

Revolutionary Perspectives

53



**Against a Global Capitalist
Crisis, the Struggle has to be
International**

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Capitalism's Global Attacks Demand an International Response

Is the Worst of the Crisis Over?

Two years on and it is difficult to understate the depth of the debt crisis which has followed in the wake of the bursting of the financialisation bubble. As Martin Wolf reported in the *Financial Times* on January 27 2010;

According to the IMF's Global Financial Stability Report of April 2009, total support for the financial system from the governments and central banks of the US, the eurozone and the UK has amounted to \$8,955bn (£5,436bn, €6,132bn) – \$1,950bn in liquidity support, \$2,525bn in asset purchases and \$4,480bn in guarantees.

And this was the figure extant as of last April. More state financing has gone into the system since then as programmes such as quantitative easing have increased state expenditures. This volume of debt, as all the pundits agree, is unprecedented in peacetime and cannot keep on growing at the current levels. On the other side of the coin the collapse in economic activity makes narrowing state budget deficits all the more difficult. As a *Financial Times* special supplement on the *Future of Finance* noted last November

... 2008 saw a decline of \$16,000bn or 8%, in the value of global financial assets, the largest absolute fall on record.

Falls in equity and property values lowered global wealth by \$28,000bn in 2008 and the first half of 2009. International capital flows fell by 82% from 10,500bn in 2007 to a mere \$1,900bn in 2008 as money rushed home. The flight of bank lending was, as usual in a crisis, dramatic. The notional value of derivative contracts declined by \$92,000bn between June and December 2008 though to a still massive \$592,000bn.

These figures tell us three things. The first is that the tax receipts from finance, which made up a huge part, particularly of US and UK government revenues, have been slashed. Second that future investment will be threatened and therefore the real economy will

recover only slowly, and third that the state is also counting on a revival of the casino culture of speculative capital to increase tax revenues.

Governments have superficially responded to popular anger against the banking bonus culture. But capping bonuses or talking about "regulating markets" hasn't substantially changed anything. They are actually still feeding the hands that have already bitten us. This was underlined by Gillian Tett et al in article entitled *A Course to Chart*. After telling us that \$2,600bn losses were created in two years of financial crisis which were covered by the issue of \$12,000bn in sovereign bonds (i.e. state loans) in 2009 the authors conclude that "the debt markets are still a lucrative area of activity". They go on

One reason is that the governments have flooded the financial system this year with liquidity in response to the crisis creating rich trading opportunities for banks that can borrow at ultra-cheap rates and then invest in higher yielding assets, at a time of considerable volatility. (Financial Times 4 Jan 2010)

In short they are still gambling with the money the state produces for them. McKinsey Consultants reckon that the amount of "leverage" (banking debt to you and me) in the Western financial system has **increased** in the last two years.

There is little doubt that without state intervention the entire capitalist edifice would have unravelled. We would be faced with an unprecedented capitalist collapse. Our rulers are now quietly congratulating themselves on "saving the world" as Brown's Freudian slip had it. Now they are enticing us to accept more austerity by promises that recovery is just around the corner.

Rumours of Recovery?

In November 2009 the acting head of the OECD's economics department

told the *Financial Times* that

Overall, unprecedented policy efforts appear to have succeeded in limiting the severity of the downturn and fostering a recovery to a degree that was largely unexpected even six months ago.

Jean Claude Trichet, head of the European Central Bank talks of "progressive normalisation" as capitalism's leader audibly breathe sighs of relief. This year US and Canadian growth is predicted (by the IMF amongst others) to be above 2% of GDP, and positive, though less impressive, predictions are also made for all the other advanced capitalist countries. Figures for the so-called BRICS countries are even more positive (with China's famous 8-10% leading the way) and some are counting on these economies to underpin the coming global recovery. The OECD representing the richest countries in the world also predicts an average growth rate of 1.9% in 2010, not far below the historic norm since 1973.

At the same time unemployment is apparently stabilising with fewer jobs being lost and some places actually now reporting a fall in unemployment. So is the worst of the current crisis over?

The simple answer is "no", not least because the crisis is not just one brought about by financial speculation. It is a product of the contradictions inherent in the capitalist system that have been affecting the world since at least 1973. This was the point when the post-war boom came to an end, when the dollar was taken off the gold standard and the first steps in financial manipulation were taken by the US Government to maintain its own power and authority in the world. In our terms it was the end of the cycle of accumulation which had begun in 1945. We have explained many times how the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall pushes the capitalist system to overproduction of capital and commodities (see, for example, our last issue or go to <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2009-11-24/the-fall-in->

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the-average-rate-of-profit-the-crisis-and-its-consequences). This provokes crises, the collapse of major sections of the economy and devaluation of capital which then allows accumulation to begin again. In the Twentieth Century when the amount of capital to be devalued was so swollen the primary means of devaluation was generalised imperialist war. However, since 1973 though warfare has been widespread it has not been sufficiently generalised to devalue enough capital to begin a new cycle of accumulation. Instead state intervention in the economy has been used to spearhead all kinds of policies to stimulate growth. In the 1970s, when workers resisted wage cuts and unemployment the capitalists resorted to inflation (via deficit financing). When this brought only further stagnation a more direct attack on the working class was undertaken with the destruction of manufacturing jobs in the advanced capitalist countries. And when all this failed to rekindle accumulation, we have had the birth of the speculative bubble from the early 1990s which extended credit to those who had no means to pay, on the assumption that somewhere in the ever receding future someone would create the wealth to repay all the so-called "securitised" loans.

The truth of the matter is that over the last twenty five years the working class in the advanced capitalist countries who form the bulk of the "consumers" have seen their real purchasing power reduced through the loss of once well-paid manufacturing jobs, the increase in part time precarious work and the decline of the individual wage. All the indices of wealth through the last decade of speculation have seen the gulf between the richest 10% and the rest of the population widen significantly. And even the slow down in the growth of unemployment in January and a few announcements of wage rises in the public sector are a bit of a mirage. As one commentator put it in the *Financial Times*

The unemployment numbers out last week, while spun as wildly encouraging, were actually awful. They showed a loss of 113,000 full-time jobs, a nasty rise in the number of involuntary part-time workers and yet another fall in real wages.

The headline number showed the

weekly average wage up 1.1 per cent, less than half the rate of inflation. Worse, the number was only positive at all because of a 3.8 per cent rise in public-sector wages. Knock that out and the average private-sector worker ended last year about where he started it, even in nominal terms. (Merryn Somerset Webb 23 Jan 2010)

1 in 6 households are now without a wage earner and those in work face increased casualisation and job insecurity. This can be seen in the number of male jobs which fell by 55,000 whilst female jobs rose by 41,000. However you interpret the figures, the actual number of people doing jobs fell overall. There will be no "consumer-led (i.e debt sodden) boom" in these conditions. Indeed, despite the loony fringe of capitalism (like the Institute for Fiscal Studies) which is calling for an immediate cut in spending and tax rises now, the prospect is for the state to keep on putting more money into the system for the foreseeable future. As consumer price inflation is already at 3% the prospect of liquidating some of the debt at least on the back of inflation is not ruled out. In fact the IMF has proposed that central banks raise their stability threshold for inflation from 2% to 4% to accommodate this.

And on top this there are still huge debts which have not yet been liquidated. Some new debts are due in the next few years. If we take the USA \$250bn of commercial real estate debt came to maturity in 2009 whilst a further \$200bn comes due in 2011. The buy-out deals which lead to 1000 US companies going private in 2006 will land another debt of \$300bn in 2012 and in 2013 more than \$600bn of non-investment grade debt is all due for refinancing. But who is going to take it on? (All figures from the *Financial Times* 7 May 2009) The answer is that the state will be called on once again to come up with loans and bonds to finance all this. Here, in some ways, the USA is ahead of the game since it has already written off 60% of its bad debts from the bubble whilst Europe (including the UK) has only written off 40%.

And yet the leading economies of the world have entered this crisis with various degrees of public and private debt which are all at historic peacetime

levels. The USA, for example, in 1929 had a state debt of 20% of GDP whilst in 2007 the US state debt was already 60% of GDP (according to the IMF - some commentators have higher figures). The UK's was 80%.

Some commentators are saying the level of state debt is unimportant. Perhaps they have forgotten Argentina's economic collapse. Anyway the case of the Baltic states, Iceland and now Greece all demonstrate that when the debt level reaches beyond 100% of GDP then the financial sharks begin to gather. The very liquidity of sovereign debt comes into question and this makes further borrowing by already dangerously indebted states much more expensive. The UK, big though it is, is not entirely immune, as the recent fall in sterling demonstrates. The increased servicing costs of this debt means that the state will have to cut expenditure sooner, rather than later.

The Working Class Will Have to Pay or Fight

And how can they get out of this mess? There are several possible scenarios but, given the level of debt each state is saddled with, they all mean more misery for the world working class. Until now the working class everywhere (despite significant episodes of resistance from workers directly facing job losses and wage cuts) has largely accepted the need for some cuts. "The flexibility of the labour markets" is frequently cited by relieved capitalists who have cut wages and hours, as well as persuading workers to take unpaid holidays in the face of falling orders. There is a certain mismatch between the widespread knowledge that this current phase of the crisis is the product of financial speculation and the lack of opposition, so far, from workers about bearing the cost. In some ways it still reminds you of Robert Tressell's novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Tressell (Robert Noonan) died in 1911 but his ironic description of the workers as "philanthropists" still holds good. He called them "philanthropists" because they "donated" wealth to society every day through the exploitation of their labour power. To that philanthropy we can today add that there is almost an acceptance on the part of the workers that bad times are inevitable.

Partially this is due to the historic

retreat that workers have experienced globally since the early 1980s, partly it is because as yet they can see no alternative to individual survival under the capitalist system. The collapse of the false alternative of so-called "communism" in the USSR has also played a part in this. Furthermore, the full effects of the crisis have not yet made themselves generally felt and will not do so for some time. In the richer states the early effects of the crisis are still, to a certain degree, cushioned by welfare measures.

In Britain the impending general election has further induced a kind of stay of execution as all parties try to keep quiet about their austerity measures (the Tories have already blown a double digit opinion poll lead by being too open about their future plans to immediately "cut the deficit"). But whichever party wins a programme of making us pay is unavoidable. This could change perceptions. We say "could" because although the capitalist crisis is a necessary condition for the revival of working class resistance there is no mechanical link between deprivation and rising class consciousness.

The whole process is complex but the growth of resistance will expand the numbers of those in the working class who start to look for other ways forward. These could equally well be reactionary ones, especially given the way the ruling class can manipulate anti-immigrant and nationalist sentiment via their control of the media. Equally there will be some who will seek collective solutions. If they can unite and organise, and successfully indicate to wider layers of the class how they can get back to their own historic programme then the political and social scenario will alter. This is what the capitalists fear and they will do everything in their power to isolate us sector by sector in order to pit worker against worker.

We have already seen this in the postal strikes and in BA before Christmas. Here the unions have been, as usual, the bosses' best friends. They have called off strikes which have massive support (even under the bosses balloting system) and have continually postponed action whilst the bosses have prepared their positions. We are seeing this in BA currently where despite another overwhelming ballot



(80%) for a strike, the union has postponed it. Instead it has called on the management to hold further talks. All the while the BA management are already preparing scabs to take over jobs. In an all-out class war the gloves would already be off but with the union acting for the other side the workers are stymied. We will know when the working class in general has had enough when they don't wait passively for union orders but carry out their own class actions. However, as long as each section of workers in each country sees its fight only in immediate terms, as one with their own bosses, then the struggles will remain isolated. Isolated struggles are easy prey for the capitalist press who can point to the "greed" of this or that section of workers with exaggerated stories of perks and wages filling their pages. Or else the workers are told that they are undermining their "own" firm and thus their own long-term job security. In a recession this is no mean threat. The solution is of course solidarity, not only across trades but also across international boundaries. The bosses may not be able to agree at summits on climate change but workers can agree to black each others work and to support each other. One recent piece of heartening news was at the construction site of Staythorpe Power Station in Nottinghamshire. This was similar in nature to the Lindsey Oil Refinery struggle but here the workers did not call for "British jobs for British workers" but extracted from the main contractor the same wage rates for Italian workers at the site. This is an important recognition of the fact that workers are just variable capital everywhere to capitalists until they

begin to show resistance to all the divisive antics of the bosses. In so doing they transform themselves into a class for itself and not just for capitalist exploitation.

The next couple of years will see the attacks of capital everywhere get stronger. As we go to press the announcement of massive cuts in local authority employment (in many areas the main employer now) is a sign of things to come. In Birmingham they are planning to cut 3000 jobs this year and every year for the next five years. The crisis will not go away and the attacks will continue. The more we acquiesce in them the greater they will be. The international working class is arriving at another historic test...

Remembering Dimitri

Dimitri Papaioannou died in hospital in Parma on 27 November 2009 from a tumour which had affected his spine and brain. He was only 30 years old. All our comrades, and indeed everyone who had the good fortune to meet him, found him intelligent (he spoke three languages fluently), sympathetic and a real militant. His militancy and contribution only increased when his illness forced him to spend the last two years of his life in a wheelchair. The following message was read out by a comrade of Battaglia Comunista as the last salute to Dimitri before his cremation. The coffin was draped in the red flag and the International was sung to conclude the ceremony.

When a comrade dies, and you have to commemorate his existence, you don't know where to stop before crossing the boundary between remembering and rhetoric.

The feeling of sharing the same ideas pushes you to hold him up as an example, particularly if it is a comrade like Dimitri, but the affection which linked you to him, and links you to him as person, gives rise to a thousand scruples. You are almost fearful of exploiting his death with a militant eulogy. But when you think of his life, particularly in these last few years, and when you think of all those comrades (young, and not so young) who are in need of an example, then you can tell them of Dimitri's will to continue the struggle and that he never in the slightest gave in to the illness which was consuming him.

For the last two years the thing which struck you was the spirit with which he accepted his fate, an acceptance which was never resignation, even if he was conscious that things could get worse. Hardly had he made the journey from the hospital to the "normal" life he was allowed than Dimitri returned to do what he had always done: to fight for a fairer society. He did this at a time when the wind was not in our favour and above all in an organisation in which at times it is easy to be despondent when for example we find ourselves in such a small number in workers' assembly, perhaps because we pay for our own coherence in terms of isolation and few members, perhaps because in general terms the times are what they are – a period of disengagement and passivity.

Another thing he could have said "what can I do in my condition?" Instead he knew that in that area of his life nothing had changed. Right up to the end he was always available, coming to the section and throwing himself into every aspect of militant activity.

I remember a person of extraordinary gentleness appreciated by all, never in conflict with anyone, neither on the political nor personal level. A generous and peaceful person, he was always ready to talk to anyone. In losing him, every one of us has lost a piece of themselves, but we have gained from his example: he has given us the incentive to fight in the times to come.

Thanks Dix and bon voyage

In Memory of Robert Perreault

Robert Perreault, a Montreal region member of the Internationalist Workers Group died from cancer at 6h00 am. on 11 January 2010. After Bertrand Desaulniers, this is the second IWG comrade to die prematurely during the relatively short existence of our Canadian group. It also follows the premature death in Parma last November of Dimitri Papaioannou (see above), a young member of our Italian affiliate, Battaglia Comunista. Robert's family asked one of our Canadian comrades to speak at the funeral, and his words are reprinted below.

In the name of the Internationalist Workers Group and our international political organisation, the Internationalist Communist Tendency, as well as a certain number of other comrades who knew him in Montréal and Sherbrooke I want to salute the memory of our comrade, and friend, Robert Perreault. Robert came to us less than two years ago. Even if our political current is still very small and fragile he did not hesitate to join us as an active sympathiser as soon as he could confirm his agreement with our fundamental orientation of struggle against the exploitation of workers, of fighting all forms of oppression and for a more human world of solidarity, that is to say, for a really socialist society.

From the beginning of our common work he had told us about the nature of the inevitable course of the illness which had struck him. He faced up to it with a great deal of courage and materialist conviction but he was frightened that he might be wasting our time. On the contrary, in spite of his reticence, and during the little time which he spent amongst us he widely, intelligently and generously contributed to the advancement of our ideas right up until the last months of his life. His contributions can be seen especially in the visual improvement of our publications (how could it be otherwise with a printing worker as Robert was?), in his lively and attentive contact with the new generation of young revolutionaries, in his insistence on the need to discuss current social changes in a serious and disciplined fashion, and to draw the lessons from the setbacks and false roads taken in the past. Robert remains in our memories as a comrade who, in every circumstance, tried to make us stick to our basic orientations and the class interests which he wanted to serve right up to the end, i.e. the exploited class, the working class. Furthermore, in spite of his limited resources, his important financial contributions allowed us to make major advances particularly, as I mentioned earlier, in our publications. Last spring Robert was rushed to hospital and as it seemed certain that he was on his death bed we granted him the statutes as a member in the normal and due form of our organisation. We believe that this confidence was widely vindicated because a few weeks ago, just before Christmas, when he was already seriously weakened with cancer, we worked with him on the new layout alongside the hospital bed which had been installed in his study. He was committed right to the end.

Even if our common journey was too short, even if it was marked by the cruelty of illness, we remember Robert so much for his dedication and seriousness, capable of making severe criticisms whenever he believed them justified, a Robert of acidic wit with whom I would have liked to drink a few more beers, a good companion, a good comrade and, I dare to believe, a friend.

All our sympathies go to his partner France, his son Nicolas, his sisters Yolande, Denise, and Sylvie and to his brother Stéphan.

Robert we will miss you advice, your solidarity and your intelligence. Honour to the printworker Robert Perreault! Thanks Robert

Richard St-Pierre

Against a Global Capitalist Crisis, the Struggle has to be International

In the ideological world-view of the bourgeoisie the crisis is the fault of greedy bankers who took unnecessary risks which did not turn out as they wished. In reality, the bankers played a crucial role in hiding the underlying problem of capitalism, the falling rate of profit, by manufacturing fictitious profit to replace the real thing. The recycling and repackaging of debt is central to this process, but is always vulnerable to the real world rudely butting in and exposing the fiction, when debtors default *en masse* on impossible loans. The whole system didn't come tumbling down this time, and capitalism still needs the bankers to play their role in the game. Which is why, at most, individual bankers have been "punished" by having to resign on very preferential terms, but banking, as a sector, has been let off by the intervention of the capitalist state.

While capitalism ponders the problem of blaming the bankers without punishing the bankers, it gets on with the necessity of making "someone" pay. And this time, surprise, surprise, it's the working class. Across the global, the capitalists have attacked the working class, and, in some places the working class has fought back, usually accompanied by a deafening silence on the part of the international media. Here are some examples that did not make the mainstream news.

Finland¹

On 2nd February, around 1000 Finnish port workers launched a strike without notice, following the collapse of negotiations over a new contract. Another three and a half thousand, including temporary workers, banned overtime. The wildcat strike affected the goods traffic at Helsinki, Turku and Kotka, cutting the flow of goods in and out of Finland by about 50% (only 70% of imports and 90% of exports are exposed to the effects of a port strike, the rest coming in overland or by air), and was declared "illegal" by the government.

Prior to this, in January, several hundred shipbuilding workers employed by STX at Turku, (part of an international

group employing 16 000 in shipyards in Norway, France, Romania, Finland, Brazil and Vietnam), struck against a management restructuring plan which had already cost 320 jobs in November and envisioned another 370 redundancies and the subcontracting out of work.

Bangladesh²

Again on 2nd February, more than a thousand coalminers at the state-owned mine of Barapukuria went on indefinite strike, demanding an increase in their productivity bonuses. The miners had issued their demands in November, without response, and the strike is reducing output by 60%.

Greece³

The one place that has had some official media coverage is Greece. The crisis has been biting particularly hard in Greece in recent times. Just as everywhere else, though, it is the working class that is being asked to pay the price. The "socialist" Papandreou government asked for "moderation" among the unions, saying that the "country" (i.e., the bosses) could not afford strikes. Of course, the unions lined up behind him, following their role in modern capitalist society. But, when the government announced its austerity programme involving tax reforms and the increasing of the average retirement age by two years, the Greek workers began a 24-hour general strike, affecting both the public and private sectors, on 9th February. The airports were stopped from working, the tax and social security departments were hit, together with local government offices and hospitals (excluding the emergency service). Schools and archaeological sites, trains and local transport were all affected.

In addition, the customs workers' actions against the austerity measures, which began on 16th February, have led to severe petrol shortages across the cities of Greece. There have been many protests, some of which have escaped the control of the unions. In Athens, for example, there was a tense demonstration in which the protestors tried to break the line of police in riot

gear by using a dustcart as a battering ram.

In an attempt to damp down the workers' anger, the unions called a further strike for 24th February. However, it seems that they were not entirely successful in this aim, at least in the short-term, as this saw protests all over the country. In Athens again, there were battles between the police and demonstrators. The hostility of the Greek populace towards the police has been magnified by their recent "accidental" killing of a 25-year old plumber, complete with public celebration by the officers involved, and following on from their murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos⁴

Algeria⁵

Against a background of massive inflation, the UGTA trade union confederation signed an agreement with the government and employers which not only did not take into account the price rises workers face in buying the means of existence, but also added ten years to the amount of time a worker doing arduous work must do the job before getting the right to retire. Thousands of workers engaged in heavy vehicle production in the Rouiba industrial zone went on strike on 3rd January, and, when they tried to march on the centre of the town of Rouiba, a part of Algiers, they were attacked by the police, who prevented them from proceeding. The reaction of UGTA was to simply ignore the workers' actions and issue a communiqué praising their own efforts in saving some of the companies (that this was at



Striking Algerian workers in a recent stand-off with the police

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the expense of the workers was presumably omitted from the account). The workers denounced the UGTA, and decided to continue the strike indefinitely.

Australia

Australia is seeing several important class battles. From council workers in Geelong and smelter workers in South Australia to egg-grading workers, postal workers and teachers and lecturers in New South Wales, workers are making a stand against job cuts, wage-freezes and the worsening of working conditions.

In particular, the Sydney bus workers have struck against the bosses' plans for new timetables, drawn up with the connivance of the unions, which undermine public safety by shortening journey times to the point where speed limits have to be broken, as well as worsening the conditions of the drivers. In addition, rest times will be eroded through the inevitable failure of busses to complete the journeys on time, and the time difference between the timetabled trip and the actual journey being subtracted from non-driving time. The response of the union to the strike was to denounce the workers involved, and to return to negotiations in order to persuade the bus workers to go back to work. This the workers did, but they promised to come out again if the unions and management do not drop the new "flexibility". In the meantime, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission has banned further strikes, and the new talks between the management and the union have resulted in... the same plan, but with a promise by the company to review procedures once they are in place (a cynical and transparent manoeuvre to present the workers with a *fait accompli* when the review concludes that everything is ok).⁶

Also in New South Wales, on 19th February workers at the Tahmoor colliery went back to work after the conclusion of a three-day strike with the intention to strike again. Xstrata, the owners of the mine, are trying to push through "flexibility", offering in compensation a pay package, according to them, worth 25-37% over four years. However, workers calculate that the package is worth only 5.5%, i.e., an annual increase of 1.3%. Australia's inflation rate is 2.6%.⁷ And official inflation rates almost always

underestimate the effect of inflation on workers. The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), has systematically attempted to divide the workers on a pit-by-pit basis, as this will obviously critically weaken the struggle. They have used as an excuse the "Labour" Party's legislation banning solidarity. In return for its service to capitalism, the CFMEU (and other unions) have been rewarded by being given a central role in the government's industrial relations strategy, and they have used this role... to essentially agree with the bosses over what is needed to increase exploitation.

In order to struggle effectively, the Tahmoor workers need to overcome their isolation by organising outside and against the CFMEU, to break their isolation from other pits (e.g., for example, there is a similar dispute between workers at Xstrata's Bulga mine in Hunter Valley, NSW), and to link up with workers in other sectors.

Turkey⁸

The Turkish state is attempting to impose its "4C" conditions on the working class. These conditions enable employers to treat present wages, already much reduced from their former level, as a maximum below which they are free to pay as they see fit. In addition, fixed working hours will be abolished, and workers will have to work until they finish the tasks the bosses set for them to complete, without any overtime being paid, and the bosses can employ the workers for part of the year only, with the workers being unpaid and unable to take alternative employment during the remainder of the year whilst having no rights to social security or health benefits. On top of all that, compensation for redundancy will be abolished, together with any right to appeal against it.

Unsurprisingly, the state has shied away from imposing these reforms ("reformism" should really have died a death! — since "reforms" of this nature are all today's capitalism has to offer) on the whole working class simultaneously, and selected the *Tekel*⁹ workers for the honour of being the first to "benefit". On 5th December, while Prime Minister and leader of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), Tayyip Erdoğan, was making a speech, *Tekel* workers asked him when

he was going to give them good news. He basically called them layabouts and said that the government had the agreement of their trade union (the *Türk-İş* union federation) for the 4-C conditions of employment. Although many of the workers had voted or even worked for Erdoğan's party, the natural outcome was that the workers were enraged with him, with party cards being torn up. But the workers went much further than this. In workplace discussions, they decided to defend themselves against 4-C.

Whether or not *Türk-İş* had agreed with the government, it had done very little against the 4-C conditions, but it now called for a gathering in Ankara, and *Tekel* workers from all over the country, from the West and Mediterranean areas to the central Anatolian area and thence to Kurdistan decided to attend this.

Thwarting an attempt by the police to divide them along ethnic lines, by resisting their efforts to prevent Kurdish workers from entering the capital, the *Tekel* workers arrived in Ankara together.

On 15th December, there was a 5000-strong demonstration against 4-C outside the offices of the JDP. Following several attacks on them by riot police, they were dispersed on 17th December, but autonomously reassembled in front of the *Türk-İş* headquarters. As a result of this pressure on the union, two workers from each of the cities represented among the *Tekel* workers were admitted to the negotiations between *Türk-İş*, *Tek Gıda-İş*¹⁰ and the government over 4-C.

Although the union successfully insisted that a committee for strike action organised by the workers be shut down, the workers nevertheless managed to gain the solidarity of a significant section of the Ankara proletariat and of the students of proletarian background, who provided material support allowing the demonstration in front of the *Türk-İş* building. Significantly, they also begin to develop links with the sugar workers, who are next in line for the 4-C reforms.

Under the pressure of the demonstration, *Türk-İş* announced a series of strikes starting with a one-hour strike, followed by a two-hour strike the week after, followed by a four-hour strike, etc. But, when the first

strike attracted a 30% participation rate, *Türk-İş*, terrified by the possibility of generalisation that this represented, called the series off, and replaced it with the idea of hunger strikes.

For a while, the *Tekel* workers were split on whether to follow the union-inspired plan for hunger strikes or to generalise the struggle, but have come down in favour of generalisation. This puts the idea of a strike involving all workers against the “reforms” of the government, which would be an enormous step towards the emergence of the Turkish section of the working class as a political entity, which would be an example to the workers of the world. As we go to press 6000 workers are still camped in the centre of Ankara outside the *Türk-İş* headquarters but rumours that they are about to be attacked by the forces of the state persist.

International Struggle is the Only Way Forward

So far the bourgeoisie everywhere is relieved that the resistance to its plans to make us pay has not been greater. The episodes we have detailed here remain just episodes. Even in Greece the support for strikes and demonstrations has been surprisingly small. The ruling class there are grateful that they can get opinion polls to show that most Greeks (53% in the latest one) are ready for some austerity measures. Whether workers will still feel that in one or two years more of this is another matter. And there will be more of this for years ahead as this crisis will not go away. This survey shows that there are signs are that the most affected workers are beginning to respond, to the attacks that are launched against them. However workers in a single sector, in a single country, face enormous pressure. Only when they unite with others (for example why no solidarity between Lufthansa pilots and BA cabin crew?) beyond their own area and country can they really halt the system's attacks. Only when they adopt their own organisational expressions (mass meetings, strike committees and coordinating bodies) outside of any state organs of mediation will they begin to act for themselves. Only then will they contain the seeds of their self-transformation into a single struggle, a first step in the growth of class consciousness. Ultimately

workers will have to realize that under this system only further deprivation is guaranteed and this will pose the eventual transformation of their ideas into a revolutionary, communist consciousness. This transformation, if it does take place, will be seen in the creation of a permanent, international organisational expression. The resulting class party will be essential for the revolutionary transformation of society.

EDL

Footnotes

- 1 See *Battaglia Comunista* 3/2010
- 2 *Ibid*
- 3 *Ibid*, and the Greek section of www.libcom.org
- 4 See *Revolutionary Perspectives* 49
- 5 Information from *L'Humanité*, 11th January: <http://www.humaniteinenglish.com/spip.php?article1433>
- 6 Information taken from an article by the Left Communists of Sydney, and published on the ICC's site: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2009/09/sydney-bus-drivers-strike>
- 7 According to Business Week: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-01-31/australian-property-prices-manufacturing-inflation-accelerate.html>; other information on the Australian miner's struggle from <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2010/feb2010/xstr-f23.shtml>
- 8 See the excellent article “Turkey: Solidarity with Tekel workers’ resistance against government and unions”, produced by the International Communist Current: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2010/01/tekel-turkey>
- 9 The ex-state monopoly for tobacco and alcohol
- 10 The tobacco industry member union of *Türk-İş*

A u r o r a

**Broadsheet of the CWO,
affiliate of the
Internationalist Communist Tendency**

**The next issue is out in May
Available from the group address**

Racism in Italy

The Working Class is a Class of Migrants

In our previous issue we focussed on the issue of nationalism and racism in the UK in the context of the rise of the BNP. An identical kind of ugly racism holds good for all the advanced economies including those in "Fortress Europe". We are printing here translations of leaflets our Italian comrades of Battaglia Comunista issued in response to the attacks on immigrant workers spearheaded by the state in the form of the right wing Berlusconi government.

The same features apply in Italy as here. After years of tolerating immigration in order to force down wages the government, faced with an insoluble capitalist crisis, whips up popular animosity against Roma, North Africans and even Chinese workers. To give one example, some 40,000 Chinese in the town of Prato near Florence have been working for a decade or more in sweat shops in the town owned by 4,200 Chinese businesses which are actually registered in the town. This has brought the sweatshop back to Europe (whilst at the same time 11,000 textile jobs have disappeared from the town since 2000). One third of Prato's 180,000 people are immigrant with nearly two thirds of these being Chinese. This illegal sweatshop trade went unnoticed by the Italian authorities who colluded in it until this year. Now, with the recession hitting Italy, and a textile factory owner becoming Mayor of Prato (a member of the racist Northern League), the authorities have started raiding the hostels and factories where the workers live to throw them out. Most of the workers have not worked for months, and have no papers, so they cannot go back to China (which refuses to recognise them in any case) and they now live in a state of limbo. Such is the inhuman life of a migrant in the modern capitalist state system.

The two leaflets here refer to further incidents. The first to a fightback by immigrant workers from North Africa in Calabria (arguably the poorest region in Italy) and the second for a demonstration organised for March 1st to unite all workers against the racist campaigns of the Italian state. Needless to say we fully share their content.

Solidarity with the Rosarno Labourers

Against the Bosses' Iron bars and Lockouts

After two days of clashes in Rosarno 66 people have treated in hospital, 17 locals, 19 police and 30 immigrants. Two of the latter were beaten with metal bars on the night of January 7-8 and remain in a serious condition. Others were run over by cars. This was the response to the sudden explosion of anger the day before after two immigrants were wounded by a coward with an airgun. The blind rage of the immigrants who have poured in hundreds on to the main road that runs through the town, has spared nothing in its path, leaving a trail of burnt-out and damaged cars - some with people inside - and rubbish bins overturned. Images of the protests have found plenty of space in the media [1].

The revolt was really inevitable. A BBC video in February [2] showed the awful living conditions of these proletarian brothers. Anyone looking at it, like the reporter himself, cannot believe the reality of conditions that some could imagine only in distant lands, but not in the heart of "civilized" Europe. For those poor souls who some days have the "luck" of being chosen by the foremen, the pay is less than 20 euros for 12 hours of hard work in the cold, harvesting citrus fruit and

vegetables. These are slave conditions. In fact in some ways many slaves live in better conditions. In May 2008 three businessmen, also in Rosarno, were arrested for "enslavement" of some laborers. Marco Rovelli, author of "Slaves", describes the former paper mill on Spinoza, where the immigrants were housed until last year:

A place that the best Hollywood set designer would find hard to copy in all its apocalyptic horror. You go and find yourself amidst a smoke screen, in the glare of a fire. In the midst of this glow, cut by shafts of light that enter from the roof vents covered with yellow corrugated plastic, like a cathedral of desolation, this is a real wasteland that no-one sees. Cooking on open fires next to huts made of wooden boards nailed together, with walls of cardboard and plastic and yet more cardboard to make a roof covered with shoes, stones and boots. Mounds of earth. Rubbish. Eternit. Debris. Bricks.

In other buildings which are still occupied, the situation is identical. Just a spark was needed to explode the anger which had built up for years, and the spark duly arrived. The "insurgents", these proletarian

brothers, have our total solidarity. We hope that all the comrades and the proletarians (in Calabria, in particular) immediately give them every possible support, with pickets, leafletting, and demonstrations. Unfortunately, the level of disorganization and discouragement of the class, in particular in the South, is such that we don't expect a massive response, but it is nevertheless necessary to support and defend those comrades who have finally shown that it is possible to rebel against the infamy of capital. This is the time for solidarity and concrete action. It is not the time to remain stunned or scared.

The living conditions of the Southern proletariat are among the worst you will see anywhere. In a region that is a real economic and social desert there is no prospect of improvement. We have written about this just recently [3]. The productive "desertification" of Calabria further materially weakens the possibilities for an effective response - such as a strike, for example. Moreover, the poison of racism, injected in large doses in the last few years, has begun to have its effects. An obvious example of this is the declaration of the Minister Maroni, who clearly blamed the immigrants who took

part in the riots – in a masterclass in reversing reality – for the miserable living conditions, and exploitation of the workers, suffered at the hands of the local bourgeoisie, which in wide areras of Calabria is called 'ndrangheta. Maroni also gracefully neglects the fact that, if they are forced to put up with everything and to live in the subspecies of a pigsty, it is also down to the law crafted by his own boss (Bossi) and the "democratic" Fini [4]

The 'ndrangheta itself can not be indifferent nor opposed to any decision to move laborers to various places elsewhere, including outside the region. With or without the consent of the peasants, the harvest can now be ended. It's a sort of lockout [5]. Anonymous statements released by L'Unita[6] as well as those of Kollettivo Onda Rossa Cinque Frondi [7], appear to suggest that the immigrants are going to make life awkward for some important people and interests, upsetting established social hierarchies. Well! It's about time someone did! Roberto Saviano - who proposes an inter-class and legalistic path, (ergo contradictory and sterile) - captures the situation however when he says:

Immigrants seem to have a courage to fight the mafia that Italians have lost. For them combatting criminal organizations is a matter of life or death. And whatever our views on the uprising we have to realize that they had to rebel and the healthy part of the African community accepts no compromise with the 'ndrangheta ... I would like to emphasize at this point, once again, that Africans are in Italy to do jobs that Italians do not want to do and defend the rights that Italians do not want to defend.

This link between the Italian and immigrant proletariat is the key issue. A link that has still to be built, but absolutely necessary for the defence of the immediate and historic interests of the working class. At present, what is coming out of this is a rather disastrous, sadistic and stupid quest for a scapegoat, with racism as an outlet for a situation that seems hopeless.

The most popular sport for the young people of Rosarno is black hunting. Where "black" does not mean a subsaharian but indicates - without discrimination - African: dark or light skin, it is all the same ... There are techniques to lynch a black. First,

of course, be in a group. Then put yourselves in strategic places, where the immigrants are forced to go if they want to go from one place to another. This description by Rovelli is reflected in the articles from correspondents in the area, who report the slogan hammered repeatedly by many Rosarnesi is " 'sti Niri' Go home!" [8]. Even the shootings are not new. About a year ago there was a case similar to that of today: two young men from a car fired several shots against two African boys who were returning from the fields. Even then there was a mass protest of the labourers.

In this affair the dramatic lack of a solid point of revolutionary reference emerges once again, i.e. the class party that can connect and channel the bursts of anger of some sectors into a more general proletarian class struggle against the capitalist system. Today (and for a very long time) the proletariat experiences or, at most, expresses its anger and opposition to this society in isolated incidents or explosions of anger but, because they have not involved the majority of workers or the proletariat in general, they are suppressed, or disappear like water in the sand (at least, it seems like that, although it is difficult to know exactly what is moving under the surface).

On the morning of 8 January, the immigrants protests revived. A big and combative demonstration took place in front of the town hall (now taken over by the anti-mafia commission) [9], clearly identifying bourgeois political power as the cause of the social disaster. This was a spontaneous initiative that is to be welcomed. But we can expect nothing from bourgeois power. Politically we must begin to act as the working class, rather than suffer for being working class. Power belongs to the working class – if it is united.

Comrades, proletarian Calabrese, join in the immigrants' protests.

One class, one struggle!

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.rainews24.it/it/foto-gallery.php?galleryid=136582>

[2] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7908910.stm>

[3] <http://www.leftcom.org/it/articles/2009-12-15/in-calabria-piove-sul-bagnato>

[4] Bossi is leader of the racist Lega Nord and Fini, the Alleanza Nazionale

(the former fascist party), both are in Berlusconi's coalition government

[5] Of about 2,000 immigrant laborers in the area between Rosarno and Gioia Tauro, more than 1,200 have been moved out by the authorities by January 10, hundreds of others were driven away by different means. <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnline4/Italia/2010/01/Rosarno-gli-immigrati-se-ne-devono-andare.shtml?uuid=f9191ab0-fc68-11de-a982-fad58e4d6543&DocRulesView=Libero>

[5] http://www.unita.it/news/italia/93429/immigrati_presi_a_pallettoni_e_siscatena_la_rabbia

[7] <http://it.peacereporter.net/articolo/19662/Ora+tutto+sar%26grave%3B+%3B+pi%26grave+difficult>

[8] "sti niri" is Calabrian dialect for "These blacks"

[9] In 2008 the local authority was shut down by the government for its Mafia links. It has still not been replaced. See <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c7c8fd9c-fc66-11de-826f-00144feab49a.html>

The attack on immigrant workers is an attack on the entire working class The response must be solid without ethnic divisions!

**(leaflet given out on the occasion of the
“Day Without Immigrants: 24 Hours Without Us”)**

The **Rosarno Revolt** in Calabria briefly brought into the media spotlight the inhuman working and living conditions of the great majority of immigrant workers. Moreover the crisis of the system of production is pushing an ever wider layers of the working class, of whatever nationality, below the poverty line. In this context it is disastrous that inter-ethnic violence between the various groups of the exploited, divided by skin colour but facing the very same common social conditions; i.e. excluded from control of the means of production and always more frequently left without any means of subsistence, after being laid off and discarded like a piece of useless machinery.

For this reasons whilst we believe it is right to denounce the conditions of hyper-exploitation and oppression of the migrant proletariat we also believe its necessary **to call on all wage workers, whether local or immigrant, to struggle**. On the other hand we need to be clear that even amongst the immigrants there are exploiters, corporals, and little bosses who live as parasites on the sweat of the workers on a par with the national bourgeoisie. Exploiters and exploited, whatever their ethnic origins, have opposing material interests!

The policy of the ruling class, the bosses and the politicians of every institution instead tends at every point to deepen the divisions within the working class because it is clear that their power increases the more we are divided. The **points system for permission to remain**, recently introduced in Italy, serves only to increase the conditions of uncertainty and the possibility of blackmail of immigrant workers, thus worsening the conditions of all workers. If the lives of the immigrant proletariat today already depend totally on the bosses and their agents, as well as the various criminal elements who speculate by selling real or assumed work contracts at unbelievable prices, tomorrow this

uncertainty will further increase. The conditions of disposable labour, used now and thrown away tomorrow, is now to widespread, thanks to the various agreements made between the bosses, the unions, and the government, and has now become the norm for the immigrant workers with devastating human costs.

The aim of international capital to push wages below their value, that is below what is necessary in order to live, brings about a constant lowering of wages of all sectors of wage labour, because today the reference point for all bosses is the wages of the poorest and most exploited strata of the world proletariat. All this is the result of the world economic crisis which is forcing the bosses to increase exploitation in order to sustain industrial profits and a monstrous financial speculation. The crisis has narrowed the bourgeoisie's room for manoeuvre. Besides the bestial increase in exploitation of the weakest sectors of the proletariat, in other words, immigrants, the young and women, this leads to the ever more frequent transformation of inter-imperialist tensions into wars, hypocritically disguised as humanitarian interventions or in defence of civilisation and religion.

All this is facilitated by **racism** – nourished by an obsessive and shameful campaign in all the means of (dis)information – which also poisons large sections of the proletariat who have lost, or have never had, their class identity, and this is even more the case with class consciousness. A racism sustained by the life of physical and moral brutalisation typical of any society founded on exploitation and oppression, which for the migrant proletariat means an even greater exploitation and oppression, is stirred up by the most reactionary and lousy sections of the bourgeoisie but is useful to the bourgeoisie as a whole.

We can and must struggle against the bosses, their government and their

racist, reactionary and anti-working laws because greater exploitation for the migrant proletariat means greater exploitation for all. Only a working class united on the terrain of real anti-capitalist struggle, not on that of the union manoeuvres that are always defeated can do it, beyond and against all false religious, ethnic and linguistic divisions. Only a revolutionary party on an international scale free from any political leftovers of Stalinism and opportunism can show the way out of this dreadful society.

No to all the anti-immigration laws of the bourgeois government!

**No to racism and exploitation!
For the revival of class struggle and the international party of the proletariat!**

**Immigrant and Italian workers:
same class, same struggle!**

After all the hot air at Copenhagen Global Warming is Set to Continue

If a week is a long time in bourgeois politics then the interval between issues of a quarterly magazine is an eternity. The last edition of RP tackled the question of climate change as the Copenhagen summit got underway with all the media hype appropriate for an event whose success or otherwise, we were told, would determine the future of human life on this planet. Predictably enough, however, Copenhagen produced no binding international agreement and the whole pantomime only emphasised how far this capitalist world is from implementing an effective plan to achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. After waiting for states to submit their final emission 'pledges' by the end of January, a disillusioned Yvo de Boer, head of UN climate change negotiations for the past three and a half years, handed in his resignation. Writing in the *Financial Times* just before Copenhagen, de Boer had claimed that "failure is not an option" and that:

The solution will not only reduce emissions; it will provide the biggest opportunity since the industrial revolution to rebalance economic activity towards a more stable and equitable path for every nation.¹

In reality though Copenhagen, like Kyoto before it, came nowhere near even a paper agreement to **reduce** emissions. The real wrangles were over how far each state would be prepared to limit the **growth** of emissions. Well, what the hell... While the northern hemisphere endured one of the longest and coldest winters in decades a steady drip of media stories about dodgy research methods and exaggerated claims of various climate research bodies has undermined public 'confidence' in the significance or even the existence of climate change. As we go to press Phil Jones, professor at the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit which is a principal supplier of data to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is due to testify to a parliamentary committee over the e-mail 'climate gate' scandal. He will do so against a background

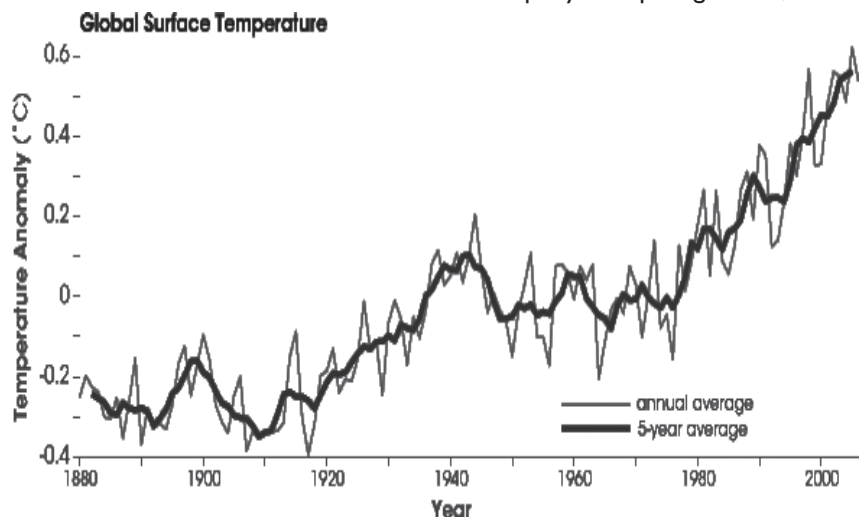
of embarrassing conceding of errors by the IPCC, notably the too short timescale for the predicted melting of Himalayan glaciers in its 2007 report, or the statement that 55% of the Netherlands is under sea level when the real figure is 26%. So far none of the exaggerations on the one hand or omission of evidence which doesn't support the desired conclusion on the other seem to amount to much, although there is plenty of scope for questioning the objectivity of bourgeois science. The plain truth is that most of us are in no position to weigh up the evidence and evaluate the basis of the numerous climate change reports. All we can do is note the consensus of scientific opinion.

The Problem of Climate Change

No serious scientist involved in climatology denies that average global temperatures have risen at an accelerated rate since the start of industrial capitalism. The vast majority accept that human activity — primarily burning fossil fuels — is the main cause, a consequence of the effect of propelling carbon dioxide and other noxious gases into the atmosphere. It follows that if global output of so-called greenhouse gases continues to grow then the average temperature of the earth will also increase. The IPCC predicts that if nothing is done to reduce these emissions there will be a rise of between 1.5°C and 6°C during this century, although this is by no means the lowest estimate. A rise of 4°C or more would mean a

world hotter than human beings had ever experienced. Plenty of models exist but no-one can foretell the exact consequences of such temperature increases. Predictions range from increasingly extreme weather patterns, such as serious flooding, droughts leading to crop failures and widespread drinking water shortages, hurricanes and so on to the disappearance of low-lying countries due to melting ice caps and rising sea levels, the wholesale destruction of ecosystems and associated animal and plant life. Hence the onus to reduce carbon emissions and thereby slow down global warming. That is, unless it is already too late to do so. The consensus now is that global warming has to be contained to below 2°C in order to avoid the 'tipping point' when the whole process would become self-sustaining and out of the hands of human beings to control it.

Here the problem of climate change becomes more than a question of scientific probability, of one set of researchers persuading another of the validity of their research. Once the problem is accepted as a real one then it is up to humanity as a whole to find a solution. If only! Unfortunately the present world order is not in the control of 'humanity as a whole'. Despite the dire warnings from environmentalists of the consequences 'we' will face from global warming, the vast majority of human beings are in no position to substantially alter how capitalism pollutes the planet. The present world is an imperialist one of unequally competing states, all of



Climate Change

them class divided, with the strongest of them reinforcing their economic power with military might and with the most powerful of all in control of the currency of international trade. It is completely utopian to expect that any agreement reached on climate change within the existing world order can “rebalance economic activity towards a more stable and equitable path for every nation”, as the outgoing UN climate change negotiator supposes.

The Capitalist Barrier

Despite the severity of the problem it is not, and cannot be, addressed head-on in terms of what is best for humanity. In fact it has taken decades for the capitalist powers to begin to tackle the issue. The US has been particularly slow to respond until carbon trading got off the ground and converted the question into one of profit and loss for business and once it dawned on political leaders that with oil supplies due to run out new sources of ‘green energy’ could be the answer to the question of ‘energy security’. Not only did the US refuse to ratify the Kyoto protocol on the grounds that it would damage the United States economy, at the time of the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 the Bush administration was gearing up for the invasion of Iraq in order to secure its hold over world oil supplies. Now the prospect of climate change affecting agriculture has brought the question of ‘food security’ which, like ‘energy security’, is now being tackled under the banner of counteracting global warming. The International Rice Institute and other scientific institutes looking at the effects of global warming on world food production have estimated that a 1°C increase in global temperature threatens a 10 percent drop in rice, wheat and other major grain yields. But in a world shored up by imperialism, food or energy ‘security’ for the most powerful states is bought or otherwise secured at the expense of the wellbeing of workers and small producers in the weakest states.

Even the terms of the problem are being redefined to make it manageable for capitalism, whether or not the future of humanity is put in jeopardy. The present UK government, for example, produced an energy policy based on recommendations by the Stern Report. In order to keep the cost of the proposed measures within



“Energy security” rather than combating climate change has been the spur.

required 17 Gt abatement, which will leave us on track to a global temperature increase of at least 3°C. Such an increase would certainly carry catastrophic consequences for the world's economy.²

And afterwards, nothing had changed. According to a recent report, even if the most optimistic post-Copenhagen reduction pledges (offered in January this year), are implemented there will be an estimated 5 gigatonnes (Gt) emissions overshoot of the targeted 44 Gt limit by 2020. The experts now generally assume this would contain “greenhouse gases to 450 parts per million in the atmosphere, yielding roughly a 40-60% chance of limiting global warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels”.³ Or, to put it another way, instead of **possibly** managing to contain global warming to an average 2°C, there is likely to be at least a 3°C increase above pre-industrial levels — “which risks severe levels of climate damage” (ibid). And this is the very best scenario that anyone can draw after Copenhagen.

Credit to Polluters

Yet, apart from seriously concerned environmentalists, the capitalist class as a whole does not appear to be too perturbed by the outcome of a summit which was too critical to fail. Individual states, or groupings of states are pushing ahead with their own policies which include substantial subsidies for ‘clean energy’. The biggest disappointment was for the big energy companies. They were looking for a clear international framework, backed up by legal powers, which would give

politically acceptable boundaries (one per cent of GDP), Stern based his recommendations round a carbon emissions target of 550 parts per million, in keeping with a temperature rise of up to 3°C — i.e. well beyond the 2°C ‘tipping point’ that the ‘international community’ is supposed to be aiming to avoid. How a single state can plan to solve a problem which knows no boundaries and affects the whole earth is difficult to fathom but this remains essentially the situation in the aftermath of Copenhagen. — Or rather there is the pretence that every state is contributing its necessary quota to an overall target. In fact the UK’s energy policy broadly follows the EU’s official aim of cutting greenhouse gases by 20% from 1990 levels at the same time as raising the portion of energy derived from ‘renewable’ sources by 2020. This policy itself was adopted by an EU summit in March 2007, following the energy crisis on the European mainland during the 2006 gas war between Russia and Ukraine. Again, ‘energy security’ rather than combating climate change has been the spur.

So, has Copenhagen ameliorated the outlook for global warming? The short answer is, ‘No’. Before the summit got underway the World Resources Institute issued a press statement indicating that by 2020:

... the proposals currently on the table (such as EU ETS, the proposed Waxman-Markey Bill in the US, and other reduction commitments put forward by other states) ... will only take us halfway to the

them 'certainty to plan investments', as the chief executive of Royal Dutch Shell put it.⁴ This uncertainty is reflected in the carbon credit markets, based on the EU's carbon trading scheme where limits are set on the amount of emissions, and the rights to emit carbon are distributed according to a company's existing propensity to pollute to comply with this limit. These permits to pollute are themselves tradable in the same way as any other financial asset. Companies who find ways to reduce their emissions, or who do not produce any, sell their remaining rights to pollute to other polluters. The low level of industrial production over the last two years of the capitalist crisis has already reduced the cost of carbon credits (as well as slowing down emissions) but in the aftermath of Copenhagen the price of a carbon permit under the EU's cap and trade scheme dropped by 15% to €20. This is bad news, not just for the markets, but for any environmentalists who have set store by such schemes which depend on carbon prices being high enough to encourage industrialists to install cleaner technologies. (According to one estimate carbon credits would have to trade at around €60 for there to be enough investment in clean energy to achieve the official emission targets.)

The whole situation demands a centralised, considered global solution. Instead it is a capitalist mess where each state is going its own way and implementing short term options: subsidising dubious new technologies on the one hand; resorting to the building of nuclear power plants on the other. (Obama, for example, has included a demand for \$54bn of loan guarantees for 10 new nuclear plants in the 2011 budget.) Whatever happens, the cost to the working class, already paying for the financial bail-out, is going to be large. In the UK, Ofgem, the energy regulator has already estimated that the average household fuel bill will have risen 60 per cent by 2016.⁵ Another estimate, this time of the global cost of limiting greenhouse gas emissions made by the International Energy Agency, is \$10,000bn, with every year of delay adding a further \$500bn. This sort of sum is almost on a par with the cost of the financial bail-out over the last two years, a bail-out which has almost brought capitalism to its knees. It implies enormous social costs and

collapse of workers' living standards to war time levels. In this scenario the response to global warming will be determined by the class struggle. And the focus of the struggle will have to be how to get rid of capitalism.

A New World?

The idea that capitalism can be 'environmentally friendly' is a nonsense. Capital has never done anything else but rampage over the planet, robbing the earth's natural resources without a thought for the consequences. Even without global warming the degradation of the environment in the capitalist epoch, from water pollution to plastic waste islands the size of Texas, from poisoned seas and rivers to the over 80,000 chemicals it has brought into existence, has limited the quality and scope of life on the planet. Alternative energy itself is no panacea. Many of the so-called clean energy innovations bring with them new ways of polluting and degrading the environment, not to mention increasing the suffering of human beings. (Take for instance the race (mainly in China) to extract rare earth minerals by powerful and abhorrent solvents, which poison the local areas as well as the workforce.)

There is a glaring need for a new world order: a global community without national borders where production can be planned directly to meet human needs and can take account of environmental consequences of alternative courses of action; a community without the intermediary of money and commodity production, where economics becomes a question of social allocation of time, particularly working time, and no longer a question of what is immediately financially profitable or not.

This is far from the vision of those who for one reason or another see the environmental struggle as the heart of an 'anti-capitalist' struggle. For many there is simply disillusion with the notion of class struggle and the prospect that this can lead to revolutionary change. Yet capitalism remains, by definition, a system dependant on generating profit, the source of which is the surplus labour workers are obliged to yield to capital over and above the wages they receive. It is this system which has to be abolished and only the concerted force of an internationally unified and politically conscious working class will

have the power to do so. The Achilles heel of many self-styled anti-capitalists is to confuse the path to socialism or communism with a mish mash of reformism (for example Attac's call for a universal tax on financial transactions) and the self-styled 'anti-imperialism' (read anti-Americanism) and state capitalism of populists and demagogues of the likes of Evo Morales in Bolivia or Chavez in Venezuela. No matter that Bolivia, for example, remains one of the poorest countries in the world with one of the most inequitable land distribution systems, despite the president's avowed defence of the rural poor and his heading of the so-called Movement Towards Socialism Party. But then Morales and Chavez have cocked a snook at US and international capital by nationalising their energy and oil industries. None of this has anything remotely to do with bringing down capitalism, much less preparing the political basis for a genuine anti-capitalist movement. We agree that a new world is possible — and necessary. Perpetually campaigning to reform this or that aspect of capitalism is not the way forward. The only way to halt capitalist 'business as usual' and save the planet for humanity is by world working class revolution. The spark for that will come from the politically conscious minority who have organised to campaign in the only revolutionary way possible: amongst the working class for the communist political programme.

E Rayner

Footnotes

1 'Failure is Not an Option', in *FT* supplement on the Copenhagen Summit, 3.12.09.

2 Jonathon Lash at a press briefing for the World Resources Institute prior to Copenhagen.

3 'Taking Stock – The Emission Levels Implied by the Pledges to the Copenhagen Accord', published by Project Catalyst, February 2010. See www.project-catalyst.info

4 Peter Voser, quoted in a *Financial Times* special report on *Clean Energy*, 18.1.10.

5 Ed Crooks, 'The Power Bill Arrives', *Financial Times* 3.2.10.

Haiti: A Disaster of Capitalism

It's still not known exactly how many people died in the earthquake of January 12, but current estimates are that over 200,000 people have lost their lives. Reuters announced that figure could jump to 300,000 once all the bodies are recovered. A further 250,000 are said to be wounded and one and a half million people are estimated to be homeless. The earthquake, which measured 7.2 on the Richter scale, is one of the most lethal disasters in modern history. The aid which followed, or rather failed to follow, shows again what a morally bankrupt system capitalism is.

The Role of Imperialism

Haiti has a double geographical misfortune. It lies on two fault lines (the Septentrional fault in the north and the Enriquillo-Plaintain Garden fault in the south), but perhaps even more disastrously, it's situated right next to the USA. A former French slave colony, Haiti's struggle for independence was won by 1804 (See *The Black Jacobins* by C.L.R. James), but was forced to pay 90 million gold francs to France for its freedom after Charles X (1827-30) sent warships to the island (the equivalent of \$21.7 billions today). This devastated the economy and took 122 years to repay. The US invaded in 1915 and although troops were formally withdrawn in 1934, the US maintained fiscal control until 1947. The post war years have been marked by US interference which has left Haiti ravaged, impoverished, corrupt and politically unstable. It is a country which has never been able to shake off debt to the richer nations. Even before the earthquake it was crippled with IMF debt and in reality has been run by the UN since the 2004 coup which killed several thousand people. This has left it at the mercy of an international community which has blocked all attempts to spend UN 'investment' on programmes such as poverty reduction or agrarian development and instead kept it firmly on military expenditure. Not surprisingly then, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere with a GDP of just \$6.95 billions per year. Even before the earthquake some 80% of the population lived in poverty, over half living on

less than one dollar a day. The food situation in Haiti was serious before the earthquake struck - with more than 2.4 million people considered "food-insecure". Such poverty has meant that the immediate effects of the disaster have been massively amplified. Although it was a well known quake zone (and although Haiti's authorities were well aware of the risk of an earthquake of this magnitude), its buildings, unlike those in richer countries, were far from quake proof. The buildings in the quake zones of major industrialised nations sit on damping systems that allow them to ride out tremors that not only shake them back and forth but also twist them in the same movement. The simplest concrete structures in the capital of Port-au-Prince not only crumpled under the same strain, they were so badly built some had collapsed previously through shoddy construction, including a school in Pétionville which killed nearly 90 children in 2008. In cities like Port-au-Prince, many people live in poor and densely-packed shantytowns or badly-constructed buildings. Homelessness was rife before the disaster, and the fact that the poorest people didn't have houses has been cited by relief organisations as adding to the crisis. According to the Catholic relief group Caritas International, 70 percent of those displaced by the earthquake in the capital did not own their own homes before the disaster struck.

Humanitarian Relief or Imperialist Security?

The humanitarian relief effort, criminally slow to start, showed capitalism's inability either to provide aid quickly or widely enough, or with much humanity at all. Bottlenecks and infrastructure damage were blamed for the hold ups, but competing aid agencies, poor organization and, above all, the inability of aid giving countries to see beyond their own interests has left the victims of the disaster vulnerable to disease, hunger and corruption. Medical supplies, food and emergency shelters were slow to arrive, even when they did most sat in warehouses or storage. Very early on U.S. forces refused to allow aid planes to land at the Port au Prince

and Jacmel airports. Planes from the Caribbean Community, France, World Food Program and Doctors Without Borders — some loaded with desperately needed medical equipment and field hospitals — were repeatedly turned away by U.S. Marines. According to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), a cargo plane carrying 12 tons of medical equipment, including drugs, surgical supplies and two dialysis machines, was turned away three times from Port-au-Prince airport a week after the earthquake despite repeated assurances of its ability to land there. MSF reported it had five planes diverted from the original destination of Port-au-Prince to the Dominican Republic, leading to patients dying for lack of supplies. As Loris de Filippi, emergency coordinator for the MSF's Choscal Hospital in Cite Soleil stated,

I have never seen anything like this. Any time I leave the operating theatre, I see lots of people desperately asking to be taken for surgery. Today, there are 12 people who need lifesaving amputations at Choscal Hospital. We were forced to buy a saw in the market to continue amputations. We are running against time here.

MSF's reports have been echoed by other agencies. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the distribution of emergency shelter materials has been agonizingly slow. "As of 11 February, over 49,000 tarps have been distributed along with 23,000 family size tents," OCHA reported. The Haitian government has insisted that its most urgent need is 200,000 tents—nearly 10 times the number distributed thus far.

Much was made of the US military distributing food, but old imperialist attitudes die hard, and so do the racist attitudes that go with it. The US military carefully policed everything it gave away but did manage to distribute 10,000 meals a day until it decided it was attracting too many people so suspended work. As Lieutenant Brad Kerfoot said of the Haitian people, "My soldiers and I think they're ungrateful". While the victims of the

disaster face starvation, the US and UN compounds keep a tight grip on the aid whilst themselves enjoying unlimited food, internet access and alcohol. In Pétionville, up the mountain from the capital, 360 US combat troops from the 82nd Airborne Division have set up camp around the Golf Club's swimming pool and restaurant in order to 'keep the peace' and preserve the property of the businessmen and politicians who live in the area. At present over 40,000 homeless people are crammed onto the club's nine-hole golf course, most without adequate shelter, water or food.

The US showed its true priority when Defense Secretary Gates "wouldn't send in food and water because, he said, there was no 'structure...to provide security.'" In fact the Pentagon's first response to the earthquake wasn't to help with the relief effort at all, it was to send in reconnaissance drones. In all some 22,000 US soldiers, sailors and Marines were dispatched, with combat-equipped troops immediately taking control of the airport, port facilities and presidential palace. Meanwhile, naval warships and Coast Guard cutters set up a blockade of the country's coast to block the earthquake's victims from trying to flee to the US. The role of the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, is fairly typical. When it finally arrived in Haiti, (with Sidewinder missiles and helicopters), it did so without any emergency relief supplies. It refused to admit wounded Haitians to its large sick bay and temporarily blocked rescue flights to Florida. The US have refused to say how long they intend to stay in Haiti. General Douglas Fraser, chief of the US Southern Command, merely said the forces would be there as long as "necessary." Where have we heard that before?

Disaster Created by Capitalism

It is estimated that 500,000 people have flooded in to the rural areas from Port-au-Prince and other affected areas under the encouragement of the Government. Conditions in the make-shift camps are unbearable. As one student, Markinson Midey, said: "Anytime they bring food or water, the police make the trucks leave." Aid agencies have criticized the government for failing to organize proper camps and a result many have returned to the countryside where they have families. The fact that they

left in the first place because they couldn't make an adequate living off the land has meant that the strain on the 'host' families who now care for them is creating starvation conditions in the countryside. In many cases people are resorting to eating the seeds they have stored for the next season and eating or selling their livestock. The implications for future food production are as obvious as they are terrifying. For those left in the cities, life remains tough. Thousands of demonstrators, most of them women, marched through the streets of Pétionville, a Port-au-Prince suburb recently denouncing the local mayor, Lydie Parent, for hoarding food for resale and not distributing it to the hungry. According to Reuters demonstrators are angry that a significant amount of food aid has been channeled into informal markets where some officials are making a fortune.

The scale of human misery in Haiti cannot be exaggerated. There's not room to go into all the aspects of the consequences of capitalism's failure following the earthquake, but examples include the failure to make the emergency camps safe and the increasing incidents of rape and sexual violence against women and girls. Christian fundamentalists such as Baptist missionaries have exploited the chaos by taking children, the most vulnerable victims of the disaster, out of the country illegally. On top of all this the Haitian working class also have to contend with international profiteers who are already gleefully rubbing their hands at the prospect of an easy profit. Haiti's bourgeoisie wasted no time in eyeing the disaster speculatively. As Georges Sassine, President of Haiti's manufacturers association, told the *Washington Post*. "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste" and Reginald Boulos, owner of a 'small empire' of supermarkets, a hotel and a car dealership said "I think we need to give the message that we are open for business. This is really a land of opportunities." Meanwhile, US firms have begun jockeying for contracts to rebuild, fully aware of the vast profits to be made by skimming off the aid which is pouring in. One such company, AshBritt is already making deals with local businessmen and politicians to win bloated contracts, and like other conglomerates is eager to exploit cheap Haitian labour. Of course reconstruction requires social

stability, so rather than meet the needs of a desperate population, moves are already underway to transform Haiti into a military dictatorship jointly run with foreign forces. Haiti's legislative elections, previously scheduled for February and March, have been indefinitely postponed and the US in particular is preparing to take over the Haitian government. In February the *Miami Herald* reported that the US State Department had presented top Haitian officials with plans for an Interim Haiti Recovery Commission. The paper noted the commission's 'top priority' is to 'create a Haitian Development Authority to plan and coordinate billions in foreign assistance for at least 10 years.' The commission would be co-chaired by the Haitian Prime Minister and

...a distinguished senior international figure engaged in the recovery effort' (possibly Bill Clinton) and according to Trinity Washington University professor Robert Maguire, (who spoke positively about the plan), it sounded 'similar to an idea that Hillary Clinton was considering long before the earthquake.

So much for the US as the promoters of democracy then. As ever, the US is tightening its grip to make a fast buck while creating even more human misery.

Once again the effects of a natural disaster have been made worse by the system we live under. The needs of the survivors should have been paramount. Instead survivors have been vilified, neglected, abused and attacked as the needs of imperialism and the scramble for profit dominated. Capitalism is about as far from a rational or humane form of social organization as you could get. Life is cheap under it, and the lives of those who have suffered this appalling disaster seem cheapest of all. If anything shows the incompatibility of capitalism with the needs of humanity it is the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake.

RT

Afghanistan – Graveyard of Imperialist Ambition

The Famous “Surge”

In mid February the US, together with their British auxiliaries, launched an assault on the town of Marjah in Afghanistan's Helmand province. This town and the surrounding area have been in Taliban hands for several years. This operation, which US forces announced well in advance and publicised by dropping leaflets on the town, was the first major move in a new strategy following the so-called “surge” in US and NATO forces which President Obama ordered in December 2009.

The surge, under which a further 30,000 US and 5000 other NATO troops are being sent to Afghanistan, will bring the total number of US and other NATO troops to approximately 100,000 and 40,000 respectively. This number now significantly exceeds the number of Russian troops in the country at the peak of their war in Afghanistan in the late 1980's. This “surge” is supposed to end the insurgency by:

- separating the population from the insurgents
- strengthening the Afghan army and police
- offering an amnesty to Taliban fighters who change sides
- bolstering the Kabul government.
- enabling infrastructure development to occur.

At the same time as ordering the “surge” Obama stated that the sending of the extra troops was really preparation for a withdrawal of US

forces which would begin in July 2011. The announcement of the “surge” was followed by a conference, hosted by the British, which took place in London in late January. The message from this conference appeared to be that the allies were now seeking a negotiated peace with the Taliban. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, who were represented at the conference, were instructed to bring the Taliban to the conference table so such negotiations could begin. At the same time the Afghan president, Karzai, was ordered to clean up his government by weeding out the corrupt individuals and then call a grand meeting of all the tribal elders, the famous “Loya Jirga” to facilitate a negotiated peace. NATO, meanwhile, would continue training police and army until their number was increased to 300,000, and gradually provinces would be handed back to the exclusive control of the Kabul government. NATO operations were meanwhile to continue to prove to the Taliban that they could not win militarily.

It is clear from these proposals that the US and its henchmen are significantly lowering their stated ambitions for Afghanistan. All the chatter about democracy, freedom, human rights, the liberation of Afghan women, defeating Islamic fundamentalism and so on, which Bush and Blair so solemnly intoned, has fallen silent. Now the talk is only of achieving a stable puppet government which includes the Islamic fundamentalists but which can control the country with the support of US cash and a smaller military force. It is interesting to note how similar these

aims are to those of the Russians when they withdrew in 1989. The Russians aimed to install a puppet government which they could hold in power by economic and limited military support. In fact they succeeded in doing this temporarily and the government they left, headed by Najibullah, was able to control the country and keep the roads open so long as it was supplied with Russian fuel, weapons and advisors but the costs proved prohibitive. Once the Soviet Union collapsed and all support ended in 1991, this government collapsed.

The reasons the allies have lowered their aims are not difficult to understand. The invading forces have become so unpopular in Afghanistan with their cavalier attitude to the loss of Afghan civilian life that they are now the main recruiting agent for the Taliban. The Afghan government, which they are supporting, is utterly corrupt. Transparency International reported that it was the second most corrupt government on earth². It is a government which has been categorised as a coalition of war lords and drug traffickers. It is also a government which is seen as illegitimate since it quite openly rigged the election of August 2009 which gave Karzai his latest term as president. 2009 has been the worst year yet for loss of life amongst the invading forces with 520 soldiers killed. Domestic support for the war is flagging in the NATO countries, while the costs remain enormous. At a time when, for the US, unemployment stands at 10%, and there are between 2.3 and 3.5 million people homeless³ the spending on the war appears profligate. The latest US military budget allows \$130 billion for the Iraq and Afghan wars in 2010 and the cost of the surge adds a further \$30 billion, while it is well known there are other hidden costs which are not monitored by the US Congress. Although the real reasons why the US and its allies have embarked on this war are always concealed, but will be considered below, the reasons given out for domestic consumption are pathetic to say the least.⁴ In addition these reasons are always being amended and opinion polls show they are now not generally believed.



American armoured vehicle hit by IED laid by Taliban.

A majority in NATO countries have no idea why they are fighting in Afghanistan. NATO governments, such as the Netherlands and Canada, are threatening to pull their forces out while France and Germany remain reluctant to commit further forces. The US general in charge of operations in Afghanistan, McChrystal, declared, before the “surge” was agreed, that the war was being lost! Can the new approach succeed?

Afghanistan - a Stable US Protectorate?

Despite all the rhetoric, the new plan is essentially the old plan but a less ambitious version of it. The US is still aiming at creating a US protectorate in Afghanistan just as it was under the Bush administration. The lowering of the goals is, in essence, recognition of the limits of US military power and the need to reach the objective by negotiation as well as force.

The weaknesses in this plan, which many bourgeois commentators have been quick to point out, are its reliance on the Kabul government and its plan to separate the insurgents from the population.

The US victory over the Taliban in 2001 was achieved by backing one side in a civil war, namely the “Northern Alliance,” which was predominantly formed from Tajiks, against the Taliban government which was largely Pashtun. The Taliban were never able to consolidate power over the whole country even with the help of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The present government, and importantly the army, is largely made up of the former enemies of the Taliban, enemies with whom they were at war before the US invasion. Building up the army and police will inevitably mean strengthening the Tajik control of these forces. When one considers the corruption and illegitimacy of the present government, it is little wonder that US support for it is seen, by many Pashtuns, as equivalent to propping up a group of gangsters. In addition the US has extended the war into the Pashtun regions of Pakistan thereby alienating the Pashtun people on both sides of the border. The US defence secretary has equated the Taliban with Al Qaida and by implication with the Pashtun people, making the war appear as a war against the Pashtuns. Far from being a prelude to withdrawal, the US

actions appear to many Pashtuns as preparations to turn the whole region into a battlefield. There are 12 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan, amounting to 42% of the population, and a further 20 million in Pakistan. At present a majority appear to support the insurgency with fighters changing from insurgents to civilians and back again in response to the ebb and flow of the fighting. The US strategy of separating the civilians from the insurgents will therefore be extremely difficult without some sea change in the perceptions of the Pashtuns. The credibility of the US is at a low ebb. Apart from killing thousands of civilians with indiscriminate bombing and shelling, it is well known that prisoners are tortured and disappear into CIA controlled black holes at Bagram, Guantanamo and elsewhere never to re-emerge. This makes the offer of amnesty appear as a cheap trick.

The “surge” is supposed to be based on the Iraqi surge and its success in Anbar province. However, as has been pointed out by bourgeois journalists, the conditions in Afghanistan are quite different⁵. In Iraq the Sunni insurgents had lost a civil war against the Shia militias and were prepared to turn to the US for protection from the Shias but this is not the case in Afghanistan. On the contrary the Afghan insurgency appears to be gaining ground against an increasingly desperate invader. Also by announcing the “surge” was a prelude to withdrawal in 18 months, Obama has indicated that the US has no stomach for a long war. The message which the insurgents, and their backers, get from this is that they only have to wait and the US will leave. No negotiated settlement will be possible without the support of the Pashtun peoples and at present this looks like a distant prospect. The current position of the Taliban is that there can only be negotiations once the invaders have withdrawn, a position which is, of course, quite unacceptable to the US.

The Kabul government itself clearly does not want the US to withdraw. Karzai stated at the London conference that it would take a further 15 years to train the Afghan army and police rather than the 18 months Obama proposed. The problems the US has with the Karzai regime were revealed in a set of e-mails from the US Afghan ambassador, Eikenberry, which were

leaked to the press during the period when Obama was considering the sending of extra troops. One of the leaked e-mails states:

President Karzai is not an adequate partner. He continues to shun responsibility for defence, governance or development. He and much of his circle do not want the US to leave and are only too happy to see us invest further. They assume we covet their territory for a never ending war on terror and for military bases to use against the surrounding powers.⁶

While the last sentence shows Karzai is dead right about US intentions, Eikenberry's assessment of his inadequacy as a US puppet is also clearly correct.

The likely intransigence of the Taliban, the alienation of the Pashtun community in which the Taliban are based, and the inadequacy of the Kabul regime for the US's purposes, mean the new US strategy will almost certainly fail.

Whilst US imperialism may have altered its strategy its regional objectives remain exactly the same as they were during the Bush administration.

US Objectives

The regional objectives of the US are to control the major energy producing regions of the world, namely the Middle East and the Caspian Basin. This means creating pliant regimes and supporting them while removing those regimes which oppose US interests. All this requires having military forces and bases from which they can operate in the region. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are part of this regional objective. Afghanistan is seen as the gateway to the gas and oil riches of Turkmenistan and the Caspian Basin. As we have explained in previous texts⁷, the US wished to get the oil out of this region to the Indian Ocean via pipelines through Afghanistan and thereby exclude Russia and China from this energy resource. It was the Taliban's failure to secure the entire state and permit US plans to proceed with its plans to build pipelines which prompted the 2001 invasion. The attack of 9/11 provided useful camouflage for the operation but was not its cause.

Three recent developments have

Imperialism

shown that the US regional objectives are not only unchanged from the Bush era, but are being actively pursued by the Obama regime despite all his waffle about “change.”

The first is the escalation of the Afghan war which the surge clearly represents. One way or other the US intends to install a client regime in the country and have long term military bases. This is a step towards getting the oil and gas from the Caspian states into US hands.

The second is the extension of the war into Pakistan which Obama has openly described as part of the Afghan war. Obama has increased the attacks on Pakistani territory by drone aircraft⁸. Hundreds of people have now been killed in these attacks. In addition to the open military operations in the frontier provinces the secret operations of US troops within Pakistan itself have been stepped up. The presence of US forces in Pakistan was brought to light in early February when 3 US soldiers were killed by a Taliban bomb in the North West Frontier Province of the country. The US subsequently admitted the soldiers were training frontier guards. This is apparently part of a secret war which the US has been conducting with funds which don't appear in the published figures for aid to Pakistan. The training of the frontier forces is part of a \$400 million, previously secret, assistance programme.⁹ In addition the US is becoming more directly involved with advising the Pakistani army and giving it weapons. The US gave the Pakistani military \$3bn in 2009 and it is reported that the defence secretary, Gates, during a visit in January, offered the Pakistan army 12 drone aircraft to use against the Taliban themselves.

The third development is the stepping up of operations in the Persian Gulf and operations against Iran. The US is now directly intervening in Yemen. Its special forces are operating in the country and its drones are killing suspects in the north of the country. The Congress has authorised \$121 million to prop up the unpopular regime and US military personnel are training the Yemeni army.¹⁰ In February, as part of a series of moves against Iran, the US sent naval forces capable of shooting down missiles into the Persian Gulf and announced that missile defence batteries were to be installed in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates

(UAE), Qatar and Bahrain. In addition billions of arms have been sold to the US Gulf clients. The UAE, for example, now has 80 F16 fighter aircraft which, US General Petraeus boasts, would be able wipe out the entire Iranian air force. These measures are clearly designed to neutralise any Iranian counter strike following an attack on its nuclear facilities. This can only mean that a direct attack on Iran is again being considered and prepared for. The Iranian regime is still unacceptable to the US and the US aims in one way or another to change it.

Why, it is often asked, is the US, which remains the only superpower, struggling to achieve its aims when its enemies are not supported by any major power?

Hidden Imperialist Struggle

When the Russians were trying to install a client regime in Afghanistan the Islamic resistance was openly supported and armed by the US. This was the mirror image of what occurred in the Vietnam War. The development of these two wars was a general representation of the pattern of all the national struggles which took place in the period from the Second World War to the collapse of the Russian bloc. These wars were characterised by Left Communists as inter-imperialist wars, since even when the major imperialist powers were not fighting themselves they were supporting their clients thereby creating proxy imperialist wars. One of the reasons the US was so happy to charge into the Afghan and Iraqi quagmires was that they considered that in the new historical period, which followed the collapse of Russian imperialism, the pattern of the post war period could not be repeated. No other power, they argued, would dare to openly back forces opposed to the US and hence achieving their objectives would be relatively easy.

Whilst it is true that no other power has dared to openly back the US's enemies, nonetheless US rivals have found ways of frustrating US plans and indirectly supporting US enemies. There is a hidden imperialist dimension to the wars of the new period and these wars are, therefore, still inter-imperialist wars.

In the Afghan war the main backer of the Taliban is a section of the

Pakistani army the Inter Services Intelligence or ISI¹¹. This group do not see Pakistani interests as being synonymous with US interests. They feel they have been double crossed by the US and sacrificed for wider US interests. They are particularly unhappy with US support for India and Indian involvement in Afghanistan, particularly in training the Afghan army. They see the old alliance with China as more advantageous to Pakistani interests. Pakistan is therefore in the classic, but dangerous, position of playing off one imperialist power against another while accepting favours from both. The Taliban is Pakistan's pawn in this game.

In the regional theatre both China and Russia fully understand US aims as being to exclude them from the energy resources of the Caspian and the Gulf and have formed the “Shanghai Cooperation Agreement” as a counter to US penetration into Central Asia. They are quite happy to see the US mired in Afghanistan, while they set about building pipelines to take the Caspian gas and oil to the north and the east. The Afghan war has therefore an inter-imperialist dimension.

It is a similar story in the Middle East where Russia and China are excluded from the areas dominated by the US and the US is attempting to freeze these powers out of Iraq. China and Russia have gravitated to Iran where they have been given enormous oil and gas contracts to the detriment of the US. US attempts to change the Iranian regime via sanctions or through a direct military attack are made more difficult by diplomatic support for Iran at the UN. Russia continues to assist Iran with its civilian nuclear power programme and sells the country weapons systems while China is negotiating to build pipelines to take Iranian gas and oil east via Pakistan. These moves clearly undermine US attempts to isolate Iran.¹² The struggle in the Gulf, therefore, also has a clear inter-imperialist dimension.

Another Bloody Chapter in the Ravages of Imperialism

Obama's escalation of the war is opening another bloody chapter in the struggle for control of the energy resources of Central Asia. The surge will not end the war; rather it will lead to more death and destruction. The irony of awarding Obama a Nobel “Peace”



prize at more or less at the same time as he was extending the Afghan war shows the depravity of bourgeois society¹³. In his acceptance speech he sang the old refrain of all imperialist powers since the dawn of class society, namely that “war is the road to peace.” Although he was extending the war, he argued, this would lead to peace and the capitulation of the enemy.

Obama is the new face of US imperialism but is pursuing precisely the same objectives as Bush. No one should be surprised at this since the objectives of US imperialism are determined by the needs of US capitalism, in particular competitiveness and its profitability. These are needs determined by the infrastructure of US capitalism, needs which the political superstructure can only reflect. Politicians are put in place to express the needs of the capitalist infrastructure and there is no essential difference between bourgeois politicians. The differences are cosmetic. While all the peace prizes are being awarded and the pretty speeches are being made the imperialist juggernaut, which capitalism has spawned, slouches on wreaking destruction and death across countries, leaving a trail of ruin and misery in its wake and always, always demanding more sacrifices and more victims.

Revolutionary Defeatism

As we have shown above the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are inter-imperialist wars. The only adequate political response of communists to inter-imperialist wars is the adoption of the politics of revolutionary defeatism. This means communists should call on workers to:

- oppose the war on the basis of class
- give no support to either side in the struggle
- continue the class struggle against their own bourgeoisie.
- give solidarity to workers from the opposing side in their struggle against their own bourgeoisie.

The orientation of this policy is towards turning the imperialist war into a civil war and the overthrow of bourgeois power. This was the policy adopted by the Bolsheviks during the First World War which was a decisive step towards the October revolution.

Much of what is generally called the “left” give support to the enemies of US imperialism. They argue that the major imperialism must be defeated before workers can struggle for their own class interests. Workers interests must therefore be subordinated to the bourgeois interests of the nation. Thus groups such as “Hamas” in Gaza, “Hezbollah” in Lebanon and the “Taliban” in Afghanistan receive the “left’s” support simply because they are fighting the major imperialist power. The utterly reactionary nature of these political forces is not the real issue. The real issue is that these groups are proxies of imperialism and by supporting them the “left” reveal the essential bourgeois basis of their politics. Their support represents support for the imperialist powers opposed to the US and therefore support for the continuation of imperialist war. The losses of one imperialist power can only represent the gains of an opposing imperialist power and both powers stand firmly for the continuation of capitalism and against the interests of the working class.

While we recognise that the Iraq and Afghan wars are skirmishes rather than full scale imperialist conflicts, and the prospect of turning them into civil wars is remote, it is still essential that communists oppose these wars on class lines and orient their opposition towards the destruction of capitalist society. Imperialist war is the direct result of the capitalist system of production and can only be ended by the overthrow of capitalist production relations. Actions of workers for

their own class interests, especially when these disrupt the war plans of the bourgeoisie, are the seeds which can lead to real class opposition to imperialist war and the construction of a higher form of society.

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Footnotes

1 The Russians had approximately 120 000 troops in Afghanistan at the height of the war.

2 See Transparency International report 17/10/09

3 This is probably an underestimate. See <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/526/homeless-facts.html>

4 We are told the war was to defeat Al Qaida, to install democracy, to make the streets of London and New York safe, to liberate Afghan women, to defeat Islamic fundamentalism etc.

5 See Patrick Cockburn *The Independent* 5/12/10 “US surge will only prolong the war.”

6 Quoted in *The Guardian* 27/01/10. Eikenberry opposed the “surge” and these e-mails were leaked to give weight to his views.

7 See *Revolutionary Perspectives* 50 “The great game in central Asia. US imperialism increases its stakes.”

8 In one day 2/2/10 drones fired 17 missiles at targets in North Waziristan province of Pakistan. *Independent* 4/2/10. These attacks represent assassinations of “suspected enemies” without any due process of law, supposedly a part of our famous “values”, values for which we are always being told we are fighting. They kill hundreds of people who happen to be where the US thinks the suspect might be. They cannot be categorised as anything other than state terrorism and the fact that they are presented as part of a “war on terror” is another illustration of the shameless hypocrisy of US imperialism.

9 See *The Independent* 4/2/10.

10 See Press TV <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=117176§ionid=3510203>

11 It was interesting to note that at the London conference the Pakistanis were being called upon to bring the Taliban to the conference table. This is a clear recognition that the Pakistanis are the gatekeepers of the Taliban.

12 This is considered in more detail in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 50 “The great game in central Asia – US imperialism increases its stakes.”

13 See <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2009-10-14/%E2%80%99Cwar-is-peace%E2%80%9D-on-the-award-of-the-2009-nobel-peace-prize-to-president-obama> or send a stamped addressed envelope to our London box for a free copy of our broadsheet *Aurora* for our initial comment on this.

Reply to the Internationalist Communist Tendency

At their most recent congress, the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP), changed its name to Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT). The ICT is an international grouping which places itself in the tradition of elements in the post WW2 Italian communist left. In the last issue of their periodical prior to adopting their new name, the group published a brief article on The Commune, and invited us to reply. Joe Thorne responds, discussing our politics in several areas.

Comrades,

Thank you for taking the time to review the politics of The Commune in issue 50 of Revolutionary Perspectives, and thank you in particular for your positive comments. You ask a good question: are we a radical new grouping, or the old left in a new form?

Perhaps the best method will be to consider some of the criticisms raised in your article, under six main headings.

Party

There is no reference to the need to create an international proletarian party which we see as playing an essential role in developing class consciousness and organising the class.

One reason not to refer obliquely to the need for 'a party' is that the meaning of this term is very unclear, and subject to different interpretations. For instance, giving a typical Trotskyist interpretation, the AWL hold that "a combat party ... is an army on the march. ... The central leadership, democratically elected and controlled, must be in charge. As the highest active consciousness, its directives are binding." [1] This "central leadership" is, of course, the executive committee, and many Trotskyist organisations give this committee the right to proscribe at will the form that external and internal organising, debate and discussion may take. This idea of the party is most widely understood in the terms given to us by contemporary Trotskyists – in fact, an ahistorical representation of, the real Bolshevik experience. [2] We do not know if this is what the ICT means when it refers to the "centralised party" [3]: if it is, we disagree. We understand that the left communist milieu often uses the term "centralised" to mean something like "unified" or "coordinated". But we ourselves do not believe that the revolution will have an executive committee (nor, if it did, would it be allowed to survive), and so it does not necessarily make

sense for us to declare straightforwardly and without qualification for "the party". Of course, the term need not be used in this way. We know that Marx talked of the party at times "in the historical sense", and in this sense we endorse the idea, in this sense we are for the party [4]. What is more, we endorse the idea of an international revolutionary movement, perhaps working through a number of formal, and perhaps some informal, organisations, in as unified and organised a manner as possible toward the social revolution. In this sense, we are for the party, although this fact is not expressed in such terms in our platform. (We know that the class struggle itself is the important thing, and that it arises organically from below, creating its own organisations as it does so. It is not something ordered by any formal party, but at best, promoted, assisted, sharpened and generalised by it.) But as G.P. Maximov put it, "The issue is not in the name, but in its content, in the organisational structure of the Party, in the principles on which it is founded." [5] These are the grounds for real debate.

Organisation

Their conception of organisation is somewhat nebulous, seeking to establish a 'pluralist communist network'.

... This organisational model borrows from libertarianism and anarchism.

This latter judgement may be correct: but it is not of itself a criticism. There is, in fact, no orthodox theory of what a small political group in an advanced capitalist society should be like. (Although we are not, as such, concerned with what is orthodox and what is not). We do not formally describe ourselves, as an organisation, as libertarian, though several of our members may adopt this label. What is pluralism? Just the idea that members, or groups of members, may disagree with each other, whether in public or private, provided they are nonetheless within the bounds of our platform. We seek to produce tendencies towards theoretical unity as an organic product of our own ongoing education, discussion and debate. But there are always countervailing tendencies: new facts, new ideas, new arguments. This tension is a real one; we hope to exist in it without drifting either to dogma, or a state of affairs in which differences are left unexamined. At present, our platform is brief and not always clearly specified. We are a little more than a year old: for now, it does what it needs to. Perhaps in the future it

will become more detailed. But the level of detail in a platform – a basis of unity – has no ideal level of specificity, it must relate to the mutual development of ideas amongst the people involved. Currently, it does.

Nationalism

One misunderstanding, at least, is entirely understandable, and we should welcome the opportunity to correct it.

They quite reasonably denounce national oppression but there appears to be no clear understanding of the fundamentally anti-proletarian nature of national movements. This was demonstrated at a recent Commune discussion meeting in London at which supporters of the Tamil LTTE were given a platform.

This was an inadvertent mistake on our part. Given the massacres of Tamils in Sri Lanka ongoing at the time, we sought a speaker with some knowledge of the situation. One was recommended to us at short notice, and we were not able to verify their politics in advance. We were not aware that we would be hosting a fully fledged LTTE apologist. However, despite the chauvinism of this speaker, the discussion was generally good, albeit slightly odd, and the relevant political criticisms were drawn out by our comrades, and others. To be clear, we give no form of support to groups such as the LTTE, and insofar as they attack the working class, as is generally the case, we oppose them.

However, we do not therefore say that national movements necessarily have a "fundamentally anti-proletarian nature". If it is reasonable to denounce national oppression, it follows that it is legitimate for movements to take place in opposition to such oppression. For sure, within those movements, organisations like the LTTE take anti working class actions and stances, but it does not follow that we should be opposed to the idea of a movement against national oppression as such; we should not be so opposed.

The unions

The most problematic area is their perspective on how the class struggle needs to develop. They correctly identify the anti-working class nature of the trade union leadership and bureaucracy but, their solution is good old fashioned leftist rank and fileism. In other words the rank and file should wrest control of the unions from the bureaucracy and in so doing transform the unions back into genuine working class organisations.

Nowhere do we express the “the belief that the trade unions can be transformed into revolutionary organisations”. We have not promoted such a view: though comrades are welcome to supply any quotations from our articles which take this position. We do not, on the other hand, abstain from ever supporting one candidate over another in union elections as a matter of principle: it is a matter of tactics. What good will it do? That depends: ordinarily not much, certainly not without a related increase in militancy at the base. But it is not necessarily entirely irrelevant, either.

We are not slavish apostles of the official methods, any more than we make their rejection an absolute. For example, a recent article on the suspension of the Royal Mail strikes on our website, reads, CWU members should push inside the union for the action to be resumed, insisting on the most democratic forms of rank and file control. But they cannot rely on this strategy being successful. Therefore, they should also be prepared, should it be necessary, to take, support and spread unofficial action, from office to office, from one end of the country to the other. The tradition of not handling work from striking offices needs to be resurrected.[6]

We think that most unions are working class organisations. They cannot fully express the universal, historic needs of the class as a whole. And, not infrequently, they act against the interests of the class. But they are overwhelmingly composed of working class people, and are often expressions of those people’s attempts to further their class interests, albeit in incomplete and mediated form.

The left

The Commune do not appear to have a clear understanding of class lines which are forged from real historical experiences, thus debates with the bourgeois left are seen as a valid political activity.

We do see debates with what you call the “bourgeois” left as valid political activity. Do members of the ICT refuse to speak to Trotskyist workmates or neighbours about politics? If not, then you also debate with the bourgeois left. Do we seek ‘unity’ with members of the larger Trotskyist organisations? If it is possible to work together in some way which means we do not sacrifice our independence and political clarity, yes.

True, “it was the German Social Democrats who murdered revolutionaries such as Liebknecht and Luxemburg and destroyed the revolutionary potential of the German workers from within.” But the SWP, even if they were precise analogues for the SPD (they are not),

are not a mortal threat to anyone. It is idealistic in the extreme to take the formal positions, or present day behaviour, let alone vague historical equivalents, of such groups, and project them into an imagined revolutionary scenario at an undetermined point in the future. This is not a serious method. The nature of organisations like those that make up the Trotskyist left is not necessarily fixed in stone. Given the fact that they incorporate a number of serious working class militants, we should value the possibility of shifting their positions in a communist direction. To say that we are in favour of left unity, under the condition of our own real independence, is only to say that we are in favour of an opportunity to make that possibility a reality.

Workers’ self management

Of course in a post revolutionary situation workers’ self management would prevail as a fundamental characteristic of socialist production. However The Commune appear to share an anarchist view that workers’ self management can develop within capitalism and contribute to its demise.

Our objective is not self-managed capitalism, an archipelago of cooperatives in the sea of the capitalist market. Our objective is communism, and we raise self management as an integral component of that precisely because that “fundamental characteristic” has been so maligned and abused by various statist socialists over the years. We consider it necessary to issue a corrective.

Can “workers’ self management develop within capitalism and contribute to its demise”? It depends what you mean. What do we say, for example, about the occupied factories in Argentina? Do these express, in a sense, workers’ self management? Clearly they do. Was – is – the battle to establish and defend them a class battle, expressing communist content and aspirations, just as militant strikes and action on the job do? Yes. So in that sense do instances of workers’ self management appear as part of the movement towards communism? They do. Is the appearance of such phenomena infrequent and highly contingent? Yes. So should we rely solely or even mainly on expropriation à la Zanon as a revolutionary vehicle? No, but we can accept it as one tactic among others.

And furthermore, in the crisis of capitalism of which the social revolution is a part, we assume that it will be necessary for some workers to engage in some sorts of production: for even a revolutionary class needs to eat. While not every workplace – perhaps not even most – will be appropriate to self man-

agement, being made redundant by the passing of the order to whose needs their product corresponds, some will. How will this production be managed? We suggest, by communist self management. In this second limited sense, then, self management can contribute to capitalism’s demise.

Conclusion

In one sense, we are the old left in a new form: several of our members are drawn from the large layer of militants experienced in, and disillusioned with, the Trotskyist movement. And we clearly adopt a more open form. But the old left is part of our roots. Do we discard everything from that experience? No.

Yet, are we a radical new grouping? Yes. We do not have the same ideas as the Internationalist Communist Tendency. The Commune represents a break with statism, nationalism, organisational authoritarianism, and crude accounts of various elements of class struggle, including the idea of the party. Our appraisal of the unions is critical, alongside our conviction that they represent, albeit often in bureaucratised form, attempts by workers to organise around their class interests: attempts that are worth relating to. We would welcome further discussion. Members of the ICT continue to be welcome at our events.

For communism,

Joe Thorne

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5750>

[2] C.f. Another look at the organisation question, Communist Bulletin Group, http://cbg.l10mb.com/organisation_2.pdf

[3] <http://www.ibrp.org/en/articles/2009-10-26/the-international-bureau-for-the-revolutionary-party-becomes-the-internationalis>

[4] Letter to Freiligrath, 29th February 1860, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1860/letters/60_02_29.htm. Freiligrath’s letter, and more of Marx’s commentary, can be read here: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1860/letters/60_01_11.htm

[5] <http://libcom.org/library/constructive-anarchism-debate-platform-g-p-maksimov>

[6] <http://thecomune.wordpress>.

Comment on The Commune's Reply to RP 50

We would like to thank The Commune for their reply to our critique of their group which we published in *Revolutionary Perspectives* No 50. We will start by clarifying the issue of who we are. The Commune refer to us as the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) formerly known as the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party. This is only partially correct; *Revolutionary Perspectives* is the publication of the Communist Workers Organisation. We are the British affiliates of the ICT (formerly the IBRP) and whilst engaging in joint activities and theoretical development with the other ICT sections we are responsible for our own activities on the ground where we live. Neither the CWO, nor the ICT, consider themselves to be the revolutionary party but part of an international tendency working towards its creation. Our website is now <http://www.leftcom.org/> but we can still be reached on <http://www.ibrp.org/>.

On a very brief historical note, the origins of our tendency go back to the Italian left's opposition to the Stalinisation of the Third International in the 1920s and not just to the post World War 2 Italian Communist Left as stated by The Commune (see, for example, our pamphlet on the Committee of Intesa of 1925).

Returning to The Commune's reply to our article, we welcome your willingness to engage in discussion on the issues raised in our critique. Whilst there are number of points we can agree on, we do think that that your response indicated a number of misconceptions about our positions. We will now attempt to take the debate further by explaining this in more detail.

Organisation: The Party and the Class

The Commune accept that their stated ambivalence on the party question stems at least in part from their view that 'the meaning of this term is very unclear, and subject to different interpretations'. The perceived complexity of the issue is not a principled reason for not having a clear position. We can see why you are wary of the concept of a centralised party as represented by the myriad Trotskyist groups that each claim to be the revolutionary party and then split off into ever more grouplets over the most arcane differences. This is not what the party is or what we envisage by advocating the need for a centralised party. We welcome

this opportunity to clarify what our views on the party are. For the CWO the revolutionary party is not separate from the class. Its emergence is a product of the revolutionary development of the class. It is an essential historically-discovered tool (like the soviets or councils) that enables the working class to overthrow capitalism and establish a communist society. The party does not create the heightened class struggle that will be an essential precursor to any revolutionary situation, but we regard it is essential for the party to inform and be prepared to lead that struggle. Whilst class consciousness develops rapidly in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation, the historical evidence indicates that the class as a whole does not spontaneously develop communist consciousness. In such a situation revolutionaries who have made it their business to understand the history and past experiences of the class struggle and, have a clear vision of the way ahead, would be abdicating their responsibility if they did not bring those experiences back to the struggle and the revolutionary organs of the working class, such as workers councils. We consider that without such actions by a class party all revolts by the working class will be contained within capitalism. Whilst we believe that the most effective party is a centralised party, we do not advocate a monolithic party. Your quotation from the AWL shows that they adhere to a form of democratic centralism, as do we, but they then distort it by insisting that the central committee has "the right to proscribe at will the form that external and internal organising, debate and discussion may take". This is not centralisation but a recipe for dictatorship. The norms of internal debate are governed by statutes which no executive can meddle with (they can only be established by the general assembly of all the militants or congresses or whatever). Our statutes actually give full rights to both factions (single issue groups) and tendencies (formed around more than one issue). The existence of factions and a considerable degree of local autonomy are essential expressions of a workers' democratic organisation. What we do need though is an instrument for united action of workers across the world against a global enemy. Isolated and in small groups we can be picked off and defeated. United and organised we will be able to take on the historic task which the

contradictions of capitalism daily makes more necessary. We know that many on the libertarian wing of communism take comfort in the current situation of many small groups but if they do not ultimately come together then capitalism will have a free hand to take us down the road to barbarism. Of course the other issue is fear. The development of the Bolshevik Party from Social Democratic stalwart to revolutionary instrument of the Russian workers and then into the ruler of the state dominating a new form of capitalist exploitation was a tragedy from which we have yet to recover. These developments were ultimately determined by the failure of the revolution to spread to the European proletarian heartlands and not by the weakness of the party form of organisation. It would be a mistake to draw from this experience that an international party is not just unnecessary but an outright danger. The key issue to the founders of our tendency was that the party leads the revolution but it does not become the government (as the Bolsheviks did). Once power has been transferred from the capitalists to the workers the task of building socialism/communism is the task of the working class as a whole. No vanguard, however clever, can do it as the new society will require a new degree of direct participation by all its citizens. The task of the party is to lead the fight against world capitalism, the task of all the class (including party members) is to begin building a new society which will also lead to a further transformation of human consciousness.

National Liberation

We are pleased to note that you accepted our criticism of holding a meeting with the bourgeois nationalists of the LTTE. However we probably still have some differences on this issue. In your reply you say "we do not therefore say that national movements have a fundamentally anti-proletarian nature". We do, and the reason we do is not because of some 'ultra left' dogma but because every historical example we are aware of clearly shows that all national movements are fundamentally anti-proletarian. The nation state has historically been, and still remains, the vehicle of the bourgeoisie for developing capitalism nationally, achieving national capital accumulation, and projecting national bourgeois interests via imperialism. Hence all national struggles

can only remain entrapped within these parameters. While we recognise that there were tactical arguments for the proletariat to support the national bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century, namely that this would assist the development of the proletariat as a class, we consider these arguments are no longer valid. The proletariat is now an international class and its agenda is the construction of a communist world. To achieve this, its struggles have to be international and necessarily against the national bourgeoisie. The history of the last century contains masses of empirical evidence illustrating that when sections of the proletariat shed their blood for the national bourgeoisie they also create the ideological weapons with which the national bourgeoisie oppresses and exploits them once the national struggle is won. The example of South Africa is only the latest of a very long list. Of course the oppression of a people by virtue of race, ethnicity or nationality is a manifestation of the brutality of class society, and by and large it is the working class that suffers the most. But, there can be no national solution to the emancipation of the working class, and wherever workers have supported national movement they have just ended up swapping one set of exploiters for another and often been massacred by their own bourgeoisie for their pains. Even where there is national oppression against a whole people, such as is the case with the Palestinians, it is clear that the so called national liberation movements of Fatah and Hamas not only have nothing to offer the working class, but actively work to curtail class struggle. The only way ahead is for workers to wage class struggle against their exploiters be they Israeli or Palestinian and to try to spread the struggle across national boundaries. For the CWO, the idea that there can be proletarian content in a national struggle is an unfortunate legacy of the Lenin's support for the 'right of nations to self determination' which was already out of date in 1917 and has no relevance at all to the world in the 21st century.

Trade Unions

We happily stand corrected on our comment that you believe that the unions can be transformed into revolutionary organisations and accept that you have not made that claim. We note your willingness to criticise the trade union bureaucracy but we are not convinced that your position on the unions is significantly different from the Trotskyists on the one hand, and the majority of anarchists on the other. Being critical of the bureaucracy is self

evident and does not require a great deal of class consciousness. Your position on the unions appears to be riddled with contradictions; you say that 'most unions are working class organisations' but at the same time say that 'not infrequently they act against the interests of the class'. The fact that you can make two such seemingly contradictory statements suggests the lack of a coherent analysis of the nature of trade unionism. For the Commune the unions are working class organisations because they are 'overwhelmingly composed of working class people'. By using that definition, the same could be said for the British National Party or the Catholic Church. The class composition of an organisation does not determine its class orientation, and as you have correctly observed the unions often (we would say almost always) act against workers' interests. You also say that 'most' unions are working class organisations but there is no explanation why some are working class organisations and why others are not.

A proper analysis of the unions has nothing to do with whether or not they have left or right wing leaders or, have a membership composed of blue collar or white collar workers. It must begin with the function of the unions in contemporary capitalist society which on an economic level is to make negotiate the sale of labour power in the context of increasingly narrow constraints. Politically the unions in the advanced capitalist countries are more or less wholly integrated into the state, and they play a conscious role in keeping workers divided along union and geographic lines. The fact that you concluded in your article on the CWU's predictable sell-out of the postal workers that:

"Therefore, they should also be prepared, should it be necessary, to take, support and spread unofficial action, from office to office, from one end of the country to the other"

seems to demonstrate that you too can see the futility of keeping the strikes within union forms.

An understanding of the fundamentally reactionary nature of the trade unions in this period does not mean that the CWO ignores the unions or makes abstract calls for workers to leave the unions unless there is a concrete alternative. The extent to which we participate in the unions is largely a tactical question; we clearly could not become part of the union bureaucracy but because they are places which regroup workers

(albeit on sectional and national bases) we join them in order to get a direct entry to workers' assemblies etc. The main thrust of our intervention is to point out to workers the limits of trade union struggle and pose an alternative of developing a broader struggle beyond trade union constraints. We do try to organise workers outside of unions in workplace, territorial or factory groups. Currently in Britain this is just an aspiration but our comrades in Italy have managed to organise a small number of such groups which are made up of our members plus other militant workers who recognise the role of the unions in their workplace. This is because we don't think a communist presence can be built up solely by propaganda or theory but by communists demonstrating in practice that they "understand the line of march" of the working class.

The Left

The Commune believes that joint work with the bourgeois left is appropriate provided that independence and political clarity is not sacrificed. We do not share this view. Despite the sincere nature of some of the militants of these organisations, revolutionaries cannot participate with organisations whose role is to defend capitalism in one form or another. The SWP may have been the first Trotskyist organisation to apprehend the state capitalist nature of the Soviet Union, but this has not prevented it from advocating state capitalist measures in the West. The 'socialism' of the SWP and other Trotskyist groups is indistinguishable from the state capitalist programme of the Labour left (as far as it still exists) who they regard as comrades. Working with 'the left' is not therefore just a tactical question, if it were we would in principle be prepared to do it. The real issue is that the Trotskyist / Stalinist / Social Democratic left, as well as having perpetrated bloody betrayals of the working class in the past, also have no vision of what Communism is. Of course we relate to sincere but misguided militants in these groups as individuals and seek to win them to our arguments. But to seek to change the nature of these organisations is a futile and corrupting endeavour. Just try to raise real communist arguments at a leftist meeting and count the seconds before you get closed down by the Chair. If The Commune can produce any example of a bourgeois leftist organisation that has transformed itself into a genuine communist organisation we would be interested to know about it.

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CWO Public Meeting in Manchester

On January 23 2009 the CWO held its first public meeting in Manchester for some years as a result of requests from local readers. The text which follows was given as the introduction to the meeting. Its basic framework was broadly accepted by the meeting, despite the apparent attendance of sympathisers and members of a number of different currents (including the Anarchist Federation, the International Communist Current (ICC), the Commune, and members of the Midlands Discussion Forum (MDF, as well as individual libertarian and left communists). Given this measure of agreement most of the subsequent discussion focussed on the significant features of the recent struggles at Visteon, in Royal Mail (where a former postman who is a member of the ICC gave some interesting insights into previous union manoeuvres against the development of a real struggle) and the Lindsay Oil refinery dispute. Indeed there was such close agreement on this theme that we did the “summing up” long before the end in order that the discussion could move on to focus on the prospects for the coming period of struggle. Here none of us had a crystal ball but there seemed to be general agreement that the biggest problem currently is that the class as a whole has not yet responded to the austerity measures so far enacted against us following the collapse of the speculative bubble of the last few years. Speakers from the MDF reported how many workers they were in contact with thought that if they accepted sacrifices capitalism would stabilise and their living conditions would improve, while workers who had made redundant tended to look for individual solutions. In this context though there was a general agreement that it will be easy for unions to once again present themselves as “militant” in order to contain the struggle within lines acceptable to capital. The idea that most workers were no longer in unions and that therefore would be able to mount a more tenacious resistance was not generally accepted since what we are also faced with is a much more fragmented working class than in the past. Helped by an unprecedented control of the media which today enters everyone’s homes the ruling class have been hugely successful in getting workers to think of themselves as individual citizens rather than the collective exploited class. The one certainty is that the capitalists have survived this period of crisis largely because workers have taken the brunt of the pain without a widespread collective fight. This remains the most important and essential condition for any transformation in consciousness.

The meeting was very heartening for us mainly because it was dominated by a sense of seriousness in confronting the real problems of the working class today and idle polemical exchanges were absent. All the participants were looking for class solidarity and concrete action. On this we proposed once again the need to establish groups of workers to maintain the gains of one struggle into the next. These would not be exclusively made of communists but would include those who saw that any advance for the working class in its fight against the cuts and austerity of the immediate future would have to also take on the union attempts to maintain the struggle on grounds acceptable to capital. These groups would not necessarily be found only in workplaces (factory groups as we used to call them) but also in communities (territorial groups) which are also under attack. Whatever the precise nature of these groups they would be linked to the political organisation which would have to work to maintain them and to try to unite workers not only within nations but more critically across nations since the capitalist attacks are international and affect all workers. Support for this was voiced from the floor with and some speakers welcoming the idea as proposing something positive; whereas a criticism of the unions, which was easy to make, was simply negative and did not offer a way forward. We were asked if we would accept those who belonged to different political tendencies in ICT factory groups. We said that we would if the individuals concerned unequivocally recognised the nature of the unions today and had no reformist illusions. Since we had worked with others in other groups before, as in the Sheffield “No War but the Class War” it was not a problem but at the moment we were the only ones advocating them as an essential link between the political organisation of the class and the class as a whole.

We had begun the meeting by thanking the ICC for generously postponing their own meeting set for the same day and gave them space at the end to advertise their next meetings. It was also announced at the end of the meeting that a Manchester discussion group was also being set up (details to be found at libcom.org).

Unions – Whose Side Are They On? (talk from Manchester meeting 23 Jan 2010)

Introduction

The title of this meeting is **Unions – Whose Side Are They On?** If you were to ask that question to any worker passing this building now it is likely that they would think you were being stupid as the answer is so obvious.

After all the unions are the only organisations in capitalist society which can claim to be mass workers bodies with millions of members. They have been the target of capitalist laws restricting their ability to defend their members and the worst firms in Britain, from Asda to Orange, to Eddie Stobart, all have no union policies in order to impose their own rates of pay and conditions. Unions do also occasionally call strikes and, since the financial bubble burst eighteen months ago, the ruling class press has been

full of worries about a return to “the winter of discontent” of thirty one years ago. And did we not establish unions in the nineteenth century which not only fought the worst wage cutting practices of the capitalist but also helped to organise us as a class? As Marx said in a speech to trades unionists in Hanover in 1869 “Trades unions are the schools of socialism”. In places like Asia and Latin America workers who try to organise unions are regularly and routinely murdered. As we have recorded in our own press the leaders of the Tehran bus workers union have been languishing in Evrem prison for the last 3 years or so. Superficially then there is no debate. Both empirically and theoretically unions are working class organisations. If only it were so simple. As Marx also said, in another context, “if things and

their essence were the same then what need for science?”. In other words we have to explain what lies behind the phenomenon we are looking at. A slightly closer look at the union issue reveals an altogether different reality.

The Origins of Unions

It is true that unions in the UK mainly began in the period after 1824 as fighting organisations of the working class largely to try to prevent wage cuts and defend living standards. Workers paid into a fund to build up a war chest to enable them to go on all-out strike for as long as possible. There were no paid officials nor did they require a bureaucracy, let alone General Secretaries on 6 figure salaries (although running off with the union funds in the nineteenth century was not unknown) They were primarily

fighting organisations which expressed the basic organisational needs of the working class, and this is what Marx and Engels saw in them. Every strike either succeeded, or the workers were ruined for years, and the union might not even exist during that time. The one thing that did not diminish was workers' recognition that the only weapon the working class has its collective strength.

However, even before unions became legally recognised in Britain (which was not until 1871), many of the skilled workers unions were already changing and becoming permanent. Most adopted some form of investment fund and acted as friendly societies to provide funds to individual members who were unemployed or ill. The defence of the workers in a particular trade replaced the notion of collective solidarity of all workers. As Marx summed it up in 1866

Too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital, the Trades' Unions have not yet fully understood their power of acting against the system of wages slavery itself. (from Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council The Different Questions August 1866)

This was to become a constant theme with Marx and Engels. They regarded the unions as the place where the unconscious development of class identity was taking place and always hoped that it would then take on a wider meaning. They wrote several passages like the following:

Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberately as organising centres of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves and acting as the champions and representatives of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the non-society men into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered powerless [French text has: "incapable of organised resistance"] by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large [French and German texts read: "convince

the broad masses of workers"] that their efforts, far from being narrow – and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions. op cit.

Or as Engels later put it

More than this, there are plenty of symptoms that the working class of this country is awakening to the consciousness that it has for some time been moving in the wrong groove [6]; that the present movements for higher wages and shorter hours exclusively, keep it in a vicious circle out of which there is no issue; that it is not the lowness of wages which forms the fundamental evil, but the wages system itself. This knowledge once generally spread amongst the working class, the position of Trades Unions must change considerably. They will no longer enjoy the privilege of being the only organisations of the working class. At the side of, or above, the Unions of special trades there must spring up a general Union, a political organisation of the working class as a whole. Engels in the Labour Standard in 1881

Unions and Imperialism

But the course of history did not take the road that Engels and Marx had hoped. As modern capitalism developed it has become more and more centralised to the point where monopolies and state capitalist industries dominated economic life. And the nature of class struggle was also changing. Unions also had developed into large permanent organisations. An unsuccessful strike no longer meant their collapse or their loss of all funds. Marx had pointed out against Citizen Weston that wage strikes did not lead to a rise in prices but to a fall in profits as all capitalists faced the same laws. However under monopoly conditions the monopolists can afford to put up wages and prices due to the extra profits they got on the world market. Monopoly companies can also ride a period of losses which bankrupt smaller rivals thus increasing the market share of the monopoly. The cooperation of the unions in regulating wages across whole industries suited the monopolists. At the same time the "class struggle" became a charade as it was turned on and off like a tap. The unions — in league with the Social Democratic and Labour Parties to which they were joined — became

increasingly satisfied with the system as long as it allowed them a say in its functioning. They did not question the capitalist mode of production — they sought only to regulate its worst excesses. Mainstream Social Democrats now completely broke from Marxism in maintaining that economic and political struggles were not part of the same fight for socialism. Reformism, jingoism, racism and imperialism became the guiding ideologies of the social democratic union leaders who were now infected with "parliamentary cretinism". In the years immediately preceding the First World War the class struggle grew more intense and many workers became more conscious and revolutionary. Whilst some looked to the revolutionary wing of social democracy many workers became discontented with the corrupt parliamentary practices of the so-called reformist socialists and turned to syndicalism. At first sight syndicalism seemed the perfect antidote to parliamentary reformism. Workers united together carry out a general strike and take over the running of the industries they work in. Not surprising that this had a wide appeal to workers at the beginning of the twentieth century. But syndicalism's rejection of the fact that revolution is also a political act found it out just as surely as the social chauvinism of the reformist socialists. When it came to imperialist war in 1914 both the bulk of social democracy and the majority of syndicalists in belligerent countries such as France supported the union sacrée of the nation united against a foreign foe.

Since the First World War the unions have acted to ensure that even the most significant and conscious struggles would end in accepting the legitimacy of the capitalist order (as in the 1926 General Strike). By putting nation before class the labour movement, whatever its political and organisational character in every country, worked to ensure that capitalism would make enough concessions to halt the revolutionary impulses of the workers and in return the unions would act as policemen for the capitalist class in the workplace. In a certain sense the unions' basic operation has not changed. They still acted as negotiators of the price of wage labour but whereas they were previously scrutinised closely by the workers whose interests

Life of the Organisation

they were directly fighting for, today they negotiate within the needs of the national capital. Unions have always accepted the rules of capitalism and their very existence depends on the continued existence of wage labour. As Marx famously argued unions

...ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'" (Marx, Wages, Price and Profit,

But they don't and the hopes that Marx and Engels had in the past that they might develop such a perspective fell foul of the actual function of the unions in capitalist society. Instead of the war to the end to defend living standards unions now negotiate their own influence on the labour market, often directly with government bodies. Their funds are largely invested in pension funds for their own officials rather than to fund a new episode of class struggle. Unions have never been revolutionary but it is clear that in the epoch of imperialism, of monopoly and state capitalism, of capitalist decadence if you like, the unions have not only failed to defend jobs but have stood in the way of a more general fight against the system.

Unions Today

Many on the so-called left (especially the followers of Trotsky) have argued that the failings of the unions are only because they are "bureaucratic" or about "a question of leadership". They have often argued for their capture by "revolutionaries" (like themselves) in order to give the leadership that has been so badly lacking. History has falsified this argument. Every so-called revolutionary or left leader who was elected to high union office has ended up acting as precisely as their predecessors (often then transferring to their ultimate reward in the House of Lords). If we take the CWU which called off the postal workers strikes just before Christmas we find confirmation of this. Billy Hayes was elected as the left alternative to John Keggie, Alan Johnson's chosen successor, because Johnson was seen to have betrayed



Slogans from the tramworkers strike in Milan 2008 - 'Against the Milan Transport Company the workers are in struggle' and 'Against casualisation and starvation wages'.

the postal workers in 1996. Today it is Hayes and Ward who have already negotiated away 63,000 jobs and have constantly assured the press that they will agree to some more going. The National Executive Committee of the CWU which contains members of the SWP and the Socialist (ex Militant) Party voted unanimously to call off the strikes. The problem is thus not just about personalities but about the role and function of the unions which operate for the benefit of UK Capital plc and not their members. The CWU leadership is not fighting for the workers but for their place in the capitalist order. They have repeatedly stated that they are prepared to cut even more jobs in the name of modernisation. By calling off the strikes they sacrificed postal workers are as pawns in their game to have a say in management.

In fact it was what happened in Royal Mail just before Christmas which prompted us to choose this issue for today's meeting but there are other recent examples of anti-working class activity by the union which others will no doubt refer to in the discussion which follows.

A proper analysis of the unions has nothing to do with whether or not they have left or right wing leaders or, have a membership composed of blue collar or white collar workers. It must begin with the function of the unions in contemporary capitalist society which on an economic level is to make negotiate the sale of labour power in the context of increasingly narrow constraints of the crisis. Politically

the unions in the advanced capitalist countries are more or less wholly integrated into the state, and they play a conscious role in keeping workers divided along union and geographic lines. We can see this confirmed by looking at the COBAS in Italy. These were set up as rank and file bodies in the 1980s by those disgusted at the reformism and lack of militancy of the existing big union federations. But what has happened to them. They have gone down exactly the same road as the old unions because they have taken on the role of negotiating with the management. These COBAS unions have split at least twice to try to form "real unions" (e.g. the SLAI COBAS) but they have all ended up acting just as the original unions. This has been the fate of all so-called rank and file unionism throughout the last century or so.

In places like Asia and Latin America where the price of labour power is driven down by the relationship of the so-called developing countries to the international market the most courageous workers still try to organise unions. But these have nothing in common with the unions of the advanced capitalist countries. They are struggle organisations which are either crushed or (more rarely) destined to become like the existing unions which exist in the cities of the so-called emerging markets. These are mafia type organisations which mainly act as a protection racket to prevent other workers getting work (the classical example being the Peronist unions in Argentina). The real problem is the function the union

performs in capitalist society today.

Our Tasks

An understanding of the fundamentally anti-working class nature of the trade unions in this period does not mean that we ignore them or make abstract calls for workers to leave the unions unless there is a concrete alternative. The extent to which we participate in the unions is largely a tactical question; we clearly could not become part of the union bureaucracy not even on its lower rungs but because they are places which regroup workers (albeit on sectional and national bases) we join them in order to get a direct entry to workers' assemblies etc. The main thrust of our intervention is to point out to workers the limits of trade union struggle and pose an alternative of developing a broader struggle beyond trade union constraints.

We do try to organise workers outside of (and it always means against) the unions in workplace, or factory groups. Currently in Britain this is just an aspiration but our comrades in Italy have managed to organise a small number of such groups which are made up of our members plus other militant workers who recognise the role of the unions in their workplace. This is because we don't think a communist presence can be built up solely by propaganda or through theory but by communists demonstrating in practice that they "understand the line of march" of the working class. These are not the "transmission belts" of the Third International as no such mass link between the class and the revolutionary organisation is possible today but they are bodies which can carry the lessons of one struggle forward to the next and help prevent the fragmentation of workers' experiences over time.

We also hold to the view that Marx and Engels were right insofar as the "school of socialism" begins, not with the union anymore, but with the daily economic struggle against exploitation. Revolutionary theory won't reach the working class just by preaching or propaganda but through such struggles. And by economic struggles we don't mean the "money militancy" of the 1970s when each sector of workers divided by the unions chased ever greater percentages for a wage rise. This not only did not lead to a questioning of the wages system but even

reinforced it. What history has shown is that the unions have disappointed the original hopes which many socialists had for them. This is largely because of the changing, and much more stultified, nature of capitalism.

Today the working class can no longer create permanent economic organs of self-defence. Now every strike's success hangs on how it advances the working class awareness of the nature of capitalism and on the way in which it is fought. If it can be conducted via mass meetings, through recallable delegates to strike committees and with the active participation of the whole workforce then not only is it more likely to be successful in the immediate term but will provide the organisational framework for a future and wider struggle against capitalist exploitation itself. To achieve it workers will have to come to recognise whose side the unions really are on and in so doing build not permanent economic organs of resistance but an international political organisation which encapsulates the consciousness that our real task is not to beg for better conditions but to fight for a new society.

Jock

¹ Although the revolutionaries inside Social Democracy fought this tendency. Rosa Luxemburg in *Reform or Revolution* wrote

On the other hand, the effort of the labour unions to fix the scale of production and the prices of commodities is a recent phenomenon. Only recently have we witnessed such attempts – and again in England. In their nature and tendencies, these efforts resemble those dealt with above. What does the active participation of trade unions in fixing the scale and cost of production amount to? It amounts to a cartel of the workers and entrepreneurs in a common stand against the consumer and especially rival entrepreneurs... Trade union action is reduced of necessity to the simple defence of already realised gains, and even that is becoming more and more difficult. Such is the general trend of things in our society. The counterpart of this tendency should be the development of the political side of the class struggle.

Workers Self Management

We probably don't have a huge disagreement with you here. We would never advocate the principle of self management within capitalist society as a step towards communism, although we recognise as you have pointed out, that self managed enterprises may emerge in the course of class struggle or to meet local needs. What we do reject is the notion that islands of self-management can be built up under capitalist conditions as a step towards the dismantling of the capitalist system. This was the illusion of many in the 1970s (Lip, Fisher Bendix, etc), an illusion fostered by the Labour Left. The first step on the road to real emancipation has to be the smashing of the capitalist state – this then opens the door for all kinds of workers' experiments.

Conclusion

We are still not clear as to the direction of the Commune and we suspect you do not yet know yourselves where your journey will take you. However we judge this dialogue to be mutually beneficial and if it helps others to define their own world outlooks more clearly so much the better. Commune members are also welcome at our open meetings and we look forward to a further serious engagement as we both sincerely try to grapple with the thorny task of proletarian emancipation.

PBD

For the CWO

Life of the Organisation

The Communist Workers' Organisation was founded in 1975 and joined with the Internationalist Communist Party (Italy) to form the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party in 1983. The Internationalist Communist Party was the only significant organisation to emerge in the Second World War (1943) condemning both sides as imperialist. It is the most significant organisation produced by the internationalist communist left which fought the degeneration of the Comintern in the 1920s as well as the process of "bolshevisation" (i.e. stalinism) imposed on the individual communist parties. In 2009, in recognition of the new elements that had joined the founding groups, the IBRP became the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

We are for the revolutionary party but we are not that Party. Nor are we the only basis for that party which will emerge from the workers' struggles of the future. Our aim is to be part of that process by participating in all the struggles of the class that we can with the aim of linking the immediate struggle of the class with its long term historic programme — communism.

Pamphlets

The Platform of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (formerly the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party)

Revised English version (including postage in UK) 70p
or see <http://www.ibrp.org/en/platform>

Socialism or Barbarism

An Introduction to the Politics of the CWO £3

South Africa: The Last Fifteen Years

How the end of apartheid would not benefit workers £4

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Trotsky, Trotskyism, Trotskyists
Examines the course of how Trotsky, who made such an enormous contribution to revolutionary practice, ended up giving his name to a movement which returned to the errors of Social Democracy £3

or go to <http://www.ibrp.org/en/articles/2000-10-01/trotsky-and-trotskyism>

Meetings

For next meeting go to www.ibrp.org

The Basic Positions on which the International Communist Tendency was founded are those established by the International Conferences which ended in the early 1980s. These are;

- * acceptance of the October Revolution as proletarian
- * recognition of the break with Social Democracy brought about by the First Two Congresses of the Third International
- * rejection without reservation of state capitalism and self-management
- * recognition of the Socialist and Communist Parties as bourgeois
- * rejection of all policies which subjects the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie
- * an orientation towards the organisation of revolutionaries recognising Marxist doctrine and methodology as proletarian science
- * recognition of international meetings as part of the work of debate among revolutionary groups for co-ordination of their active political interventions towards the class in the class struggle, with the aim of actively contributing to the process leading to the International Party of the Proletariat, the indispensable political organ for the political guidance of the revolutionary class movement and the proletarian power itself.

Extract from the Platform of the ICT
The Internationalist Communist Tendency

Britain
The Communist Workers' Organisation which produces Revolutionary Perspectives (a

Life of the Organisation

quarterly magazine) and Aurora (an agitational paper)
BM CWO, London WC1N 3XX

Italy

Il Partito Comunista Internazionale which produces Battaglia Comunista (a monthly paper) and Prometeo (a quarterly theoretical journal)
CP 1753, 20101, Milano, Italy

Canada/USA

Groupe Internationaliste Ouvrier / Internationalist Workers Group which produces Notes Internationalistes/Internationalist Notes (quarterly)
R.S. C.P. 173, Succ.C, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2L 4K1

PO Box 14173, Madison, WI 53708-0173, USA

Germany

Gruppe Internationaler Sozialistinnen which produces Sozialismus oder Barbarei (to appear quarterly)
GIS, c/o Rotes Antiquariat, Rungestrasse 20, 10179 Berlin, Germany

France

Bilan&Perspectives
produces a quarterly journal of the same name
BP 45, 13266, Marseille, Cedex 08, France

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