



world revolution

Syria: imperialist war or class solidarity

Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Syria, the massacres keep spreading. The horror of capitalism accelerates, deaths pile up. A continuous carnage that no one seems able to stop. Capitalism in utter decomposition is dragging the world into generalised barbarism. The use of chemical weapons as in Syria today is unfortunately only one of the instruments of death among many others. But there is nothing inevitable about this perspective, which left to itself will result in the destruction of humanity. The world proletariat cannot remain indifferent in the face of all these wars and massacres. Only the proletariat, the revolutionary class of our epoch, can put an end to this nightmare. More than ever humanity is faced with one choice: communism or barbarism.

The Syrian population is being sacrificed on the altar of imperialism

On Monday 21 August an attack with chemical weapons left hundreds dead in an area close to Damascus. On the internet, on TV screens and the newspapers there were unbearable images of men, women and children in agony. The bourgeoisie, without any scruple, has seized on this human tragedy to advance its sordid interests. The regime of Bashar al Assad, a butcher among butchers, has, we are told, crossed a red line: you can use any weapons to slaughter people, but not chemical ones. These are 'dirty' weapons, as opposed to the 'clean' ones like 'conventional' bombs and mortars or even the atomic bombs the Americans dropped on Hiroshima or Nagasaki in 1945. But the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie has no limits. Since the First World War of 1914-18 where poison gas was used massively for the first time, killing several hundred thousand people, chemical weapons have been continuously 'perfected' and used. The superficial agreements about their non-utilisation, especially after the two world wars and in the 1980s, were just empty declarations, which were not meant to be applied¹. And many theatres of war since this time have seen these kinds of weapons being used. In North Ye-

men between 1962 and 1967, Egypt used mustard gas without restraint. In the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, towns like Hallabja were bombarded with chemical weapons, leaving over 5000 dead, under the benevolent gaze of the 'international community' of the US, France and all the members of the UN! But they are not just the speciality of small imperialist countries or dictators like Assad or Saddam Hussein, as the bourgeoisie would like us to believe. The most massive use of chemical weapons, alongside napalm, was carried out by the USA during the Vietnam war. Vast amounts of herbicide contaminated with dioxin were used to destroy rice plantations and forests in order to reduce the population and the Vietcong to famine. This scorched earth policy, this deliberate desertification, was the work of American capital in Vietnam, the same which today, alongside supporters like France, is getting ready to intervene in Syria, allegedly to defend the population. Since the start of this war in Syria, there have been over 100,000 deaths and at least a million refugees fleeing to surrounding countries. Looking past the discourse being poured out by the bourgeois media, the working class has to know the real causes behind this imperialist war in Syria.

Syria: it's decadent capitalism which is responsible

Syria is currently at the heart of the imperialist tensions and conflicts which are extending from North Africa to Pakistan. If the Syrian bourgeoisie is tearing itself apart inside a country which is now in ruins, it has been able to rely on the insatiable appetites of a whole number of imperialist powers. In this region, Iran, Hezbollah from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey... are all more or



less directly involved in this bloody conflict. The most powerful imperialisms in the world are also defending their squalid interests. Russia, China, France, Britain and the USA are playing their part in the continuation of this war and its extension across the region. Faced with their growing incapacity to control the situation, they are more and more just sowing death and destruction, according to the old scorched earth policy ('if I can't dominate this region, I will set it on fire').

During the Cold War, the period which went officially from 1947 to 1991 and the fall of the USSR, two blocs confronted each other, led by Russia and the USA respectively. These two superpowers directed their 'allies' or 'satellites' with an iron hand, forcing them to fall in line in the face of the enemy ogre. This 'world order' was based on the discipline of the bloc. It was a historical period that was full of danger for humanity, because if the working class had not been able to resist, even passively, the ideological march towards war, a third world conflagration would have been possible. Since the collapse of the USSR, there are no longer two blocs, no more threat of a third world war. The discipline of the blocs is in pieces. Each nation is playing its own card; imperialist alian-

ces are increasingly ephemeral and circumstantial. As a result conflicts are multiplying and in the end no bourgeoisie can control it. This is chaos, the growing decomposition of society.

Thus the accelerating weakness of the world's leading imperialist power, the US, is an active factor in the whole Middle East plunging into barbarism. Immediately after the chemical attack on the suburbs of Damascus, the British and French

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Australia AS2.25, Canada C\$1.50, Europe €1.3, India 10 rupees, Japan ¥300 USA 90¢

1. The 'Greatest Briton' of all, Winston Churchill, certainly never stopped arguing for and even sanctioning their use, whether against 'primitive tribesmen' in rebellion against the Empire, the revolutionary workers of Russia, or the German proletariat during the Second World War: see, for example, http://en.internationalism.org/wr/265_terror1920.htm, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2013/sep/01/winston-churchill-shocking-use-chemical-weapons>; http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v06/v06p501b_Weber.html

Economic crisis

Talk of recovery masks the underlying disease

For several weeks there has been such a torrent of unexpected good news about the British economy that our rulers have become quite excited. It has given a shot in the arm to the markets, because of an expectation of an earlier than predicted rise in interest rates. And it has helped push the IMF to a humbling re-appraisal of the criticisms it has previously made of the British government's economic policy. In fact the IMF is now praising the British government's approach to economic management as the light of the world, replacing the old fashioned idea that China and the other emerging countries offered hope to us all.

The bourgeois media's commentary on this alleged recovery has been quite informative, and we can largely let them tell the story in their own words. Unfortunately for the bourgeoisie, it's a recovery that turns out not to have lasted very long.

When Cameron and Osborne came to power, they gave the impression that a short but severe bout of austerity measures would be sufficient to rein in the deficit and pave the way to recovery in fairly short order. Therefore, although austerity is not enjoyable in itself, the rewards would soon be available and effectively cancel out the necessary reductions in living standards. As the bourgeoisie themselves admit, the reality has been that they have not managed to steer the economy even back to the level of economic output that prevailed prior to the financial crisis of 2007. An important consideration that partially accounts for the governing team in particular now talking confidently about 'recovery' is that they could foresee getting back to that level of output prior to the next election. That would have given them enough to suggest that the original promises of the government were not completely hollow.

Except during the admittedly extended periods when it was actually in recession, there has not been an absolute lack of good news about the British economy since the outbreak of the financial crisis. The difficulty for the bourgeoisie in creating a convincing story of good news about the economy is that each piece of good news has been followed almost straight away by bad news. If industrial output was up, services were down, and vice versa. If exports were up, consumer demand was down. If employment was up, unemployment (surprisingly) was not down. And so on, along those lines, the evidence has gone for years.

The difference over recent weeks was a series of reports on different aspects of the economic situation that all tended to exceed the rather cautious expectations of forecasters who were used to getting their fingers burnt by over-optimistic predictions. As the *Financial Times* said on September 5th:

"Expert economic opinion regularly bends with the wind. Rarely has it been blown so far so quickly. Talk of a 'flattening' economy was universal until the spring, when fears of a 'triple-dip' (recession) disappeared. But after a string of good economic figures and the release of an extraordinarily strong services sector business survey yesterday, economists rushed to judge that growth was running at boom-time rates. ..."

"If the economy is growing at 1 per cent this quarter ... that rate of growth is roughly the pace of former rapid recoveries from recession. If sustained, output would finally climb back above the level of its previous peak (before the financial crash) in spring 2014, a year before the general election. ..."

"Civil servants and central bankers know that the speed of recovery says little about its breadth or durability and are still struggling to explain the turnaround. Before they swap caution for confidence, they will want to take stock of the wider picture which remains mixed."

Without going through the *FT*'s retailing of the mixed evidence, we can skip to the following day, September 6th when the run of good headline news fell apart:

"A damper was put on rapid recovery hopes today with disappointing industrial production figures and a widening of Britain's stubbornly high trade deficit in July."

"Industrial output was flat over the month after a healthy 1.1% expansion in June. Economists had

expected production to edge up slightly. The trade in goods deficit rose to £9.8 billion, considerably larger than City traders' forecasts of 8.15 billion."

"The monthly gap was higher than the £7.3 billion deficit recorded in July 2012. There were also signs of problems in emerging markets beginning to affect British firms, with export to non-European countries plunging by almost 16%." (from *The Evening Standard*)

The fact that "problems in emerging markets" are affecting the hopes of the bourgeoisie for a broadly based recovery in the British economy should give the International Monetary Fund pause for thought. Again we can refer to an article in the *FT* of September 5th:

"Turmoil in emerging markets this summer has forced the IMF into a humbling series of U-turns over its global assessments."

"In a confidential note seen by The Financial Times, the IMF has dropped its view of emerging economies as the dynamic engine of the world economy, instead noting that 'momentum is projected to come mainly from advanced economies where output is expected to accelerate'."



This is very sound, except for the last point. Presumably we are due to hear much less, at least from the IMF, about China, the BRICS and 'globalisation' being the light of the world in economic terms. That's a relief! As the ICC has always pointed out, the basic foundations of globalisation, of a world economy, had already been achieved by the end of the ascendant period of capitalism, i.e. by the beginning of the twentieth century, and it was precisely at this point that the system entered into its historic crisis.

The bourgeoisie have essentially come to use the term globalisation to express their (ill-founded) hope that huge dynamic growth in emerging economies and China in particular will somehow succour the stagnating economies of the west. But since the rise of China, in particular, underlines precisely how uncompetitive the western economies are, it is difficult to follow this line of reasoning. Of course, the west has sold huge volumes of raw materials to China and also sophisticated engineering (even Britain sells in the latter category to China). But the overall trade deficit of the west with China shows the real balance of economic power and the decline of the older industrial economies.

At the same time, countries like China are highly dependent on the western countries as markets for the mass of commodities that they have been churning out at a frenetic rate thanks to the brutal exploitation of their workforce. With the recession in the west, China and the other BRICS are now beginning to falter in their turn.

Faced with this rather worrying scenario, the IMF is proposing now to institute British economic management as the new beacon of the world to replace China! This is quite a turnaround:

"In April, Olivier Blanchard, IMF chief economist, singled out the UK as a country that should lighten up on austerity, but the fund now recommends that countries follow the British policy of 'achieving structural fiscal targets and allowing automatic stabilisers to play freely'." (*FT*)

But, as *The Evening Standard* commentators note, discussing the retardation in Britain's export performance, the "problems in emerging markets" are very likely to undermine the objective of the British bourgeoisie to achieve a balanced and durable recovery. The fact that the world economy is indeed interconnected is not some kind of automatic solution to the crisis as so many bourgeois commentators placidly assume. On the contrary, it is the guarantee that all the components of the capitalist system are doomed to sink together. **Hardin, 6.9.13**

Syria intervention vote

Impasse of British imperialism

Parliament's rejection of the government's motion supporting military intervention in Syria was seen by many as a reassertion of democracy, Labour showing a bit of backbone at last and Cameron being cut down to size. Indeed, the vote in Parliament attracted a lot of attention not only in the media but also amongst the population. Faced with the terrible slaughter in Syria many are deeply concerned about what is going to happen in Syria and the Middle East. However, the vote in parliament was not the manifestation of the 'popular will'; rather it graphically illustrated the impasse of British imperialism.

The closeness of the vote expressed just how deeply conflicted the British ruling class is, and not only over Syria but its whole imperialist strategy.

Once British imperialism had its empire. Following the loss of Empire as the result of two world wars, it became the US' loyal lieutenant during the Cold War. This meant that despite being a second rate military power it could have a place at the top table, or as parts of the ruling class like to say: punch above its weight.

With the disappearance of the old bloc system British imperialism has been faced with the increasingly complex problem of how best to defend its own interests. Should it simply remain loyal to the US? Move more towards Europe, or somehow try to maintain an independent course adapting itself to challenges as they arrived? This strategic choice has become increasingly problematic as the world has sunk deeper and deeper into evermore chaotic international relations. In 1991 it was a pretty easy decision for the British ruling class to go along with the US in attacking Iraq. There were parts of the ruling class that warned about the dangers of the new world order. British imperialism however did not come out of this war too badly. Only 12 years later however the decision to back the US in the 2nd Gulf war was more problematic because parts of the ruling class feared the chaos that would follow and the danger of linking the national interest so closely to that of the US. Blair and the pro-US fraction that he represented drove through the decision however, using every devious trick in the book to get support. However, far from furthering the national interest it suffered a bitter humiliation as Iraq, and Afghanistan, sunk into chaos and British armed forces were exposed as being dependent upon the US. Blair, and thus the British ruling class, became linked with George W Bush and a visibly declining US imperialism. Supporting the US has become extremely costly.

On the other hand, not supporting US military action means accepting not being able to punch above one's weight, and being a secondary power. Also where do you turn for alliances? There are those who say closer relations with Europe are the way forwards, but this increasingly means a complex game of alliances against the rising power of German imperialism. The Cameron team with the backing of much of the ruling class had been pursuing a policy of seeking to build relations with the growing powers such as India, Brazil, Turkey, as well as commercial relations with China.

However, all the relations that the British bourgeoisie build in Europe and beyond are increasingly unstable because of its increasing inability to use its close relations with the US to counterweigh the actions of its rivals.

It is in this context that we have to understand the events around the vote on Syria. The divisions went across party lines and reflected the deeper division in the whole ruling class.

To go along meant being pulled further into the consequences of the US declining status ie desperate military action in Syria in order to try and display US military superiority but at the possible cost of being sucked into another war. Former military leaders openly stated their opposition to becoming involved: *"A former head of the navy, Lord West, and a former head of the army, Lord Dannatt, reflected widespread criticism within the military and defence circles by pouring scorn on claims by ministers that military strikes did not mean the UK or the US were taking sides in the civil war. 'As regards a limited strike, this was always an impossible notion,' said Dannatt. 'Any*

use of explosive ordnance by the west, for whatever purpose, would have committed us to participation in the Syrian civil war irrevocably.'" (*The Guardian*, 31.8.2013). The historical significance of not supporting the US was clearly stated by a former adviser to the Foreign and Defence secretaries, Crispin Blunt, who said *"he hoped the vote would relieve Britain of its 'imperial pretension' and stop it trying to punch above its weight on the world stage"* (ibid).

It was the loss of this role on the world stage that concerned those in favour of supporting the US's action. This was made clear by Michael Clarke, the director general of the Royal United Services Institute (one of the British imperialism's main think tanks): *"...there is a danger it could become a tipping point where the UK falls into strategic irrelevance in US eyes. We can all be friendly, well respected, kith and kin, etc -like the Dutch- but just not be taken seriously as a strategically significant player in security matters"* (ibid).

The events around the US's announcement that it was going to strike Syria have thus placed the British ruling class on the rack.

The US however, also suffered through these events. Its international authority was further undermined by its inability to get the support of its partner in the 'special relationship'. French imperialism may now be the US's "oldest ally" but it is clear to everyone that John Kerry only said that to insult the British ruling class. For US imperialism having to rely on a country which only a few years ago it was pouring scorn on for not supporting the 2nd Gulf War, is not a sign of strength but historical weakness.

The US will not forgive British imperialism easily. Obama's refusal to hold a meeting with Cameron at the G20 meeting in Russia was a very public snub, which very visibly demonstrated the price of not supporting them. The other major imperialist powers will also take note of this.

This decision not to back the US whilst being fundamentally a matter of how best to defend the national interest, also reflected a self-inflicted wound. The blatant manipulation of public opinion over the 2nd Gulf war, Blair's talk about Weapons of Mass Destruction etc, and the trouble and tragedy that unfolded in Iraq afterwards, badly dented confidence in politicians. This meant that the public was highly sceptical of any claims made by the government. The vote against military action has certainly boosted the idea that parliament has some power, and thus strengthened democratic illusions. If the most powerful parts of the ruling class had wanted to support the US, they would have done so but it would have been at the cost of a further weakening of any confidence in the ruling class.

Cameron et al may have wanted to use the US insistence on action as a means to push the rest of the ruling class to support such action and thus the special relationship, but it is clear that important parts of the ruling class refused to go along with this. This is an event of historical importance because it expresses a further step in the decline of British imperialism. A decline that will exacerbate the divisions in the ruling class, and push it to take up more military actions where it can in order to make a display of its power, no matter how limited. There may be a resurgence of the pro-US fractions as this historical weakness becomes clearer, but the US will be extremely wary of the British ruling class. British imperialism is being pushed further onto the side lines. **Phil, 6.9.13**

Zero hours Insecurity faces the whole working class

As austerity bites and capitalism shows its teeth in its relentless quest for profit and for ways to offset its crisis onto the working class, the recent revelations of the explosion in so-called zero hour contracts have filled the newspapers and our television screens. Signing up to a zero hours contract is a condition that can mean no wages or little wages at the end of the week. In the hope of gaining some employment many workers wait at the end of a phone for whatever an employer or an agency offers. This uncertainty, the knowledge that perhaps you won't have a job next week or the week after, is profoundly demoralising for workers and isolates them into individual units competing on the job market. In many cases of the zero hours contract the national minimum wage applies but they are being applied across the board, both in the private and, increasingly, the public sector - social and care workers, in the NHS. Health authorities have introduced zero hours which have also affected professional higher paid staff. The employers or agencies offering these contracts are not obliged to offer sick pay or holiday pay and they can usually be terminated at will. There can be no doubt that there has been an explosion in all kinds of precarious work, including the phenomenal rise in part time and casual work at the minimum wage or lower, as well as zero hours. This is a huge attack on the living conditions of the working class.

Zero hours contracts are clearly one of a number of ways of making jobs more precarious and are greatly advantageous to the bourgeoisie in reducing the cost of labour. So why the huge media publicity? Why has Vince Cable announced a government review (even if Ian Binkley of the Work Foundation has pointed out that this review is totally inadequate)? Why has the Labour Party apologised for not spotting it sooner? Why has Edinburgh University felt 'shamed' into agreeing to end its 2,712 zero hours contracts? Reports don't tell whether the new arrangements will be any better for the workers!

"The greater use of zero hours contracts is taking place against a background of falling real wages, high levels of workplace fear of the consequences of redundancy and unfair treatment for a significant minority, and an employment recovery where permanent employee jobs have been in a minority" (<http://www.theworkfoundation.com>). Apart from the implication that capitalist employment is 'fair' for the majority, the Work Foundation report gives

a good idea of the wider context of the increase in zero hours contracts. And also the motivation for all this publicity: while politicians hypocritically wax indignant about these contracts, they hope to divert our attention from the overall worsening of conditions for the whole working class. This issue also has the advantage of being one where we can be encouraged to demand the protection of the state through legislation against abuses by private employers, although this is an illusion as the situation of health and care workers shows. Meanwhile Vince Cable can bleat that - "well it's not ideal, but at least it allows for 'flexibility'" for employers and workers.

Damn lies and statistics

The official statistics on zero hours are rubbish, as we can see from the ONS (Office of National Statistics) estimate of 250,000 on such contracts which is less than the number affected in the care sector alone. The Work Foundation estimates there are one million, and Unite has now estimated 5.5 million based on a survey of 5,000 of its members. Whatever the true figure zero hours and other precarious and flexible work practices create a vast reserve pool of labour which nominally can appear as employed, allowing Cameron to boast of 'creating' thousands of new jobs.

One million or 5.5, the figures for the growth in zero hour contracts are definitely on the up. This has been the case for many years in the fast food industry. The opt out clause when there is criticism of the low pay and work precariousness in this industry is that they are 'franchised' out and the contracts have nothing to do with the major fast food chains. Even so, McDonald's have admitted that 90% of their employees, that's 82,200 staff, are on 2 hour contracts; Burger King (a franchised operator) employs all of its 20,000 workers on zero hour contracts. Likewise Domino Pizza - similarly a franchised operation - has 90% of its 23,000 staff on zero hours.

The rise in zero hours contracts has been particularly marked among care workers, with a majority now on zero hours, with an increase in the proportion of their contracts being zero hours "from 50% in 2008/09 to 60% last year. The government has estimated that there are 307,000 care workers on zero hour contracts, despite estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) that Britain's zero hour workforce is 250,000 people" (*The Guardian*: 27.08.13.).

This trend towards zero hours contracts has not just affected ancillary staff and primary care staff, who often work through bank agencies: many health care professionals such as radiologists, psychiatrists, and heart specialists are also being offered zero hour contracts by the Health Trusts.

The education sector has also seen implementation of zero hours.

"More than half the 145 UK Universities and nearly two thirds of the 275 Further Education Colleges said that they used the contracts, which do not specify working hours and give limited guarantees on conditions" (*Guardian*: 05.09.13).

Bleats from the Labour Party

The Labour Party is shedding crocodile tears on the iniquities of the zero contracts. Chuka Umunna (the Shadow Business Secretary) has said, *"Flexibility works for some, but the danger today is that too often insecurity at work becomes the norm"*. Ground-breaking stuff! To show its seriousness the Labour Party brought together a conference of employers and unions: *"This is why Labour has convened this important summit bringing together representatives of employees and employers to consider what action must be taken. In contrast this Tory led government has refused to have a proper and full consultation on the rise of zero hour contracts or to treat the issue with the seriousness it deserves"* (*Guardian*: 20.08.13).

Up until this statement and the occasional bleats from Andy Burnham, the Labour Party has remained extremely quiet on the issue of zero hour contracts. The Labour Party made much about introducing the minimum wage in its election manifesto of 1997 and indeed introduced the Minimum Wage Act of 1998. However, within this act was contained the retention of zero hour contracts. Legally, the Labour government had to retain the right for agencies to impose flexible work contracts. Firms and agencies have exploited this right from the last Labour government and of course the Tory and Lib-Dem government didn't look a gift horse in the mouth!

The development of the recession and the austerity that has been imposed since the crisis of 2008 has seen a massive use not just of zero hour contracts but of part-time work, of firms and agencies using insecurity and precarious work to the hilt.

The fight back

We can see with the Hovis workers (Premier Foods) in Wigan the beginnings of a fight back. After 400 fellow workers at Hovis in London were given redundancies at the beginnings of this year, the Wigan bakery workers began a series of strikes at the beginning of August.

30 Wigan Hovis workers were given redundancies and management announced that hourly pay was being reduced from £13 per hour to £8.60 an hour and working hours cut, while management brought in agency staff to take up the short fall. In an interview with *Socialist Worker* (03.09.13) one worker said: *"We're not having it. They always want something from us - pensions, wages, conditions. It's time to draw a line."*

The Wigan bakery workers have embarked on a series of one-day strikes. Their picketing had been positive, with lorry-drivers and other workers refusing to cross pickets. However, there are inherent dangers in this tactic of rolling strikes (as the last postal workers' strike demonstrated). The union, Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) has demonstrated its ability to negotiate the 400 London redundancies and were quick to demand rolling strikes.

The use of agency staff at the same time as redundancies and other attacks has the potential to cause divisions among the workers to the benefit of the employers and unions. Therefore it is encouraging to read *"Agency workers have joined the picket line"* in the same *Socialist Worker* article.

Other sectors have entered into struggle against the imposition of zero hour contracts. In Liverpool on the 9th of August we saw 400 council workers (street cleaners and road maintenance and ground staff) go on strike against imposed redundancies and new contracts. In London at the beginning of the year we saw London Underground Piccadilly line tube drivers' strike against planned new contracts.

Workers today face widespread attacks through precarious work, falling real wages, reductions in benefits, reduced health and social care. In order to push these through the bosses and the state use all sorts of tricks to isolate and divide workers as much as possible. What workers need is unity, solidarity and confidence in our ability to fight. **Melmoth, 7.9.13**

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bourgeoisie, followed much more timidly by the American bourgeoisie, declared loudly that such a crime could not go unpunished. A military response was imminent and it would be proportionate to the crime. The problem is that the American bourgeoisie and other western bourgeoisies have been through a serious reverse in Afghanistan and Iraq, countries which are also in a total mess. How could they intervene in Syria without finding themselves in the same situation? This has resulted in some very significant foreign policy differences within the ruling class, and the recent rejection of Cameron's call for military action in the UK parliament was a graphic expression of these divisions. On top of this, these bourgeoisies also had to deal with what they call 'public opinion'. The population of the west doesn't want this intervention. The majority no longer believe the lies of their own bourgeoisies. The unpopularity of this proposed intervention, even in the form of limited bombings, has posed a problem for the ruling class in the west.

The British bourgeoisie has thus had to renounce its initial bellicose declarations and move away from the path of military intervention. This expresses the fact that all the bourgeoisie's solutions are bad ones: either it doesn't intervene (as Britain has just decided to do) and this is then a big statement of weakness; or it does intervene (as the US and France are still planning to do) and they risk stirring up more chaos, more instability and uncontrollable imperialist tensions.

Only the proletariat can put an end to this barbarism

The proletariat cannot remain indifferent to all this barbarism. It is the exploited who are the main victims of the imperialist cliques. Whether it's Shia, Sunni, secular, or Christian being massacred, it makes no difference. There is a natural and healthy human reaction to want to do something about this right away, to stop these abominable crimes. It is this sentiment which the grand democracies are trying to exploit, justifying their warlike adventures in the name of 'humanitarian' causes. And each time the world situation gets worse. This is clearly a trap.

The only way that we can express real solidarity towards all the victims of decaying capitalism is to overthrow the system which produces all these horrors. Such a change can't happen overnight. But if the road towards it is long and difficult, it's the only one that can lead to a world without wars and countries, without poverty and exploitation.

The working class has no national flag to defend. The country where it lives is the place of its exploitation, and in some parts of the world, the place of its death at the hands of imperialism. The working class has a responsibility to oppose bourgeois nationalism with its own internationalism. This is not an impossibility. We have to remember that the First World War was brought to an end not by the good will of the belligerents, or by the defeat of Germany. It was ended by the proletarian revolution. **Tino 31 August**

Hunger in the 'rich world'

The rise in the use of food banks has reached huge proportions. The food banks, originally intended for the most destitute within society, are starting to be used across all sectors of the working class, often including those parts who might have previously seen themselves as belonging to the 'middle class'. The figures produced by the Trussel Trust (a charitable organisation) are revealing: in Britain in every town and city we have seen the opening up of food banks, and the number of people needing the banks to feed themselves and their families has gone up as follows:

2008/9	26,000
2011/12	128,697
2013	200,000 (estimated for this year so far)

It's not just in Britain where we've seen populations resorting to food banks. Over this past year in Greece and Spain we have seen the same situation: workers being forced into queuing for food hand-outs in order to live. However, these are economies which are openly bankrupt and these are emergency measures, are they not? But even in a much more prosperous country and economy such as Canada we are seeing the same thing:

"Last year Mr. De Schutter (a UN official) completed an 11 day mission to Canada, his first to a developed country. He reported 'very desperate conditions' in a country where 850,000 rely on food banks and condemned the Canadian government's 'self-righteous' failure to acknowledge the scale of the problem on its doorstep" ('UN Official alarmed by Food Banks in UK', *Independent* 17.02.13)

Chronic and society-wide hunger used to be associated with the countries of the 'Third World', but it's now spreading in the bastions of the 'Rich World' as well. It's the same the whole world over under austerity. **Melmoth**

Extract from the resolution on the international situation

Imperialist tensions in the phase of decomposition

We are publishing the point on imperialist tensions from the resolution on the international situation adopted by the last international congress of the ICC¹. The whole resolution, and a balance sheet of our 20th congress, will soon be available on our website.

1 A century ago the capitalist mode of production entered its period of historical decline, its epoch of decadence. It was the outbreak of the First World War which marked the passage from the 'Belle Epoque', the high point of bourgeois society, to the 'epoch of wars and revolutions' described by the Communist International at its first congress in 1919. Since then, capitalism has continued to sink into barbarism, most notably in the shape of a Second World War which cost 50 million lives. And if the period of 'prosperity' which followed this horrible butchery could sow the illusion that this system had finally been able to overcome its contradictions, the open crisis of the economy at the end of the 1960s confirmed the verdict which revolutionaries had already pronounced half a century before: the capitalist mode of production could not escape the destiny of the modes of production which had preceded it. It too, having constituted a progressive step in human history, had become an obstacle to the development of the productive forces and the progress of humanity. The time for its overthrow and its replacement by another society had arrived.

2 At the same time that it showed the historic dead end that the capitalist system now faced, this open crisis, like the one in the 1930s, once again placed society in front of the alternative between generalised imperialist war and the development of decisive proletarian struggles with the perspective of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Faced with the crisis of the 1930s, the world proletariat, which had been ideologically crushed by the bourgeoisie following the defeat of the 1917-23 revolutionary wave, had not been able to come up with its own response, leaving the bourgeoisie to impose its own: a new world war. By contrast, with the first blows of the open crisis at the end of the 1960s, the proletariat had launched very widespread struggles: May 1968 in France, the 'Hot Autumn' in Italy 1969, the massive strikes of the workers in Poland in 1970, and many other combats, less spectacular but no less significant as signs of fundamental change in society. The counter-revolution was over. In this new situation, the bourgeoisie did not have a free hand to head towards a new world war. There followed more than four decades marked by the world economy getting more and more bogged down and by increasingly violent attacks against the living conditions of the exploited. During these decades, the working class waged many resistance struggles. However, even though it did not suffer a decisive defeat which could have overturned the historic course, it was not able to develop its struggles and its consciousness to the point of offering society the outline of a revolutionary perspective.

*'In this situation, where society's two decisive - and antagonistic - classes confront each other without either being able to impose its own definitive response, history nonetheless does not just come to a stop. Still less for capitalism than for preceding social forms, is a "freeze" or a "stagnation" of social life possible. As a crisis-ridden capitalism's contradictions can only get deeper, the bourgeoisie's inability to offer the slightest perspective for society as a whole, and the proletariat's inability, for the moment, openly to set forward its own can only lead to a situation of generalised decomposition. Capitalism is rotting on its feet' ('Decomposition, final phase in the decadence of capitalism', *International Review* 62).*

Thus a new phase in the decadence of capitalism opened up a quarter of a century ago, the phase where the phenomenon of decomposition has been 1. The question of imperialism is the first question taken up in this resolution. It is followed by the destruction of the environment, the economic crisis and lastly the class struggle.

come a decisive element in the life of the whole of society.

3 The area where the decomposition of capitalist society is expressed in the most spectacular way is that of military conflicts and international relations in general. What led the ICC to elaborate its analysis of decomposition in the second half of the 1980s was the succession of murderous attacks which hit the big European cities, especially Paris – attacks that were not carried out by isolated groups but by established states. This was the beginning of a form of imperialist confrontations, later described as 'asymmetrical warfare', which marked a profound change in relations between states and, more generally, in the whole of society. The first historic manifestation of this new and final stage in the decadence of capitalism was the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Europe and of the eastern bloc in 1989. Straight away the ICC pointed out the significance of this event in terms of imperialist conflicts:

*"The disappearance of the Russian imperialist gendarme, and that to come of the American gendarme as far as its one-time 'partners' are concerned, opens the door to the unleashing of a whole series of more local rivalries. For the moment, these rivalries and confrontations cannot degenerate into a world war.... However, with the disappearance of the discipline imposed by the two blocs, these conflicts are liable to become more frequent and more violent, especially of course in those areas where the proletariat is weakest. (*International Review* no 61, 'After the collapse of the eastern bloc, destabilisation and chaos')."*

Since then the international situation has only confirmed this analysis:

- Gulf war in 1991
- War in ex-Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001
- Two wars in Chechnya (in 1994-95 and 1999-2000)
- War in Afghanistan from 2001, which is still going on 12 years later
- The war in Iraq in 2003, the consequences of which continue to effect this country in a dramatic way, but also the initiator of the war, the USA
- The many wars which have ravaged the African continent (Rwanda, Somalia, Congo, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Mali, etc)
- The numerous military operations by Israel against Lebanon and the Gaza Strip in response to rocket attacks from Hezbollah or Hamas

4 In fact, these different conflicts graphically illustrate how war has taken on a totally irrational character in decadent capitalism. The wars of the 19th century, however murderous they may have been, had a rationality from the standpoint of the development of capitalism. Colonial wars allowed the European states to establish empires where they could obtain raw materials or as outlets for their commodities. The American Civil War, won by the north, opened the door to the full industrial development of what would become the world's leading power. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 was a decisive element in German unity and thus in creating the political framework for the future powerhouse of Europe. By contrast, the First World War bled the countries of Europe dry, both the 'victors' and the 'vanquished', above all those which had been the most 'warlike' (Austria, Russia and Germany). As for the Second World War, it confirmed and amplified the decline of the European continent where it had begun, with a special mention for Germany, which in 1945 was a pile of ruins, as was the other 'aggressor' power, Japan. In fact, the only country which benefited from this war was the one which had entered it later on and which, because of its geographic position, meant that the war was not fought on its territory – the USA. However, the most important war waged by the US after the Second World War, the war in Vietnam, certainly showed its irrational character because it brought nothing to the American power despite a considerable cost at the economic and above all human and political levels.

5 This said, the irrational character of war has gone on to a new level in the period of decomposition. This has been clearly illustrated by the American adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars also had a considerable cost, notably at the economic level. But their benefits were severely limited, if not negative. In these wars, the American power was able to display its immense military superiority, but this did not enable it to obtain the objectives it was seeking: stabilising Iraq and Afghanistan and forcing its old allies of the western bloc to close ranks around the US. Today, the phased withdrawal of American and NATO troops from Iraq and Afghanistan is leaving these countries in an unprecedented state of instability, threatening to aggravate the instability of the whole region. At the same time, the other participants in these military adventures have jumped or will jump ship in dispersed order.

6 During the last period, the chaotic nature of the imperialist tensions and conflicts has been illustrated once again with the situation in Syria and the Far East. In both cases, we are witnessing conflicts which bring with them the threat of a much wider extension and destabilisation. In the Far East we've seen rising tensions between the states of the region. Thus in recent months there have been tensions involving a number of countries, from the Philippines to Japan. China and Japan have been in dispute over the Senkaku/Diyao islands, Japan and South Korea over the island of Takeshima/Dokdo, while there are other tensions involving Taiwan, Vietnam and Burma. But the most spectacular conflict is obviously the one ranging North Korea against South Korea, Japan and the US. In the grip of a dramatic economic crisis, North Korea has upped the stakes on the military level, with the aim of putting pressure on the others, and especially the USA, in order to gain a certain number of military advantages. But this adventurist policy contains two very serious elements. On the one hand, the fact that it involves, even if in an indirect manner, the Chinese giant, which remains one of North Korea's only allies, and which is more and more pushing forward its imperialist interests wherever it can, in the Far East of course, but also in the Middle East, through its alliance with Iran (which is its main supplier of hydrocarbons), and also in Africa where a growing economic presence is aimed at preparing the ground for a future military presence when it has the means to establish it. On the other hand, the adventurist policy of the North Korean state, a state whose brutal police rule is evidence of its basic fragility, contains the risk of things getting out of hand, of an uncontrolled process creating a new focus for direct military conflicts whose consequences would be hard to predict but which we can already say would be a further tragic episode to add to the long list of expressions of military barbarism ravaging the planet today.

7 The civil war in Syria followed on from the 'Arab spring' which, by weakening the Assad regime, opened up a Pandora's Box of contradictions and conflicts which the iron hand of this regime had managed to keep under control for decades. The western countries have come out in favour of Assad's departure but they are quite incapable of coming up with an alternative, given that the opposition is totally divided and that the preponderant sector is made up of the Islamists. At the same time, Russia has given unstinting military support to the Assad regime, which has guaranteed it the capacity to maintain its war fleet in the port of Tartus. And this is not the only state supporting the regime: there are also Iran and China. Syria has thus become the stakes of a bloody conflict involving multiple imperialist rivalries between powers of the first and second order – rivalries which have exacted a heavy price from the populations of the Middle East for decades. The fact that the manifestation of the 'Arab Spring' in Syria has resulted not in the least gain for the exploited and oppressed masses but in a war which has left over 100,000 dead is a sinister illustration of the weakness of the working class in this country – the only force which can form a barrier to military barbarism. And this situation also applies, even if in less

tragic forms, to the other Arab countries where the fall of the old dictators has resulted in the seizure of power by the most retrograde sectors of the bourgeoisie, represented by the Islamists in Egypt or Turkey, or in utter chaos, as in Libya.

Thus, Syria offers us today a new example of the barbarism which capitalism in decomposition is unleashing on the planet, a barbarism which is taking the form of bloody military confrontations but which is also affecting zones which have avoided war but where society is sinking into growing chaos, as for example in Latin America where the drug gangs, with the complicity of sectors of the state, have imposed a reign of terror in a number of areas.

8 But it's at the level of the destruction of the environment that the short term consequences of the collapse of capitalist society takes on a totally apocalyptic quality. Although the development of capitalism has from the beginning been characterised by the extreme rapacity of its search for profit and accumulation in the name of the 'conquest of nature', the depredations reached by this tendency over the last 30 years have reached levels of devastation that are unprecedented whether in previous societies or at the time of its birth 'in blood and filth'. The concern of the revolutionary proletariat faced with the destructive essence of capitalism is as old as the threat itself. Marx and Engels already warned against the negative impact both on nature and on human beings – of the agglomeration and confinement of people in the first industrial concentrations in Britain in the mid-19th century. In the same spirit, revolutionaries have in different epochs understood and denounced the ignoble nature of capitalist development, showing the danger that it represents not just for the working class, but for the whole of humanity and now for its very survival on the planet.

The current tendency towards the definitive and irreversible degradation of the natural world is frankly alarming, as shown by the constant terrible scenarios of global warming, pillage of the planet, deforestation, soil erosion, destruction of species, pollution of water sources, seas and air and nuclear catastrophes. The latter are an example of the latent danger of the devastation resulting from the potential that capitalism has put at the service of its mad logic, turning it into a Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of humanity. And although the bourgeoisie tries to attribute the destruction of the environment to the wickedness of individuals 'lacking an ecological conscience' – thereby creating an atmosphere of guilt and anguish – the truth revealed by its vain and hypocritical attempts to resolve the problem is that this is not a problem of individuals or even of companies or nations, but of the very logic of devastation inscribed in a system which, in the name of accumulation, whose principle and goal is profit, has no scruples about undermining once and for all the material premises for metabolic exchange between life and the Earth, as long as it can gain an immediate benefit from it.

This is the inevitable result of the contradiction between the productive forces – human and natural – which capitalism has developed, compressing them to the point of explosion, and the antagonistic relations based on the division between classes and on capitalist competition.

This dramatic scenario must also stimulate the proletariat in its revolutionary efforts, because only the destruction of capitalism can enable life to flourish once again.

Against Morsi, against the military: for class struggle!

In our previous article analysing the situation in Egypt, we wrote in our conclusion:

“capitalism has accumulated the means to destroy all human life on the planet. The collapse of social life and the rule of murderous armed gangs – that’s the road of barbarism indicated by what’s happening right now in Syria. The revolt of the exploited and the oppressed, their massive struggle in defence of human dignity, of a real future – that’s the promise of the revolts in Turkey and Brazil. Egypt stands at the crossroads of these two diametrically opposed choices, and in this sense it is a symbol of the dilemma facing the whole human species”¹.

The tragic events which have taken place and accelerated during the month of August in Egypt following the reactions to the army coup against former president Morsi, in particular the bloody repression of the Muslim Brotherhood which peaked on the 14th August, bear witness to the whole gravity of this historic situation and confirm this idea of a “crossroads” for the whole of humanity.

Getting caught up in the logic of civil war

The quagmire of decomposition, of economic and social crisis, the corruption and disastrous policies of the Morsi government (elected in June 2012) led the population back to the streets to express their discontent with growing poverty and insecurity. It was this deteriorating situation, aggravated by the political irrationality and endless provocations of the Muslim Brotherhood, which pushed the Egyptian army to carry out the coup of 3 July, deposing president Morsi from office. Parallel to this, the social agitation continued, stoking up very dangerous tensions and some bloody confrontations. This was nothing less than a juggernaut heading towards civil war. The only force capable of holding society together, the army, was compelled to step in and prevent it from breaking apart. The strongman of the hour is therefore the head of the army, Abdel Fattah al-Sissi. The latter was obliged to impose a policy of brutal repression, mainly using the civil police against the Muslim Brothers and the pro-Morsi forces. Throughout the summer, there was a growing number of clashes between

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201307/8946/egypt-highlights-alternative-socialism-or-barbarism>

the pro and anti- Morsi elements, resulting in a number of deaths, particularly among the Muslim Brotherhood. The pro-Morsi demonstrations and sit-ins, which gathered together men, women and children, were dispersed in a violent manner. The army assaults left over a thousand dead. Martial law, in the shape of a state of emergency and a curfew, was imposed in Cairo and 13 provinces. A number of Muslim Brotherhood leaders and activists (over 2000) were arrested, including the ‘supreme leader’ Mohammed Badie and many others, some of whom died in prison after an escape attempt.

Since then, the demonstrations, targets for the bullets of the police and the army, have become less numerous. In maintaining order in this manner, the army and the police have won the support of the majority of the population who see the Muslim Brotherhood as ‘terrorists’. This support for the army and the state, mixed up with a growing anti-Islamist feeling, but tainted with nationalism, can only weaken the proletariat, which risks being caught up in the negative logic of the situation. This is all the more true in that the rejection of religious fundamentalism is fed by the democratic mystification which still retains a great deal of strength.

Unlike the great demonstrations in Tahrir Square which led to the downfall of Mubarak and where the political presence of women was tolerated and where they were relatively protected, the terror reigning today has led to a spectacular moral regression, such as the collective rape of women in the middle of demonstrations, and the pogrom atmosphere against the Copts (hundreds of churches have been burned and a number of Copts have been killed).

As we wrote in our previous article: *“The working class in Egypt is a much more formidable force than it is in Libya or Syria. It has a long tradition of militant struggle against the state and its official trade union tentacles, going back at least as far as the 1970s. In 2006 and 2007 massive strikes radiated out from the highly concentrated textile sector; and this experience of open defiance of the regime subsequently fed into the movement of 2011, which was marked by a strong working class imprint, both in the tendencies towards self-organisation which appeared in Tahrir Square and the neighbourhoods, and in the wave of strikes*

which eventually convinced the ruling class to dump Mubarak. The Egyptian working class is by no means immune from the illusions in democracy which pervade the entire social movement, but neither will it be an easy task for the different cliques of the ruling class to persuade it to abandon its own interests and drag it into the cesspit of imperialist war”.

It’s also true that there have been some new expressions of the class struggle, notably in Mahalla where 24,000 workers came out on strike after half their wages were not paid². There have also been strikes in Suez. And some demonstrators have held up banners proclaiming ‘Neither Morsi nor the military’. But these rare voices have been stifled more and more, just as the courageous struggles of the workers have been increasingly isolated and thus weakened. While the situation has not reached the tragic level it has in Syria, it is becoming more and more difficult to break out of the deadly logic leading towards such barbaric outcomes.

The threat of violent chaos and instability in the region

The internal instability that has been aggravated by recent events is not taking shape in a secondary country of the region. Egypt is a turning point between North Africa and the Middle East, between Africa and Asia. It is the most populous country of the Muslim world and Africa and its capital, Cairo, the biggest metropolis of the continent. The country is part of a Sunni arc opposed to the Shiite countries, notably Syria-Lebanon and Iran, the sworn enemy of the US and Israel in the region. From the geographical point of view Egypt therefore occupies a major strategic position, in particular with regard to the interests of the USA, the world’s leading, but declining, imperialist power. During the Cold War, Egypt was an essential pawn guaranteeing the stability of the region to the benefit of the US. This advantage was consolidated with the Camp David Accords of 1979, sealing the rapprochement between Egypt and Israel and the US. The relative stability linked to the balance between the rival military blocs of east and west made it possible to contain and tolerate the

2. <http://english.ahram.org/NewsContent/3/12/79967/Business/Economy/Egypt-Mahalla-textile-workers-onstrike-again.aspx>

Muslim Brotherhood even though they were kept under constant state surveillance – in the epoch of Nasser they had been banned outright. Today the disappearance of the bloc discipline and the development of every man for himself, of social decomposition, is accentuating centrifugal tendencies and especially the rise of radicalised factions like the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood, which Mubarak had already seen as a ‘state within the state’³.

The international context, above all the free for all between the big global powers, is now serving to exacerbate all these inherent tensions. In the Middle East itself, the growing cleavage between Qatar and Saudi Arabia on the one hand, which are close to the US despite their extreme Wahabite ideology, and Egypt on the other, is pouring oil on the fire. This is why the US can’t draw back from financing the Egyptian army (to the tune of at least 80%), even though it can see that the situation is getting more and more out of its control.

Capitalism has nothing to offer but poverty and chaos. Whatever bourgeois gang is in power, the situation of the mass of the population can only get worse. But contrary to what the bourgeoisie and its media would have us believe – that the failure in Egypt is indubitable proof that any uprising can only end up in religious obscurantism or in dictatorship - the historic perspective of the proletarian revolution, even if it’s not an immediate one, is the one and only alternative to barbarism. It is the responsibility of the proletariat to become aware of this and to express its class solidarity in order to offer a real perspective for all the struggles going on in the world. Only the decisive intervention of the world proletariat, above all its most experienced fractions in the old European industrial centres, can open the road to the future – world revolution. **WH 28 August**

3. The Muslim Brotherhood, constituted by Hasan al Banna in Egypt in 1928, quickly implanted itself in a number of Arab countries. It had a retrograde, traditionalist ideology, based on the project of a grand Sunni Caliphate, the logic of which came up against all the countries which had already been formed as national entities. See http://en.internationalism.org/ir/109_islam.html

Discuss with the ICC and others through our online discussion forum

At the time of writing, one of the liveliest threads on our English-language forum is ‘Decadence after 1968’ (<http://en.internationalism.org/forum/1056/mhou/9035/decadence-after-1968?>), which has had over 100 replies and over 2,000 views. It is raising questions about what we mean by the decadence of capitalism, about the relation between economic crisis and decadence, between ecological crisis and decadence, about the significance of the rise of China and so on. The following extract from a post by jk1921 gives the flavour:

I think it’s clear that we all more or less agree that decadence is not the same as the crisis, but we all also seem to agree that it must be related somehow. The question is in what way? Does capital accumulation have to be in a “permanent crisis” for decadence to occur (even if this permanent crisis is punctuated by periods of fictitious growth)? Or can capital accumulate “normally” even in decadence?

My sense is that decadence is a qualitative measure not a quantitative one. Decadence means that the capitalist system has reached a point where it no longer serves a progressive historical mission, because it can no longer develop the productive

forces in a *progressive fashion*. I think this is where the sticking point on Chinese development comes into play. How can capitalism be decadent if it is now developing China towards a more modern capitalist economy, creating a new major power, a new national capital and a new national proletariat in the world’s most populous country (I am not arguing that this is what is *actually happening*). I think the way some comrades has dealt with this is to focus on the “progressive fashion” in the construction “development of the productive forces in a progressive fashion.” Is what is happening in China progressive from the standpoint of humanity as a whole?

This seems to raise a new issue. It’s not just that “growth” can be illusory, but now so can “development”? Can there be something like “excess development”? Can there be too much capitalism in a global context? Capitalism has become decadent before it even got around to really transforming the world’s most populous country in its own image? Perhaps, but this seems very uncomfortable for Marxists who are used to arguing that capitalism is obsolete because it can no longer develop the productive forces in the Third World condemning it to backwardness. This would all seem to require us to revise some of the assumptions Marxists have traditionally made about growth, development, historical progress etc.

On the same thread A. Simpleton takes up a question about ecology:

It took more than a minute :@- and of course misses your date by 6 years :@{ ...but do I get a consolation prize or badge or something?

‘ I suppose someone will come up with a citation about a revolutionary who saw an ecological crisis in 1870 any minute now! cheeky’

‘Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries. When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the southern slopes, so carefully cherished on the northern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby depriving their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year,

and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons. Those who spread the potato in Europe were not aware that with these farinaceous tubers they were at the same time spreading scrofula. Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery consists of, is in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.’

Engels, *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man* (1876)

Less superficially, it does prefigure ecological considerations - though note the ‘who could have guessed’ tone. It does factor in human choice viz ‘correct application’ of human invention to redress such environmental degradation as he cites. I do get the sense that he warns against taking inexhaustible natural supply for granted. However, although never one to underestimate the ruthlessness of Capital - it doesn’t sound as if knowing, blithely indifferent devastation of the whole planet ever figured in his worst nightmare.

The alternative to capitalism

The alternative to capitalism is published by Theory and Practice whose website contains a broad range of texts from political currents such as the SPGB, left communism and situationism (www.theoryandpractice.org.uk). The book contains essays by Adam Buick and John Crump which were first published in 1986 and 1987. It's not presented as an official publication of the SPGB, although the book was sent to us for review by comrades who are members of the organisation. In any case, while Adam Buick is a longstanding member, John Crump left the SPGB in the 1970s, criticising the party's parliamentary conception of revolution and arguing – as we shall see – that the SPGB was by no means the only authentically socialist organisation in the world, in opposition to the 'hostility clause' contained in its 1904 statement of principles¹. Despite these criticisms, relations between Crump and the SPGB seem to have remained fraternal until his death in 2005, and it would also seem that one of the reasons why the Socialist Studies group split from the party (or as it sees it 'reconstituted the SPGB') in 1991² was the influence of Crump's efforts to push the SPGB in certain untraditional directions.

The first part of the book is a straightforward account of what capitalism actually is, a task that it is as necessary as ever given the immense sea of confusion which surrounds the term. The idea that capitalism can be defined as individual enterprise or ownership, a conception shared both by the openly capitalist right and the allegedly anti-capitalist left, still has to be confronted and rejected: it was central to the ideology pervading the 'Occupy' movements of 2011, where notions of making the rich pay their taxes, abolishing bankers' bonuses, defending public ownership etc were extremely tenacious despite the waning influence of the established organisations of the left within these movements. The essay was originally published as 'State capitalism: the wages system under new management' and the central aim of this return to basics is to show that state capitalism, whether in its Stalinist, social democratic or other political forms, remains capitalism because capitalism is not at root a form of property but a social relation, where the mass of producers are compelled to sell their labour power, and a capitalist minority (private or state) accumulate the value extracted from this inherently exploitative relationship. It then goes on to do what the SPGB has been doing for over a hundred years now: defend the fundamental principle that socialism (or communism, it rightly sees the terms as interchangeable) can only be based on the abolition of the wage relationship, and is a stateless, money-less world community.

We have few criticisms of this section of the book, except to say that it has a somewhat timeless approach which doesn't really explain why state capitalism has become the most important form of capitalist 'management' for the entire period of the SPGB's history. For us, this can only be understood with reference to the passage of the capitalist mode of production from its ascendant to its decadent phase: in a system faced with near permanent war and economic crisis, and dangerous outbreaks of revolutionary class struggle, state capitalism - the state's totalitarian grip on social and economic life - becomes a condition for ensuring the survival of the system. Although the SPGB has always rejected our conception of decadence, it holds some conceptions which are not far from it in practice, such as the idea that from the beginning of the 20th century capitalism had created the material conditions for abundance and thus for the socialist transformation, rendering capitalism 'obsolete'. But the full implications of the system becoming a barrier to human progress have never been drawn by the SPGB, even if in conversations with individual members there is obviously a serious interest in this question.³

1. <http://revolutionarytotalitarians.wordpress.com/2012/04/01/john-crumps-critique-of-the-spgb/>

2. <http://www.socialiststudies.org.uk/polemic%20john%20crump.shtml>

3. See also this recent contribution by Binay Sarkar of the Indian affiliate of the World Socialist Movement. <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/forum/general-discussion/ascendancedecadence-capitalism>

It also seems evident to us that there are many comrades in the SPGB who feel somewhat embarrassed by the idea that 'electing a socialist majority' to parliament could be at least part of the revolutionary process. We will come back to this, but for now we want to turn to two of the ideas contained in the essay by John Crump, who was, as we have already noted, a critic of the parliamentary road: the idea of the 'thin red line', and the idea that socialism could be achieved without an intervening period of transition.

The essay 'The thin red line and non-market socialism in the 20th century'⁴ complements the essay by Adam Buick in the sense that it shows that most of the officially accepted varieties of 'socialism' are actually proponents of state capitalism and can thus be seen as a left wing of capitalism. Crump terms them 'social democratic' and 'Leninist', the latter referring mainly to the Stalinist regimes of the eastern bloc which were still in existence at the time of writing. We reject the term Leninist to describe these regimes, since this equates the Stalinist parties which managed them with the revolutionary Bolshevik party of 1917, but we don't intend to enter into that debate right now.

Overall, we find this essay to be based on a positive and constructive premise: that throughout the 20th century, a genuine vision of socialism has been maintained by a number of political currents which have shared five key points in opposition to the false conception of socialism propagated by the left wing of capital: production for use; distribution according to need; voluntary labour; a human community; opposition to capitalism as it manifests itself in *all* existing countries. He categorises these currents as follows: anarcho-communism; impossibilism (groups like the SPGB); council communism; Bordigism; situationism. These groups make up the real socialist tradition of the 20th century.

We could object to the categories or see the need to update them: there are plenty of anarcho-syndicalists today who fulfil the criteria; there's no space for left communist groups like the ICC and ICT which are neither council communist nor Bordigist; situationism is hardly a political movement these days while on the other hand there are a number of groups which belong to the 'communisation' current which certainly fit the overall category. And we could add various other political animals to the ark.

We could also say that the criteria for marking off a genuine socialist/communist movement from the left wing of capital should lay much more emphasis on the last point, which seems to be added as an afterthought. This is essentially the question of internationalism, and it's the only one which actually refers to present day political issues rather than the programme for the future. And we have seen in the past how this criterion, above all when concretised by the question of imperialist war, has been a true dividing line between loyalty to and betrayal of the socialist cause.

However, as we said, the basic approach is a fruitful one. In opposition to the sectarianism of the 'hostility' clause, Crump is arguing that there something like a 'proletarian political camp' which shares certain common principles despite their many differences (such as the parliamentary question, the role of the vanguard party, etc). Crump even defends the Bordigists against the charge that their position on the party makes them indistinguishable from leftist groups like the Trotskyists. We don't know where the SPGB officially stands on this idea of the 'thin red line'. We do know that the Socialist Studies group specifically cited Crump's views on this issue as a revision of the SPGB's principles. The SPGB has always been prepared to debate with anyone, irrespective of their class nature. But this recognition of a wider milieu than the party itself demands something a bit more: it demands a recognition that we are comrades who should have an attitude of mutual solidarity towards each other, an attitude that is sadly missing in today's proletarian political movement.

4. <http://theoryandpractice.org.uk/library/thin-red-line-non-market-socialism-twentieth-century-john-crump-1987>

At the end of the essay Crump speculates that it might in future be necessary to add a sixth criterion: opposition to any notion of a transitional society. In his view socialism must be introduced straight away or not at all:

"One feature which capitalism and socialism have in common is their all-or-nothing quality, their inability to coexist in today's highly integrated world, which can provide an environment for only one or other of these rival global systems. In the circumstances of the twentieth century, the means of production must either function as capital throughout the world (in which case wage labour and capitalism persist internationally) or they must be commonly owned and democratically controlled at a global level (in which case they would be used to produce wealth for free, worldwide distribution). No halfway house between these two starkly opposed alternatives exists, and it is the impossibility of discovering any viable 'transitional' structures which ensures that the changeover from world capitalism to world socialism will have to take the form of a short, sharp rupture (a revolution), rather than an extended process of cumulative transformation..."

Here Crump is very much on the same lines as the SPGB (and others such as the communisation tendency).

We agree with Crump and the SPGB that state capitalism is not a transitional stage towards socialism, and that the economic programme of a victorious working class does not consist of 'accumulating' value to the point where here is a sufficient level of productive capacity to make abundance possible. Capitalism has already developed a huge overcapacity and what is required is the transformation of the productive apparatus rather than its 'development' in any capitalist sense.

But what strikes one is how superficially optimistic Crump's vision is. He admits that capitalism has bequeathed us a bit of a mess which will have to be cleared up, and that some temporary measures may be needed to deal with shortages, but at the same time we will almost overnight (a few months, or at most a few years) have eliminated markets, nations, and all the rest of it, and be living in a world of free access communism.

It seems like a vast underestimation:

- Of the dire material consequences of capitalism surviving a hundred years into its epoch of senility, at the level of ecological damage, the waste and irrationality of a productive apparatus geared to competition and war;

- Of the inevitable brutal reaction of the ruling class which will not recognise any legal niceties in attempting to suppress a revolutionary movement;

- Of the near impossibility of the revolution being simultaneous in all countries at once, and thus the necessity to subordinate any economic measures taken in the area controlled by the working class to the number one priority of spreading the revolution internationally;

- Of the ideological poison distilled not only by a hundred years of barbarism but also of thousands of years of class society, of alienated social relations which will constantly hold back humanity's efforts to become self-aware and self-organised⁵;

- Of the inability of capitalism to create a world limited to bourgeoisie and proletarians, which means that the proletarian revolution will be faced with the task of integrating millions of individuals who belong to other non-exploiting strata and who will not have the same material interest in communism. Exchange will still exist with small property owners for example, hence the law of value will not vanish until all these social layers have been incorporated into the working class.

It's of course true that to make the revolution in the first place the working class will have to confront and overcome many of the ideological obstacles which hold it down, as well as the physical

5. There is a debate on the question of transition on the SPGB internet forum here. One of the SPGB's posters – ALB – expressed surprise at the emphasis the ICC comrade (Alf) placed on the subjective elements of the revolutionary process and the necessary but difficult struggle against alienation: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/forum/general-discussion/icc-way-and-our-way>

barriers erected by the bourgeois state. But class consciousness is not something that is downloaded for good - it evolves through advances and retreats and there is no guarantee that even after the first victories of the revolution, initial difficulties in taking the communist programme forward will not result in regressions and even counter-revolutionary moods. The struggle for communist ideas will be every bit as intense after the revolution as before it. For all these reasons, a phase of transition between capitalism and communism will be inevitable.

This is a major discussion and we can't hope to take it very far here⁶. But one thing does need to be said. Crump considers that the rejection of a transition period could be a sixth key point demarcating real socialists from apologists for capital, but we would suggest that some of the other differences among the 'non-market socialists' could become much more crucial **well before** the working class had assumed political power: in particular, we would expect that communists would be involved in a real political struggle against organisations and tendencies who argued that the councils should submit to this or that party 'by right' – or against those who argued that instead of being diametrically opposed to each other, councils and parliament can co-exist, a fatal error that helped bury the German revolution (and thus the Russian revolution as well) in 1918-19. **Amos, September 2013**

6. For a more global view about why periods of transition between one mode of production and another are necessary, see: http://en.internationalism.org/ir/1_problems_mc.htm

ICC Online: recent additions

NSA Spying scandal: the democratic state shows its teeth

Frankenstein and the Luddites
(an article by our sympathiser Fred looking at the symbolism of 'Frankenstein's monster' in the light of the class struggle in the early 19th century)

Solidarity appeal for the renovation of Gondolkodó Autonom Antikvárium
(Gondolkodó Autonomous Bookshop), Budapest

Prehistory: a contribution to discussion

Article by our sympathiser Baboon in response to the articles on 'Woman's role in the emergence of human culture' in International Reviews 150 and 151

en.internationalism.org

Continued from page 8

The spying game

Just one time in history have the real details and methods of the political police been examined and exposed by revolutionaries. This was when the archives of the Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, fell into the hand of the Bolsheviks and were analysed by the revolutionary Victor Serge, which resulted in his book *What everyone should know about repression* (first published in 1926)². In it he is clear that the state apparatus is not just a war machine for competing groups, but a machine for the repression of the exploited. This is an incredible read for what Serge describes as the “prototype of the modern political police”. By 1900, the Okhrana was organised internationally and by 1905 it was engaging in highly sophisticated levels of espionage across Russia with extensive spying networks. To keep track of all this, spies would spy on spies and spies would spy on them, and informers, secret agents, provocateurs, police spies were everywhere in Russia: “*The police had to see everything, know, understand and have power over everything. The strength and perfection of their machinery appears all the more terrible because of the unsuspected forces they dragged up from the depth of the human soul*”. You can see from reading the book how paranoid the bourgeoisie was about the working class, and we have had a hundred years of state capitalism since then to reinforce and refine their fears and their machines of repression.

Serge denounces “legality” and the respect for it as an element of class collaboration in much the same way as “accountability” and “transparency” - and indeed “legality” - are used around the NSA issue today. This naivety “ignores the real role of the state and the deceptive nature of democracy; in short, the first principles of class struggle”. He doesn’t at all underestimate the “powerful and cunning adversary” and from this denounces the idea of the “idyllic revolution”. In respect of the undercover forces at work today, Serge gives some considerable insight: “*Police provocation is above all the weapon - or the curse - of decomposing regimes. Conscious of their impotence to prevent what is going on, the police incite initiatives which they can then repress. Provocation is also*”
2. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/serge/1926/repression/>

a spontaneous, elementary action resulting from the demoralisation of a police force at its wits’ end, overtaken by events, which cannot perform tasks infinitely above its capacities, and nonetheless wants to justify the expectations and expenditure of its masters”. And finally on Serge, in line with our position above: “*There is no force in the world which can hold back the revolutionary tide when it rises and all the police forces, however Machiavellian, scientific or criminal, are virtually impotent against it*”.

“1984”: Counter-revolution...

There’s been lots of talk in the media about these leaked secrets showing how we have arrived at George Orwell’s nightmare vision of 1984 and “Big Brother is Watching You”; with some saying that we have gone well beyond it. Orwell’s 1949 book, with its story of the state overlooking every aspect of one’s life, every corner of it, was a horror story of the counter-revolution. It’s a story of perpetual warfare generated to keep the population behind the state, of the national socialism of Big Brother and the hopelessness of rebellion. The rebel hero, Winston Smith, eventually has all the spark of revolt snuffed out of him and any hope of a different society is completely extinguished. This book was a reflection of the counter-revolution, of the dark days leading up to and coming out of the Second World War when the working class seemed totally helpless, impotent and atomised vis-a-vis the state. But, in reality, even in the depths of this period of counter-revolution, even in places like Nazi Germany or the police states of the eastern bloc and the militarised democracies, there were still acts of revolt, compassion, solidarity, protests and strikes, some major, some very minor in character but all the more significant given the period that they took place in.

It’s true that today Orwell’s nightmare vision of a citizen’s every step being followed by the state is very much a reality. But we have more than enough evidence that all the state’s surveillance and all the state’s bloodhounds cannot control a population in revolt and particularly the working class. The recent demonstrations and protests across the world, even if greatly facilitated by an

electronic field that can be switched off, show the potential difficulties for the ruling class. There were very strong strikes in the eastern bloc countries, Hungary, Poland, Russia in the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s, despite the all-pervasive nature of the state apparatus, particularly their interior ministries and their trade union spying networks. In East Germany the 1953 workers’ strikes knocked the repressive apparatus of the state, including the unions, sideways, despite its reliance on one of the biggest bodies of secret police in the world, the Stasi - an organisation that went to the extent of collecting sweat samples from people and storing them in tubes in order to identify them later. The workers’ self-organisation in the MKS in Poland, 1980, shows even more clearly how to fight state repression: the ruling class, consisting of the army, party, security services and the official trade unions, wanted to cut off the phone-line between the MKS in Gdansk and the rest of the country, i.e. the other workers’ assemblies. But the workers met up and responded with a force that pushed back the arm of repression. It was the general assemblies - where workers of several cities and towns were united and debated and decided together - which held the forces of repression at bay. The elected strike committees also used the company/union PA address system to broadcast talks between the workers and the politicians directly to the workers. This is a question of the historic course, of an undefeated working class and we have the more recent example of the self-organisation of the proletariat in China in the face of formidable state repression. Unlike the

vision of “1984”, today a massive and widespread mobilisation of the working class cannot easily be contained. Thousands, millions of protesting workers, especially if centralised through general assemblies or even at well-organised and pointed demonstrations, cannot easily be corralled, let alone overcome. From this perspective we begin to understand a bit more here about the unions being the state’s police of the working class.

But if we can take heart from the actions of our class we mustn’t console ourselves with a false sense of security. In relation to the proletariat and its revolutionary minorities, there can be no doubt about the determination, ruthlessness and cold-bloodiness of the ruling class in wanting to destroy and eliminate their threat and this inevitably leads to harassment, imprisonment and assassinations, as we saw even in the heights of class struggle in Germany during the revolutionary wave of 1918/19. Deportations, the kidnapping of thousands of opponents by innumerable regimes, the pogromist campaigns against revolutionaries all bear witness to the consciousness of the ruling class. The bourgeoisie has never been nice to the working class when it dares to raise its head against capitalism in any effective manner.

Baboon 6.9.13

In a second part we will look at the development of the fortress state, the “war on terror” used to justify spying, Britain as an example of spying and policing by a democratic state, and the use of counter-espionage and intelligence by the working class.

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Primitive communism and women’s role in the emergence of human solidarity

Communism is not just “a nice idea”, vol. 3
Bilan, the Dutch left and the transition to communism (i)

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The spying game

The recent revelations about the extent of surveillance by the capitalist state, as exposed by the former National Security Agency operative Edward Snowden, shouldn't really surprise us. There are certain technical innovations which are quite revealing about the way the state uses the development of technology, but in essence this latest scandal just confirms what we already know about the development of state capitalism and the paranoia of the bourgeoisie; and we can probably assume that many of the technicalities revealed have already been superseded by even more refined methods. The Wikileaks release of classified US documents three years ago, giving rise to a world-wide media frenzy, amply demonstrated that spying and lying are part of the stock-in-trade of the ruling class.

There is nothing really new about revelations that our rulers are a ruthless, murderous, Machiavellian, conspiratorial class. It would be naive for revolutionaries to think otherwise because this would directly lead to fostering illusions in the democratic state and the idea that this state would abide by the rules or operate fairly. In general, throughout history, the workers' movement has tended to underestimate the Machiavellianism of the bourgeoisie and it has paid a great price for doing so. The enormous reach and depth of state surveillance that has recently been unmasked is thus not an exception and not really a scandal, but the true face of a capitalist society which is driven by the cancers of militarism, terrorism (for the most part fostered directly and indirectly by the major powers) and competition as well as the imperative need to use its spies, police and secret agencies as weapons of repression and oppression against the working class or any elements that come up against the system. This is just as true of the velvet-glove democracies as of the iron-fist totalitarian regimes - they are all expressions of the dictatorship of capital and they provide themselves with the tools to maintain that dictatorship, of which spying is just a part. Behind all the fuss about state surveillance, despite all the outrage and protest from left to right, these are the very principles of capitalist society being put to work and the outrage tends to cover up this reality. Spying has always been an important tool in class societies, all the more so in capitalist society and particularly a capitalist society in its decadent phase where the size and intensity of the state's espionage machine reaches new extents and depths.

The basis and continuity of capitalism's spying game

There are at least three factors that underlie the spying activities of the capitalist state:

- the economic competition which breeds industrial espionage - the more frantic and desperate the competition, the more so the spying around it. The recent revelations showed that this includes the NSA spying on embassies and other institutions of its so-called allies (such as France and Germany) as well as its more traditional imperialist foes;
- military confrontations and the developments of imperialism. These are unthinkable without 'intelligence', spying, undercover agencies at work;
- the maintenance of class domination. Class society compels the ruling class to use repression, secret police, undercover agents, all kinds of observations and spying on the working class and on any oppositions or protests. This is particularly the case with the working class, the revolutionary class in capitalist society. Here the spying had to become systematic.

To express outrage that governments, the US in the case of the NSA, or Britain in the case of GCHQ, use their spying agencies against economic or military rivals, or populations at large, is just hypocritical. The same British media outlets and liberals today bleating about a "free press" and censorship are the same ones that joined in the vilification and demonisation of the miners during their pivotal strike of 1984/5, and the same ones that repeated the state's lying propaganda about WMD in Iraq in 2003. All countries are forced to spy and lie and there is no state, no ruling class without its secret services, machines of surveillance and undercover operations. The democratic New Zealand government has just passed a new spying bill giving the state more power over its population (*Guardian*, August 20), and its police and intelligence services have direct access to US surveillance networks such as PRISM; meanwhile a 'national liberation' organisation such as the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank has 7 different police/security bodies. This hypocrisy is also endemic to the system itself with the call from the White House last year for an international convention to regularise "consumer data privacy in a networked world" (*Guardian*, 27.4.13). This was just another weapon in the USA's cyber-warfare, particularly involving China. Scandal after scandal has emerged in the countries that



the US and Britain were spying on but all of them are at it. Germany's BND intelligence agency has used "massive amounts" of daily intercepts from the NSA (*Der Spiegel*, 7.8.13) and they have been working closely together for decades. It's a similar story from France whose politicians like to boast about the independence of their country. And while they are cooperating at one level, at another they are all spying on each other.

While they existed during capitalism's rise as a dynamic system, while they even pre-date capitalism itself, spying activities take on a new dimension in capitalism's decadence. This is because of permanent war and imperialist conflict; increased commercial rivalry and competition which also tend to overflow into the realms of military developments; and, above all, because of the need to keep a tight watch and control over the working class. Those are the main reasons why we see such a strong growth in these parasitic bodies and their activities. Even in the period of counter-revolution when the working class was more or less absent as a fighting force - indeed arising from it - came the most developed means for permanent surveillance. The totalitarian regimes of the Nazis and the Stalinists built the most secret and fearsome apparatus for spying and repression: the Gestapo and the Russian GPU. From the Second World War, where the spying activities of all the belligerents were vital for victory or defeat, these machines developed further during the Cold War where they were again intensified by technological means along with a considerable growth of the CIA and other such organisations. There are also developments in the closeness between the

head of the state and the secret services. In Russia every president bar one, Boris Yeltsin (who was close to them), came directly from the KGB or their predecessors; President Bush Senior was previously the head of the CIA and Klaus Kinkel, the former German Foreign Minister, was head of the German secret services. In 1981, the Thatcher clique, which had links to the secret services, set up the shadowy MISC 57 unit, three years before taking on the miners, and secret service bosses in many Middle East countries are very close to the head of government and the forces of direct repression.

1917: Revolution

There's an idea among some revolutionary elements, an idea that sits side-by-side with the rejection of an analysis that the bourgeoisie is an intelligent and conspiratorial class, that the police "won't bother with the likes of us - we're too small, too insignificant". Such ideas are concessions to democracy which also underestimate the fact that the bourgeoisie has often been clearer about the crucial role of revolutionary organisations than the working class (See the article in *WR* 252 'Revolutionary organisations struggle against provocation and slander'). Mussolini's secret police maintained a spy in the very small left communist group *Bilan* in the 1930's and the nascent group of the ICC in France in the early 70's was watched over by the police. These are things that we know.

1. http://en.internationalism.org/wr/252_slnder.htm

Continued on page 7

Political positions of the ICC

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

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

* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.

* The statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in

the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* All the nationalist ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

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

* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union

organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

* In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

* The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

* The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active

factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to 'organise the working class' nor to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.

OUR ACTIVITY

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

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

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

OUR ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League* of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen's Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian Lefts*.