Brexit mess: A ruling class in disarray

Ever since the UK’s Referendum of June 2016 the British bourgeoisie has been in a turmoil of division and instability. For generations identified as an experienced and skillful manipulator of the social situation, the British bourgeoisie, in the form of the Cameron government, made a fundamental mistake when, in trying to take the steam out of increasing populism, it called a referendum which resulted in a vote to leave the EU.

This was followed by a further error in 2017 when Theresa May called an election to strengthen the government’s position which ended with the Tories in a weaker position, dependent on the loyalist DUP. Since then negotiations with the EU, is as much as it’s possible to mix between the lines, have, unsurprisingly, not appeared to have favoured the UK. And when, in July 2018, the Cabinet agreed the Chequers statement on the UK’s future relationship with the EU, it led to the resignations of Boris Johnson and David Davies, and general acknowledgement that divisions continued throughout the Conservative Party.

While May’s version of Brexit is not acclaimed, with even her Chancellor, Philip Hammond, disagreeing on the implications of ‘no deal’ for the British economy, there is not any coherent ‘hard Brexit’ alternative being offered, except the perspective of crashing out of the EU without an agreed deal. Jacob Rees-Mogg says it might be 50 years for the benefits of Brexit to be felt. Nigel Farage insisted that “I never said it would be a beneficial thing to leave and everyone would be better off.” — which, of course, he did — “just that we would be self-governing.” Boris Johnson is reported to have said “Fuck business”, a rather nihilistic response for a leading figure in a major capitalist party. To be fair to Johnson and Davies, they have both, since before the Referendum, been advocates of establishing the same sort of relationship with the EU as Canada has. The EU/Canada negotiations took 7 years or more and produced a 1600-page text of agreement. Whatever its merits, it is not an option that’s currently on the table. In reality the Brexiters can only offer ‘no deal’.

At a time when a government is in disarray you would normally expect the opposition to be profiting from the situation. This is far from the case as the Labour Party has little to offer on the question of leaving EU while it expends increasing energy on accusations of antisemitism in its ranks. These accusations, based on the real racism and antisemitism in the Labour Party (not unusual in what is after all a party of capital) might have first been used as a means of putting pressure on Jeremy Corbyn, but have escalated into a cycle of claim and counter-claim which show the intensity of the divisions in the Labour Party and make it look a lot less likely prospect for government.

The option offered by Tony Blair and other Remainers of a second referendum appears to be based on a hopeless desire to turn back the clock to the time before the last referendum. A million-signature petition has already been rejected by parliament, and the campaign seems to be based mainly on alarm at all the varieties of Brexit on offer. Labour says it would prefer a general election, which is what opposition parties are supposed to say.

Different responses to the growth of populism

Population is an international phenomenon. Across the globe, with the experience of the effects of the economic crisis and a sense of powerlessness in the face of the impersonal force of globalised capitalism, the expression of anger and despair takes many forms. Disillusioned by what mainstream parties offer there is a turning against potential scapegoats. “It’s all the fault of a metropolitan elite”, “Blame the bankers”. “Things wouldn’t be the way they are if it wasn’t for immigrants/refugees/Muslims”. “It’s all down to the Brussels bureaucrats”. This is a product of the de-composition of capitalism. The major bourgeois parties have nothing to offer. On the other hand, with a historically low level of workers’ struggle, the proletarian alternative appears absent. This is the basis for the growth of populism.

There is not a specific policy or set of policies that characterises populism and in different countries the bourgeoisie’s established parties have responded in a number of ways to the development of populism. In the US, Trump was a candidate for a traditional party but with a populist agenda. He has criticised NATO and the CIA despite them being cornerstones of American imperialist policy, criticised the World Trade Organisation despite the role it plays for American capitalism, and flirts with Putin regardless of the machinations of Russian imperialism. Against this, his bourgeois opponents are finding that conventional politicking has little effect. They can call Trump a liar, investigate Russia’s role in the 2016 Presidential Election, look at the implications of bash money paid to various women, and speculate on the possibilities of an eventual impeachment. Trump is criticised by his bourgeois rivals for acting irresponsibly, but the introduction of trade tariffs, expulsion or barring of immigrants, and increased investment in US militarism, are all policies that have been pursued by others in defence of the interests of American national capital. They obey a definite logic in a world where “every man for himself” has been the dominant tendency since the break up of the blocs at the end of the 1980s.

In France the response to populism took a different form. Marine Le Pen’s Front National was a known force in French politics, but none of the established parties could produce a candidate who could have convincingly have taken her on. Investment banker Emmanuel Macron’s En Marche was created in 2016 in order to confront the populist forces represented by Le Pen. Macron’s victory in the May 2017 election for the French Presidency was a success for the French bourgeoisie. However, it is not clear how long-term this success will be sustained as the social situation that gives rise to populism still persists.

In Italy this year, after three months of negotiations following inconclusive elections, there emerged a coalition government of the League and 5-Star movement. Both of these populist parties, with very different policies, had made much of their opposition to the main established political parties. The League was for the expulsion of immigrants and more police on the streets. 5-Star, with more following in the poorer South of Italy, proposed reductions in the cost of living and a “minimum payment for the citizen”. In government they have followed up on their promises to attack migrants and immigration, but so much on economic promises so far. With a certain scepticism towards the EU there is evidence that they will add further instability to the situation in Europe.

This is the global context for what’s happening with the British bourgeoisie. Specifically, the 2016 Referendum was an attempt to head off populism that failed. This failure has meant that Tories have had to pursue Brexit, which, along with anti-immigrant policies, is one of the centrepieces of populism, despite many of them having campaigned to stay in the EU. All the predictions of economic disaster remain in place, to which there have been added talk of the need to stockpile food and medicines, warnings of the possibilities of social unrest, and forecasts of the implications for travel, trade, security and terrorism. If there have been some exaggerations in these prognostications — and predictions doom have characterised the Remain camp — it’s aim has been to put pressure on the Brexiters to compromise. Two years after the Referendum the UK bourgeoisie is in a weaker position, more divided, and the possibility of a neat, orderly departure from the EU seems remote.

Continued on page 2

50 years ago, May 1968

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International Communist Current in Britain

workers of the world, unite!

world revolution
Beware the capitalist state when it comes bearing gifts

Struggle and solidarity. Discontent was also channelled to the state for the Labour government by the Conservative Manifesto of 1945 shows they were not backward in advocating a “comprehensive
system of health services”, where “no adequate attention, the treatment or the appliances he requires because he cannot afford them.”

This led to the establishment of the welfare state in 1946 which was intended by the welfare state: “Those who can afford to pay for their own health care are not a rabid one”

To the extent that the establishment of the NHS and the welfare state were as much the product of the wartime coalition as the Labour government. The 1945 election, which Attlee who had been the deputy Prime Minister in the Coalition which had overseen the preparation of these policies. The 1944 Education Act extending secondary education was carried out by the Coalition. The NHS and welfare state were based on the Beveridge Report, by a liberal economist, hark- ing back to ideas put forward by Lloyd George before the First World War, and another Liberal economist, S.R. Bowley was right for the areas of full employment and state stimulation of the economy. It was also part of a process of nation- alisation of key public utilities, coal, mining, railways and steel… which, although not supported by the Tories, followed on from the years state direction of the economy during the war.

Even before privatisation

One of the ideas given for defending the NHS is that the real problem is privatisation. But all we don’t see people going round saying “I love BUPA”, even when some people have private health as part of their pay, not as “I love the NHS and the welfare state”!

However, we should see what Beveridge said was intended by the welfare state: “The plan is not one for going back to everything being nothing and without trouble, or something that will free the recipients for ever thereafter from personal responsibilities. The plan is an attempt to make health care income for subsistence on condition of service and contribution and in order to make and keep fit for service.” From the hour when you have it, the NHS is to keep workers “fit for service”, in work or in the military.

Everywhere in the present society in the UK we do not look for evidence of insurance before giving treatment, like they do in the USA. But the NHS has always been a compulsory, universal, National Insurance. Long before “privatisation” this was demonstrated by a British national living in the USA without health insurance who returned to the UK for treatment, only to be faced with a bill for her treatment in an NHS hospital because she was not insured here. Or a returned to the USA where she was titled to Medicaid. This kind of thing has become much more systematic with campaigns against “health tourism”, guidelines about who can and can’t be treated on the NHS, and the “hostile en- vironment” for immigrants which requires health services to scrutinise each patient’s right to treat- ment, or otherwise. But the principle remains.

Before ‘privatisation’ money was already a maj- or concern in running the NHS, in particular a concern to keep costs down. There was always a long waiting list for treatment. The number of beds was steadily reduced. GP surgeries, always under pressure to control costs, are under in- ansious condition. It was no golden age. ‘Privatisation’, integrating more private money and private industries necessary to the national economy, has been exacerbated within decomposing capitalism.

But, while the length and depth of divisions over Europe should not be underestimated, they have been exacerbated within decomposing capitalism by the rise of populism. This is an active factor in the situation that has contributed to the growing distrust in the British bourgeoisie. It’s a mess that doesn’t serve the interests of the British national capital.

At the Europe-wide level the threat of fragmen- tation is also growing. It’s not only in Italy that there are, to put it mildly, calls to re-assess na- tional relations with the EU – there is also scepti- cism in Greece, Hungary and elsewhere in eastern Europe. For US capitalism there are economic advantages in a fragmented Europe: it’s a logical consequence of the end of imperialist blocs, and a particular threat as the American state attempts to isolate Trump. The US is convinced that the US can make deals with countries sepa- rately. Russian imperialism is definitely in favour of undermining the unity of the EU, principally for military-strategic reasons. On the other hand, German economic interests are not served at all by the fragmentation of the European market, and as for Chinese capitalism, its globalisation policy requires a more open world market rather than a return to national capitalism.

So, the problems of the British bourgeoisie, whether the UK leaves with a deal that will satisf- y the business community or it crashes a cliff into uncharted waters, have to be seen in the international context of decomposing capitalism. None of the arguments introduced [the NHS and the welfare state] can be used to defend the wages paid by capital. The NHS is also an aspect of this.

The ideology of the NHS and welfare state as taking care of its citizens is very dangerous. Work- ers are encouraged to identify with those parts of the state that appear to benefit them, such as the NHS and welfare services, and to identify with it as a good state. We should for- get that it is capitalist, forget its involvement in various military adventures, forget its repressive role. This identification can also be used to divide workers in the classroom, the idea that the benefits are for the good citizens that have already contributed and should be denied to immigrants who have only recently arrived.

With this identification with the NHS, and through that with the state, we would be led to imagine that it can be induced to act in our inter- ests if only we campaign hard enough or vote for the right people. To this end, the state promotes the ruling class and runs its imperialist war machine.

Alex 8/9/18

1. https://www.england.nhs.uk/five-year-forward-view/ 2. http://en.internationalism.org/revolution/munis_second_part.html 3. See: “The NHS is not a reform to workers’ class ownership”, in “The time of the crisis: the outlook for the NHS, for more details, see: http://on.internationalism. org/03/10/nhs-reforms 4. “Attlee was an atro-city for being a passionate ideologue that his wife Violet once casually observed: “Clen was never really a socialist, were you darling? Well, not a rabid one.” “https://www.dailymail.co. uk/politics/2001/03/14/past-education

State capitalism and the social wage

We have described this phase of capitalism as a wave of nationalisation by the post-war Attlee govern- ment, and that this followed on from the state di- rection of the economy, including health services, during the war. We have also seen that the need to have men fit for military service was what first prompted the ruling class to take an interest in im- proving the health of the working class. This is no accident, state capitalism is an aspect of the adaptation to anti-communist and war needs, in this period of counter-revolution and freeing the bour- geoisie of its national enemies, and a system of state capitalism. From the time that the state that appear to benefit them, such as the NHS and welfare services, and even the tax credit (or the universal credit to be brought in) are paid over paying an aspect of wages, for instance with tax credit (or the universal credit to be brought in) to protect it. It all seems too good to be true, a naive trust in the health care system, but capitalism had entered its phase of war and great economic growth, supported by all the bourgeoisie’s political, is based on many falsehoods.

The NHS has itself in this ideological celebra- tion partly because it offers medical treatment, often free at the point of use. There are many who are alive today because of that medical treatment. Also many NHS employees love their jobs caring for patients. These reactions are often translated into the idea that the “nationalisation of the NHS and the welfare state” because they were scared of the threat of revolution and the influence of commu- nists. The “returning soldiers were a real threat to the social order.”

However, the working class was still defeated at the end of the Second World War. The Great War of 1914-18 was characterised by mass surrenders on both the Western and Eastern fronts and ended by the start of the German revolution 100 years ago, follow- ing the Russian revolution in 1917. However the revolutionary wave was defeated, ushering in a period of counter-revolution and freeing the bour- geoisie to uncharted waters, have to be seen in the international context of decomposing capitalism.

Yet, despite their defeats, the working class with greater state control: targets, regular inspec- tions, integrating more private money and private industries necessary to the national economy, has been exacerbated within decomposing capitalism. None of the arguments introduced [the NHS and the welfare state] can be used to defend the wages paid by capital. The NHS is also an aspect of this.

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The obsolescence of the nation state

"President Trump said Friday that tariffs on another $267 billion in Chinese goods are ready to go and could be rolled out on short notice, reinforcing earlier threats and signaling no end to the global trade war. Mr. Trump said the tariffs would be in addition to the tariffs on $200 billion in Chinese goods the administration has been preparing, which he said will ‘take place very soon, depending on what happens very soon.’

On the same page you can watch a video specu- lating on how the Chinese might hit back. The Trump administration has also announced sev- eral new economic sanctions targeting Chinese individuals described by Trump on his recent European visit as a “foe” – and even from its neighbours and partners in the so-called North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexico and Canada.

The spectre of an accelerating trade war is haunt- ing capitalism. It may seem difficult to understand in a period where production has never been so global and the “free movement of capital and lab- our” has been an almost unanimous predicate of the world’s leading politicians and economists for decades. But it is precisely the inherent contradic- tion between the capitalist’s thrust towards conquering the globe, and the inhibiting framework of the na- tion state, which is behind this new surge of pro- visionalism.

Global v national: an insurmountable contradiction

Engels said that Marx provides us with a key to grasping why the nation state, as a political expression of capitalist social relations, must it- self also ensure a certain discipline in these conflicts; and as being itself the greatest barrier to this tenden- cy and will ‘take place very soon, depending on what happens very soon.’

One of the key contradictions of capitalism is the expression of this barrier – the first imperialist war. In 1916, in the wake of the clearest possible expression of this barrier – the first imperialist world war – Trotsky could be more precise: ‘The nation state has outgrown itself – as a framework for the development of the productive forces, as a basis for class struggle, and especially as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.” (Nashe Slavo, 4 February 1916)

The very survival of the nation state had been added an element in the growing contradictions of capital at both the economic and military levels. These contradictions have grown sharper over the last few decades, as the result of war and the obsolescence of the bourgeois to contain them. In the 1930s, the protectionist response of the US to the depression, along with the development of the national state, NATO and the growth of international trade, deepened the world crisis of overpro- duction by further restricting the global market. Fortunately for the bourgeoisie, but tragically for humanity, capitalism confronted a defeated working class and was able to “solve” the problem through a gigantic military mobilisation and the subsequent reorganisation of the world market. The post-1945 world order was, in part, based on the recognition that this had to be imposed on national competition. Formally this was ex- pressed in the establishment of the United Nations Organisation, but in reality it was the two-blue system of national defence and the subordination of its allies that lay at the heart of the new order. Since it was aimed at the rival bloc, it contained the ‘peaceful transition of power’ through the spread of de- mocracy, and also the destruction of the imperialist blocs in the Middle East and elsewhere, a situation in which the US is at the very heart of the globe, and the inhibiting framework of the nation state, which is behind this new surge of pro- visionalism.

The US looks to bail out of its own world order

This new post-Cold War order remained one of the crucial economic policy measures. Trump’s aggressive approach to the erosion of US domination at the imperialist level, especially around events in the Middle East. Inter- national organisations created in the previous period (IMF, World Bank, WTO) survived and were still US-led. Rival trading blocs, in particular the EU, were accepted as necessary by the US.

But this new order also corresponded to the advancing decomposition of capitalist society, creating powerful centrifugal forces that tended to undermine the state and inter-state structures of the ruling class. Decomposition not only pits nation against nation in an increasing free-for-all, but also pits the infra-structure of the state against itself, starting with the “failed states” at the peripheries but spreading towards the centre (cf the Catalonia crisis). These tendencies are to the regionalisation of industries.

At the political level, these tendencies are the soil for the growth of populism, a form of reaction against the parties and institu- tions tied to the “neo-liberal” world order which has overseen a massive increase in inequality, the ruin of whole areas of traditional production and a growing inability to deal with the problems posed by the refugee crisis and the terrorist “blowback” in the capital cities. These latter phenomena correspond to the deterior- ation of the national economies; the “age of austerity” has reached a certain stabili- ty and economic development.

The crisis of this phase of state capitalism mani- fests itself in the effort to “stabilisation” of the na- tion state and the beginnings of open unemployment towards the end of the 1960s. The crises of what they called “socialism” or the “mixed economy” that emerged in the national state management of the free operation of market forces (and there was indeed some truth in this, as we noted in our the- sis on the nation state and the national state as a bar- on), was the approach pioneered under Thatcher, Reagan etc was called neo-liberalism because it presented itself as a form of adjustment to the collapse of the Russian bloc; but as we always insisted, it was a new version of state capitalism (the German term “vondo-liberalism” is a more accurate description) which was di- rected by a highly repressive central state.

The international face of neoliberalism is “glo- balisation”, which began to be a common term in political discourse and popular usage by those who strongly defined the “new order” as a European bloc. There is a deep falsehood in this concept, since it is based on the argument that capital had only become global once the “socialist” countries had disappeared: in reality, the Stalinist regimes were a particular form of the world capi- talist system. Nevertheless, the end of the aura of the model of the eastern bloc countries made a real economic expansion possible: not so much into the “vast areas” of the Russian bloc; but into ar- eas like India, China, South East Asia etc. This ex- pansion had a number of underlying elements: the technological developments that allowed a much faster circulation of capital and a reorganisation of global industrial networks; a more directly eco- nomic expression of the nationalism, in which capital penetrated new extra-capitalist areas and make use of much cheaper labour power, while at the same time making gigantic profits through the swelling of the productive forces; and as part of a deliberate policy since the break-up of industrial concentrations in the “old” capitalist countries, driven by the hunt for new markets and profits anywhere, the effect of atomising centres of class militancy.

Could decomposition lead to economic collapse?

The ICC is right to emphasise the need to avoid such a “two-sided” view; for example in the Resolution on the International Class Strug- gle from its 22nd Congress it argues that, while it is true that capitalist exploitation functions according to the “laws” of the market and that the capitalists are obliged to obey these laws, it is equally true that “despite this machine-like character of the economy, there can be interruptions between classes, since this “system” is based and maintained by an act of will of the bourgeoisie (the state and the creation or enforcement of capitalist private property).” (my emphasis)

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Once more on decadence: What does it mean to say that capitalism is a historically transitory system?

We are quoting a passing by looking at the ef- fects of decomposition

The deeper deepening decomposition of its system pushes the bourgeoisie to take more and more extraordinary measures, which sweep up to and including major wars, degradation of the planet, etc, not to mention degradation and destruction. But the ICC is right to emphasise the only viable ‘economic’ strategy for each national capital is to attempt by any means nec- essary to stop the immediate threat.

In order to restore profitability, in other words, the bourgeoisie is prepared to blow up the world. The exploitation of all capital is the condition of contradictions leads not to economic collapse but to the accumulation of catastrophes for bourgeois production, leading potentially to the destruction of the basis for life on the planet. (...)
The advances and retreats in the class struggle since 1968

After a short-pause in the mid-70s, there was a second wave, which included the strikes of the Bra- zilian miners in 1978, the ‘Winter of Discontent’ in Britain, and the Rotterdam dock strike, led by an independent strike committee, and the steelworkers’ strikes in Brazil in 1979 which also challenged the control of the trade unions. This global movement in the mid-70s was characterised by the tendency to see the struggle of the workers as essentially circular in nature, since it can only be transformed in a revolu-
tional sense by the intervention of the party. In Belgium the question of where the party stands comes from. The Bordigists in particular offered a caricature of this approach in 68, when they issued leaflets insisting that the movement was ecologically anywhere if it put itself behind the banners of The Party (i.e., their own small political group). Our current, on the other hand, has always claimed that this is an essentially idealist approach which divorces the party from its material roots in the class struggle. We continue to see itself as being tied on the real acquisitions of the Italian com-
munist left, in its most fruitful period theoretically – the period of the Fraction in the 1930s and 40s, when it recognised that its own diminution from the preceding stage of the party was a product of the defeat of the working class, and that only a revival of the class struggle could provide the conditions for the transformation of the existing communist frictions into a real class party. These conditions were indeed developing after 1968, not only at the level of politicalised minori-
ties, which went through an important phase of growth in the wake of the 68 events and subse-
quint upsurges of the working class, but also at a more general level. The class struggle that erupted in May 68 was not a flash in the pan but a lasting signal of a powerful dynamic which would quickly come to the fore on a world wide scale.

The advances in the class struggle between 1968 and 1988

Consistent with the Marxist view that has long noted the wave-like process of the class move-
ment, the article analyses three different interna-
tional waves of struggle in the two decades after 68; the first, undoubtedly the most spectacular, encompassed the Italian Hot Autumn of 69, the violent uprisings in Cordoba, Argentina, in 69 and 70 in Spain and in Britain in 1972. In Spain in particular the workers began to organise through mass as-
semblies, a process which reached its high point in Vitoria in 1976. The international dimension of the wave was demonstrated by its echoes in is-
rael (1969) and Egypt (1972) and, later, by the uprisings in the townships of South Africa which were led by committees of struggle (the Civics).

1. See for example World Revolution 315, “ICC member” at 1968, as well as “Communist movement has already taken over 40 years ago has not gone away”.
3. International Review 53, second quarter 1988. The article was written by one of the leading “Venezuelan” who helped to form RI in 1968.

1987. The struggles in France and Italy in particul-
arily May 81 and 1985. These movements also had a real capacity for self-organisation through general assemblies and strike committees.

The turning point of 1989

This wave of struggles was led by the party that was still standing by today. And yet, we cannot help but be struck by a phrase which sums up the article’s as-
cessment of the present day class movement – “Finally, the recent mobilisation of the workers of the Ruhr in Germany and the rear-
ning call by the party of the ICC to the workers (in this issue) confirmed that this third international wave of workers struggles, which has now lasted for two decades, is far from over.”

In fact, the third wave, and indeed the entire pe-
riod of struggles since 1968, was to come to a sud-
den halt with the collapse of the eastern bloc in 1989-91 and the attendant side of campaigns about the death of communism. This historic change in the world situation marked the defini-
tive onset of a new phase in the decline of capital-
ism – the phase of decomposition.

The ICC had already noted the symptoms of de-
composition earlier on in the 80s, and a discus-
sion about its implications for the class struggle was already underway in the organisation. How-
ever, the article about May 68 was written, and certainly the most important single episode in the his-
torical dilemma posed by the irresolvable eco-
nomic mire but patently unable to mobilise its workers for a military solution to the bankruptcy of its economy (the struggles in Poland in 1980 and 1981), which did not renounce the use of repression, of course, but which would not renounce the use of repression, of course, but which had indeed seen important developments in class conflict; although it had been surprised by the outbreak of the May 68 movement, reset-
ting many of the advantages of representation, the party had been unable to mobilise the workers as a whole for a new wave of struggles, had not renounced the use of repression, of course, but which had been better put forward: the idea that new bour-
goirds mysticals were wearing out in a mat-
ter of months, exaggerated expectations in the struggles then taking place in Russia; the conception of a third wave that was marching ever onwards and upwards, and above all a reluctance to accept the idea that in the face of growing social decompo-
sition, the class struggle seemed to be “marking time” or stagnating (which, given the seriousness of the stakes involved, could only imply a tenden-
cy towards retreat or regression). This viewpoint was defended by Marc Chirik and a minority of the fraction in the International Review 53, as well as by the editorial in the same issue, provides evidence that its deeper significance had not been grasped. The article on 68 has a sub-heading “20 years of decom-
position” without providing an explanation for the term, while the editorial only applies it to its American section. It is clear that these reflections represented real differences which had appeared at the 8th Congress of the ICC in 1978.

The dominant mood at this Congress had been one of over-optimism. Partly this reflected the unprecedented creation by the ICC of a theoretical division of the party as a whole and the whole of the working class (what should not be done). It has not been noted the Dani of the ICC – the 40th anniversary of the ICC – which was the first time this Congress had been held in a more general level. The class struggle that erupted in 1968 was not a flash in the pan but a lasting signal of a powerful dynamic which would quickly come to the fore on a world wide scale.

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ever, the article about May 68 was written, and certainly the most important single episode in the his-
torical dilemma posed by the irresolvable eco-
nomic mire but patently unable to mobilise its workers for a military solution to the bankruptcy of its economy (the struggles in Poland in 1980 and 1981), which did not renounce the use of repression, of course, but which had indeed seen important developments in class conflict; although it had been surprised by the outbreak of the May 68 movement, reset-
ting many of the advantages of representation, the party had been unable to mobilise the workers as a whole for a new wave of struggles, had not renounced the use of repression, of course, but which had been better put forward: the idea that new bour-
goirds mysticals were wearing out in a mat-
ter of months, exaggerated expectations in the struggles then taking place in Russia; the conception of a third wave that was marching ever onwards and upwards, and above all a reluctance to accept the idea that in the face of growing social decompo-
sition, the class struggle seemed to be “marking time” or stagnating (which, given the seriousness of the stakes involved, could only imply a tenden-
cy towards retreat or regression). This viewpoint was defended by Marc Chirik and a minority of the fraction in the International Review 53, as well as by the editorial in the same issue, provides evidence that its deeper significance had not been grasped. The article on 68 has a sub-heading “20 years of decom-
position” without providing an explanation for the term, while the editorial only applies it to its American section. It is clear that these reflections represented real differences which had appeared at the 8th Congress of the ICC in 1978.

The dominant mood at this Congress had been one of over-optimism. Partly this reflected the unprecedented creation by the ICC of a theoretical division of the party as a whole and the whole of the working class (what should not be done). It has not been noted the Dani of the ICC – the 40th anniversary of the ICC – which was the first time this Congress had been held in a

Continued on page 5
Cordoba, Argentina 1969

The ICC had not foreseen the events of 89-91, but we were able to respond to them with a coherent analysis based on previous theoretical work. This was true with regard both to understanding the economic factors involved in the downfall of Stalinism, and to predicting the growing crisis that, in the absence of blocs, would now begin to unleash in the sphere of imperialist conflicts. And on the level of the class struggle, we were able to see that the proletariats now faced a particularly difficult period:

- The identification which is systematically established between Stalinism and communism, the lie repeated a thousand times, and today being wielded more than ever, according to which the proletarian revolution can only end in disaster, will for a whole period gain an added impact within the ranks of the working class. We thus have to expect a momentary retreat in the consciousness of the proletariat; the signs of this can already be seen in the many animated discussions that took place in the many industrial centres and among more educated layers of the working class - a momentary retreat in the consciousness of the proletariat now faced a particularly difficult period:...
Weinstein Trump Feminism or class struggle?

On 25 May, Harvey Weinstein, the now notorious Hollywood producer, walked out of a New York police station to a court where he was charged with rape and sexual abuse. He was wearing only a white T-shirt and a bangle with an ankle bracelet to monitor his movements.

Ideological uses...

The “Weinstein affair” has been known all over the planet since the New York Times and the New Yorker published an inquiry into numerous cases of sexual abuse by Weinstein, who has been accused by dozens of women. Since then an even greater number of women have exposed harassment and assault by men in all sectors: cinema, business, politics, etc.

At the beginning the media coverage of the “women affair” served as a context for embarrassing Trump and pushing towards his impeachment. In the days of Bill Clinton, sexual abuses committed by a prince, a duke or a cardinal. Among other things, the difficulties he now faces for his pay-offs to two women, a playboy model and a ports star, to keep them quiet about extra-marital affairs, cannot be dismissed as a mere case of benefitting one’s own image.

At the same time, the international impact of this case shows that there is much more involved than a simple encounter with another victim of the bourgeoisie. It reveals a real and profound indignation around the condition of women in this society.

It is the latest example of the Women’s Day demonstrations on 8 March 2018 was much bigger than in previous years and held in more countries (in Asia: Turkey, Russia, Philippines, India, Pakistan, Switzerland, South Korea, Congo, the Ivory Coast, etc) and with more women participating in acts of protest against violence. This legitimate anger was however rapidly repressed by the bourgeoisie through a feeling of impunity because of his powerful position was used to weaken the president: the famous “Lewinsky affair”.

What’s more, it was the workers’ movement which took up the case of women workers raised slogans against the “Weinstein affair” during their march on 8 March 1917: “No boss, no sexual a boss could easily abuse women because this is ‘protection of the State’, implications for a society whose male head of the family.

The treatment of women to men is necessary for the good functioning of capitalist society. Marxism was thus early on able to show that the contemporaneous condition of women to men was not fundamentally a moral or even physical question, but a material and social one. With the development of the productive forces, human society was led to eliminate the slave and the thraldom towards the bourgeoisie.

Women are thus considered as fundamentally inferior beings, and the material development of the system has lead to a growing sexual division of labour and labour insertion of women to men, particularly through marriage and the family.

The behaviour under the media spotlight today fully confirms this. Social evolution since the days of Engels and Bebel, far from putting women in a better place, has perpetuated her situation. Women are not considered as an object for marriage. Women are considered as fundamentally inferior beings, and the material development of the system has lead to a growing sexual division of labour and labour insertion of women to men, particularly through marriage and the family.

Feminist movements are nothing new and have appeared regularly throughout the history of capitalism. After all, don’t bourgeois women also suffer from the effects of the sexual division of labour and sexual exploitation? Furthermore, the bourgeoisie is just applying sticking plaster to the real emanation of women. Basing himself on the work of Morgan, Engels demonstrated that the appearance of private property and the family, the industrial economic cell of society. The man was now in charge and the woman was turned off a human being, the property of the man and the procurer of women who would inherit the property of the male head of the family.

In the struggle of August Bebel, in his work Women and Socialism, described how capitalist relations perpetuated this position of women by maintaining and extending the family model, capitalism was based on this position, especially bourgeois marriage. In capitalism women remain the property of men, reduced to a useful object at the beck and call of masculine desire. Bebel demonstrates that the logical expression of this situation is the fact that prostitution is necessary for the good functioning of capitalist society.

Feminism was thus a concern for the “woman question”. What has changed for women under capitalism since the situation described by Engels in 1845? In the developed countries, women have gained a certain number of rights: access to education, the vote...some are even at the head of big companies or even big countries! But their condition, in a more subtle and hypocritical way, is not that different. If women are no longer forced to work up until the day they give birth as Engels saw in 1845, an unemployed woman is bound to remain unemployed if she is pregnant and the chances of young women finding jobs is reduced by the “equal opportunities”.

As the 20th century and the beginning of the 20th, the working class is basically faced with the same problems. But in the past workers’ parties could take up these questions and develop propaganda and education which had a real impact on the working class. Today, when capitalism can only keep going by gendering the decomposition of social relations, the working class is experiencing great difficulties to recognise its class identity. This is a major obstacle to understand the necessarily revolutionary character of its struggle, which has to integrate the fight for a radical change in the female condition.

What the workers’ movement has always put forward - that women will only lose their chains when the whole of humanity is freed by the victory of the proletarian revolution and the building of communism - the proletariat is finding hard to understand because of the low level of its class consciousness.

In this situation the bourgeoisie is posing the problem on the rotten and dangerous ground of individuality. According to this ideological deadlock, which derives from the ruling class, women must unite to free themselves from men and seize some of the power that men try to conserve for themselves and against women. Not only does this conception hide and exclude the antagonistic character of social relations (as though female workers have the same social or economic interests as bourgeois women), it also encourages the illusion that the state is the guarantor of “equality”, the force that restrains the powerful and slightly reduces their advantages in favour of the weak.

In this framework, the feminist struggle is supposed to put pressure on the state to obtain more rights and more equality. Above all, it’s the old formula of divide and rule, the cultivation of obstacles to the unification of the class struggle, both in the future and in the immediate.

The indignation being expressed against the unjust, humiliating, and degrading treatment of women reveals the insurmountable incapacity of the capitalist system to allow a real improvement in the living conditions of the exploited. In complete opposition to all the arguments about the existence of social and economic progress, these conditions are getting worse given the continuing tendency towards the levelling of the social tissue.

All the “oppressed categories” (women, immigrants, homosexuals, this or that race or ethnicity), etc who feel threatened or rejected are not suffering as a result of their particular condition as such but because the capitalist system only operates on the basis of two categories of human beings - the exploiters and the exploited - and through the competition of each against all which, under the pressure of the crisis, and above all of social decomposition, tends to exclude any form of difference, to restrict solidarity to the gheerous framework of the defence of particular interests identified with the “successes” of the system.

'What August Bebel wrote in the introduction to Women and Socialism remains impressively relevant today.'

“The woman question deals with the position that woman should hold in our social organisation, and to this extent has profoundly to do with the power, her powers and her abilities, in order to become a useful member of human society, endowed with equal rights and serving society according to her best capacity. From our point of view this question coincides with that other question: in what manner should society be organized to abolish oppression, exploitation, misery and need, and to bring about the physical and mental welfare of individuals and of society as a whole? To ask first, then, the woman question is only one phase of the general social question that at present occupies all intelligent minds, its final solution can only be attained by removing social extremes and the evils which are a result of such extremes”. 2

1. See also the article written at the time of the “Strassau-Kahn scandal”, when “DSK” was president of the Socialist Party, on his ordination to the presidential elections in France: “Alaïa DSK, la femme est toujours éveillée”, Revolution International no 424.

2. Last Sunday in February in the Russian calendar. Subsequently the 8 March became the official day of the event.
Global warming is considered to have increased temperatures by over 1°C over the last 100 years of industrialisation. Realistic predictions for future global temperatures talk of an increase by as much as 5°C by the end of the century, with the full knowledge of the horrors this would bring. We should stress that the most harm in the future will be inflicted on the poorest countries and their citizens. They are the most vulnerable to climate change. They have fewer resources to combat the devastating storms, the floods, the rising sea levels, the heat and the droughts, the occurrence of these extreme weather conditions. Back in 2009 we highlighted this: “A report made public by the World Humanitarian Forum...” (…) re-evaluates the effects of climate change. Because it’s not only a very serious threat for the future, with 250 million ‘climate refugees’ predicted by 2050, but also a major contemporary crisis which is already killing 300,000 people a year around the world. More than half of the 300,000 deaths are the result of malnutrition. Then come the health problems, because global warming serves to propagate numerous diseases. Thus, 10 million new cases of malaria, resulting in 55,000 deaths, have been identified. These victims join the 3 million who die each year from this disease. Here again the populations of the poorer countries are the most affected because they are the last to have access to the necessary medicines. The rise in temperatures attained by all scientists in recent years has a direct impact on agricultural yields and access to water, and this again hits the poor first and foremost. (see WR 126, “Global warming: capital- ism kills”). So the countries with the lowest GHG emissions that will suffer the most from climate change are those with least capacity to affect any change at a global, international level.

The Economist magazine has produced its own independent assessment: “Three years after coun-
tries vowed in Paris to keep warming ‘well below’ 2°C relative to pre-industrial levels, greenhouse gas emissions are up again. So are investments in oil and gas. In 2017 for the first time in 4 years, demand for coal rose. Subsidies for renewables such as wind and solar power are dwindling in many places and investment has stalled; climate-friendly nuclear power is expensive and unpopular. It is tempting to think that these are temporary set-backs and that mankind, with its instincts for self-preservation, will muddle through to a vic-
tory over global warming. In fact, it is losing the war...” (“The Economist, ‘The world is losing the war against climate change” 04/08/18). In fact it is very easy for journalists at The Economist or elsewhere to show how bad things are, and what inves-
tors or politicians should do, although we have seen that it cannot be effective within capitalism. But what we need to say about Trump’s decision to leave the Paris deal is this: the danger is not that it will prevent the USA carrying out the mea-
sures required, but that he will fool us into thinking that by comparison Democratic politicians, or the countries still holding to the Paris accords, are doing something more than “greenwashing” the real problem.

Capitalism is driving the world towards disas-
ter, reflecting its blind and destructive impulses and its historical bankruptcy. This is a profound change, those with least capacity to affect any change at a global, international level.

Evidence of growing disaster

See website for details
http://www.internationalism.org

Contact the ICC

Write to the following addresses without mentioning the name:

COMMINIST INTERNATIONALIST POB 25, NIT, Fardabad, 121001 Haryana, INDIA
WORLD REVOLUTION BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX, GREAT BRITAIN

Write by e-mail to the following addresses:
From Great Britain use @internationalism.org
From India use international@internationalism.org

http://www.internationalism.org
The summer of 2018 has produced the hottest summer on record in the northern hemisphere, and across 4 continents with an untold number of people dead as a result of the heat. Germany recorded a record of 36°C and 18 days that exceeded 30°C with many deaths reported. Texas had 10 continual days of between 39-44°C. Algeria recorded 51°C said to be a record for the continent of Africa. Tokyo, Japan had 41°C with over one hundred people dead from the heatwave. Sweden had its hottest temperatures too. In Europe Stockholms had it hottest July since records began and Soda-

A strong factor in this heatwave has been the weak and unusual course of the Jet Stream, which is normally a key agent in steering the weather patterns over Europe. The jet stream itself has been extremely weak and has been in a po-

In Britain too, the hot dry weather which started in the Spring, as in several other European countries, has given rise to parched gardens and green landscapes, the climate and summer heat stocks to feed their animals. There have also been fires across some of the peat-filled moorlands in the north of the country that have been difficult to bring under control because they continued burn-

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

* 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 win through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry on this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Our ancestors could not succeed because of the defeat of the capitalistdecisive of capitalism, 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 revolu-

The state regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called ‘socialist’ were not socialist, but were basically the formal universal tendency state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

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