



workers of the world, unite!

world revolution

You can't have a green capitalism

Every day the evidence for the environmental catastrophe grows more alarming: melting glaciers, fires and floods linked to global warming, massive extinction of species, unbreathable air in cities, plastic waste building up in the oceans: it's almost impossible to keep up with the coverage in the media and the press. And virtually every article you read, every speech by celebrated scientists and authors, ends up by calling on the governments of the world to be more committed to protecting the planet, and the individual "citizen" to use their votes more responsibly. In short: it's up to the bourgeois state to save us! The youth marches for the climate and the protests by Extinction Rebellion don't escape this rule. The indignation of the young people involved in them is very real, but so is the total inability of these campaigns to get to the roots of the problem.

It's capitalism that is destroying the planet

170 years ago, in his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Friedrich Engels was already pointing out that capitalism was undermining the health of the exploited class through the poisoning of the air, water and food, and by herding the workers into disease-ridden slums.

While, on the one hand, it was developing the productive forces, this new industrial system was generalising pollution: "*In these industrial centres, the fumes from burning carbon had become a major source of pollution... Numerous travellers and novelists described the scale of the pollution pouring out of industrial chimneys. In 1854 Charles Dickens, for example, in his famous novel **Hard Times**, evoked the filthy skies of Coketown, a fictional town that mirrored Manchester, where all you could see were the 'interminable serpents of smoke' hanging over the city*".¹

The responsibility for this pollution that was not born yesterday lies with a social system which exists only to accumulate value without any concern for nature or humanity: capitalism.

The great London smog of 1952² is a more recent example of atmospheric pollution resulting from industry and domestic heating, but today the world's biggest cities, with Beijing and New Delhi at the top of the list, are faced with new varieties of the same phenomenon becoming more or less permanent. One of the most polluting sectors today is maritime transport whose low costs are a vital component of the entire world economy. But

1. François Jarrige and Thomas Le Roux, *La contamination du monde* (2017)
2. In December 1952, for five days, fog caused by an anticyclone mixed with smoke produced by industry and domestic heating, creating a smog which killed up to 12,000 people

the accelerating destruction of forests for logging, palm oil or meat production is equally determined by the demand for profit. In every branch of its activity, capitalism pollutes and destroys without regard for the consequences.

The pollution of the atmosphere is today reaching apocalyptic levels. Whatever the 'climate skeptics' may say (with the generous backing of the oil and chemical industries), numerous scientific measurements of the retreat of glaciers and of the temperature of the oceans go in the same direction and leave no serious doubt about the issue: because of the increasing rates of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the average temperature of the Earth is rising inexorably, resulting in a series of unpredictable climatic phenomena which are already having a dramatic impact on populations in certain regions of the world. According to a study by the World Bank, the aggravating effects of climate change could push more than 140 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050.

In other words: capitalist industry is threatening civilisation with a gradual but ineluctable slide into chaos. This sinister reality is giving rise to a widespread and very understandable disquiet. The question "what kind of world are we leaving to our children" is being posed everywhere and it's quite logical that children and young people are the first to be concerned about growing up in a rapidly degrading environment.

In this situation, the "climate marches", strikes and other protests that have been organised with a great deal of media coverage are responding to this growing disquiet. When a young Swedish high school pupil, Greta Thunberg, left her classes to demonstrate outside the parliament in Stockholm, she expressed these deep concerns about



Capitalism has been polluting for over 200 years

the future. But straight away she was invited to speak at the UN, the world climate conference at Katowice, and the British parliament, and was constantly being photographed alongside politicians like Angela Merkel and Jeremy Corbyn. Greta Thunberg was promoted to be a symbol of the concerns of her generation. And we have to ask why.

Creating divisions between the generations

Behind slogans carried on climate march placards like "They are stealing our future" and "if you won't act like adults, we will" lies the idea that, if the world is overheating, it's because the "older generation" haven't done anything to prevent it, while the younger generation is acting more responsibly by striking for the climate. In reality, the environmental disaster is not the particular responsibility of the previous generation, any more than it can be reduced to the irresponsible individual behavior or the lack of determination of the people who have been elected to govern. It is a product of the capitalist system and its internal contradictions, a system that can only survive through brutal competition and the ruthless hunt for profit. Both the previous generations and the newer ones are subjected to the implacable laws of a mode of production which is descending into barbarism.

The real aim of this ideology about the older generation is to block any solidarity between the generations and even more to hide what is really responsible for our current plight. By setting the old and the young against each other capitalist propaganda is once again seeking to divide and rule the exploited. At the same time, pointing to the "old" generation as the ones who are responsible for our current mess camouflages the mechanisms of the system and the need to overcome it. The solution is not to have new, younger people running the present social system, because they would be prisoners held by the same chains.

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Where does the working class stand in the Brexit mess?

In reality the working class has no stake in the Brexit imbroglio, no camp to choose among the many factions or the umpteen ‘solutions’. All the arguments in the Brexit debate are ultimately to do with the best conditions in which to manage the capitalist economic crisis, the best way to compete with other capitalist swindlers on the world market, with the ultimate aim of extracting the maximum surplus value from the working class and deciding amongst the bourgeoisie who gets the biggest cut.

The inexorable decline of workers’ living standards - now there are 14 million in poverty in Britain according to the latest UN report - began long before Brexit and will continue whatever ‘solution’ is found to the EU conundrum.

And behind Brexit is the question of Britain’s imperialist role in the world and which military conflicts the proletariat will have to pay for.

Workers have no interest or benefit in any of these ‘national interests’. Even if, in the fantasy of the no-deal Brexiteers, immigration were to stop, the erosion of workers’ livelihoods would continue. Even if Britain remained in the EU, workers would still be the target of austerity measures like those imposed on the Greek proletariat.

Indeed, the ongoing media circus about the Brexit mess is used as a means of obscuring the central questions for the working class and pretending that the latter has no interests and perspective of its own.

The different factions in the Labour Party play a

full part in creating and maintaining this smoke-screen concerning the real interests of the working class, and are barely distinguishable from the Tory factions. Jeremy Corbyn and the ‘hard left’ only provide a subsidiary diversion, with the promise of ‘nationalisations’, the pretence of ‘redistributing wealth’ - which means in reality making poverty more equitable - or on the world arena supporting an alternative set of imperialist gangsters. The Trotskyists and other leftists have still more radical variations on these illusions.

All these political games of the bourgeois parties help to reinforce the present disorientation of the working class.

However, sooner or later, the further worsening of the economic crisis will oblige the work-

ing class to revive the struggle to defend its living conditions, to recognise itself as an autonomous class once more and expose more clearly the fact that the present social system has no alternative to the decline of its system other than a growing barbarism.

This renewed class struggle will reveal itself as a political struggle. But the working class has nothing to gain from the bourgeois state or the parliamentary game which, as Brexit shows, excludes the political interests and participation of the proletariat. In the future the working class will therefore have to re-create its own mass organisations of political power and a revolutionary political party. **Como 25.5.19**

The British bourgeoisie losing control of its political game

This resolution, adopted by a conference in January 2019, seeks to draw out the main perspectives for the British situation in the coming period. It is one of the core responsibilities of a revolutionary organisation to put forward the most coherent understanding of the perspectives for the national situation. This takes on even more importance when the whole social situation is dominated by the ruling class’s unprecedented political crisis around Brexit – a crisis that is going to continue to worsen in the coming period. Without an understanding of the roots and consequences of this turmoil it is impossible to draw out the probable implications of this for the proletariat in Britain and internationally in the coming years.

The role of the resolution is not to provide a detailed analysis of dynamics at work - this is done in the report on the national situation from the same conference - but to lay down a general theoretical framework and its implications. In the last issue of *World Revolution* we published the historical section of the report, which readers can refer to¹.

In this introduction we want to examine if the resolution has been verified by the unfolding of events.

The resolution argues that Brexit is the product of the combination of the century-long decline of British imperialism, the divisions within the ruling class that this has generated, the deepening of the impact of the decomposition of capitalism since the 2008 financial crisis, and the rise of populism. The resolution demonstrates that the bourgeoisie is caught up in irreconcilable contradictions. These are not only represented by the rise of populism, but also by the already existing divisions over Europe within the main parties, which have been pushed to a point where they could destroy the carefully constructed parliamentary political apparatus that has served the British bourgeoisie so well over the last two centuries.

This has been fully confirmed by the paralysis of the parliamentary machine over the last 6 months. Both the main political parties have been torn by factional struggles over Brexit. The Withdrawal Agreement drawn up by the May government and the EU, aimed at preventing Britain from simply crashing out of the EU, has been undermined by the inability of the main factions of both parties to agree on how to carry out this plan. May was unable to compromise because of the pressure exerted by the pro-Brexit hardliners, whilst Corbyn was constrained by the divisions within Labour where important factions want a Customs Union or a Second Referendum. The last desperate effort to get this Agreement were the common talks between both parties but these were doomed because it became obvious that May was going to be driven from power by factions in the Tory party opposed to a deal with Labour, as proved to be the case when May announced that she would resign on 7 June. This paralysis has now produced a leadership contest in the Tory party, with the most rabidly pro-Brexit figures easily in the lead, but whatever the result it will not resolve the stale-

mate.

This political vacuum has stimulated a new upsurge of populism, fed by anger and frustration at the inability of parliament to progress on Brexit. Farage and his wealthy bourgeois backers have taken full advantage of this void by forming the Brexit Party. This new party expresses a serious danger to the main parties. It represents a new face to populism. Gone is the strident anti-immigration rhetoric and the odd and bizarre characters that made UKIP unacceptable to many. The new party is very slick, it has a very sophisticated internet campaign and sells itself as being both multi-cultural and supported by younger voters. Farage has made much of his rejection of UKIP’s increasing racism and Islamophobia. This operation is a serious effort to make inroads into the main parties, based on being the only party able to defend the democratic vote of “the people”.

The rise of the Brexit Party, has thrown a spanner in the works. A new leader of the Tory party will not want to call a general election, as long as Brexit is not solved, because as one former Cameron aid put it, they will be “toast”. Labour will also be very reluctant to go for an election because the Brexit Party is making an effort to sell itself as the party of working people.

This means that three years after a referendum that was meant to push back the tide of populism the ruling class is now faced with a re-invigorated and more sophisticated populist party pouring petrol onto its political crisis.

As the resolution says, this crisis is threatening the territorial integrity of the British state. The election of a hard-line Brexiteer as Tory leader and/or the arrival of the Brexit party in parliament would worsen tensions with the pro-Independence Scottish fraction of the bourgeoisie.

The impact of this is not confined to Britain. As the resolution explains Brexit contributed to the strengthening of populism in Europe and the US. The EU and the main European powers have responded with a very hard line towards the British bourgeoisie. This line has paid some benefits, because the political chaos has produced a real fear even amongst the European populist parties and governments, who have now abandoned or toned down the demand to leave the EU. However, the populist far right still poses a serious threat to the future of the EU.

The Brexiteers hopes of a new “global” Britain able to strike up free trade deals have already started to hit the hard rock of reality. The developing trade war between the US and China has made it clear that the US has no hesitations to undermine the interests of its former allies in its increasingly desperate struggle with China. The Huawei scandal has seen China threatening its investment in Britain if the British government gives in to US pressure to ban Huawei from its infrastructure.

The struggle with China for global dominance, along with its intention to undermine its European rivals, means that the US has little interest in a weakened Britain outside the EU. Trump was happy to encourage Brexit in order to hurt the EU, but, once Brexit takes place, what role can the UK play for the US?

The resolution’s perspective of the deepening of the political crisis has been verified by events. Its warning of the threat of populism in this situation of paralysis was justified. The emergence of the Brexit Party is another factor of chaos and instability, further endangering the British state’s efforts to ensure an orderly Brexit.

The implications of this situation for the working class are grim. More than a decade of austerity has taken place with hardly any response from the class. This does not mean there is no discontent but it has not found expression through the class struggle due to the proletariat’s profound lack of self-confidence. This disorientation and demoralisation have been exacerbated by Brexit and the political crisis. The support for populism and its simplistic promise of a better tomorrow among

parts of the proletariat is an expression of this despair and hopelessness. However, an even greater danger to the proletariat is being mobilised behind anti-populism and its defence of democracy and the democratic state. At present and in the coming period the proletariat will find it hard to avoid being mobilized behind these different bourgeois factions.

But the economic crisis will continue the deepen, and no matter which bourgeois faction dominates, they are all going to have to attack the proletariat. It is only through struggling against these attacks that the working class can defend itself. Such struggles will see the same response from the Tories, Labour or populists, because in the end they all defend capitalism. **WR, 25.5.19**

Resolution on the British situation

1. The historical and international significance of the UK’s exit from the EU marks a qualitative acceleration of the impact of decomposition on the political life of the world bourgeoisie. Brexit demonstrates the increasing impact of populism, the political expression of the deepening of capitalist decomposition, which has also taken the form of populist governments in eastern Europe and Italy, and the strengthening of populist parties and factions in Western Europe and the US. The Brexit mess has become a veritable caricature of political crises internationally.

With the impasse over Brexit, the whole of the British bourgeoisie, state and society has been thrown into a political crisis due to the irresponsibility of minority factions of the bourgeoisie, the result of the contamination of these factions by the upsurge of populism.

To this can be added the other manifestations of the deepening historical crisis: the growing undermining of the post-World War Two institutions of the Pax Americana: the EU, WTO, the World Bank, NATO, and, underlying all this, the insoluble global economic crisis.

The historical roots

2. Brexit has been able to have such an impact in Britain because of the historical tensions within the ruling class over Europe that have been generated by its decline as an imperialist power. Before 1956 the British ruling class believed it could influence Europe from outside, but after the humiliation of Suez it had to accept the end of its time as an international power of the first rank. Being part of Europe was not only about economic stability but also, very importantly, about continuing the long-term British imperialist policy of trying to keep the continental powers divided, and particularly of opposing the influence of German imperialism.

At the same time, British imperialism also needed to balance its involvement in Europe with the

“special relationship” with the USA, a relationship that only really had substance if the UK was part of Europe.

Fundamentally British imperialism had been grudging about having to be part of the EU; nevertheless it had bitten the bullet in order to further the national interest.

Growing chaos and the question of Europe

3. The end of the division of the world into two imperialist blocs in 1989 unleashed powerful centrifugal tendencies. The Eastern bloc collapsed and the Western bloc lost its reason for existence. This pushed all the major imperialist powers into a new historical period, trying to find the best way to defend the national interest in a much more chaotic world. At the imperialist level this meant all of the secondary powers having to navigate international waters in which the US was in decline, and thus all the more determined to maintain its role.

This placed great pressure on the British bourgeoisie, exacerbating the already existing divisions within it, especially in its political apparatus, over how best to defend the national interest in relation to Europe. The rise of German imperialism over the last 30 years and the weight of French imperialism in the EU have both underlined the weakened role of Britain. Thatcher’s stated disquiet about the impact of the rise of Germany expressed a deep historical fear haunting British imperialism, fueling Euroscepticism within the Tory party and xenophobia amongst its electorate. By the early 2010s the ability of the British bourgeoisie to manoeuvre within the EU was thus being undermined due to the increasing weight of Euroscepticism within the Tory party and to the electoral successes of UKIP. It was this that led to the decision to hold the referendum in 2016.

1. <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16634/report-national-situation-january-2019>

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The disaster of the referendum and the impact of populism

4. The political gamble of calling the referendum to counter the growing influence of Euroscepticism and populism ran up against a number of fundamental problems. In particular, the bourgeoisie underestimated the depth of the impact of populism within the population and parts of the working class, the result of:

- the proletariat's loss of confidence in itself over the last 30 years under the impact of a series of important defeats;
- the growing weight of despair and lumpenisation in areas and regions which have been abandoned to rot;
- a growing cynicism and distrust towards the parliamentary system, not in the context of a developing proletarian alternative but rather in one of confusion, frustration and anger which has left parts of the proletariat prey to the influence of populism. The fact that the Leave campaign was able to mobilise 3 million to vote who had previously abandoned voting enabled them to win the referendum;
- the use of Euroscepticism as a panacea for austerity, the blaming of immigration for the decrease in workers' living standards.
- the ideology of blaming the economic recession of 2008 on the bankers and the traditional political elites, rather than capitalism itself.

The depth of the political crisis

5. Brexit has thrown the British bourgeoisie, one of the oldest and most experienced in the world, into a profound political crisis. It has faced other crises but never one which has so fundamentally weakened every aspect of its political life.

In the Theses on Decomposition of 1990 the ICC showed that this was one of the manifestations of decomposition:

“Amongst the major characteristics of capitalist society's decomposition, we should emphasise the bourgeoisie's growing difficulty in controlling the evolution of the political situation. Obviously, this is a result of the ruling class' increasing loss of control over its economic apparatus, the infrastructure of society. The historic dead-end in which the capitalist mode of production finds itself trapped, the successive failures of the bourgeoisie's different policies, the permanent flight into debt as a condition for the survival of the world economy, cannot but effect the political apparatus which is itself incapable of imposing on society, and especially on the working class, the 'discipline' and acquiescence necessary to mobilise all its strength for a new world war, which is the only historic 'response' that the bourgeoisie has to give. The absence of any perspective (other than day-to-day stop-gap measures to prop up the economy) around which it could mobilise as a class, and at the same time the fact that the proletariat does not yet threaten its own survival, creates within the ruling class, and especially within its political apparatus, a growing tendency towards indiscipline and an attitude of 'every man for himself'”¹

30 years ago, when the Theses were published, the main expression of this dynamic was the collapse of the Eastern bloc. However, as we said at the time:

“The spectacle which the USSR and its satellites are offering us today, of a complete rout within the state apparatus itself, and the ruling class' loss of control over its own political strategy is in reality only the caricature (due to the specificities of the Stalinist regimes) of a much more general phenomenon affecting the whole world ruling class, and which is specific to the phase of decomposition”.

6. The political destabilisation of the ruling class in Britain has been most graphically expressed in the chaos that has developed as the date for the UK's exit from the EU has drawn ever closer. This has led to the paralysis of parliament. The British state was once seen as a master of controlling the political situation; now the political apparatus is being openly mocked, but also distrusted, due to its inability to manage the Brexit process.

The main factions of the state accepted that they had no option but to accept Brexit following the referendum. Nevertheless, British state capitalism has sought to do all it can to try and make the best of a very bad situation. The main factions in the Tory and Labour Parties around May and Cor-

1. https://en.internationalism.org/ir/107_decomposition

byn accepted this policy. But with the deepening tensions generated by the realisation of the full implications of Brexit, each of the parties has become increasingly divided by numerous factions pushing their own solutions to the irreconcilable contradictions of Brexit. Even within the main factions of the Tory and Labour Parties there are divisions over how to achieve a planned Brexit. May has to struggle against the hard-line Brexiteers of the European Research Group, while Corbyn seeks to reconcile supporting a planned Brexit in a party that is overwhelmingly Remain. This situation has resulted in more than two years of conflict in both parties as all the factions have battled it out. Both May and Corbyn have had to fight off ‘coup’ attempts in the form of parliamentary confidence motions.

This situation of increasingly irresponsible political conflict has been exacerbated by the faction-fighting as the state desperately seeks to avoid crashing out of the EU. Through May the state has been reduced to attempting to bribe MPs into supporting the Withdrawal Agreement, with millions of pounds being offered to the most pro-Brexit Labour constituencies, which are usually the most deprived. This has generated even more tensions within the Labour Party, with pro-Remain MPs denouncing other MPs for accepting these bribes.

These divisions are not limited to the main political parties but extend into the unions and the leftist groups, which underlines just how integrated they are into the state structure.

7. The state's efforts to negotiate a deal have not only had to cope with the political crisis domestically but have increased the political crisis in Europe. The result of the referendum poured petrol onto populist bonfires across Europe. The populist governments in Hungary and Poland drew renewed strength from the result. In France, the Front National gained inspiration, whilst in Italy the populists of the Northern League and Five Star Movement rode to power on the coat tails of Brexit. Faced with this upsurge of populism, the main factions of the EU have no choice but to make Brexit as difficult as possible. The most responsible parts of the European bourgeoisie are particularly angry about this fall-out from the British bourgeoisie's inability to control its own political situation.

8. It is very difficult to make a precise analysis of the perspectives for the unfolding of this crisis because the bourgeoisie is engaged in an increasingly desperate effort to avoid a no-deal Brexit. However, what can be said with certainty is that this crisis and political instability will continue and worsen. Even if the bourgeoisie was able to achieve a planned Brexit it is still faced with the increasingly complex question of steering its way, in a weakened state, through the deepening chaos of the international situation. Given the chaos already inflicted on the British bourgeoisie by the process leading up to Brexit, the accentuating pressures towards political irresponsibility, ‘every man for himself’ and the fragmentation of the political apparatus can only continue.

The impact on the two-party system

9. Over the course of the last 100 years British state capitalism has maintained a two-party system in order to contain and control the political situation. However, even before Brexit this system was being weakened by the emergence of nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. Now we are witnessing a process of fragmentation of the Tory and Labour Parties themselves. The last two years have exacerbated these tensions to levels that threaten the very existence of the Conservative Party. Post Brexit these divisions will widen as the party's factions blame each other for the deepening problems faced by British capitalism, entering into new battles over which policies to follow. This is assuming that the party does not fracture under the pressure of achieving Brexit.

10. The situation in the Labour Party will not be much less fractious. The rise of Corbyn enabled the bourgeoisie to establish a clear difference between the Labour and Tory Party. This is now in danger as Corbyn's strategy - trying to please the Leave faction by agreeing to Brexit, but at the same time insisting on the need for the closest possible relationship with the EU in order to contain the Remainers - comes under increasing strain. Fundamental to these tensions is the fact

that the greatly increased party membership, who joined in support of Corbyn, in a large majority support a second referendum. This is being used by the Remain MPs to put pressure on Corbyn. The Blairites in particular will continue to use this tension in order to undermine Corbyn. As with the Tory Party, if the party survives Brexit, there will be a sharpening of these tensions as the anti-Corbyn factions try to depose him for allowing Brexit to take place.

The fragmentation of either of the parties would be a major problem for the British ruling class, because it would open up a political arena that could be exploited by the populists, thus further deepening the tensions and difficulties in its political apparatus. Such a collapse of the two-party system would be a further expression of a growing loss of control of the political situation.

11. To this political instability has to be added the prospect of the strengthening of moves towards independence amongst the Scottish fractions of the British bourgeoisie. Such a threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom would provoke unprecedented tensions within the ruling class. Not only between the Scottish Nationalist Party and the rest of the national bourgeoisie, but also within the Scottish bourgeoisie, as not all agree with independence, and also within the national bourgeoisie as a whole, as those who wanted to Remain blame the Brexiteers for undermining the territorial integrity of British capitalism.

12. Tensions will also worsen in Northern Ireland between the Loyalist and Irish Nationalist factions of the bourgeoisie. The Good Friday Agreement that brought about the ceasefire was based upon the UK being in the EU, thus providing the Nationalists with the ability to appeal to the EU over the UK. The loss of this framework is not discussed by the bourgeois media. However, the Irish bourgeoisie is very aware of the potential for renewed instability in the North and that is why they are insistent upon the withdrawal plan which tries to ensure there is no hard border and the subsequent potential for reigniting the ‘Troubles’.

The majority in the North voted to Remain in order to avoid this. However, the hard-line Democratic Unionists are fervent Brexiteers, while Sinn Fein was for Remain. These divisions in the context of political instability in the wider political apparatus will accentuate pressures towards the outbreak of open conflicts between the different factions of the bourgeoisie in the North.

The Welsh Nationalists who also supported Remain in order to have a counter to the national bourgeoisie will renew their calls for independence.

Weakening of Britain's imperialist and economic position

13. Leaving the EU marks a qualitative moment in the 100-year decline of British imperialism:

- being forced out of the EU through its own political weakness means that British imperialism has retreated from one of its most important areas of interest. The whole imperialist policy of Britain within the EU was to contain and undermine a resurgent Germany. For example, Blair's push for the extension of the EU into Eastern Europe was aimed at bringing into the EU states who historically have opposed Germany. Leaving the EU undermines this ability. British imperialism will now have to stand on the sidelines as its main European rivals Germany and France are given a freer hand. It will only be able to have an influence by provoking tensions within the EU, supporting those countries opposing Germany. However, these countries distrust the UK as it walks away from Europe.
- The ‘special relationship’ with the US is threadbare and will become even more exposed because, without Britain in the EU, the US no longer has the UK to counter German and French imperialism. Trump has already made it clear that he sees Britain as a state whose political life he can openly seek to destabilise, with his support for Brexit. This may have helped to deepen the political crisis in Britain and the EU, but once Britain leaves what role can Britain play for the US in its efforts to undermine the EU and confront Russia and China? A profoundly weakened British imperialism will find itself marginalised and forced into desperate actions in order to try and assert itself.
- For China, Britain outside the EU becomes a secondary European power that it will try to use

as a counter-weight to the US.

In this context tensions within the bourgeoisie will be worsened as the ruling class desperately seeks ways to maintain some international influence. The idea of moving closer to the US will provoke strong opposition given the bitter experience of the US's undermining of Britain's imperialist role over the last 100 years, intensified by the loss of international reputation caused by the Blair government's support for the US in Afghanistan and Iraq. The EU will keep the UK at arm's length. British imperialism will be left looking increasingly like a third-rate imperialist power.

14. Brexit has already had a very important impact on the economy. A central part of the manufacturing base is the car industry but this has seen a 50% fall in investment since 2016. The main business bodies, the City, the Confederation of British Industry, the Chambers of Commerce, have all expressed their anger about the political crisis and paralysis. They, along with other more responsible parts of the bourgeoisie and the state, are determined to avoid a no-deal Brexit, hence their support for the Withdrawal Deal. However, the political instability caused by trying to get this deal agreed holds out a grim prospect for the future trade deal with the EU and this will reignite the tensions over Brexit. The achieving of a trade deal with the EU is of huge importance to the economy not only because of the size of the EU, but also because, as Japan has made clear, until such a deal is agreed it will not discuss a deal with the UK. Given that the EU and Japan in January 2019 signed one of the biggest trade agreements in the world, they will not want to give British capitalism any advantages when it comes to an agreement between them. The signing of this deal underlines just how damaging Brexit is: British capitalism is being forced to leave one of the world's biggest free trade areas. All the talk of a new, expanding ‘global Britain’ is just hot air.

This is further underlined by the situation facing the UK in relation to the USA. The Brexiteers made much of being able to strike a deal with the US rapidly. The brutal use of US economic, political and imperialist power by Trump to openly attack its main rivals, to rip up existing free trade arrangements and to impose bilateral deals are the most obvious indications that any hopes placed in the US being ‘nice’ to British capitalism are delusions.

The impact of Brexit on the proletariat

15. The referendum campaign and the period since have seen an unprecedented ideological onslaught, outside of a situation of world war, on the proletariat in Britain. Five years of being suffocated by a blanket of democratic, nationalist and xenophobic ideology has seen important divisions generated within the proletariat. The social atmosphere is saturated with manufactured tensions between Leave and Remain, the North and South, City and Country, the poor white working class and the rest of the class. A climate of irrational hate, social tension and boiling potential violence pervades society.

These destructive forces are not new but express the advancing ideological decay of bourgeois society, the noxious fumes seeping from its rotting flesh. The proletariat cannot escape this poisonous atmosphere. As we said in the late 1980s the decomposition of bourgeois society, as its contradictions tear at the fabric of society, would have an impact on the very qualities that are the strengths of the proletariat:

“The different elements which constitute the strength of the working class directly confront the various facets of this ideological decomposition:

- *solidarity and collective action are faced with the atomisation of 'look out for number one';*
- *the need for organisation confronts social decomposition, the disintegration of the relationships which form the basis for all social life;*
- *the proletariat's confidence in the future and in its own strength is constantly sapped by the all-pervasive despair and nihilism within society;*
- *consciousness, lucidity, coherent and unified thought, the taste for theory, have a hard time making headway in the midst of the flight into illusions, drugs, sects, mysticism, the rejection or destruction of thought which are characteristic of our epoch”*

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No solution to the ecological catastrophe without the emancipation of labour from capitalist exploitation

The overwhelming consensus of serious scientific opinion is that we are already entering a global ecological catastrophe of unprecedented proportions. This is not the place to itemise all the various aspects of the disaster facing humanity, from the pollution of the sea, air and rivers to the impending extinction of innumerable of plant and animal species, culminating in the threats posed by the accelerating process of global warming. Suffice it to say that the combination of all these tendencies, if unchecked, could make the planet itself uninhabitable, and at the very least unfit to sustain a decent human existence.

It is our contention, however, that it is not enough to examine this problem through the lens of ecology, or the natural sciences, alone. To understand the underlying causes of ecological devastation, and the possibility of reversing it, we have to understand their connection to the existing social relations, to the economic system that governs the earth: capitalism. And for us that means using the only really scientific approach to understanding the structure and dynamics of human society – the method of marxism. One excellent point of departure here is Engels’ 1876 essay ‘The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man’, an unfinished movement that has been included within a broader unfinished symphony, *The Dialectics of Nature*¹.

Engels’ essay is an application of the understanding that only by looking at the human past from the standpoint of a class of labour – and of associated labour in particular – does it become possible to understand the emergence of the human species. Contrary to the mechanistic view that it is the result of the development of the human brain seen in isolation – its growth in size and complexity as the simple result of random mutations – Engels argues that in the final analysis **man makes himself**; that it is the dialectical interaction between hand and brain in the collective production of tools and the transformation of our natural surroundings which determines the “mechanical” capacities of the brain, the dexterity of the human hand, and the evolution of a specifically human consciousness. This consciousness is one in which planned, purposeful activity and cultural transmission outweighs the more instinctual actions of previous animal species.

“It goes without saying that it would not occur to us to dispute the ability of animals to act in a planned, premeditated fashion. On the contrary, a planned mode of action exists in embryo wherever protoplasm, living albumen, exists and reacts, that is, carries out definite, even if extremely simple, movements as a result of definite external stimuli. Such reaction takes place even where there is yet no cell at all, far less a nerve cell. There is something of the planned action in the way insect-eating plants capture their prey, although they do it quite unconsciously. In animals the capacity for conscious, planned action is proportional to the development of the nervous system, and among mammals it attains a fairly high level... But all the planned action of all animals has never succeeded in impressing the stamp of their will upon the earth. That was left for man”.

In short, the animal merely uses its environment, and brings about changes in it simply by its presence; man by his changes makes it serve his ends, masters it. This is the final, essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it is labour that brings about this distinction”.

There is no question that humanity acquired these capacities through collective activity, through association. In particular Engels argues that the evolution of language – a prerequisite for

the development of thought and of cultural transmission from one generation to the next – can only be understood in the context of a developing social connection:

“It has already been noted that our simian ancestors were gregarious; it is obviously impossible to seek the derivation of man, the most social of all animals, from non-gregarious immediate ancestors. Mastery over nature began with the development of the hand, with labour; and widened man’s horizon at every new advance. He was continually discovering new, hitherto unknown properties in natural objects. On the other hand, the development of labour necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by increasing cases of mutual support and joint activity, and by making clear the advantage of this joint activity to each individual. In short, men in the making arrived at the point where they had something to say to each other. Necessity created the organ; the undeveloped larynx of the ape was slowly but surely transformed by modulation to produce constantly more developed modulation, and the organs of the mouth gradually learned to pronounce one articulate sound after another”.

The human capacity to transform nature has brought it enormous evolutionary and historical advantages, undeniably making humanity the dominant species on the planet. From the utilisation of fire to the domestication of animals and the sowing of crops; from the construction of the first cities to the development of vast networks of production and communication that could unify the entire planet: these were the necessary stages towards the emergence of a global human community founded on the realisation of the creative potential of all its members, in other words, of the communist future which Marx and Engels predicted and fought for.

A warning against arrogant assumptions

And yet *The Part Played by Labour* is anything but an arrogant hymn to human superiority. In the footsteps of Darwin, it begins by recognizing that everything that is uniquely human also has its roots in the abilities of our animal ancestors. And above all, no sooner has Engels noted the fundamental distinction between man and animal than he issues a warning which has a very clear resonance in the face of today’s ecological crisis:

“Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries. When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the southern slopes, so carefully cherished on the northern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby depriving their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year, and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons. Those who spread the potato in Europe were not aware that with these farinaceous tubers they were at the same time spreading scrofula. Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly”.

In this passage, Engels provides us with a concrete example of the marxist theory of alienation, which is predicated on the recognition that, in given social conditions, the product of man’s own labour can become a hostile power, an alien force that eludes his control and acts against him. With-

out entering into a discussion into the more remote origins of this human self-estrangement, we can say with certainty that the qualitative development of this process is linked to the emergence of class exploitation, in which, by definition, those who labour are compelled to produce not for themselves but for a class that holds the power and wealth of society in its hands. And it is no accident that the development of exploitation and of alienated labour is connected to mankind’s progressive alienation from nature. The examples of “unforeseen consequences” of production that Engels provides us with in the passage just cited are taken mainly from pre-capitalist forms of class society, and it is precisely with these earlier forms of civilisation that we find the first clear example of man-made environmental disasters.

“The first cases of extensive ecological destruction coincide with the early city states; there is considerable evidence that the very process of deforestation which allowed civilisations such as the Sumerian, the Babylonian, the Sinhalese and others to develop a large-scale agricultural base also, in the longer term, played a considerable role in their decline and disappearance”³.

But these were, relatively speaking, local catastrophes. In contrast to previous modes of production, capitalism is compelled by its deepest inner drive to dominate the entire planet. As it says in the *Communist Manifesto*,

“The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere...”

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image”.

This necessity to “globalise” itself, however, has also meant the globalisation of ecological catastrophe. For Marx, the capitalist social relation marked the high point of in the whole process of alienation, because now the exploitation of human labour is no longer geared towards a personal relation between master and servant, as it was in previous class societies, but towards the expansion and growth of a fundamentally impersonal power – “Das Kapital”, or the profit system. The universal advent of production for the market and for profit means that the tendency for the results of production to escape the control of the producer has reached its ultimate point; moreover, the capitalist exploiter himself, though benefiting from the proceeds of exploitation, is also driven by the remorseless competition for profits, and is, in the final analysis, merely the personification of capital. We are thus confronted with a mode of production which is like a juggernaut that is running out of control and threatening to crush exploiter and exploited alike.

Because capitalism is driven by the remorseless demands of accumulation (what it calls “economic growth”), it can never arrive at a rational, global control of the productive process, geared to the long-term interests of humanity. This is above all true in a period of economic crisis, where the pressure to penetrate the last untouched regions of the planet and ransack their resources becomes increasingly irresistible to all the feverishly competing capitalist and national units.

The extreme point in the alienation of the worker in the process of production is thus mirrored in the most extreme alienation of humanity from nature. In the same way that the workers’ labour power is commodified, our most intimate needs and feelings seen as potential markets, so capitalism sees nature as a vast warehouse that can be robbed and ransacked at will in order to fuel the juggernaut

3. “Capitalism is poisoning the Earth”, https://en.internationalism.org/ir/63_pollution

of accumulation. We are now seeing the ultimate consequences of the illusion of ruling over nature “like a conqueror over a foreign people”: it can only lead to “nature taking its revenge...” on a scale far greater than in any previous civilisation, since this “revenge” could culminate in the extinction of humanity itself.

“Taking back control”

Let’s return to the last passage from Engels, where he writes that “*all our mastery of (nature) consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly*”. He goes on thus: “*And, in fact, with every day that passes we are acquiring a better understanding of these laws and getting to perceive both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature. In particular, after the mighty advances made by the natural sciences in the present century, we are more than ever in a position to realise, and hence to control, also the more remote natural consequences of at least our day-to-day production activities*”.

The paradox of capital is that while the development of science under its reign has allowed us to understand the laws of nature to an unprecedented degree, we seem increasingly powerless to “apply them correctly”.

For Engels, of course, the capacity to control the consequences of our production depended on the overthrow of capitalism and the appropriation of science by the revolutionary working class. But Engels, confident that the victory of the socialist revolution was not far off, could not have foreseen the tragedy of the centuries that followed his: the defeat of the first attempt at world proletarian revolution, and the prolongation of the capitalist system that has reached such a level of decay that it is undermining the very bases for a future communist society. In the nightmare world that decadent capitalism is shaping before our eyes, scientific knowledge of the laws of nature, which could and should be used for the benefit of humanity, is more and more being enlisted to aggravate the mounting calamity, by bending it to the intensification of the exploitation of man and nature, or the creation of terrifying weapons of destruction which themselves pose a major ecological threat. Indeed, a measure of capitalism’s decadence is precisely this growing gap between the potential created by the development of the productive forces – of which science is a vital part – and the way this potential is blocked and distorted by the existing social relations.

On its own even the most disinterested scientific knowledge is powerless to turn back the tide of environmental despoliation. Hence the endless warnings of concerned scientific bodies about the melting of the glaciers, the poisoning of the oceans or the extinction of species are endlessly ignored or counteracted by the real policies of capitalist governments whose first rule is always “expand or die”, whether or not these governments are ruled by crude climate change deniers like Trump or by earnest liberals and self-proclaimed socialists.

The solution to the ecological crisis – which, increasingly cannot be separated from capitalism’s irreversible economic crisis and its drive towards imperialist war – can only come about if mankind “takes back control” through the suppression of capital accumulation, with all its outward expressions, not least money, the state, and all national frontiers. Labour must emancipate itself from capitalist exploitation: the entire process of production must be organised on the basis of the needs of the producers and their long-term interaction with the rest of nature.

This is a precondition for the survival of our species. But it is also much more than that. In the last-cited passage, Engels continues: “*the more this progresses the more will men not only feel but also know their oneness with nature, and the more impossible will become the senseless and unnatural idea of a contrast between mind and matter, man and nature, soul and body, such as arose after the decline of classical antiquity in Europe and obtained its highest elaboration in Christianity*”.

1. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1876/part-played-labour/index.htm>
2. Anthropologists, geologists and other scientists have coined the term “Anthropocene” to designate a new geological era in which man has definitely stamped his will upon the atmosphere, climate and biology of the Earth. They put forward different moments to mark this transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, some seeing the invention of agriculture as crucial, while others opting for the beginning of the industrial revolution, i.e. the beginning of the capitalist epoch, but also including a phase of considerable acceleration after 1945.

Appalachian coalmine pollution

We cannot fight for our health and the environment as citizens

It is nothing new for capitalist industry, and mining in particular, to cause health problems and pollution. We have only to think of the lives lost to pneumoconiosis, to mining accidents and the collapse of slagheaps. However, mining companies in the Appalachian Mountains have taken this to a new extreme, clearing and blowing the tops of mountains and creating about 16 tons of “overburden” (the waste polluted by iron, sulphur and arsenic) for each ton of coal. Over 1,000 square miles of forest and soil has been destroyed, and 2,000 miles of streams buried, and the local water poisoned to the point that residents, mainly mine-workers themselves, have to travel miles to buy water to wash and cook, as well as to drink. Homes are damaged as orange water destroys pipes, sinks and washing machines.

Health is ruined as well. “*Professor Michael McCawley, an environmental engineer who has spent time researching the health impacts of mountaintop removal.*

‘It’s kind of like dumping geological trash,’ he explains. ‘It ends up increasing the concentration of acidic ions and metals [in the water], things like arsenic and nickel.’

This pollution, according to his research, has taken a catastrophic toll on the health of those whose water supply lies in its path.

‘This population is under assault from both water and air,’ Professor McCawley says. ‘What we’re finding in the water is likely to cause inflammation in the body, which can set off a lot of other chronic diseases. The big [problems] we have found are certainly cancers. Name a cancer and they’re seeing it here.’”¹

Dividing up the victims

Various websites describe various ways to tackle the problem. First, rely on the state to restore “*the Stream Protection Rule in 2016 to mitigate some of mountaintop mining’s harmful effects. The rule required mining companies to monitor and restore streams polluted by their activities, but Congress got rid of it in one of its first acts under the Trump administration.*”² This form of mining has been developing since the 80s, with or without the Stream Protection Rule and with or without Trump in the White House. Relying on the state and democracy is a false hope when the state itself belongs to capital.

Secondly, the citizen can take the mining companies to court. “*That company is facing a lawsuit*

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-47165522>
2. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/12/10/coal-mine-next-door/how-us-governments-deregulation-mountaintop-removal-threatens#>

Continued from page 4

Here Engels returns to some of the most audacious hypotheses of the young Marx about the nature of communism. Fully realised communism means the emancipation of labour not only in the sense of getting rid of class exploitation: it also demands the transformation of labour from a penance into a pleasure, the unleashing of human creativity. And this in turn is the precondition for the subjective transformation of the human species, which will “feel and know” its oneness with nature.

Such notions take us into a far-distant future. But it will only be our future if the class which embodies it, the world proletariat, is able to fight for its specific interests, to rediscover its sense of itself as a class, and to formulate a perspective for its struggles. This will mean that its immediate, defensive struggles will more and more have to incorporate the struggle against capitalist oppression and barbarism in all their forms; at the same time, it is only by fighting on its own class terrain that the proletariat can draw behind it all those layers of society who want to call a halt to capitalism’s cannibalisation of nature. The recognition that capitalism is a threat to all life on the planet will be central to this broadening of the class struggle towards a political and social revolution. **Amos 3.4.19**

from a number of residents ... who are seeking compensation for the costs of dealing with their water issues. It won a similar lawsuit a few years ago, and Jason, who was part of that legal battle, said it left the entire community divided between those who supported the coal industry and those who wanted to fight back.”¹ For “supported the coal industry” we should read: fear to lose their jobs in an area which has no other industry.

This division, based on the false hope of regaining clean water or compensation by political or legal action as private citizens, is most destructive. Often the media portray the concerned public defending the environment against workers who need to make sacrifices for it, such as higher fuel prices. However, as the Appalachian situation shows, there is an impossible choice between needing to make a living and needing clean water and good health. You simply cannot do without either. And in this situation the division in the community created by this impossible choice is particularly destructive because it is dividing a mining community, which means dividing the workers, and when workers are divided they lose the one strength they have to struggle against capital. **Alex 23.5.19**

Continued from page 1

You can’t have a green capitalism

Of course, the official organisers of the climate marches and protests do envisage the young and old coming together at another level – but again only to ask the capitalist state to do its best for the planet. Thus the signatories of an appeal by the Climate Action network in France “*demand that those responsible for climate change take the necessary measures to limit global warming to 1.5%, while also guaranteeing social justice*”. When Greta Thunberg demonstrated outside the Swedish parliament, she was in fact calling for those elected to positions of power in the capitalist state to do their job by thinking about the future for young people. And the politicians have seized on her initiative to issue calls for the renewal of democracy and for supporting new economic models, like the New Green Deal in the USA, to be implemented by a more caring and left-leaning Democratic administration. All this forgets that the states are the protectors of their national capital and cannot afford to let up in the mad race to generate profit. We are seeing a manipulation of perfectly legitimate concerns, a means of dragging young people into the electoral dead end. At a time when the young are more and more disillusioned with the institutions of bourgeois democracy, we can understand very well why the ruling class would seize on any opportunity to reverse this trend.

At the same time, we can hear Greta Thunberg or the Extinction Rebellion group calling for “mass resistance”, for direct action in the streets, for an international general strike of youth and adults on 20 September 2019, but this doesn’t change the underlying perspective: to put pressure on the state so that it will change from a leopard into a llama. Such a dead-end perspective can only contribute to the eventual demoralisation of many thousands of people who really want to resist the system.

Young people are a particular target of these ideological campaigns, not only because they are voicing very real concerns about their future, but because it’s vital to prevent young proletarians mobilising on a class terrain, as they did, for example, in the struggle of French students against a government assault on their employment prospects in 2006, or in the movement of the Spanish “Indignados” in 2011. Fighting as “young people” or simply as “people” in general obscures the class divisions in this society and the necessity for the exploited class to defend its material interests against the attacks of the capitalist regime.

Green ideology in the service of capitalism

When the bourgeoisie itself starts to worry about the question of global warming, you can be sure

George Monbiot

Not exactly anti-capitalist

George Monbiot, who writes a regular column for *The Guardian* on the looming ecological catastrophe, is a very passionate investigative journalist. He has produced innumerable carefully researched exposés of the cynicism, avarice, and mendacity of the corporations and governments who – whether they brazenly deny climate science outright or coat themselves in green credentials – are the principal agents of global environmental destruction. For a long time he has tried to find the root causes of the whole problem in the economic model that reigns throughout the planet, railing against various forms or aspects of the capitalist economy. But recently, he appears to have taken a step to the left:

“For most of my adult life I’ve railed against ‘corporate capitalism’, ‘consumer capitalism’ and ‘crony capitalism’. It took me a long time to see that the problem is not the adjective but the noun. While some people have rejected capitalism gladly and swiftly, I’ve done so slowly and reluctantly. Part of the reason was that I could see no clear alternative: unlike some anti-capitalists, I have never been an enthusiast for state communism. I was also inhibited by its religious status. To say ‘capitalism is failing’ in the 21st century is like

saying ‘God is dead’ in the 19th: it is secular blasphemy. It requires a degree of self-confidence I did not possess.

But as I’ve grown older, I’ve come to recognise two things. First, that it is the system, rather than any variant of the system, that drives us inexorably towards disaster. Second, that you do not have to produce a definitive alternative to say that capitalism is failing. The statement stands in its own right. But it also demands another, and different, effort to develop a new system”¹.

Monbiot accepts that there are two elements of capitalism which are inherent to the system and which are utterly inimical to maintaining a sustainable environment: the drive towards perpetual growth, and the institution of private property, which allows you to do what you want with the land and nature as long as you have enough money to buy it. He also explains that his lack of enthusiasm for “state communism” derives from the fact that “*Soviet communism had more in common with capitalism than the advocates of either system would care to admit. Both systems are (or were) obsessed with generating economic growth*”

Of course Monbiot is right that the problem is not this or that form of capitalism but the system itself. The drive to perpetual growth and expansion is the drive to accumulate capital – extracting surplus value from your workforce, producing for the market to realise your profit, then reinvesting to expand your enterprise and outdo the competition. This is not some by-product of the system, it is the system, and anyone who follows a no-growth model of capitalism is doomed to extinction. Similarly, the system can’t be separated from private property, from competition between separate enterprises, even if the older model of individual ownership has to a large extent been superseded by ownership by faceless corporations or nation states, some of them claiming to be “socialist”.

Monbiot humbly tells us that he has no ready answers to the problem but is making inquiries into the work of ecological thinkers like Jeremy Lent, Naomi Klein and Amitav Ghosh, and in particular the “doughnut economics” of Kate Raworth. But while the latter’s model seeks to factor social justice and ecological consequences into an overall economic diagram, it is telling that Monbiot himself considers that Raworth is “*the John Maynard Keynes of the 21st century*”². But Keynes was the perfect example of someone who tried to find a way of preserving capitalism while lopping off its worst bits (in his case, the crisis of overproduction in particular); and none of the authors that Monbiot recommends, for all the insights they offer us, are able to go beyond the confines of capitalism when it comes to proposing an alternative society.

Monbiot’s anti-capitalism (which is increasingly shared by august institutions like the IMF who are getting very concerned about the growing gulf between rich and poor) shows how hard it is to pronounce the God of capitalism to be dead, to make a real break from its ideological grip.

And yet the real alternative is, at one level, childishly simple: if the problem is a system that can’t help but invade the very last corner of the planet, the alternative is to suppress the whole spiral of accumulation by attacking it at its roots: the system of wage labour and generalised commodity production, replacing it with production for direct use. If capitalism equals the privatisation of the planet then private property in land, resources and the means of production needs to be got rid of, whether in its individual, corporate or state form.

In other words, the alternative is communism. Not Monbiot’s contradiction in terms, “state communism”, but a stateless world human community. To make this small step in thinking would seem to be uncomplicated, but in fact it means putting into question the entirety of bourgeois politics and economics and recognising the necessity for a proletarian revolution, because the present rulers of the earth are certainly not going to give up their private property without a fight. **Amos, 23.5.19**

1. <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2019-04-25/dare-to-declare-capitalism-dead-before-it-takes-us-all-down-with-it/>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/doughnut-growth-economics-book-economic-model>

Strikes in Mexico

Illusions in the unions sterilise workers’ militancy

The city of Matamoros is in the state of Tamaulipas which is considered one of the most dangerous regions of the country. There are constant confrontations between the mafia gangs over the control of these areas, sowing terror and death. Kidnappings, extortion and murders are common occurrences faced by the inhabitants of this area, but also for those using it as a crossing point, both Mexicans and those from Central America, in their quest to reach the US¹. Matamoros, in spite of being marked by this terrible environment, is part of a broader industrial zone, formed at the end of the 1960s, but strengthened and expanded in the mid-1990s as a result of NAFTA²; nearly 200 maquiladora³ factories been installed in this stretch of the frontier alone. These are no longer small and medium-sized units as in the 1970s; some of them are giant companies with different plants and with a workforce of up to two thousand workers.

The maquila factories are characterized by the intense rhythms of their working practices. Since 2002 their working week has been extended from 40 hours per week to 48, wages have stayed at almost the same level for the last 15 years, with minimal annual variations. In order to maintain these rates of productivity and high profits, it is necessary to maintain powerful technical and political vigilance and control within the factory by supervisors and foremen, but above all through the union structure. High productivity and low wages (competing with or equal to the measly wages of workers in China) are the combination that has allowed these investment projects to make big profits. Nevertheless the vigilant presence of trade unions is essential to ensure workers’ subjugation and the continuity of those conditions.

Given the environment that dominates on the border, the fierce political control imposed in the factories of Matamoros by the unions and management, it could be surprising that there has been a workers’ response in this area and one expressing a great combativeness and a broad capacity to build ties of solidarity. But while this situation demonstrated the potential of the working class’s struggle, the workers involved were able to take control of their struggle due to the weight of confusion and lack of confidence in their own strength. The leftist apparatus of capital says that the recent event in Matamoros was a “workers’ rebellion”, others affirm that it was an offensive against Andrés Manuel López Obrador (commonly known as AMLO) and his “fourth transformation”,⁴ and there are even those who say that there was a “wildcat and mass strike”⁵. In addition to

1. In 2010, there was the macabre discovery of 79 bodies of Central American migrants, and then in 2011, a grave containing about two hundred bodies was found again, although some sources reported that there were about 500 corpses. Concerning the recent caravan of emigrants from Central America see <https://es.internationalism.org/content/4377/migraciones-en-latinoamerica-solo-el-proletariado-puede-parar-la-barbarie-del>

2. NAFTA: The North American Free Trade Agreement, signed by the USA, Canada and Mexico, came into force in 1994.

3. “*A maquiladora, or maquila, is a company that allows factories to be largely duty free and tariff-free. These factories take raw materials and assemble, manufacture, or process them and export the finished product. These factories and systems are present throughout Latin America, including Mexico, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Specific programs and laws have made Mexico’s maquila industry grow rapidly.*” Wikipedia.

4. Andrés Manuel López Obrador was elected President last year and leads a coalition government of his party “Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional”, which describes itself as being nationalist, the left wing Labour Party and right wing Social Encounter Party, and has been presented as a “ray of hope” after years of corruption. He also made all sorts of promises to the poor and workers, which he is selling as the “fourth transformation”, a completion of the ‘Mexican Revolution’ of 1910.

5. These affirmations are put forward by: “Socialist Left” (<https://marxismo.mx/rebelion-obrera-en-matamoros-tamaulipas>), the MTS (www.laizquierdadiario.mx/Matamoros-donde-late-fuerte-la-lucha-proletaria...) and “New Course” (<https://nuevocurso.org/dos-mexicos-dos-alternativas-universales-tlahueli...>). There are other leftist groups that repeat those same arguments with certain variations, but we take these as a sample to illustrate

being false, these statements are deceptive and are a direct attack on the workers, because they pull a veil over the reality in order to prevent the workers from drawing the lessons of their struggles.

The proletariat’s strengths drowned in a sea of bourgeois labour laws

The slogan that unified and mobilised workers for a little more than a month was “20-32”, which simplified their demands: a wage increase of 20% and payment of a bonus of 32 thousand pesos (1,660 dollars). It was the degradation of workers’ lives that propelled the discontent and animated the struggle, but union control trapped this combativity. From the beginning of the mobilisations there were expressions of distrust towards the unions, though at no point did they lead to an understanding that the unions are no longer instruments that the workers can use to defend their interests; therefore they submitted to their practices. At the beginning whilst still showing indecision there was a certain ingenuity when the workers’ discontent began to spread, nevertheless workers believed that it is possible to “pressure” the “union leader” and force him to “defend” them. This indecision was transformed into a widespread confusion that it was enough to receive “honest legal advice” to assert their “rights”.

By focusing its hopes on the law and the lawyer Susana Prieto, the workers’ mobilisation was weakened and confusion spread. Feeling “protected” by the lawyer, they no longer looked for control of their struggle. This underlines a serious problem facing the working class today: loss of confidence in its own strength and the lack of class identity.

This difficulty led to a situation where, in spite of showing distrust towards the union structure, the struggle remained under the unions’ control and on its terrain, which is the framework of labour laws. It is these laws that give power to the union, as they are the signatories of the collective bargaining agreement. By remaining tied to the union framework, the workers handed over control of the struggle to the union itself, allowing it to contain workers’ discontent, shackling their militancy, forcing compliance with bourgeois laws, thus preventing them from achieving a true unification of the workers’ forces by organising themselves outside of the union.

By reducing the struggle to compliance with the laws, the workers, even when they were marching in the streets and holding general assemblies, when they confronted the bosses, the State and the union, they did so separately, factory by factory and contract by contract, because this is how bourgeois legality stipulates it should be done. This divides and isolates the workers. After all, laws are made to subdue the exploited.

But is it possible to fight outside the union and the law? The history of the working class has diverse experiences that confirm that it is possible to do so. For example, in August 1980 the workers in Poland carried out a mass strike really controlled by the workers themselves. Neither the outbreak of the strike, nor the construction of their unitary combat organs complied with legal guidelines and yet they were able to extend the struggle throughout the country and impose public negotiations with the government. The massiveness of the mobilisations and their capacity to organise allowed them to create a gigantic force capable of preventing repression⁶.

The very mechanism that the Polish state used to divide the workers and weaken them was the same one that the bourgeoisie all over the world uses: the trade unions. With the creation of the trade union “Solidarity” (led by Lech Walesa), the state broke the organisation and unity of the workers, and only in this way could it carry out the repression. Sometime later, the trade union leader Lech Walesa was made the head of the Polish state...

the way in which they use exaggeration, lies and deceit, helping the ruling class to feed the confusion among the workers.

6. On the experience of Poland 1980 see ‘Mass Strikes in Poland: the proletariat opens a new breach’, <https://en.internationalism.org/ir/023/mass-strikes-in-poland-1980> and ‘One Year of Workers’ Struggles in Poland’ <https://en.internationalism.org/content/3114/one-year-workers-struggles-poland>

The mass strike in Poland is the best example that the workers and especially those in Matamoros should draw on because it makes it clear that the union is a structure that operates against the workers and that it is not enough to distrust it, it is necessary to organise outside it.

Unions against the working class

The first main lesson of the struggle of the maquila workers is that unions are a weapon of the bourgeoisie⁷. The blatant attitude of the trade unions, tricking them into accepting a smaller increase and rejecting the bonus, makes it clear that they are no longer an instrument of the proletariat (as they were in the 19th century). The threats and direct aggression carried out by the unions of Day Labourers and Industrial Workers of the Maquiladora Industry (SJOIIM) and by the Industrial Workers in Maquiladoras and Assembly Plants (SITPME), openly confirmed that the interests they defend are not those of the workers. They are weapons of the bourgeoisie at work within the ranks of the proletariat... they are like wolves in sheep’s clothing.

During the course of the strikes the unions acted to defend the interests of the bosses: that is why the majority of the workers repudiated the union leaders Juan Villafuerte and Jesús Mendoza. The shouts of “outside the union!” were also repeated in each factory and in each demonstration. They did not advance any further however, because the workers’ lack of confidence in their strength prevented them from taking control of the struggle, from organising themselves in a unifying structure that would have enabled them to break completely with the domination of the unions and the divisions they imposed. The workers appeared to have stopped passively following the “traitorous” union leadership, but instead fell into the same trap by passively follow the informal “new leadership”, personified by its legal advisor, who used her skill in litigation⁸ to submit the class struggle to the framework of bourgeois legality and sow hope in the creation of an “independent” union that would dispute the collective contract with the old union structures.

The work of confusion, subjugation and control carried out by the unions does not take place only in some regions or some unions, all of them are weapons of the bourgeoisie. Is there is a difference between the SNTE and the CNTE?⁹ One uses a traditional language, the other resorts to phrases and actions to appear radical, but its aim is the same: to subdue and control the workers.

There is nothing strange about the AMLO government, in a very silent way, encouraging the creation of union structures that allow it to use the discontent of the workers and direct it into confrontations with the old union structures, associated mainly with the old governing party, the PRI (as is the case of the CTM, CROM and CROC¹⁰). López Obrador has not only “rescued” the mafia boss of the miners’ union, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia (“Napito”) from the so-called exile where he lived luxuriously in Canada during the last two Presidencies, to turn him into a senator; but fundamentally this was done in order that he could form a “new union”. A few months after his return to Mexico, “Napito” created the International Confederation of Workers (ILC), integrating unions that have broken away from the CTM and CROC, but he has also secured alliances with unions in the U.S. and Canada, particularly the AFL-CIO

7. See our pamphlet *Trade Unions Against the Working Class*

8. We do not intend to dwell on conjectures about the honesty of the lawyer S. Prieto: the principles of her profession lead her to move within the framework of bourgeois laws, but the fact that she maintains a sympathy and support (as she herself has declared) for the government of López Obrador places her on a clearly bourgeois terrain.

9. SNTE: National Union of Education Workers (official union). CNTE: National Coordination of Education Workers (“dissident” union).

10. CTM: Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), created in 1936. CROM: Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers, founded in 1918. CROC: Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), formed in 1952. The PRI is the “Institutional Revolutionary Party” that governed Mexico for decades.

and United Steelworkers.¹¹

In his February 14 speech, AMLO stated that his government will not intervene in the life of the unions. However, he adds: “*We cannot prevent workers or leaders from requesting to form unions, because this in accordance with the law...*”. (*La Jornada*). On the same lines, “new” unions are emerging, that are seeking to take power from old unions that defend the interests of bourgeois factions different from those aligned with the new government. We have seen the formation of “alternative” union projects in the IMSS, PEMEX and UNAM.¹²

The trade unions in the 19th century were an important instrument for the unity and combat of the workers. This was a period when capitalism itself, by developing the productive forces, allowed the implementation of economic and social reforms that improved the lives of the workers. At present it is impossible for the capitalist system to ensure lasting improvements for the workers. This situation led to the union losing its proletarian nature and being assimilated into the state.

That is why every struggle the workers carry out finds the union trying to contain and sabotage the struggle, submitting discontent to the guidelines of bourgeois laws, creating confusions and fears in order to weaken confidence and impeding the unity and extension of the struggle.

What lessons can we draw from the “20-32 Movement”?

The mobilisation led by the workers of the maquilas was undoubtedly a very combative one. However, it could not avoid the domination of illusions in the law and of confused hopes that the unions, if run “honestly”, can change their anti-proletarian nature. The references to López Obrador’s decree (“Decreto de Estímulos Fiscales de la Región Frontera Norte”¹³) in order to justify the “legality” of the wage increase in the maquilas, demonstrates that the confusion goes even deeper, because it nurtures the hope that the new government can improve the living conditions of the workers. But, in addition, AMLO’s own government took advantage of the workers’ mobilisation to show its North American partner its willingness to comply with the wage increases in the factories of the automotive and electronics sector, installed in Mexico, as demanded by the Trump government in the NAFTA 2.0 (or USMCA) tables.

In order to make a balance sheet of this struggle it is not enough to count up the number of factories which have accepted the demands. That aspect is important, but it is not definitive. In order to have a broader perspective it is necessary to evaluate the massive forces that were unified, but above all it is necessary to consider the level of consciousness reached and its expression in the forms of organisation adopted. For example, the lack of control of struggle by the workers themselves and the dispersion at the end of the movement broke the bonds of solidarity and allowed reprisals to be taken against workers. According to official figures, 5,000 workers were dismissed for having taken part in the strike.

To summarise, the strikes showed a real workers’ combativity generated by the degradation of their standards of living, but the bourgeoisie soon undermined the courage of the workers, feeding illusions in “democratic respect” for the laws and impeding the development of consciousness.

11. The “American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations” (AFL-CIO) is the largest of the US trade union structures, also grouping unions such as the United Steelworkers (USW) of Canada.

12. IMSS: Mexican Social Security Institute; PEMEX: Mexico’s main oil company with international projection. UNAM: National Autonomous University of Mexico, considered one of the best in the world.

13. On December 10, 2018, AMLO’s government presented a programme to boost investment and employment in the border area. Its objective is to co-opt a portion of Mexican and Central American migrants, in order to slow the flow of migrants to the United States. In summary, this programme offers: i) Reduction of the Income Tax (ISR) from 30% to 20%; ii) Reduction of the Value Added Tax (IVA) from 16% to 8%; iii) Equalization of the price of fuels with the United States; iv) Increase in the minimum wage at the border to \$8.8 dollars.

Continued on page 7

The impact of these tendencies is clearly manifested in the present situation. Already, before the referendum, these toxins were seeping into the working class.

The weight of this decay was also reinforced by the bourgeoisie with its campaigns against asylum seekers, people on benefits, etc. The central message was that the problems of society are the responsibility not of capitalism but of scapegoats.

The key to the situation is for the working class to recognise that it has separate interests from all factions of the ruling class. A sober analysis of the present situation must admit that the proletariat's sense of its own identity as a revolutionary class has weakened. A central aspect of the activity of revolutionary organisations is to contribute to the process that leads to the revival of a conscious class struggle. **WR January 2019**

The government retaliated by saying that the UK was one of the happiest places in the world (15th on a UN list, apparently) and that the rapporteur was “biased”. The latter point is not wrong. The report says “*UK standards of well-being have descended precipitately in a remarkably short period of time, as a result of deliberate policy choices made when many other options were available*”. It says that the attacks are “ideological”, implying that there are other ‘options’ for capitalism which don’t involve the impoverishment of the working class. The last hundred years of examples show

Tatlin, from *Revolución Mundial*, ICC publication in Mexico, April 2019

that, internationally, left and liberal governments, in response to the state of the capitalist economy, have also tended to make policy choices that reinforce capitalism at the expense of the exploited and dispossessed. In this context, it's not the choices of the Tories, or the threat of Brexit that's to blame but the nature of capitalism impelled by its economic crisis. However, the UN report's empirical observations are accurate, despite the bias of the author. We intend to highlight, in a series of articles, the reality of poverty in Britain, starting with some points on child poverty.

Read the article online

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The spread of terrorism shows the deadend of capitalism

Those born in 2001, the year of the 9/11 attacks will be 18 in 2019. What have they grown up with? What have they been exposed to on the news? What sort of world have they been living in?

Following 9/11 there was Bush’s “global war on terrorism”. In reality, it was just “war” where, in invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (and in other campaigns as well) US imperialism attempted (and failed) to assert its position as the only surviving super power.

But what about terrorism? That seems to have gone from outrage to atrocity, from unspeakable massacre to indiscriminate terror. To take a handful of examples, there were the 2002 bombings in a tourist area of Bali where more than 200 people were killed and hundreds injured. In 2004 there were the bombings of four commuter trains in Madrid which killed 193 people and injured 2000. In 2011 there were the attacks by Anders Breivik: a car bomb in Oslo which killed 8 and injured more than 200 - followed by the attack on a summer camp where he killed 69 and injured more than 100. In Paris in November 2015 there were mass shootings and suicide bombing at cafes and restaurants, culminating in the attacks on the Bataclan theatre; 130 died and more than 400 were injured. There was the attack in Nice in 2016 where a lorry was driven through crowds of people celebrating 14 July where 86 died and nearly 500 were injured. Also in 2016, there was the attack on the gay club in Orlando, where 49 people were shot and many injured. More recently we have seen bloody attacks on synagogues in Pittsburgh and San Diego.

And how does the capitalist media explain terrorism? The perpetrators are typically described as Islamist fanatics, or white supremacists. Their crime is “extremism”. But there have been other massacres with individuals “on the rampage” as in the US school shootings such as Parkland, Sandy Hook and Virginia Tech. How do they fit into the picture? Or what about the October 2017 shootings in Las Vegas where a man fired more than 1000 rounds of ammunition into a crowd of concertgoers, killing 58 people and injuring hundreds? For the media people are bad or mad, or sometimes there is just no explanation.

The shootings at two mosques in March this year in Christchurch, New Zealand, added one grotesque element to the horror as it was live-streamed on the internet for all the world to see.

There were many stories about the 51 Muslim worshippers who were killed, some of whom had moved from other countries (including Iraq, Palestine, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Turkey) in the hope of finding a haven from war and persecution in their country of origin. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was praised for her empathy and sensitivity, while she tried to find ways to censor the internet

In Sri Lanka the attacks in April on Christian churches and luxury hotels by suicide bombers left 258 people dead and more than 500 injured. The government had received warnings in advance from Indian Intelligence Agencies that the attacks were imminent, but did nothing to stop them. After the events the Sri Lankan government strengthened its apparatus of repression with a number of measures including the need for all sermons in mosques to be submitted to the relevant ministry.

A framework to understand terrorism

How are this year’s 18-year olds supposed to make sense of terrorism? The only possible approach is to look at the phenomenon in class terms, and historically. In 1978 the ICC published an article and a resolution on terrorism, terror and class violence. These were attempts to re-assert the marxist position, on, among other things, the distinction between capitalist state terror and the terrorism of intermediate social strata.

The terror of the bourgeoisie, whether by the state or other bodies, has as its goal the perpetuation of exploitation and the rule of the capitalist class. *“Terrorism on the other hand is a **reaction** of oppressed classes who have no future, against the terror of the ruling class. They are momentary reactions, without continuity, acts of vengeance with no tomorrow”*. (https://en.internationalism.org/ir/014_terror.html). Terrorism is *“not directed against capitalist society and its institutions, but only against individuals who represent this society. It inevitably takes on the aspect of a settling of scores, of vengeance, of a vendetta, of person against person and not a revolutionary confrontation of class against class.”* (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/2649/resolution-terrorism-terror-and-class-violence>)

In the 19th century two notable exponents of terrorism were the Narodniks in Russia and certain French anarchists in the 1890s. Three consecutive examples of the latter give an idea of their ‘pro-

paganda by the deed”. In December 1893 Auguste Vaillant threw a home-made bomb into the French Chamber of Deputies, causing only limited injuries to a few of those present. In February 1894 Emile Henry set off a bomb in a bar in the Gare Saint-Lazare in Paris. When asked why he had hurt so many innocent people he said *“there are no innocent bourgeois”*. In Lyon in June 1894 Sante Caserio stabbed and killed the French President Carnot. It was episodes like these that gave anarchism a violent image for decades. The leading anarchist Peter Kropotkin distanced mainstream anarchism from this tendency: *“an edifice which is built on centuries of history will not be destroyed by a few kilos of explosives”*. The classic expressions of petit-bourgeois ‘revolt’ were not so prevalent in the twentieth century, although we can point to the Red Army Faction (Baader–Meinhof Gang) in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy in the 1970s and 80s, and the Angry Brigade in the UK in the 1970s.

In contrast to these petit-bourgeois expressions of ‘revolt’, the methods of terrorism, bombs detonated in public places, indiscriminate shootings etc, became part of the arsenal of factions in intra-bourgeois conflicts, in inter-imperialist wars. The US State Department’s standard definition of terrorism is appropriate here: *“politically motivated attacks on non-combatant targets”*. Examples that come to mind are the activities of the Stern gang and Irgun in Palestine in the 1940s, the bombings and massacres of the factions in the Algerian War (1954-62), the car bombs, shootings and retaliations of paramilitary gangs in Northern Ireland, or the decades long bombing campaigns of ETA in Spain. All these show terrorism in the service of identifiable bourgeois goals.

Some academics see these as examples of a period of ‘old terrorism’. This changes to a ‘new terrorism’ in the 1990s with, as an early example, the 1993 attempt to destroy the World Trade Centre with a massive truck bomb beneath the North Tower (which was supposed to collapse into the South Tower) *“So-called ‘new terrorists’, on the other hand, are nihilistic, are inspired by fanatical religious beliefs, and are willing to seek martyrdom through suicide. They rarely set out aims that appear remotely attainable; they give no warnings; they do not engage in bargaining; they find compromise solutions to problems unappealing; they are willing and even eager to carry out the mass slaughter of non-combatants; and they fre-*

quently do not even claim responsibility for their deeds.” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*)

Other examples of this ‘new terrorism’ are the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo sarin attack on the Tokyo underground or the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh in which hundreds were injured and more than 150 died, in revenge for the attack on Waco

However, neither the analysis of academics nor the sensational accounts of tabloids give any real explanation for this development. For all the talk of irrational hatreds, racism, fanaticism, alienation, nihilism etc, the commentators who serve the bourgeoisie cannot give any truthful answers because the roots of terrorism lie in a global capitalist system that has outlived its usefulness, but will continue its decay until it is destroyed. With a stalemate between the two main social classes in capitalism - the proletariat and the bourgeoisie - terrorism is just one of the phenomena, along with fanaticism and nihilism, which proliferates with decomposing capitalism. For some, desperation in the face of the miserable reality of capitalism leads to the flight into religion or other drugs; for others the certainties of religious or political dogma inflame a desire for destruction, of self or of others. But where the impotent terrorist acts of intermediate strata in the nineteenth century were fleeting moments of ‘revolt’, today’s terrorism is an expression of the nihilism at the heart of a rotting social order.

In Northern Ireland in April, the journalist Lyra McKee was killed by the paramilitaries of the “Real IRA” as they shot at the police. Politicians rushed to condemn the action, while still maintaining their various roles to sustain the society that produces terrorism. In an article published in 2016 (“Suicide of the Ceasefire Babies”) McKee showed that, in Northern Ireland, more people committed suicide in the 16 years after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 than died in the 29 years of violent conflict before it. This shows what capitalism really has to offer; its ‘peace process’ led to a world without prospects, with, for many, seemingly, nothing to live for. The prospects of war are horrifying, the reality of ‘peace’ in capitalism unbearable. Those in the marxist tradition argue that capitalism has its own gravediggers, the working class, which offers the perspective of revolution **against** a society where fear and terror are endemic, and **for** a society based on relations of solidarity. **Car 24/5/19**

Political positions of the ICC

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

- * Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- * The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.
- * The statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.
- * Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in

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

- * All the nationalist ideologies - ‘national independence’, ‘the right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.
- * In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. ‘Democracy’, a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.
- * All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-‘Communists’), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘anti-fascist fronts’ and ‘united fronts’, which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.
- * With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union

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

- * In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.
- * Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it’s not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.
- * The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers’ councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.
- * The communist transformation of society by the workers’ councils does not mean ‘self-management’ or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.
- * The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active

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

OUR ACTIVITY

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

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

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

OUR ORIGINS

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