as strongly as possible. But is it the first? Can we classify the incidents of rape into more or less important? All incidents of rape are equally contemptible and have to be equally condemned. According to the 2007 report of NCRB (National Crime Record Board) the number of incidents of rape in India is 21,397 whereas that for the USA is 89,241. But a correct assessment and comparison is not possible on the basis of numbers alone. In a country like India where women are held responsible for being raped, many women prefer not reporting the incidents of sexual assault. On the other hand such complaints from those raped women who dare to go the police station are not very often duly recorded by the police officers. In the last month a 17 year old girl from a remote village in Punjab went to the police station to lodge a complaint after being raped. The police refused to record that complaint. After this the girl committed suicide. So we can easily understand that the number of incidents of rape in India will be much more. On the average an incident of rape takes place every 20 minutes in this country. In 2011 numbers of brutal assaults on women were reported in Uttar Pradesh, and according to the report of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) the majority of those assaulted were poor women from remote areas, many of them Dalits ("untouchables"). Political leaders and parties use these incidents solely for political gain.

In spite of all this it seems from the reaction of the government and the political spectrum as if this incident of rape in Delhi has taken place for the first time in India. All leaders and ministers have at present articulated apparently very humanitarian reactions. They have all demanded punishment for the culprits. Chief minister Shila Dikshit of the ruling Congress party has said that she did not have the courage to meet the victim. Sushama Swaraj, a BJP leader, has asserted that the rapists should be hanged. As if hanging the rapists will put an end to the incidents of rape in the future. I am confused. I am not clear about what sort of punishment should be demanded for the culprits. Moreover to whom should we demand this punishment? Can those people who are themselves drowned in the sea of corruption, crime and falsehood give any justice?

In December 2009 a Russian woman was raped by a state politician, and Santaram Naik, a Congress M.P. from Goa made a vigorous defence of the rape, blaming the victim. In 2011 Bikram Singh Brahma, a Congress M.P. from Assam was accused of rape in the Chirang District. In 2004 in the Manipur region in the north east of India, Indian soldiers picked up Manorama, a thirty two year old woman from home at dead of night, took her forcibly to the nearby military camp, raped her and then killed her. Later on it was reported by the military authority that she was killed in a military 'encounter'. She was alleged to have been associated with an armed extremist group. The state and government authority is never tired of singing hymns of praise for its military as it is said to be engaged in the defense of the country and security of the people. The military is depicted to be patriotism incarnate by the authorities and the

media! This patriotism is nothing but a powerful weapon of the capitalist ruling class to keep the capitalist system intact. That is why this very military is raping and killing innocent women in the name of 'encounters' in various parts of India wherever there is a strong protest movement against the exploitation and repression of the authority. Is there anybody who can be in the seat of judgement in these cases of rape and murder by the state's armed forces? Is it possible that the culprits will punish themselves? Is any true justice for the exploited and oppressed people possible in this social system? If a decision to punish the culprits is taken at all that will solely depend on the calculation of political gain or loss and the so-



cial status of the culprits. There will never be any punishment solely for the tremendous humiliation and mental pain caused to the raped women! The key to the continued existence of the system is the destruction of all human feelings, sentiments, social solidarity and confidence. So is it possible for persons in the top positions of authority to bother about such 'insignificant' incidents of rape of unknown, innocent helpless women by its own beloved military personnel?

This extreme degradation of human values is nothing but the manifestation of the advanced phase of decadence of the present day world capitalist system. We can not keep the greenery of the tree intact for any length of time, a tree whose roots have rotted, simply by sprinkling water on the leaves. In the same way it is not possible for the social system and its different parts, whose roots are also rotten, to do anything correct and justified. Human values are always being raped by this system. So the roots of the various problems such as rape, barbarous torture in police custody, custodial or 'encounter' death, or terrorist attacks very often lie deep inside the whole socio-economic, political, cultural structure and the dynamics of this society passing through its advanced phase of decadence. This started in the beginning of the twentieth century. This system is absolutely unable to provide the young generation with any positive orientation and perspective. So in the midst of their increasing unemployment, poverty, misery and mental agony sexual perversion turns out to be the only orientation. The very media, print as well as electronic, which is highlighting this incident of gang rape so much, organizing protest meetings against it and delivering high sounding sermons for respecting human values and rights of women, doesn't hesitate to make the physical features and postures of women attractive commodities for more profit in their pages for advertisement. These contradictory roles prove in reality that they are solely concerned with their sordid self interest and nothing else. This may be called 'media prostitution'.

These incidents manifest nothing but the decomposition of the whole system. We say very often that there are two alternatives in the world today: socialism or barbarism. We are drowning more and more deeply in the expanding ocean of barbarism. Is that not enough for us still now? So now the only remaining alternative is socialism. We have no other way but to fight for the achievement of the goal of socialism with all our physical and mental capability, time and energy. This is the only way to save humanity from total destruction and put an end to all sorts of exploitation, repression, sexual assaults and violence, not only against women but all human beings. **PB, 29.01.13**

## Additional comments

K: Was there any necessity for sending the gang raped and seriously injured girl to a Singapore hospital in the most unstable condition? Some

doctors of AIIMS have pointed out that the arrangements for adequate and effective medical treatment are equally good or better in AIIMS. Is it not a cruel mystification of the Indian government and ruling class to show that they are very concerned and worried about the worsening health condition of the hapless rape victim and arranging for better foreign treatment? This shifting of the girl in the much worsened condition of her health might have contributed to her death. Why was she not transferred to a much better hospital in Europe or USA in the very beginning? It cannot be anything but a mystification. Everything is being done for the political gain of the ruling class. It is a very traumatic and tragic situation. Not only are the women being victimized but those socially related with the women such as father, husband, brothers are also being victimized and seriously injured or murdered by the miscreants.

The ruling class needs to maintain a very close relation with antisocial elements. Political parties, police and anti-social elements are in a close alliance. There is a crisis of the heart everywhere and it is deteriorating each passing day. Lack of security of not only women and young girls but all working class people is increasing. This insecurity has intensified so much that women do not want to have girl child. The ruling class cannot serve humanity in any way today. They cease to remain human beings once they are in power and authority. So it makes no difference whether the ruling person is a man or a woman.

R (daughter of K) Being a girl I am always worried about the situation of insecurity. Once I thought that if there is some companion with me when I go out for study this can save me but the reality is that our companion is also being attacked by criminals and they are being attacked first and seriously injured, made unconscious or murdered before attacking the real target, the helpless girl.

## Woman and socialism

The following is an extract from *Woman and Socialism* by August Babel. First edition written and published in German in 1879.

*"Religion and morality condemn prostitution, the laws punish it, and yet the state tolerates and protects it. In other words, our society that prides itself on its morality, its piety, its civilization and culture must suffer itself to be polluted by the slow poison of immorality and corruption. Still another conclusion follows from these conditions: the Christian state admits that marriage is insufficient and that the man is justified in seeking illegitimate satisfaction of the sexual impulse. The woman is taken into consideration by this same state only, inasmuch as she yields to the illegitimate satisfaction of male lust, that is, becomes a prostitute. The police supervision and control of enlisted prostitutes does not include the men who mingle with the prostitutes, which ought to be a matter of course if the medical surveillance were to be partly effective at least, quite disregarding the fact that justice demands that the law should be equally applied to both sexes.*

*This protection of the man from the woman by the state overturns the nature of conditions. It appears as if men were the weaker, and women the stronger sex, as if women were the seducer, and poor, weak man the seduced. The myth of temptation of Adam and Eve in Paradise continues to influence our conceptions and laws and sustains the Christian assumption, that "woman is the great seducer, the source of sin." Men ought to be ashamed of the pitiable and unworthy part they are playing, but it is pleasing to them to be regarded as "weak" and as "victims of seduction" for the more they are protected the more they may sin."*

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/ch12.htm#s2>)

## From cardinals to commissars: bourgeois power and sexual abuse

A leading figure in a nationwide institution has been accused of rape and sexual harassment. This has shaken many of those who had confidence in the organisation, although others have rallied round to defend him.

This is not a reference to a Scottish Cardinal and the Roman Catholic Church, nor to a Liberal Democrat peer, nor to a dead DJ and the BBC. The latest scandal concerns the ex-National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party.

A Disputes Committee of the SWP (made up mostly of those who knew the accused, but not the victims) decided that no offences had been committed and this decision was ratified by a National Conference of the SWP.

The different institutions have different functions, but they have bred creatures who seem to behave in very similar ways. As a DJ Jimmy Savile seemed to assume that constant access to young girls meant they were available for sexual abuse. Lord Rennard, a Liberal activist since the age of 12, credited with his ability to manipulate the electoral game over a period of thirty years, was accused of "inappropriate behaviour" with at least ten women. He was defended by some LibDems out of loyalty to a man who helped them gain prized parliamentary seats. There was also relief when Eastleigh was retained. Cardinal O'Brien, a vociferous opponent of gay marriage, has been accused of "inappropriate acts" towards fellow priests, an interesting variation of the usual accusations against Catholic clerics. Although nothing has been proved the Church thought it best for the Cardinal not to play a role in the election of a new pope.

While some have resigned from the SWP, Martin Smith continues to function as a leading figure in organisations such as Love Music Hate Racism and Unite Against Fascism. Critics have used the accusations to renew the usual criticisms of the SWP – it's a cult, they're Leninists, they oppose feminism. But this is not something new to this political milieu, or specific to the SWP. Back in the 1980s there were all the accusations against

Gerry Healy of the WRP - twenty years of gross sexual abuse of women members.

What is significant is how those with power and influence appear to have been able to get away with 'inappropriate' behaviour for so long. In reality there's not a contradiction between the roles of entertainer, spiritual leader, political strategist, leftist functionary, and the behaviour which the bourgeois media currently chooses to vilify. At other moments, in other situations, a blind eye is turned. The leering figure of Silvio Berlusconi is an easy target for ridicule, but variations on his behaviour permeate the corners of all manner of organisations of the capitalist status quo. Ultimately, organisations that have no quibbles with the barbarities of imperialist war are likely to be at ease with their leaders taking personal advantage of their position. In this the SWP (advocates most recently of war in Libya and Syria, as they have been over the decades elsewhere in the Middle East and internationally) are natural bedfellows with parliamentarians, the church and salacious entertainers. **Car 2.3.13**

## Donations

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

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\*Out of print pamphlets will be photocopied which may take a little longer to supply.

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## Discuss with the ICC and others through our online discussion forum

At the time of going to press, the most popular thread is 'Beliefs, science, art and marxism', (37 replies, nearly 6000 views) started by Fred. This is an extract from his opening post:

"Some comrades don't believe in "beliefs" as a sound basis for thought and comment, certainly not for anyone claiming to be Marxist, but trust only in science whenever possible. Fair enough. Others believe that beliefs which have undergone some testing in time can form a trustworthy basis for human action. But surely even science starts out from beliefs? When Newton saw the apple fall straight down, rather than sideways, he had a hunch, an initial belief, that some physical force was at work, and came up with gravity. The same is true of Marx. He had a hunch that forces

were at work in society which were beyond everyday perception. He was right, and came up with class struggle as a force of history. The bourgeoisie beg to differ, preferring the invisible hand or something even vaguer! They're mistaken. So if a comrade feels that their connection to Marxism is more like an act of faith, or stays at the level of a belief: I BELIEVE IN THE PROLETARIAT; THE ONLY REVOLUTIONARY CLASS; BEGOTTEN OF THE BOURGEOISIE and so on, is this necessarily reprehensible? But I suppose it could be dangerous, and I suppose I'm partly joking when I should be serious, but I don't think beliefs are just to be dismissed for not being scientific, but see them as a basis for science. Contentious? Newton was a scientist. True. But was Marx?"

## ICC Online: recent additions

**Postscript to Decadence of Capitalism XIII: Rejection and Regressions**  
 (a clarification of our understanding of the ICT's position on the decadence of capitalism)

**The left wing of the Turkish Communist Party**  
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**Workers burn to death in Bangladesh**

**French intervention in Mali: another war in the name of peace**

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## Contact the ICC

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# Malnutrition and food waste show the absurdity of decadent capitalism

A billion human beings suffer from malnutrition<sup>1</sup>. To that we must add the increasing misery of a growing mass of impoverished people, a majority of the world population. In spite of technical progress and unprecedented productive capacity a large number of people are still dying of hunger!

How can we explain this paradox? The ruling class has its answers. This tragedy is linked to “running out of resources”<sup>2</sup> and the “population explosion”<sup>3</sup>.

In reality the chronic shortage of food spreading like a plague is the product of the capitalist system, of its law of profit. This law leads to an absurdity in the market itself and for humanity: the overproduction of goods. This is the basis of an irrational and scandalous phenomenon that the bourgeoisie largely passes over in silence: waste.

The report of a recent study reveals that “it is estimated that 30-50% (or 1.2-2 billion tons of all food produced) never reaches a human stomach”<sup>4</sup>. Since the study cannot bring to light the profound causes of waste without putting the capitalist system in question, it stays on the surface of the phenomenon, explaining that in Europe and the USA consumers themselves throw food into the bin as a result of product packaging and marketing (such as ‘buy one get one free’ promotions). The study does not dare to reveal that waste is above all generated by overproduction and the search for short term profit, leading the industry to make increasing use of inadequate infrastructure and inefficient storage areas with the most significant failures downstream of the production chain. This study forgets to mention that products of poorer and poorer quality cannot be sold for lack of buyers and are piled up in places that are happily neglected if it costs too much to shift them. In order to make economies, and profit, speculative capitalists often end up **deliberately** destroying goods, particularly foodstuffs. For the same motives “up

1 This means daily nutrition insufficient in quantity for the physical needs of a person (2,500 calories a day).

2 All lies have a basis of truth. It is not, in itself, due to a lack of resources. On the contrary, the capitalist system leads to their massive destruction.

3 It is predicted there will be 9 billion of us in 2050.

4 *Global Food Waste Not, Want Not*, published 10 January 2013 by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IME). All quotations from this report, see [http://www.imeche.org/news/archives/13-01-10/New\\_report\\_as\\_much\\_as\\_2\\_billion\\_tonnes\\_of\\_all\\_food\\_produced\\_ends\\_up\\_as\\_waste.aspx](http://www.imeche.org/news/archives/13-01-10/New_report_as_much_as_2_billion_tonnes_of_all_food_produced_ends_up_as_waste.aspx)

to 30% of the UK’s vegetable crop is never harvested”. So products are often destroyed in order to prevent the market price falling. For example, some producers who cannot sell their fruit or vegetables, even at a loss, use petrol to burn them to artificially maintain their price.

The same phenomenon exists in the so-called ‘developing’ countries, amplified and even aggravated from the start of the production chain. Here “wastage tends to occur at the farmer-producer end of the supply chain” due to “Inefficient harvesting, inadequate local transportation and poor infrastructure”, leading to colossal losses. The “deficiencies” can be such that “In South East Asian countries for example losses of rice can range from 37% to 80% of total production depending on development stage...In China, a country experiencing rapid development, the rice loss figure is about 45%, whereas in less developed Vietnam, rice losses between the field and the table can amount to 80% of production”.

The report underlines the sombre reality: “Cumulatively this loss represents not only the removal of food that could otherwise feed the growing population, but also a waste of valuable land, energy and water resources. In the case of water for example, about 550 billion cubic metres is wasted globally in the growing of crops that never reach the consumer...”

According to the engineers writing this report, a simple rational exploitation of existing resources would create “the potential to provide 60-100% more food for consumption ... Furthermore, due to the large demand that food production puts on other natural resources including land, water and energy, such an approach offers significant benefits in terms of sustainability and reduced environmental risk.” This ‘common sense’ perspective is impossible to realise within the capitalist system. The problem does not lie in a lack of competence or of will: it lies above all in the contradictions of an economic system which does not produce to satisfy human needs, for which it doesn’t give a fig, but for the market, to realise a profit. This rolls out the worst absurdities, complete anarchy and irrationality.

One of the most scandalous examples is that of children suffering severe malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa, while milk quotas and farm set-aside are imposed in Europe. Meanwhile charities and NGOs are mounting costly advertising campaigns, based on feelings of guilt, to raise funds

for milk powder for the starving children who are also without ... water! If this were not so tragic it could almost be a joke in very bad taste.

Capitalism is an obsolete mode of production which has become a destructive force menacing civilisation. It generates and activates all the deadly drives and passions. Faced with the growing tragedies which it engenders, its contradictions exacerbate the most irrational and antisocial behaviours. Famine and waste, poverty and unem-

ployment, like wars, are its offspring. But within it grows its negation, its gravedigger, the working class, the exploited class which alone has a perspective for the future. Only the working class can put an end to this rotten system. More than ever the alternative is “socialism or barbarism”. **WH January 2013**

## Food adulteration – it’s not just horsemeat

At the beginning of the year the scandal of beef products adulterated with horse meat broke, leading supermarkets across Europe to withdraw affected products, particularly processed and ready meals, some of which contained up to 100% horse instead of beef. Horse is of course much cheaper.

For the ruling class the duty to maximise profit and grow capital is a far higher ethic than the health of workers or anyone else who doesn’t own anything – or even simple honesty. In any case, we have been reminded that horse is safe to eat and this is an issue of fraud rather than public health – which ignores the fact that the suppliers have not taken the necessary care to avoid carcasses contaminated by veterinary medicines such as ‘bute’ (phenylbutazone, which was banned from human use due to a fairly rare but very dangerous side effect). If the risk to anyone who has consumed this horse meat is extremely small this is not due to any particular care on the part of the ruling class. Toxic oil syndrome which killed 600 people in 1981 in Spain was due to colza oil intended for industrial use being sold as olive oil. A recent US study<sup>1</sup> showed 69% of imported olive oils were not what they purported to be.

Adulteration of food is nothing new in capitalism and became a particular problem with industrialisation and the growth of towns which needed to be supplied with food. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century many substances, including poisons, were added

1. <http://olivecenter.ucdavis.edu/news-events/news/files/olive%20oil%20final%20071410%20.pdf>

to bread or beer, including alum, plaster of Paris, sawdust, and strychnine. Decades passed, long after the danger of these substances was shown, before legislation was enacted against this practice in the UK in 1860.

Today we have reason to be even more worried about pollution of our food, whether from normal waste or accidents such as Fukushima. Studies have shown high levels of heavy metals, such as arsenic, cadmium, zinc, lead and copper, in water and vegetables due to pollution from mining, smelting and other industrial processes in Turkey, Greece, Nigeria, Egypt and New South Wales in Australia. Whether the ruling class have had any interest in studying it or not we have no doubt that there is even worse industrial pollution in India, China and other ‘developing’ countries. In the 1950s up to 50,000 people were poisoned by mercury in fish at Minamata in Japan, and 5,000 died. There continue to be warnings by the US Food and Drug Administration to avoid eating fish with the highest levels of mercury such as shark and swordfish.

Whatever prompted the media and politicians to get so excited about horse meat labelled as beef – whether to get the consumer to buy one brand rather than a competitor’s, or for political advantage – it gives us a glimpse of a far wider problem: how the search for profit damages our food. **Alex 28.2.13**

## 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 stratified 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*.