Our rulers just can’t get enough of war. A whole year of ‘commemorations’ of World War One, with opinion divided among them about whether this was a Good War or a Bad War. The right wing tends to argue that this was a Good War. The Kaiser was Bad, and had to be stopped. And Britain’s empire was, on the whole, a Good Thing, which had to be defended. The left wing can then pose as very radical, and say, this was a Bad, Imperialist War.

A week or more of celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in 1944, with royals and presidents hob-nobbing in northern France on the big day. This time left and right are united: this was a Good War. The US and the British were definitely the Goodies, and the Germans were the Haddies. The Goodness of the war is proved by the fact that it made the world safe for Democracy.

When it comes to the First World War, the left can quote authentic revolutionary likes Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg and tell us that capitalism, at a certain stage in its historical development, inevitably turns to imperialism and war to prolong its survival past its sell-by date. But they mysteriously forget all this when it comes to the Second World War, which was to all intents and purposes the same war fought by the same imperialist powers as the conflict that ended only 20 years previously. The magic of ‘anti-fascism’, of ‘Nazism is the greater evil’, wipes away what marxism tells us about the real nature of capitalism, and the barbarism of Auschwitz and Treblinka justifies the barbarism of the aerial obliteration of Hamburg, Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In opposing the First World War on the basis of class internationalism, the revolutionary who went on to form the Communist Internationals insisted that if capitalism in decay was not overthrown by proletarian revolution, it would drag humanity into a deadly spiral of wars which would threaten its very existence. History has proved them right: the Second World War – which revolutionsaries opposed for the same reason – plunged even greater depths of horror than the First. The “Cold War” that immediately followed wiped out millions in proxy wars between the two superpowers, with the sword of nuclear annihilation hanging over mankind’s head. The break-up of the two imperialist blocs after 1989 did not bring peace, but a growing war of each against all that has swept across Africa, the Middle East, and, with the war in ex-Yugoslavia, to the gates of Europe. The great powers, reacting to the break-up of their spheres of influence, have since 1989 intervened militarily even more often than during the Cold War, but as we can see in Chechnya, Iraq and Afghanistan, they have only accelerated the plunge into chaos.

Today the ruin that is Syria, the permanent massacre that is the Congo and Central Africa, the growing tensions between the USA and Japan and China in the Far East, the descent of Ukraine into an imperialist ‘civil war’ fuelled by both Russia and the western powers – all this is testimony to the fact that the rulers cannot have enough of war, that their system needs it, feeds on it, fuels it, even if this murderous addiction will also lead to capital’s own destruction. Hence all the efforts of all the ruling classes of the world to stir up the poison of patriotism, to make the exploited of the world identify with their exploiters and wave the national flag, which is always the flag of capitalism and war.

For the working class, to identify with our rulers, to march in their parades, leads to suicide: To understand our identity with all the exploited of the world, to unite in struggle against the capitalists’ call for sacrifice in the national interest, to carry on that struggle against the capitalists even when they go to war, to oppose the national flag with the flag of the international revolution – that is the only hope for a world without war. 

Ukraine slides towards military barbarism

The crisis in Ukraine is the most dangerous in Europe since the break-up of Yugoslavia a quarter of a century ago, as Russia attempts to defend its interests in the region against the tendency for Western European powers to gain more influence, threatening civil war internally and destabilisation in the region.

The country has a new president, Petro Poroshenko, elected by a majority in the first round of voting and promising to defeat the “separatist terrorists” in the East of the country within hours. A new hope he is not. His political career started in the United Social Democratic Party of Ukraine and then the Party of Regions, loyal to Kuchma, an ally of Russia, before swapping to Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine Bloc in 2001. He has been a minister in governments of both Yushchenko and Yanukovich. A chocolate billionaire, he was accused of corruption in 2005 and fought the presidential election with the support of former boxer Vitaly Klitschko, who was elected Mayor of Kiev at the same time, and his corrupt backers, Levochin and Firtash. Ukraine has yet another corrupt oligarch in charge, imposing the only perspective this rotten capitalist system has in store for humanity: militarism and austerity.

Far from defeating the pro-Russian separatists in hours, the fighting has continued with Ukraine MASSACERING a separatist assault on Donetsk airport, at the cost of dozens of lives, and losing a helicopter with a general on board. The fighting continues and the separatists remain in place.
As the results of May’s elections to the Euro-
A 2 Euro elections

Capitlist decomposition produces the search for scapegoats

Ukraine slides towards military barbarism

Continued from page 1

Russia's foreign policy

Russia defends its strategic interest in Crimea

Russia imperialist needs Crimea for its Black Sea fleet, a warm water port with access to the world's oil and gas reserves. Both Moscow and Crimea had no intention of lost their territorial integrity and the Russian military build-up on the Crimean peninsula is seen as a clear indication of Russia's intention to keep the Black Sea port operational by military force if necessary. Russia has been actively building up its military presence in the region, including the deployment of a new naval base in Sevastopol.

The Economist worldrevolution/201403/9565/internationalist-declaration-russia

tips or slag heaps risk mudslides. Added to which there is radioactivity from Soviet era nuclear min-

There is no evidence that the EU would be able to prevent another annexation of territory if it occurs, or to punish the aggressor. The EU's ability to act swiftly and effectively to prevent annexation is limited by the fact that it has no standing military force, and that its member states, especially Russia and Ukraine, have significant nuclear arsenals and the capacity to launch a pre-emptive strike. The EU's military capabilities are limited to the provision of military assistance and advisory services to member states.

The danger for the working class in this situa-
tion is that it is likely to bring about a new period of political and economic instability, with a rise in prices and a decline in living standards for the working class. This could have serious consequences for the stability of the EU, and for the prospects of a viable and peaceful resolution to the conflict in the region.

But in no way does this mean that the EU is powerless to prevent another annexation of territory by a member state. The EU has a number of tools at its disposal that could be used to prevent such an event from occurring.

The EU could impose economic sanctions on the aggressor, including the imposition of trade sanctions and freezing of assets. These measures could have a significant impact on the aggressor's economy, and could be used to force it to withdraw its forces from the annexed territory.

The EU could also use its political influence to pressure the aggressor to withdraw its forces. The EU has a number of allies in the region, including the United States and the United Kingdom, and could use these relationships to put pressure on the aggressor to withdraw its forces.

The EU could also use its diplomatic influence to mediate between the parties involved in the conflict. The EU has a long history of successful mediation in other conflicts, and could use this experience to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the region.

The EU could also use its military capabilities to provide a counterbalance to the aggressor's military forces. The EU has a small but significant military force, and could use this to provide a deterrence to potential aggressors.

The EU could also use its economic and financial resources to provide aid and assistance to the people of the annexed territory. The EU has a long history of providing aid and assistance to people in need, and could use this to help the people of the annexed territory to rebuild their lives and their economy.

The EU could also use its media and information capabilities to spread the truth about the annexation and its consequences. The EU has a powerful media and information infrastructure, and could use this to counter the propaganda of the aggressor and to help the people of the annexed territory to understand the true nature of the annexation.

The EU could also use its legal and judicial capabilities to bring the aggressor to justice. The EU has a number of tools at its disposal for prosecuting crimes against humanity, and could use these tools to bring the aggressor to justice for its violations of international law.

The EU could also use its political and institutional resources to provide a framework for the annexed territory's future development. The EU has a long history of providing support for democratic and economic development, and could use this to help the people of the annexed territory to build a brighter future for themselves.

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1. http://www.theguardian.com/comment/story/0,3604,376455,00.html

Set piece confrontation

The strike itself broke out after a long period of rising international class struggle - a strike wave in Britain, strikes in Germany, Belgium, the USA, Jap- an and Poland, to name but a few - with the work- ers more and more tending towards self-organisa- tion. As a result, a great deal of job loss or re- duction of vocational skills against the constraints and diversions of the trade unions. If there are some revolutionary, anarchist or libertar- ian elements they are part of the fundamental role of the trade unions in policing and attacking the working class (indeed some of these elements actively work within the unions and bolster their ideology). Then there are elements of the ruling class that are well aware that the trade unions belong to them and and know how to use them to their greatest effect. Such was the case with the 1984 miners’ strike where the state used repression on the one hand and the National Union of Miners and its leader Arthur Scargill on the other, in order to crush the miners and deliver a message that “struggle doesn’t pay” not only to the class in Britain but also for the proletariat inter- nationally.

Under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher the British bourgeoisie prepared well and carefully from the very early 80s in order to take on the miners. A shadow Cabinet Office group, MISC 57, was set up in 1981 in order to lay the ground.

In 1981, a wildcat strike by tens of thousands of the British bourgeoisie demonstrated its own scab nature at the end of the strike by leading the 60% of miners still out, “with heads held high” as the union put it, across picket lines of miners who had been sacked or were on bail. Despite acts of solidarity and support from individual workers or groups, the whole of the trade union apparatus showed in practice its support for the state against the miners. To back up this formu- lated opposition to the miners, many of whom were being radicalised by the overt repression of the police and other state agencies, the whole gamut of the unions, from the NUM to the GMBU were used to crush the miners and their unions for the national interest, was mobi- sised behind the NUM and other trade unions in order to maintain credibility in the fiction among workers that it was inside the union structures and in defence of the union that the miners had to be supported. And the unions, the NUM and the other major unions, supported the workers like the rope supports the hanged man. The overt repression of the police and the subtle divisive repression of the NUM and other unions worked hand in hand against the miners specifically and the working class in general. The defeat of the miners’ strike was an extension to other workers, Scargill, the NUM and the other unions had all these divisions within itself and they helped to strangle any initiative of the miners to cut through all this shit and move the direction of the strike towards a result.

Arthur Scargill became president of the NUM in 1982. He was the perfect foil for the Thatcher clique, the other side of the coin in the left versus right game that the British bourgeoisie was getting down to a fine art. He was deliberately set up as a bogeyman and the more the bourgeoisie attacked him the more he drew the majority of the miner’s strength as an old trick of the ruling class and the modulus operandi of the British bour- geoisie - particularly using its popular press and TV stations - in many important strikes through the 60’s, 70’s and into the 80’s. Union leaders were labelled “socialist firebrands”, “reds” and “political functionaries” that kept the miners trapped in the union framework and it was this framework/prison that proved decisive in the defeat of the miners and their strike. Scargill’s role

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In 1981, a wildcat strike by tens of thousands of miners - which threatened to get even bigger - pushed the Thatcher government to withdraw its pit closure plans and severely dented the latter’s credibility in the eyes of the ruling class. Thatcher was on her way out but the British victory in the Falklands War, facilitated by the US, gave renewed vigour to the British bourgeoisie and it turned to dealing with the “enemy within” - the working class, the main battalions of which were seen to be a militia and will to fight, was the miners. The re- pressive plans mentioned above were put in place and the ruling class relied on the NUM leadership, along with the other main unions, to play the role that it had consistently played in the past: isolating the miners and leading them into an ambush and subsequent defeat. Scargill and the NUM started this ball rolling with a ridiculous overtime ban be- gan in November 1983, which gave the bosses all the warning they needed in order to build up coal stocks and their own repressive forces. None of Scargill’s whining and evasions in his “memories” alters this or any of his and his union’s role in the defeat that followed. There were plenty of work- ers’ initiatives that counter-poes a class dynamic particularly based on their self-organisation. This included the very effective “flying pickets” when the strike started in March 1984, which the union tried to curtail. But the union had the misplaced confidence of a great number of the workers be- hind it and this reinforced the role of the NUM, with its nationalist demands for “British Coal” and “Defend the NUM”. The union fixed the miners on the Notts collieries and set-piece battles, like the ones around the Orkewick coking plant that, in the face of repressive forces, the miners could only lose. While the only dynamic that will take a workers’ struggle forward is self-organisation and extension to other workers, Scargill, the NUM and the other unions, turned this militancy back into warfare between the miners, growing isolation and unnecessary ritualised battles. It’s not a question of “bad leadership” or the personality of Scargill. It was the whole union structure of the NUM and the other unions that defeated the miners and delivered a blow to the rest of the class in Britain and internationally.

We’ve just passed the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the miners’ strike in Britain, a strike which began in March 1984, lasted nearly a year and involved something like 300,000 workers - many of which had its roots in the whole period beforehand of international class struggle. Despite returning to this question repeatedly, and particularly on anniversaries, we make no apology for looking at this issue once again given that the lessons of the miners’ strike are important for the trade unions - particularly the National Union of Miners - are important not only for the working class in Britain but also for the proletariat inter- nationally.

1. http://www.theguardian.com/comment/story/0,3604,376455,00.html


Also on Britain:

The recovery bubble

page 7

In reality Thatcher wasn’t the only enemy

Alsso on Britain:
Revolutionaries in Britain and the struggle against imperialist war

In World Revolution 365 we republished an article that showed how, when the imperialist war of 1914 broke out, the Labour party and the trade unions offered their services to the ruling class by mobilising the workers for war. But there were numerous voices within the workers’ movement in Britain who, like their counterparts in other countries (such as the Bolsheviks in Russia and the Spartacists in Germany) remained loyal to their internationalist principles and raised their voices against the ideological orgy of patriotism and the hideous carnage in the trenches. This article, written by a close sympathiser of the ICC, was originally published in two parts (in World Revolution 267 and 268 in September and October of 2003) which we have now consolidated into one article.

An additional article, on the minority in the UK who maintained internationalist positions in the face of the Second World War, was published in WR 270.

Part 1: the First World War

The first duty of revolutionaries in the face of capitalist war is to defend the interests of the whole working class, as expressed in the historic slogan of the workers’ movement: “Workers of the world unite!”

The defence of internationalism has never been an abstract principle; it is an intensely practical struggle, involving a fight for clarity inside the political organisations of the working class, more than ever through intervention in its defensive struggles, often in difficult conditions of state repression and patriotic frenzy. This article examines the struggle of the revolutionary left in Britain against the first world war, looking firstly at the development of clarity at the theoretical level about the entry of capitalism into its imperialist phase, and then at the organisational struggle for an active anti-war position inside the main ostensibly Marxist organisation, the British Socialist Party.

This struggle for internationalism demanded not only a ruthless fight against the jingoism and nationalism of the upper layers of society, but also against all signs of opportunism and centrist within the working class. (The history of the different socialist organisations in Britain and their responses to the First World War are dealt with in more detail in the series on the struggle for the class party in Britain - see WR 237, September 2000).

Understanding the new imperialist epoch

The understanding that capitalism had entered into its imperialist phase was the product of a pre-war political struggle waged by the left – in particular the Bolsheviks, the left wing in the German Social Democratic Party and the Dutch Tribunists - against the revisionist theories of Hyndman and others on the right-wing of the Second International, who began to argue that capitalism was in fact capable of overcoming its own inner contradictions and that the struggle for gradual reforms alone could ensure towards the bureaucratic enslavement of the working class, and will create the industrial war-wage of whole empires and groups of empires... Thus, along the road of nationalisation or state ownership, instead of meeting socialism, freedom and peace, we find competition intensified, wage slavery, militarism, and, in the distance, the bloodstained fields of future battles.

The increased output of commodities...will never cease...war; and the profits of the war... will increase...the interests of the capitalist classes.

The Socialist Labour Party in particular developed quite a sophisticated analysis of state capitalist, arguing that even the Liberal government’s welfare measures - despite offering some minimal improvements in the conditions of the working class - were fundamentally “a preliminary measure towards the bureaucratic enslavement of the peoples.”

Four for the SLP, the final outbreak of the imperialist world war and the insatiable demands of the world economy greatly intensified this tendency and confirmed the reactionary consequences of any further support for nationalisation or state control.

Nationalisation or state socialism so far...from being a method of working class progress to socialism, has become the very life blood and method of the most militant and aggressive imperialism... State control means the highest form of capitalism, and will create the industrial war-wage of whole empires and groups of empires... Thus, along the road of nationalisation or state ownership, instead of meeting socialism, freedom and peace, we find competition intensified, wage slavery, militarism, and, in the distance, the bloodstained fields of future battles.

Three years of bloodstained battlefields enabled the clearest elements the SLP to conclude that capitalism, like the social systems which preceded it, was strongest in East London, and in Scotland where Maclean and the Glasgow branches carried out anti-militarist propaganda. In both areas, exiled Marxists with invaluable experience of the organisational struggles in Russian and East European social democracy played a leading role.

The left was successful in gaining representation on the party’s executive, and in late 1912 narrowly won endorsement for its own clear rejection of militarism and imperialism. But, in the face of a counter-attack by the right, the opposition revealed a fatal tendency to vacillate; two of its representatives failed to attend the next executive meeting in February 1913, giving the leadership a majority of one in voting to suspend the resolution and to allow the party to decide on the question of maintaining a British Navy. At the 1913 party conference, the centre in the party did all it could to prevent a split on such a ‘non-essential point’, proposing that members should be “free to hold any opinion they like on subjects apart from socialism.” As one delegate bluntly put it: “first and foremost they must have socialist unity.” In the end, the left’s anti-militarist resolution was never voted on and Hyndman, still air his ‘strong conviction’ that a very powerful navy was ‘indispensable’ to Britain, agreed to keep quiet for the sake of the party. In a display of phoney unity, a resolution was then adopted, pledging the BSP to oppose the growth of militarism as an integral part of the Second International. For the left this proved a Pyrrhic victory. The right, in danger of losing its grip on the party, had been rescued by central control.12 The working class paid heavily for this failure; at the outbreak of the first imperialist world war one of the very few Marxist organisations in Britain - so painfully built up during the preceding period of capitalist prosperity - remained in the hands of a right-wing chauvinist clique which proceeded to offer its enthusiastic support to the slaughter, dragging the whole notion of proletarian internationalism down into the mud with it.

Red Clydeside - a mass meeting in 1919

The first duty of revolutionaries in the face of capitalist war is to defend the interests of the whole working class, as expressed in the historic slogan of the workers’ movement: “Workers of the world unite!”
The organisational struggle for an internationalist position - the dangers of centrism

The BSP leadership’s first tentative efforts to mobilise an internationalist centre, the Intelligentsia, provided a swift reaction from the internationalists in the party, who found growing support among the membership. The right was forced to prevent this opposition unifying by avoiding a national conference in 1915; at the six regional conferences held instead, the mass of the party rejected both the social chauvinist and revolutionary positions, narrowly adopting an “Indian revolution” resolution which in fact justified the British war effort. Again the leader’s reaction was to try to narrow the mass of the party to the centre, which was largely a continuation of the old International. However, in 1916 the Old International and his supporters set up a ‘Socialist National Defence Committee’ which effectively operated as an arm of the government in the party; the organisational struggle turned violent and anti-war militants found themselves being set up for state repression by their own leadership.

A split was clearly inevitable, but the opposition - which included both the left and the centre of the party - still hesitated to take the initiative despite gaining a majority on the executive. Within the opposition, there appeared a more clearly defined centre. The publication of a war manifesto, which called for the revolution to sustain the war, which became part of the pacifist argument, was rejected by the old International. However, with Maclean’s imprisonment and the closure of the Vanguard in 1916 political leadership of the opposition passed over to the centre, which urged peace and called on the Second International to back it. At the 1916 conference, the Hyndmannites were finally isolated and walked out, but even now they were not excluded, and the debates at the conference - clearly revealed the centrist confusions of the majority. Essentially the new BSP leadership deeply feared a British military defeat and did all it could to avoid any action that might jeopardise an allied victory.

Zimmerwald: a first step in the regroupment of the internationalists

After the initial shock of the war and the betrayal of social democracy, the question for revolutionaries was whether the old International could be rebuilt or if a new one was now necessary. In practice, with the old International’s leaders now fully backed by the US and other central organs, the ‘International Socialist Bureau’ (ISB), was completely impotent. It was eventually on the issue of the war that it was decided that a first, unofficial international socialist conference was held at Zimmerwald in September 1915. This brought together some of the most important current leaders of the revolutionary left, including the Bolsheviks, along with representatives of the pacifist centre. The left’s own draft resolutions and anti-war纲领s, which called for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, were rejected by the majority which restricted itself to a call for peace, but the conference acted as an important moment

John Maclean and comrades

In this way, despite all their confusions, through the initiative of the Italian Socialist Party that a new International had been formed of the anti-war movement abroad through émigré contacts and supported Zimmerwald as laying the foundations for a new International denouncing the pro-war socialists with whom all common action was now impossible: “We are at the parting of the ways. Every day the cleavage between the socialists remaining true to the International and the pro-war socialists is becoming more and more marked.”

Sylvia Pankhurst also gave support to Zimmerwald in her paper the Women’s Dreadnought, which was in the process of evolving towards a revolutionary position on the war; later, if social politics would be marked by the newspaper changing its name to the Workers’ Dreadnought in 1916.

So from their initial isolation, by late 1915 at least some of the scattered revolutionary forces in Britain began their first steps towards regroupment at an international level based on a clear political break with the social chauvinists, but also by clearly revealing the centrist confusions - more or less explicitly - from the pacifist centre.

The need for a clear internationalist perspective for the workers’ struggles

The collapse of the Second International and the definitive betrayal of its opportunistic right wing, while disarming the working class and temporarily putting a brake on its struggles, did not constitute a decisive blow, and the genuine euphoria which with thousands of workers greeted the war quickly began to evaporate as the bourgeoisie declared their greater sacrifices in the name of the war effort.

As early as February 1915, workers’ struggles re-emerged in the British trade union movement, struck for higher wages against the advice of their union executive and formed their own unofficial strike committee. Rent strikes also began. In July, 200,000 South Wales miners struck in defiance of the Munitions Act and forced concessions from the government, while in November 1915 transport workers in Dublin paralysed the docks. Unofficial shop stewards’ committees grew up all over the country. The introduction of conscription in 1916 provoked further strikes in Clydeside engineering workers, which were only cut short by the wholesale arrest and imprisonment of the strike leaders (including John Maclean). The wave of unrest was now moved on England with a strike by engineering workers in Sheffield in November 1916, and in the following March further repressive government measures led to renewed unrest which spread throughout England, eventually involving over 100,000 workers, the largest mass movement of the war.

In the midst of the slaughter, these struggles were driven ahead - both by sheer revolutionary opportunities, and despite their initial isolation, those few revolutionaries who had rejected the war found the causes of life and death in 1914 now found opportunities to win a hearing in the workers’ struggles. The group around John Maclean, which had emerged, when engineering workers on the Clyde and the engineers on Rotherhithe strikers on Clydeside; against the prevailing disdain of British socialists for the class’s struggle, eventually won the parting of the ways. Every day the cleavage between the socialists remaining true to the International and the pro-war socialists is becoming more and more marked.

The Vanguard group also intervened in Clydeside; their committee body set up by the militant shop stewards to co-ordinate their struggle against the Munitions Act - to urge it to organise mass action against the threat of conscription, but was expelled from its meetings after attacking the leadership’s refusal to deal with the issue of the war, which led Maclean to question its ability to respond to the needs of the class struggle, calling on the workers if necessary to “take the initiative into their own hands”. Only the revolutionary left around Maclean consistently intervened in the workers’ struggles to call for a class struggle against the war.

The Socialist Labour Party also had a strong presence on Clydeside, where some of its militants played a leading role in the Clydeside Workers’ Committee, but it failed to raise the question of a war or to attempt to give the struggles a revolutionary perspective, pandering instead to the syndicalist idea of the majority and restricting its intervention to a call for nationalisation and workers’ self-management of the munitions industry. From its initial focus on the fight for women’s suffrage, the small group in the East End of London around Sylvia Pankhurst also moved closer to the workers’ struggles to defend their conditions, actively denouncing the imperialist war at mass demonstrations and leading protests to the government against repression and the hunger and misery imposed on the working class.

In this way, despite all their confusions, through active intervention in the growing struggles against the war revolutionaries could build a significant hearing for internationalist positions within the working class, and constituted part of an international movement against the war. As the outbreak of revolution in Russia in February 1917 - only three years after capitalism had plunged the world into the greatest war in history - the revolutionary perspective of this movement, and when in November 1918 the bourgeoisie was forced to hurriedly declare an armistice in order to be able to deal with the proletarian threat, the SLP rightly observed that: “For the first time in history a great world social struggle was being waged by the workers.” The imperialist war was turned into a civil war.

Conclusions

War and revolution are vital tests for revolutionaries. The World War, giving national defence the imperialist war, the right wing of the workers’ movement - including in Britain the Labour Party and the trade union leadership - passed over to the camp of the bourgeoisie. The centre and the left proved unable to provide the basic internationalist interests of the working class that they remained within the proletarian camp, but only fulfilled the need for a real struggle against the war.

By breaking with the social chauvinists and identifying with the Zimmerwald movement the left had taken the first necessary steps towards the regroupment of revolutionaries at an interna- tional level, opening a political struggle against the centre and the influence of centrism within the ranks of the workers’ movement was still an essential condition for the creation of a new party and a new International.

An equally important condition for this was the presence of revolutionaries within the working class, to intervene in the workers’ struggles and give them a revolutionary direction. It was the workers’ own efforts to defend themselves against the attacks on their conditions that laid the ground for a revolutionary struggle against the war and strengthened the left in its struggle against both chauvinism and social pacifism.

Notes

1 Comintern, 19 February 1887.
2 Theodore Rothstein, Social Democracy, 25 December 1911, p.360.
3 Socialist. October 1913.
4 Socialist. October 1916.
6 See, for example, Socialist, May 1917.
8 Letter from ‘JM’, Justice, 17 August 1914.
9 Justice, 17 September 1914.
10 Vanguard, October 1915.

The ICU in Britain will be holding a third Day of Discussion in September 2014. This year, the theme will be World War I – part of our response to the international campaign of the bourgeois ‘commemorating’ this barbaric war. We plan to divide the day as follows:

- In the afternoon, a session on how the social democratic parties, and in particular the German SPD, betrayed the working class and mobilised for war. The presentation will focus on the process of degeneration that led to this betrayal.

The meeting will take place in London, the provisional date is 13 September, but please check our website for confirmation and details of time and venue. We will also suggest some reading material to help prepare the discussions. All workers who envisage travelling from outside London, and who will need accommodation, should write to us at uk@internationalism.org.

History of the workers’ movement 5
The ICC under attack from a new agency of the bourgeois state

In October 2013, a new ‘political group’ was born: the name of the new group is the ‘International Group of the Communist Left’ (IGCL). This group doesn’t tell us much about itself, and it has already started the discussion around the question of the fusion between the two elements of the group Klaubat- alo in Montreal and elements from the so-called ‘International Communist Tendency’ who were excluded from the ICC in 2003 for behaviour un- worthy of communist militants as well as robbery, slander and some other demagogues, who used the Rubicon with their deliberate behaviour as snitch, in particular by publishing in advance, on the internet, the daily conference of our section in Mexico City. After the real initials of one of our comrades, presented as the ‘leader of the ICC’. We refer our readers who are unaware of this to the articles published in our press at the time.

In one of these articles, ‘The police-like methods of the IFICC’, we clearly showed that these elements were freely offering their good and loyal services to the bourgeois state. They spend the greatest part of their time in hand in hand with the ICC’s website, trying to inform themselves about everything going on in our organisation, not to mention their efforts with spreading the most nauseating gossip dug up from the sewers (especially about the couple Louise and Peter, try to follow them with their work). We further exercised to the highest degree for more than 10 years’).

Shortly after this article, they further aggravate their attacks, giving us much more pages, reproducing numerous extracts from the meetings of our international central organ, supposedly to demonstrate to the members of our ‘international group’ that one of our comrades (the “wife of the ICC’s leader”) has already used (notably two of them, Juan and Ana) the ICC’s internal documents to members of the IGCL. I don’t defend these acts but I don’t think that from this you can deduce that these people are police agents or that the ICC is under attack. The ICC has a history of using hysteric language against other groups on the communist left and against former militants. To point this out is not an attack on the ICC. (From post 16 on 12 May)

There were a number of responses from ICC sympa- thisers:

- “But that’s not all. If you click on the links on the front page of its internet site! If a group of the IGCL would have every right to claim a decoration from the highest degree for more than 10 years!).”
- “This is how the ICC and its militants have always defended themselves ferociously and these attacks, far from being the work of the bourgeois state aimed at destroying them. They defend their positions of the communist left and work towards the proletarian revolution but to destroy the main organisation of the communist left today. This is a police agency of the capitalist state, whether it gets paid or not.
- “The ICC has always defended itself against the attacks of its enemies, notably against those who want to destroy it through campaigns of lies and slander. This time it will do the same. It will be neither destabilised nor intimidated by this attack by the class enemy. All the proletarian organisations and parties must fight to face up to this situation of the bourgeois state aimed at destroying them. They defended themselves ferociously and these attacks, far from being ‘hysterical’, on the contrary, they are a clear indication of their unity and the solidarity between militants. This is how the ICC and its militants have always responded to the attacks and information campaigns of the enemies everywhere.

But how could one not see this kind of language as being paranoid, hysterical ranting? All of the ac- tions of the IGCL, from their first meeting, to their last three events: they published the real initials of a militant, they published an internal letter which included the time and date of an ICC meeting in Mexico, Mexico City. And they are sending internal documents to members of the IGCL. I don’t defend these acts but I don’t think that from this you can deduce that these people are police agents or that the ICC is under attack. The ICC has a history of using hysteric language against other groups on the communist left and against former militants. To point this out is not an attack on the ICC. (From post 16 on 12 May)

Given the wholesale verifiable evidence over the last couple of years of insights into the infiltration of the state into small political groups in Britain centrally unsurprising in my opinion and I would think the same for the ICC) and the general plie- thro of information about the yapping activities of the state wide world. I think that the idea of the ICC going into another ‘hysterical rant’ is something worse than ‘complacency’—though that is un- doubtedly for the rightist milieu. There is an idea that real revolutionary groups are of no interest to the bourgeoiuse, that they don’t see them as a serious threat to their illusions in democracy and the democratic state. It’s also related to the rejection of the machiavel- lin nature of the bourgeoisie, another analysis of the ICC that’s been more than confirmed by events over the last couple of years (if it needed to be).

A debate on our forum has developed around our communique to readers on the attacks on the ICC by the group calling itself the International Group of the Communist Left (see the article in this issue). One reader, Esty, argued that the commun- ology (exemplary of paranoia and hysteria evincing of the ICC’s left. Enemies are everywhere.

4. In 2008, the ICC was asked to participate in a debate in the ‘New Anticapitalist Party’ of Olivier Besancenot, as the leader of the ‘New Anticapitalist Party’ of Olivier Besancenot and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the ‘New Anticapitalist Party’ of Olivier Besancenot and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the ‘discussion forum’

5. See in particular our communique of 21 February 2002, ‘Repressive organisations struggle against the ICC, the ICC mobilises itself against the bourgeois state and slander’ and our communique of 11 February 2001, ‘The ICC under attack from a new agency of the bourgeoise state’.

The recovery bubble

C

ity and media commentators think that things are definitely looking up for the British economy. The statistics that they are basing themselves on certainly show a surge in industrial production that has not been present for six or seven years, since the crash of 2008. The housing market is moving forward at a great pace, and not just in London. The car industry has seen a long period of growth with sales rising for 27 months in a row (although presumably some of the demand is met by German output, for example). Some see exports doing well, but the UK’s trade deficit with the rest of the world widened by more than expected in April, because of weaker manufacturing exports, which were offset by the usual surplus in the services sector.

But British commentators do look for good news about the performance of the economy, and like to compare it with Europe where possible. As a commentator in the Evening Standard (5/6/14) said: “Consider how the eurozone economy grew by just 0.2 per cent in the first quarter, missing targets, while Britain advanced at four times that rate. The European Commission forecasts 1.2 per cent growth for the economic bloc this year followed by 1.7 per cent next; it has pencilled in 2.7 per cent and 2.5 per cent for the UK over the same periods.”

A key reason why the commentators feel a little less restrained in talking up the performance of the British economy is that it has finally, at this point in time, arrived back at level of output prior to the financial crash in 2008 (i.e. 6 years). Pre-

viously, even if, at times, the economy appeared to be on an overall growth track, everyone knew that there was no recovery in the formal sense: ar-

ival back at the level of economic activity before the recession. Furthermore, the time taken to ar-

rive back at the starting point for Britain is longer – much longer – than in the case of the Great De-

pression. In the Great Depression (in the 1930s) it took ‘only’ 4 years for the economy to arrive back at the level of output it had at the beginning of the recession. This is one reason why the state author-

ities (notably Mr. Carney and his colleagues at the Bank of England who have responsibility for interest rates) take quite a very measured view of the performance of the economy and have caught ou-

spectators on interest rates more than once.

The ‘recovery’ takes many forms. The level of employment in Britain in actual numbers is much higher than it was at the beginning of the recess-

ion. Historically, it is higher than it has ever been before. But not everyone is convinced that unemployment is as high as ever after the recent falls, it is over 2 million (and that is only the official count). Nonetheless, it is true that employment has expanded as the population has expanded (partly due to natural increase and partly due to immigration). Now, one does not have to be an expert to see that productivity has therefore fallen – significantlyfallen. Tofigureoutnational pro-

ductivity the bourgeois simply divide the overall economic output by the number of people work-

ing. Since the economy has only just got back to where it started (in 2008) it follows that produc-

tivity has fallen since the working population is significantly larger. That is a very serious problem for the bourgeoisie and has a profound implica-

 tion for the ‘success’ of the recovery. That is why the bourgeois do not talk about their success in employing so many new people as often as one might expect – despite the fact that they have achieved this on a level is not replicated in every-

country. Furthermore, for the bourgeoisie’s purposes, claims of ‘falling unemployment’ are not under-

mined by the growth of chronic underemploy-

ment, highlighted by the scandal of zero hours contracts; and ‘overall economic output’ tends to include any number of parasitic and unproduc-

tive activities, such as property speculation. In sum, more reasons for being sceptical about the ‘recovery’.

This is why for every proclamation of progress in the economy, usually from the government and its least critical supporters, there is also caution. The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) re-

cently upgraded their predictions for growth, but “dampened some of the feelgood factor with a warning that 2014 could mark the high point for the economy as household come under renewed financial strain next year once interest rates start to rise.” (Guardian 30/5/14). The director general of the BCC warned that “The task at hand is to ensure that 2014 is not ‘as good as it gets’ for the UK economy” (ibid). A spokesman for the trea-

sury agreed that “we cannot take the recovery for granted” (ibid).

Other commentators are more blunt. “James Meadoway, a former adviser at the Treasury, has criticised Chancellor George Osborne’s claim that newly released GDP figures prove Britain is coming back. He argues that the government’s relentless pursuit of stringent austerity and ex-

pansion of household debt is risking the risk of a major economic crash. Meadoway argues that the policies driving UK growth are fatally flawed: ‘We are setting up ... exactly the conditions that helped produce the crash of 2008. Debt-led growth, in which stagnant or falling real earnings are masked by increasing levels of household debt that sustain continued consumer spending. Despite the 0.8% increase in growth over the last quarter, current performance indicates that manufacturing output ‘will not recover to its 2008 level before 2019.’ With average earnings ris-

ing at a rate of 1.4%, and the Consumer Price Index’s inflation figures ignoring the larg-

est share of housing at around 40% of household income, real inflation ‘is now running at 2.5% a year, well ahead of increases in earnings...The fall in real earnings since 2008 is the longest sustained de-

cline in most people’s living standards since the 1870s.’” (Guardian 1/5/14)

This particular bourgeois expert comes perilous-

ly close to telling the truth: that the ‘recovery’ is largely a sham fuelled by debt, that the prospects for future difficulties are clearly discernible, and that the perspective for the working class is a con-

tinuing attack on its living conditions.

Contact the ICC

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The ‘Arab Spring’: from hope to terror

In Egypt, the army’s candidate Abdel al-Sisi has won with 97% of the votes. 93% and 96% of the votes. True, the elections were widely boycotted, and only 46% of the electorate voted. Just as the sectarianism of the Syrian society have led Muslims as Christians and members of the Alawite sect that the Asad family belongs to – to support Asad’s brutal regime out of fear of what would happen if he lost the civil war, so in Egypt the fact that many ordinary people continue to support the rule of the army is also a product of fear.

Fear of the repression and corruption incarnated by Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood government that came to power in the elections that followed the fall of the Mubarak regime in 2011. Fear of the crime in the streets that has grown appreciably worse since the decline of the mass movement that ousted Mubarak. Fear of the jihadist version of Islam which was gaining influence under the cloak of ‘moderately Islamic Muslin Brotherhood. It was this climate of fear which led even many of those who had participated in the 2011 movement – and who had been disillusioned by the army-based regime – to turn back to the army in the hope that it would guarantee a minimum of order. This order, of course, is also based on the same ruthless repression which kept Mubarak in power for so long, and which sustained the brief rule of Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood

But these revolts never escaped the profound ideological illusions of those who took part in them. They were in essence the response of a new generation of the working class, faced with a capitalist system mired in an intractable economic crisis and with a future of insecurity, unemployment and austerity. These revolts saw themselves as the last stand, even as part of a world revolution, but they were the product of a proletariat that has largely lost its sense of identity as a class, forgotten its real history and its traditions of struggle. The participants acted in their hundreds of thousands, but they still largely saw themselves as citizens, individuals, not as part of an associated class.

‘Democracy’ is the logical expression of this outlook of the atomised citizen: one man, one vote, enter what the French call the ‘soviets’ the polling booth/isolator to elect a capitalist party to manage the capitalist state. And this was the great goal that was offered to, and largely accepted by, these movements, with only a small minority arguing that the Assad/Mubarak’s army-based regime should be overthrown and new institutions put in place. This was the period when the congress of the ICC of the Communist International reviewed the balance of the congress of the ICC of the Communist International.

Political 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 Working Men’s Association, 1868-72, 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 Left.

The forces of repression (not only the police and the army, but also the criminal gangs unleashed on the demonstrators by the regime). The Islamic groups centred round the huge textile factories and other industrial institutions affirmed the power of the working class and workers in a country that was still in the process of making its decision in the ruling class to dethrone Mubarak. The revolts centred in Tunisia and Egypt were an inspiration to rebellions across the divide of war, in Israel, and to the ‘Indignation’ which motivated the mass demonstrations and assemblies in Spain, the Occupy movement in the US, and street rebellions in Turkey and Brazil in 2013.

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 a world war, capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of the late 19th century, was called only one alternative offered by this irreversible historic process.

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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 deca-
dent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of war, 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 his-
torical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the defeat of the proletariat.

* 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 a world war, capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of the late 19th century, was called only one alternative offered by this irreversible historic process.

* The state, 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-increas-
ing 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 independ-
dence’, ‘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 re-

elected ‘Democracy’, a particularly hypocritical form of democracy, that of the bourgeoisie, who do not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

* Out of the rancid brains of the bourgeoisie are equally re-
actionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-Communists), the left of the trade unions (TUC, Monist, Labour, other so-called ‘official’ unions) are nothing but the legacies of a world dictatorship. All the sects of the bourgeoisie, from the Ratzlik to the ‘united fronts’, which mix up the
sights 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 the capitalism, the unions every-
where 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 its ex-

tension on the whole of society: the unity of the Working

I C C O n 1 5 2

Social movements in Turkey and Brazil: Indignation at the heart of the proletarian dynamic

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- Balance sheet of the congress
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International Review

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 uniting by the proletariat world community in which all activity is oriented to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of their fate for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the political goals of the proletarian’s combat.

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Our origins

The positions and activity of revolutionary or-
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