

**Journal of the  
Communist Workers'  
Organisation**

**Summer 2016**

# **Revolutionary Perspectives**

## **08**



## **Brexit Vote Only Highlights Global Capitalism's Impasse**

**There is no Capitalist Solution to a  
Deepening Economic Crisis**

**The Labour Party Crisis is a Crisis of the  
Capitalist Class**

**Sanders' Electoral Campaign in the US**

**The Revolutionary Party and the  
Working Class**

# Revolutionary Perspectives

Magazine of the Communist Workers' Organisation  
Affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency  
Series 4, No 8, Summer 2016

Editorial	1
There is no Capitalist Solution to a Deepening Economic Crisis	4
Corbyn and the Left: 'New Politics', Part of the Problem Not the Solution	14
The Labour Party Crisis is a Crisis of the Capitalist Class	17
Sanders' Electoral Campaign in the US	24
The Revolutionary Party and the Working Class	40
Life of the Organisation	51

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# **Brexit Vote Only Highlights Global Capitalism's Impasse**

In normal circumstances "democracy" is just the figleaf for the dictatorship of the capitalist class. However a vote turns out, it generally conforms to their interests as the article on the US elections in this issue demonstrates. As we previously wrote<sup>1</sup> it is not the first time in history that the pursuit of short-term political expediency has gone against the long term class interests of a regime. Cameron's and Osborne's arrogant "Eton mess" of holding a referendum of 54 million adults because they feared a split in a Tory Party of 125,000 has not just led to their personal downfall but has revealed a ruling class truly in crisis.

This even engulfs Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The Parliamentary Labour Party is openly fighting amongst itself over how best to fool the working class into supporting the system. As the two articles in this issue show, Corbyn is doing his job in this but his programme is nothing like anti-capitalist despite the illusions of some of his supporters.

But these are not normal times and behind all the cock-ups lies a deeper reality. In the face of intractable economic stagnation the British ruling class are losing the plot. None of their strategies for reviving growth have worked, as the article on the economic crisis in this issue shows. After eight years of austerity the UK has a record current account deficit<sup>2</sup> and the mountain of debt is greater than ever. The vote against the EU was really a vote against an accumulation of factors.

Thatcher's deliberate deindustrialisation of the 1980s and 1990s decimated the earning potential of whole communities and the few jobs which followed were nowhere near as well paid. Blairism always ignored the victims as it chased the vote of "Middle England". Brown's answer was simply to offer in-work benefits to the low paid. These went down the pan when the speculative bubble burst. The bankers were bailed out but the working class paid for this in austerity policies which have driven more and more into poverty. The great lie is that this was all to do with immigration. Blaming the 3 million people who have come from the EU as part of its freedom of movement policy was the simple vote-catching issue latched onto by UKIP and the racist Right. "Brexit" became the choice for many who have suffered due to the crisis but don't understand the real cause of their hardships. The enduring legacy of this campaign has not only given every racist gobshite confidence but has already seen the murder of an MP and a doubling of reported racist assaults on those who are perceived to be migrants (Poles and Muslims mainly).

This only confirms what we have said since the referendum on the UK's EU membership was announced. This was no affair of the working class<sup>3</sup>. As the campaign developed it was clear that it became a campaign, on both sides, against any idea of a working class alternative and in the end the campaign obliterated the very idea of a "working class" altogether. Sure we were told that Britain was "divided" but not between classes. For the scribblers of the capitalist

press it was young versus old, London versus the regions, Scotland versus England, racists versus liberals or any distinction you care to make – except that of class. Whichever way the vote went the attack on working class living and working conditions that has been so sustained since 2008 is destined to continue. With Brexit our rulers have just another excuse for imposing the further misery that they had already planned.

Alongside dire economic consequences Brexit has been called by one Tory grandee “the greatest constitutional crisis of modern times”. Indeed it could presage the break-up of the UK itself. In the Scottish referendum debate membership of the EU was central to the argument on both sides and Scotland voted overwhelmingly for Remain. The economic situation (and halving of the oil price) has now upset the economic arguments of the SNP but if Brexit brings more short-term misery a second independence referendum cannot be ruled out. Brexit will certainly do nothing to calm sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement was, after all underwritten by the EU status of both the UK and the Irish Republic. Whilst the Nationalist areas voted Remain the Unionist areas voted out. The former are now calling for a united Ireland with renewed vigour.

As the uncertainty lingers on there will be other economic consequences but Brexit or not the capitalist world is already heading for a new recession.

The consequences are not much better for the rest of the capitalist world. The US has lost its “Trojan Horse” into the EU. After the fall of the USSR it was the UK which pushed for the “broadening” of the EU into Eastern Europe (alongside the drive to take NATO to the borders of Russia). Of all the European countries the UK (as the publication of the Chilcot report shows) has been the link between the US and the “coalition of the willing” (and not-so-willing) behind US imperialist adventures in the Middle East. The UK also represents a quarter of all EU imports from the US so the negotiations on TTIP are now likely to be much more difficult. There is even some speculation that the treaty will never get signed.

For the EU the consequences are likely to be worse. The same pressures of debt-burdened economic stagnation are leading to the traditional ruling parties losing their grip across the continent. The in-fighting we have seen in Britain is also engulfing the French Socialist Party as the Socialist Government has to use rule by decree to get an anti-working class measure past its own deputies. Meanwhile neo-fascists like Marine Le Pen of the Front National, and Geert Wilders have already called for French and Dutch referendums to exit the EU, whilst the rise of the AfD in Germany further exemplifies the narrow nationalism that is increasingly dominant across the continent from Poland to Portugal. German Finance Minister Schäuble concluded that after Brexit “visions are off the agenda” for the European project which will now have to change in order to survive.

Capitalism has been without a vision for some time. As the world economy stagnates so too does world trade which has not increased for 18 months. Whilst G20 ministers can utter pious platitudes against more protectionism the WTO is warning that it is creeping up slowly in the

world economy<sup>4</sup>. Not only might the TTIP agreement be abandoned but both candidates in the US are opposed to the Trans-Pacific Partnership proposed by Obama. Trump has already said he will tear up the North American Free Trade Area agreement to buy the votes of ex-blue collar workers.

We have argued many times that capitalism in the imperialist epoch needs war periodically to carry out a massive devaluation of capital that can kickstart a new cycle of accumulation. However we have always said that this depends on other factors being in place first. At the moment the Great Powers delude themselves that an economic recovery will take place and all will be well at home and abroad. However, if historical precedent is anything to go by, protectionism would make the world a more dangerous place. Trade wars are often the precursors of shooting wars and as the global capitalist class loses its grip around the world who can say where this will take us. Recent developments in the Ukraine, the Middle East, Central Asia and the South China Sea already give plenty of arenas where the next conflict might break out.

Only the world working class can oppose the barbarism capitalism offers us. This means not putting our trust in any elected politician but in ourselves. The daily resistance to austerity policies has to be linked to the fight for a better world and this can only be done if the working class creates its own political body, a revolutionary and internationalist political party capable of uniting and giving a lead to workers everywhere. The last article in this issue gives some idea of our conception of how such a party would operate and we invite responses.

## Notes

1 <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2016-06-27/brexit-vote-%E2%80%93-another-sign-of-global-capitalism%E2%80%93deepening-crisis>

2 <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-kingdom/current-account-to-gdp>

3 See <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2015-11-16/european-union-referendum-%E2%80%93-more-capitalist-choices-to-reject>

4 See “World Trade languishes as economies opt for greater protectionism” *Financial Times* 14 July 2016

# **There is No Capitalist Solution to a Deepening Economic Crisis**

## **Introduction**

The latest phase of the economic crisis which exploded in 2007/2008 still dominates the world economy. All attempts to break its grip and engineer a new period of recovery and growth have failed. Instead the crisis itself is determining political developments to the extent that our rulers are tending to lose control of the situation. The Euro crisis, the bailouts of the peripheral EU countries and the more recent refugee crisis are all consequences of this latest phase of the economic crisis. In the UK the most recent expression of this is, of course, the political crisis triggered by the Brexit vote which showed the ruling class unable to produce a referendum result which suits the interests of British capital. This in turn has precipitated a political crisis in the both the UK and the EU itself. The moving force behind all this is the economic crisis which our rulers are proving incapable of resolving. As each initiative fails, their room for manoeuvre narrows.

The ICT have consistently argued that the Achilles heel of the capitalist system is the tendency of the average rate of profit to fall and problems in the financial sphere, which struck with such force in 2008, are ultimately expressions of this. Attempts to restore profitability have largely amounted to simply reducing the consumption of the working class via austerity and wage reductions, and reductions in the social wage through cuts in health services, benefits, pensions and education. Attempts to stimulate the economy via monetary manoeuvres of the central banks have also failed. The measures taken in the last 8 years are unprecedented in capitalism's history. Initially central banks mounted bailouts of retail banks, then direct injections of money into the financial system via Quantitative Easing (QE) and, more recently, by imposing negative interest rates on short term deposits and government bonds. However, these extraordinary measures have all failed to produce an increase in investment or an increase in demand. Now there is talk of central banks resorting to "helicopter money"<sup>1</sup> which means electronically sending money to the population at large to stimulate demand. Such talk has the ring of desperation.

## **State of the Global Economy**

The capitalist economy goes in cycles of accumulation. In the first phase of each cycle the economy is healthy because profits are high. There is almost full employment of workers, trade is expanding and capital accumulation is occurring through investment. The general measure of all this is the growth rate which tends to express indirectly the average rate of profit. This results in increased productivity per worker and increased international trade and a situation in which the financial sphere operates to facilitate trade and investment. By all these measures the global economy today is in a poor state.

We have shown in previous articles that the average rate of profit is in decline<sup>2</sup> and argue below

that this is the real reason why investment is being held back. Exploitation of workers in production is the only source of capitalism's profits and it is not a surprise that global unemployment has risen. According to the International Labour Organisation, global unemployment has increased by 27 million since 2007 and is now stands at 200 million.<sup>3</sup>

The trend growth rate for the US economy is 2% which is half what it was 20 years ago<sup>4</sup>. Globally there has been a decline from a growth rate of 6.4% in 1973 to 2.5% in 2014<sup>5</sup>. Growth of productivity per worker is very low or nonexistent. In the EU annual productivity growth is now 0.25% and in US it is 1.2% while in the UK it is zero. A report in the *Financial Times* newspaper expressed the danger the bourgeoisie sees in low productivity;

"Without an improvement in output for every hour worked, economies can grow only if people work harder, longer or more people find jobs."<sup>6</sup>

Of course, this stagnant productivity can be explained by lack of investment in the means of production which we consider below. However, even if labour were to become more productive, this would ultimately lead to a further drop in the average rate of profit. These figures indicate economic stagnation.

Global trade figures show a similar stagnation. Global trade as a percentage of the global GDP was around 50% of GDP in 2007. After the 2007 crisis it contracted sharply to 30% and after a rise has since stagnated at around 40%.<sup>7</sup> In fact the global trade system established under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is itself in crisis. The failure of the Doha round of trade negotiations has reduced the WTO to a dispute arbitration body. Furthermore the US is ignoring its judgements when they go against it, and attempting to remove its judges when they find against the US<sup>8</sup>. The US is now negotiating unilateral trade deals such as the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which ensure greater benefits to US capital.

Since the end of the post-war boom, and the collapse of the Bretton Woods<sup>9</sup> world order in 1973, the size of the global financial sector has steadily increased relative to the global economy. In the period leading up to the crisis of 2007, US financial profits, for example, were approaching 50% of total corporate profits. This sector does not produce new value. Its role is to recycle surplus value produced in the productive economy. One of its key operations is recycling surplus capital into government debt and collecting the interest. After the crisis of 2008 it was generally agreed that there was a need to "de-lever" or reduce global debt relative to GDP. Global capitalism has simply been unable to do this and, in fact, the opposite has happened. Global debt, the sum of household, corporate, government and financial, has risen from \$142tn in 2007 to \$199tn in 2014<sup>10</sup>, far outpacing economic growth. Attempts by certain governments, notably the UK, to achieve a balanced budget and so limit the rise in sovereign debt have also failed. The UK has, since 2010, regularly postponed the date at which the famous balance is to be achieved while the debt to GDP ratio has risen inexorably. In the wake of the Brexit vote this ambition appears to have been abandoned altogether and sovereign debt is predicted to rise

from its present level of 84% of the GDP to 100% by 2020. In fact bailing out banks has now ballooned so much that the ratings agencies (who determine the climate of investment) have made record downgrades of sovereign debt.<sup>11</sup> These debts are becoming unsustainable, and for smaller countries like Greece this has been recognized by the IMF. Yet the bourgeoisie is terrified of cancelling debt for fear of the turmoil this would undoubtedly unleash. However an unsustainable situation cannot be sustained for ever! The steady rise of indebtedness, which is another symptom of the fall in profitability of capital, points to a new and catastrophic collapse when defaults on the debts begin.

### **Monetary Manoeuvres**

As already mentioned, the bourgeoisie has responded to the 2007 crisis with an unprecedented series of monetary manoeuvres pumping money into the economy. For the Keynesian section of bourgeois economists the problem is shortage of global demand, which is still below the level it was when the crisis struck in 2008<sup>12</sup>, and accompanying lack of investment. There is, they argue, a global savings glut. Yet the central banks all over the world have certainly taken measures to address these issues. The European Central Bank (ECB), for example, has a QE bond buying programme, which previously totaled €1.1tn and was being dished out at €60bn per month. In March it increased this to €80bn per month. It also offered so called “Targeted Long Term Refinancing Offers” (TLTROs) to Euro area banks of up to 30% of their loan book, at no interest whatsoever over 4 years. If these banks borrow additional monies beyond their TLTRO allowance in order to make additional loans the ECB will pay interest on these additional sums at 0.4%. This is based on the ECB’s negative deposit rate of - 0.4% but because this is a loan not a deposit the ECB is paying interest to borrowers at +0.4%. This is the upside down world we are now living in! One wonders what more the central banks could do!<sup>13</sup> Other central banks have been equally generous. The Federal Reserve has handed out \$4.5tn in 3 rounds of QE, while the Bank of England has doled out £375bn. Yet, despite the astronomical sums handed out by the central banks and the ultra-low, or negative, interest rates they have set, these measures have failed either to stimulate demand, or to stimulate investment. These failures indicate the impasse in which capitalism finds itself. The best that can be said for these monetary manoeuvres is that they have stabilised the situation in the countries where they have been applied and prevented further chaos. In the global context, QE and zero interest rates have weakened the currencies in the countries where they have been applied, thereby boosting exports at the expense of their competitors. They thus amount to a “beggar my neighbour” policy. However, for the Keynesians all this means only that the programmes have been applied with insufficient vigour hence the proposal of helicopter money and direct infrastructure investment. Ultimately these measures will not help global capitalism recover as they do not affect the problem of profitability.

Under capitalism investment is only made if there is a prospect of profit and if the rate of profit is low investment will not be made. Bourgeois economists recognise this when they argue that, in their terms, there is a “shortage of investment opportunities.” It is for this reason that the major non-financial corporations are hoarding capital. In 2015 the UK FT100 companies were sitting on a cash mountain of £177bn, or 10% of the GDP. In the Eurozone, the corresponding figure was



€14.3tn about 7% of GDP, while in the US it was \$1.64tn, equivalent to 10% of the GDP. Instead of being invested these funds are being used to repurchase equity from shareholders, or handed out to shareholders in higher dividends, or being recycled as debt to governments or going into speculation in some form or other. This has pushed the yield on government debt to the lowest levels in capitalism's history and some nations, for example, Germany, Denmark and Switzerland, have issued bonds with negative interest rates. In February the *Financial Times* reported that there are now \$5.7tn negative yielding sovereign bonds<sup>14</sup>. The fact that capitalists prefer to buy debt and pay out money for holding it, shows that these purchases are speculative. Those who buy these debts hope the face value of the debt will rise in response to further QE. What it also shows is that they consider that other investments are worse. This is a clear indication of their dire view of the economy and its future! Speculation, however, is only likely to create further asset bubbles which, as we saw in 2008, will eventually explode with devastating force.

The above is an empirical catalogue of the poor state of global capitalism. The theoretical reasons for this are hotly disputed. The idea that free markets will solve these problems, espoused by the neo-liberals, has been discredited by the 2007/2008 collapse. However, the idea that state control of the economy, or full state capitalism, could restore the system to health has gained ground, despite such measures being thoroughly discredited by the disasters of the 1970s. Economists, such as Thomas Piketty<sup>15</sup>, who is now an advisor to the UK Labour opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn, see capitalism as like a ship heading for the rocks. Piketty argues that the rock on which capitalism will flounder is inequality and calls for the state to rescue capitalism by tax reforms and wealth redistribution. Inequality, however, is simply a result of capital accumulation. He and his mentors<sup>16</sup> mistake symptoms for causes. The reality is that increased accumulation of capital is resulting in reduced profit rates as predicted by Marx. The existence of declining average profit rates is, however, furiously denied by the entire spectrum of bourgeois economy and also by many academic Marxists. We will briefly outline below why we consider Marx was correct.

### **The Labour Theory of Value and the Falling Rate of Profit**

Marx analyses the capitalist system in terms of values. Value is distinguished from price but values and prices form a single system since Marx maintains that the sum of prices in the economy is equal to the sum of values. All value is produced by labour and the measure of value is labour time. Marx's theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is directly deduced from the labour theory of value.

Under capitalism value is extracted from the working class by dividing working time into a section in which workers' labour produces the value of their wages and a section in which they labour unpaid for capital producing, what Marx called, surplus value. This unpaid labour produces a surplus product which incorporates the surplus value. Surplus value is the source of all capitalist profit. Profit therefore exists when and **only** when surplus value exists.

Human labour consists of many types, types which Marx describes as useful concrete labour.

## Economics

The various types of concrete labour are, however, equated in the market and therefore must contain a common element which enables this equation to take place. This Marx calls abstract human labour, that is, general labour abstracted from the various forms in which it exists as useful concrete labour. Marx argues that one hour of abstract human labour, produces the same amount of value irrespective of the productivity of labour.

*“However then the productive power may vary, the same labour, exercised during equal periods of time, **always** yields equal amounts of value.”<sup>17</sup>*

From this it follows that increases in productivity which reduce the amount of labour in an economy reduce the total labour time in that economy and, since labour is the source of surplus value, they consequently reduce the amount of surplus value produced. The ratio of surplus value to the total capital employed, which is the rate of profit, consequently decreases. As Marx explains:

*“The progressive tendency of the general rate of profit to fall is, therefore, just an expression peculiar to the capitalist mode of production of the progressive development of the social productivity of labour”<sup>18</sup>*

Marx called this the Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall (LTRPF). This law will hold true for a sector of an economy but, since capital migrates to sectors or regions where the rate of profit is higher, it will ultimately be true for the global economy as a whole. There is thus a tendency for the rate of profit to decline inexorably. This results from the contradictory process which lies at the heart of capitalist accumulation. Marx argued that this tendency could only be resolved in periodic crises in which trade and production collapsed, bankruptcies followed and capital was written off and wages reduced. The key effect of such crises was the devaluation of the means of production or in Marx's terms “constant capital”. That the capitalist system can only survive by destroying the wealth it has previously created in crises, indicates the historically limited nature of capitalism and the need for humanity to replace it with a higher system of production.

What needs to be emphasised is that the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is a conclusion derived logically from the labour theory of value. The rejection of the one implies rejection of the other.

Over the last century Marx's theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall has been furiously disputed, and still is disputed, not only by bourgeois economists, but also by academic Marxists. While bourgeois economists reject the labour theory of value and hence the basis of the theory, academic Marxists attempt to keep the labour theory of value while rejecting the conclusion. Instead they have maintained that Marx made mistakes and his work is inconsistent and self-contradictory<sup>19</sup>. During the post war boom in the 1960s, when capitalism appeared to have solved its problems, and capital was being accumulated more rapidly than in any previous period, the Japanese academic Marxist N. Okishio produced a theorem, which supposedly proved algebra-

ically, that increased productivity would **always** cause the rate of profit to rise, not fall. Marx was therefore deemed incorrect. A further error in Marx was that, supposedly, prices could not be derived from values. This theorem was generally accepted by Marxist academics who subsequently devoted their energies to correcting what they saw as Marx's mistakes. However, with the return of the capitalist crisis from the 1970s this analysis has been challenged. More recent academic works<sup>20</sup> have shown the Marx's system is not self-contradictory and that his conclusions follow from his premises and there is therefore no theoretical error. This has been done by showing that if inputs and outputs to the capitalist production cycle are valued temporally rather than valued simultaneously and if price and value are treated as a single but related system then all of Marx's conclusions follow. In particular; Okishio's theorem, which is based on simultaneous valuation of inputs and outputs to the production process, fails to disprove Marx's conclusions. Marx's conclusions remain valid, in particular:

- Surplus value is the only source of profit
- The aggregate sum of values in the economy is equal to the aggregate sum of the prices
- The aggregate sum of all the surplus value produced is equal to the aggregate sum of the profit
- Increases in the productivity of labour lead to a fall in the rate of profit.

As capital accumulates thereby increasing constant capital, productivity rises and labour is forced out of the productive process. This removes the source of surplus value hence causes the surplus value produced to decline. This decline is either absolute or relative to the increasing constant capital. The economy therefore experiences a tendency for the rate of profit to fall. This tendency in turn increases competition and accelerates the process.

The measures open to the bourgeoisie to reverse this fall are as follows:

1. Increasing the exploitation of labour. The most direct method is to increase the length of the working day or week so that more unpaid labour is produced. This can also be effected by increasing the intensity of work via speedups or reorganisation of the system of work. These amount to what Marx called increasing the absolute surplus value extracted from the working class. An alternative is to increase the productivity of workers by installing more productive machinery. This is equivalent to reducing the time of work a worker spends producing his or her wages and increasing the time spent working without pay for capital. This results in an increase in what Marx called the relative surplus value. The problem with this is that, as argued above, it invariably involves squeezing workers out of production and installing machinery or constant capital of higher value and ultimately leads to falling profitability.
2. Increasing the speed of turnover of circulating capital. Each production cycle is funded with capital which pays for means of production and workers' wages and is regenerated when the commodities produced are sold on the market. If the number of cycles per year can be increased the annual value of workers' wages is reduced and hence the

rate of profit is increased.

3. Devaluation of constant capital. If the value of constant capital can be reduced while the surplus value remains unchanged the rate of profit will rise. Devaluation of capital occurs in crises where means of production are written off or sold for a fraction of their nominal value. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century crises devalued constant capital sufficiently to restore profit rates and initiate a new round of accumulation. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the mass of capital accumulated on a global scale was so vast that sufficient devaluation could only be effected by world wars in which constant capital was not replaced, competition was suspended and the products of industry were destroyed in war. We argue that this was the economic effect of the two world wars. In particular the recovery, and 30 years of growth, which followed the Second World War was made possible by the devaluation, and destruction, of capital in the 6 years of war. However, the reconstruction period was a period of capital accumulation and massive increases in the productivity of labour and consequently the average rate of profit declined ushering in the start of the long crisis from the early 70s to today.

What capitalism really needs is a massive devaluation of capital as outlined in the third option above, a devaluation which can only be achieved by generalised war. Our rulers, of course, do not go to war to devalue capital. They go to war for imperialist reasons, but imperialist ambitions have their roots in the economic crisis. They go to war to destroy their competitors and to devalue their competitors' capital and so increase their share of the available global surplus value extracted from the world's workers. Although the system has spawned a host of local wars, and although the disputes which could lead to a new global war are certainly growing, a new global war is not on the immediate agenda. This means that only the first two options are open to the bourgeoisie today. Both these options have their limits. The working day or week cannot be extended beyond a certain maximum and increasing the rate of turnover of circulating capital without increasing the constant capital also has its limits. Capital has already increased the rate of turnover significantly and it is questionable how much further this could be taken. Studies of the annual turnover of circulating capital in the Netherlands and Japan found that whereas the average number of annual cycles of production was 5 in 1965 by 2005 it had risen to 12<sup>21</sup>. Such dramatic increases could not be achieved without the installation of more productive means of production. This means an increase in the constant capital and an increase in productivity of workers. Consequently there will be a compensating fall in the rate of profit. If we discount the manoeuvres in the monetary sphere, which, as we have seen, have failed to stimulate investment or demand, our rulers are left with only option 1. This, however, is being pursued with a vengeance.

### **Attack on Wages and Living Conditions of the Working Class**

Globalisation of production has opened the path for both direct and indirect attacks on the working class in capitalism's central countries. An attack whose principal objective is to increase the absolute surplus value extorted from the class. The lower wages in the peripheral countries,

particularly Asia, have produced a situation where the price of labour power is tending to reduce to a global average. This has allowed the bourgeoisie to impose direct cuts in wages, increased flexibility at work, and cuts in the social wage. In effect these developments represent the repudiation of social settlement between capital and labour which followed World War Two. These attacks have been codified in a series of new labour laws across Europe. Examples are the Hartz IV law in Germany, the Jobs Act in Italy, the Peeters Law in Belgium, numerous amendments to labour laws in the UK and the recent El Khomri law in France which has provoked a wave of class struggle. All of this is aimed at reducing the share of the social product going to the working class and an increasing in the share going to capital.

Cuts in direct wages have been widely enforced. In the UK and the US real wages have fallen since the end of the post war boom in the mid-1970s. In the UK since 2008 there has been an average fall in wages of 8%. The figure for the public sector employees is even higher at 10%. Cheaper labour has been imported to the UK, particularly from Eastern Europe which has enabled wages in the service sector to remain at the level of the minimum wage. In addition there has been an increase in taxation on staples consumed by the working class.

Increased “flexibility” has been imposed on the workforce. One of the ways this has been done in the UK is through “zero hours” contracts. Workers are not guaranteed any work whatsoever but must come to work when the boss requires them and are only paid for the hours they work. In the UK there are now 1 million working under such contracts. The Confederation of British Industry estimates that this type of flexible working keeps 500,000 workers from claiming unemployment benefit. In Germany there is a similar version of this arrangement called mini-jobs. It is estimated that 7 million workers now work in such mini-jobs. While unemployment in the UK has been kept down through the new flexibility and wage cuts this has led to the zero increase in productivity we noted above. However, in the EU as a whole 10% of the population are unemployed. They constitute capital’s reserve army of labour. But capitalism is now incapable of integrating them into productive work. Its strategy is to confine them to ghettos or imprison them or recruit them to the military.

In parallel with all this the social wage has been cut. There have been cuts in welfare allowances, cuts in education and health provision as well as increased student fees for university, cuts to pensions and increases in retirement age, and savage cuts to disability benefits.

As we wrote in our comment on the French strikes against the El Khomri law:

*“Laws from a previous era that still “limited” and “regulated” workers’ exploitation (are) no longer tolerable with capitalism in its current state. The deep crisis in the global economic system makes the bosses more “vicious”, urges them to put pressure on their governments to eliminate all that prevents the extraction and realisation of a “fair” profit, a profit, that is, adequate for the current organic composition of capital, for the investment needed to continue the process of accumulation ... In short, behind the war of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat and the social strata closest to it are not only social factors but also one of the most serious crises of capitalism,*

*of which the imperialist wars, with their tragic “side effects” such as the flight of millions of human beings in desperate conditions, are “only” the other side of the coin.*

*Welfare is finished, it's time for workfare. In other words, ... the compulsory levy on deferred and indirect wages has to carry on, but less and less of this tax on wages goes to social services (pension, health, education etc.), whilst more and more is sucked in by the economic and financial “institutions” of the bourgeoisie, or rather their companies wherever and however they are operating.”<sup>22</sup>*

The effect of all this has been to reduce the living standards of the working class and create social hardship. An OECD report found that in the UK 8.1% of the population found it difficult to afford food. A third of the councils in England and Wales report they have subsidised food banks and according to the Trussel Trust, which runs 400 foodbanks, 1.1 million<sup>23</sup> received emergency food for at least 3 days from one of their food banks in the last year.

We have already pointed to the limits of the extraction of absolute surplus value from the working class. These are set by the fact that the day only has 24 hours and workers need a minimum period to eat, drink and sleep to reproduce their ability to labour. In the longer term, austerity measures will not work. However, in the shorter term these measures are succeeding in transferring the burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of the working class and, as long as the working class accepts them, they will provide some increase in profit and so provide the system with a little oxygen to keep it alive. The real question is how long the working class will tolerate the austerity being imposed on it before it returns to open struggle against the whole system. Such a turn will require a renewed consciousness of its position as an international class for-itself with an historical mission to create a higher system of social production.

CP

## Notes

1 See Adair Turner, former Financial Services Authority chairman, writing in the *Financial Times* 23/05/16

2 See *Revolutionary Perspectives* 06, Series 4 “Piketty, Marx and Capitalism’s dynamics” and RP 62, Series 3 “The Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall, the Crisis and its Detractors”

3 See ILO [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_443500/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_443500/lang--en/index.htm)

4 Quoted in the *Financial Times* 30/05/16

5 See World Bank <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>

6 *Financial Times* 26/05/16

7 *Financial Times* 3/03/16

8 US is attempting to block reappointment of Mr. Seung Wha Chang after rulings went against the US. See <http://www.bna.com/us-blocks-korean-n57982072872/>

9 Named after the US meeting place of the United Nations Monetary and Finance Conference in July 1944. This set up the World Bank, the IMF, and established the dollar as the lynchpin of the international monetary system.

10 *Financial Times* 5/02/15

11 "Sovereign downgrades surge to record levels" *Financial Times* 8/07/16 p.32. Fitch have downgraded the debt of 14 countries (including the UK), S&P, 16 and Moody's, 24 this year so far.

12 For the EU demand is 2.4% below 2008 see *Financial Times* 7/07/16

13 *Financial Times* 11/03/16

14 *Financial Times* 18/02/16

15 Piketty is an advisor to Jeremy Corbyn. For a criticism of his book, "Capital in the Twenty-first century" see *Revolutionary Perspectives* 06, Series 4

16 Tony Atkinson ex-professor of economics at Oxford has been writing about inequality since 1960s. His recent book "Inequality: What can be done" recommends every 18 year old given an inheritance and guaranteed public employment.

17 Marx, *Capital* Volume 1 p.53 Progress edition.

18 Marx *Capital* Volume 3 p.213 Progress edition

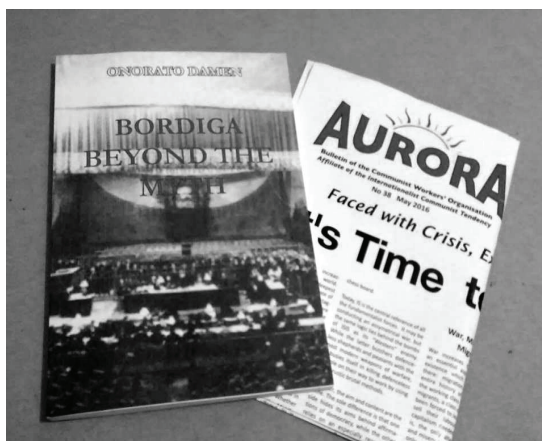
19 E.g. the US *Monthly Review* School.

20 See for example A. Kliman "Reclaiming Marx's Capital", Michael Roberts "The Next Recession", and Paul Mattick junior, "Business as Usual: The Economic Crisis and the Failure of Capitalism" amongst many. We don't necessarily endorse their political views but on the crisis they all make a similar case to ours.

21 See E Maito <http://gesd.free.fr/maito14.pdf>

22 See <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2016-06-06/strikes-in-france-a-brief-introduction>

23 See Trussel Report <https://www.trusselltrust.org/>



For a free copy or copies  
of our broadsheet Aurora  
email or send a stamped  
addressed envelope to our  
London address.

## **Corbyn and the Left: ‘New Politics’, Part of the Problem not the Solution**

*This document and the one which follows should be read in tandem. The first has already appeared on our website. It is contribution from a one young sympathiser of the Communist Left written a week after the referendum. We had no hesitation in publishing it not only as a contribution to the debate on the crisis of the British ruling class but to recognise the fact that a new generation is increasingly taking up the task of developing an independent movement of the working class (see also article on Sanders in this issue). The second document is our update on the subsequent machinations in the Labour Party which, as we go to press, is in serious danger of imploding.*

Following the EU referendum, and the success of the Leave campaign which won with 51.89% of the vote, the politics of the British ruling class is in a bit of a mess. As we showed in our article on the Brexit vote (see <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2016-06-27/brexit-vote-%E2%80%93-another-sign-of-global-capitalism%E2%80%99s-deepening-crisis>) capitalism’s insoluble economic crisis is undermining the old political order. For the Tories, the result triggered a leadership contest as Cameron, the face of the Remain campaign, had to resign. A number of even more unsavoury characters competed for his position and he is succeeded by Theresa May. For Labour, the result served as a signal for the centre and the right of the party to carry out a coup against their leader. Corbyn stands accused of supporting the Remain vote only reluctantly, but by this point any excuse would do as the Blairites increasingly want to pull in the reins. The Labour left is now rallying once again, in a bid to #KeepCorbyn as their leader.

The traditional ruling classes and their parties throughout the world have no answer to the global economic crisis of capitalism. They are losing their grip and not just in the UK. The rise of so-called “populism” is just one symptom of this. In 2013 we saw the growth of UKIP, a party of the Eurosceptic anti-immigrant right with a stock broker leader who plays the act of being ‘one of the people’. In 2014 the Scottish independence referendum, with a turnout of 84.6%, the highest in the UK since 1928 when universal suffrage was first introduced, was celebrated by both left and right as the ‘greatest democratic experience in Scotland’s history’.<sup>1</sup> The referendum cemented the Scottish National Party as the main party in Scotland overturning decades of Labour dominance. In 2015 Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party, with 250 000 votes in his favour, and thousands of new members. And finally this year the EU membership referendum was called by Cameron in order to calm down the Eurosceptics within his own party. The turnout of the referendum was 72.21%, higher than any recent election in the UK. Now with a second Scottish independence referendum on the horizon, and the leadership crises in two of the biggest British parties, increased participation in these political spectacles is not likely to stop any time soon. Already in major cities there are rallies in support of Corbyn.

Of special interest here is the renewed capability of the Labour Party to bring thousands back into the dead-end of parliamentary politics. Much of this is thanks to Corbyn and the election



contests, as even some of those who would normally not get involved in Labour, suddenly have changed their minds (an article published by the anarchist Freedom Press appeals to the left to ‘#KeepCorbyn as a transitional demand’!).<sup>2</sup> Just over the recent crisis the party has gained 60 000 new members, many joining only to vote for Corbyn.<sup>3</sup> For British politics these are huge numbers (the entire Liberal Democrat party membership is about 60 000), but they may sound more impressive than they are in reality. There are three ways to have a say in a Labour leadership election: 1) join the Labour Party as a member (which requires a monthly membership fee), 2) become a supporter (which only requires a one-time payment of £3), or 3) be a member of an affiliated trade union. Whichever of these categories a Corbyn enthusiast may belong to, it doesn’t necessarily mean they will be engaged in party structures or stay active beyond just voting in the election contest. This is especially true for many young people, who increasingly get involved in politics on an ad-hoc basis (it’s not uncommon to see someone jump from Labour to the Greens, and then once again to Labour just to support Corbyn).

Nevertheless the participation of self-avowed communists or even anarchists in Labour has to be explained. The history of the party, its origin as a platform for trade union bureaucrats, and it’s many betrayals both in and out of power (be it support for both World Wars, sending troops against striking workers, or the neo-liberal turn) are not a secret.<sup>4</sup> Labour is a party of the capitalist class and always has been. At best, it tried to moderate some of the more nasty elements of the system; at worst it embraced them whole. Yet many leftists still believe that it can be transformed, that it can be made a ‘workers’ party’ again. Others join it out of opportunism – these groups may want to split the party or just recruit new members. Historically the most successful example of this was the Militant tendency. In the 1970s these Trotskyists were able to build a base within Labour, grow in size and by the 1980s dominate the Liverpool City Council. It didn’t take long for Labour higher-ups to realise what’s happening, and soon the process of expelling the entryists commenced. By the 1990s Militant abandoned entryism, formed its own ‘true workers’ party’, the Socialist Party of England and Wales (SPEW), which nowadays stands in elections as the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Unsurprisingly, the electoral front has not been fruitful, and now we find SPEW as one among the many groups that sing the chorus of defending Corbyn. And so the cycle starts again. The left-wingers in Labour right now have to deal with many of the same problems as Militant did. Some have already been expelled, others hide their aims and politics to avoid it. Every once in a while there is an article in the news decrying the ‘hard-left’ that is wrecking Labour. It turns out that the biggest enemy of the Labour left and Corbyn is actually their own party (particularly the Parliamentary Labour Party).

What’s more, a look at Corbyn’s policies reveals how inoffensive he is to capital. A crackdown on tax avoidance, higher income tax for the wealthy, ‘people’s quantitative easing’, opposition to TTIP, and \*gasp\* nationalisation. His vision for new politics is not drastic even by petty bourgeois standards – at the end of the day, ‘Labour’s new leader wants a prosperous economy’.<sup>5</sup> The attempts to appear ‘electable’ have led McDonnell to claim that ‘Labour will tackle the deficit’ and that ‘we in the Labour Party have to show [the public] how we will act as a responsible custodian’.<sup>6</sup> And that’s what Corbyn will be at best – a custodian of the capitalist system. Momentum or the Labour left in general may shout about socialism, but the programme behind

which they have rallied is strictly that of capitalist reform. This is not unlike the other left populist projects across Europe, such as Syriza, which tried to ‘save capitalism from itself’, or Podemos, which even according to finance investors ‘can improve Spanish capitalism’.<sup>7</sup> Corbyn’s ‘new politics’ certainly sounds awfully familiar to the ‘l’autre politique’ of François Mitterrand of the French Parti Socialiste, who, elected in 1981 on a programme of reform, soon after unleashed a programme of austerity instead. While naïve optimists hope that Corbyn in power will not turn out as bad, history shows that even a mass movement will not stop a social democrat from capitulating on their promises.

The role of Internationalist Communists is to dispel illusions in reformist agendas and show how they fail to disturb underlying capitalist dynamics. While the Corbyn phenomenon may be a positive sign that more and more people have begun to question the current condition, as a response to capitalist crisis this is not enough. Do not depend on left leaders of capitalist parties, in the vain hope that they will somehow move against capitalism for you. Only an international working class, fighting on its own terrain and with its own independent organs, can bring the fight to capital and its states.

**Dyjbias**

2 July 2016

## Notes

1 *The Independent*, ‘Scottish independence: SNP doubles in size as thousands of Scots flock to join’ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/scottish-independence/scottish-independence-snp-doubles-in-size-as-thousands-of-scots-flock-to-join-9751609.html> . For the CWO take on this see <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2014-08-18/the-scottish-independence-referendum-the-great-diversion>.

2 *Freedom News*, ‘The End of Dogma: #KeepCorbyn as a transitional demand’ <https://freedomnews.org.uk/the-end-of-dogma-keepcorbyn-as-a-transitional-demand/>

3 *The Independent*, ‘Labour Party gains 60,000 new members in one week following attempted coup against Corbyn’ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-party-gains-60000-new-members-following-attempted-coup-against-corbyn-a7112336.html>

4 Libcom, ‘Labouring in vain - a critical history of the Labour Party’ <http://libcom.org/library/labouring-vain>

5 Forbes, ‘Six Reasons Why Entrepreneurs May Come To Love Jeremy Corbyn’ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidprosser/2015/09/16/six-reasons-why-entrepreneurs-may-come-to-love-jeremy-corbyn/>

6 *Morning Star*, ‘Labour ‘On The Front Foot’ For Economy’ <https://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-9c02-Labour-on-the-front-foot-for-economy>

7 *BreakingViews*, ‘Podemos can improve Spanish capitalism’ <http://www.breakingviews.com/columns/rob-cox-podemos-can-improve-spanish-capitalism/>

# The Labour Party Crisis is a Crisis of the Capitalist Class

For decades the British ruling class used a system involving two main political parties as the democratic frontage behind which they maintained their social and economic control. The traditional role of the Labour Party has been to act as a machine to cajole working class people into the electoral circus with the illusory temptation that they had “their” party.

A crucial part of this deception has been the structure of the Labour Party whereby significant numbers of people, including many working class people, were allowed to participate either as individuals in local party branches or through local Trade Unions. Amongst other things, the Labour Movement provided a career path to elected or unelected office in the Unions, Councils and at the pinnacle, Parliament. More recently the European Parliament and the EU institutions/quangos were added to the list.

Those who achieved such office became participants in the political superstructure which both masks and supports the embedded power of the capitalist class. The further the Labour activists move up the structure the more tightly are they enmeshed.

Sociologically, more and more of those finding positions in or around the Parliamentary structures have not “risen through the ranks”. This is unsurprising in that the previous social structures of the industrial working-class communities have been decimated in the last forty years.

Instead of people having origins in the big workplaces and related communities the new generations of Labour MPs are predominantly recruited from the ranks of the “meritocracy”. Their career paths are much more likely to be via a University education followed by employment within or around the Labour Movement (ie. Labour Party and Trade Unions).

Meanwhile, to “modernise” the Party, the Labour Party establishment decided to make it easier for new layers to be drawn into their orbit. This was necessary precisely because the old base structures of the Party had been destroyed by de-industrialisation and membership was falling. These changes included “the £3 membership” (with instant voting rights) and basing the election of the Leader and Deputy on “One Member One Vote”.

In that case, as religious types might have said “Forgive them Lord, for they know not what they do”!

A massive chasm had opened up between what the mass of members wanted – some protection against the ravages of the crisis – and what their “representatives” were able to deliver. The Parliamentarians may have been a tad unhappy that the working class voters were choosing to vote for SNP or UKIP charlatans rather than Labour worthies but the democratic gravy train would still keep them satisfied. However, the fact that the Labour Party membership massively

preferred a new Leader who had only been nominated as a sop to the left of the party opened up the previously hidden massive fissure.

During June and July the Parliamentary Labour Party, as loyal agents of capitalism, tried to solve the problem.

### **Corbyn's Election – Unplanned and Unwelcome**

Jeremy Corbyn was elected as leader of the Labour Party in September 2015. It was clear that this was not part of the plans of the Labour Party establishment.

The intention of the MPs and their supporters was simply to maintain the Labour Party's brand as a "broad church". After 20 years when the traditional commitment to state intervention and a "welfare state" had been ditched in favour of cutbacks and austerity it was still necessary to present the left with options safely in the fold of Labourism. Corbyn was intended to be an Aunt Sally radical to disappear in the first round or two of voting with a slap on the back and wishes for "Better luck next time".

However, the ingrained smugness of the MPs was blown apart. After decades of believing their own propaganda about the politics of "opportunity" i.e. unbridled exploitation, now "austerity lite", they discovered the limits of their self-deception. Fundamentally, they had misunderstood, or quite likely ignored, the changes in the internal Labour Party voting system which Dyjbas refers to in the previous article.

### **A Year is a Very Short Time for the Labour Party!<sup>1</sup>**

Since Corbyn's election the Labour Party, by its own yardsticks has had reasonable results in its electoral activities in England and Wales<sup>2</sup>. They have won Mayoral elections, Parliamentary by-elections and achieved reasonable results in Council elections. If a Leader acceptable to the Labour establishment (or the bourgeois order as a whole) had such a record it is inconceivable that they would have sought to oust her/him.

Similarly, the Brexit vote<sup>3</sup> offered the flimsiest cover for the moves against Corbyn. The idea that Corbyn, personally, was responsible for Brexit is palpable nonsense. The idea that the corrective for Brexit is the replacement of the leader of the Labour Party is, in the words of Jeremy Bentham<sup>4</sup>, "nonsense on stilts".

As we have repeatedly made clear, project Corbyn is not our project. It could, at best, only confuse and reinforce confusions about the meaning of socialism, the role of the Labour Party and the limits of the left reformist aspirations embodied in a "decent man"<sup>5</sup>.

At the time of writing the outcome of the crisis in the Labour Party is far from resolved. A decision to remove Corbyn could yet result in a significant split in one of the big two parties

in British capitalist politics. That aspect of the future is as yet unknown but we need to repeat our arguments that, whatever convulsions happen in the Labour Party, are entirely within the capitalist framework.

### Labour Party Demystified

The holding of elections in a constitutional framework that guarantees and maintains numerous layers of elected “representatives” is central to the “smoke and mirrors” of the democratic conjuring show. It is the preferred format of all the bourgeoisies in the vast majority of leading states in the globalised world economy that advanced imperialism has generated.<sup>6</sup> Exceptions exist, such as in the oil-rich Gulf states where a capitalist elite emerged from the feudal royal clans and in China, where the bourgeoisie grew around the heavily-misnamed Communist Party during the period when the Stalinist state totally dominated economic development. Those exceptions only serve to prove the general rule, particularly taking into account the frequent need of the local capitalists to at least pay lip-service to democratic practice and ideology.

The Labour Party, in common with the other parties in the Second International<sup>7</sup> tradition and parties such as the Democrats in the USA play a crucial role in the democratic mystification. They exist to offer the illusion of a “left-wing” approach to running capitalism. At periods when capitalism is sufficiently profitable to allow choices then the left and right parties can offer different meals from the capitalist menu. The options will involve, for example, the degree of state ownership, state-provided welfare, levels of wages protection etc. In periods when the declining rate of profit reduces options then the differences between the Left and Right “set menus” become less and less meaningful. In Britain, the Labour Governments from 1997-2010 were a good example of the latter situation with Blairism and Thatcherism sharing essential approaches to the deepening crisis.

For the last hundred years the Labour Party has indisputably been part of the political apparatus which supports and reinforces capitalist power – the dictatorship of one class, the bourgeoisie, over the far more numerous working class. It is a very straightforward conclusion that therefore the Labour Party is in class terms a **bourgeois** party. Crucially **its existence and activity supports the capitalist status quo and it has played a crucial role in maintaining the charade of democracy within capitalism.**

Entire articles could be, and have been, written to illustrate the final point in the above paragraph<sup>8</sup>. However, the 57 varieties of leftism that emerged from the Stalinist or Trotskyist camps propagandise and encourage practice that denies that basic reality and sows confusion amongst working-class militants who come into contact with them.

One of their favourite techniques of misrepresentation is to distort Lenin’s positions, in reply to the Left Communist opponents, at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International<sup>9</sup> in 1920. Relying on a weak and ill-informed description used by Lenin the epigones<sup>10</sup> often rely on using a description of the Labour Party as a “Bourgeois Workers Party”. Denying the historic experience

since Lenin advocated such formulations, the Stalinists and Trotskyists and many newcomers persuade their followers to engage in Labour Party organisation and politics<sup>11</sup>.

These self-styled but fraudulent Socialists or Communists have to consciously blur the real class nature of the Labour Party to carry out their strategic approach. They need to sow confusion about both the reality of the nature of socialism and the intertwined questions about the necessary path to achieve the overthrow of capitalism.

On both aspects they have to pretend that there is a continuum between capitalist political and economic organisation and the needs of the working class. By necessity, they argue that state capitalist initiatives which are achievable by a Parliamentary decree e.g. nationalisation are steps towards Socialism. On a more local level, a Labour Council that, like Liverpool in the 1980s, builds Council Houses is praised as “Socialism in action”.

To summarise, the radical Labourist programme of state intervention, state ownership, more generous welfare payments and legislation to equalise exploitation across all workers is a programme for the maintenance of capitalism<sup>12</sup>. Since real socialism can't be achieved by a Parliamentary majority or elected politicians then the whole Labourist project is clearly an activity within, and for, capitalism.

By contrast, the programme of communism (or “socialism” - Marx used the words interchangeably) is the programme of working class self-emancipation, the negation of capitalism.

Linked to that first deception is an obsessive desire to choose representatives of “the left” to take paid and unpaid positions in the Labour Movement (Labour Party and Trade Unions). Once again, a core misunderstanding, is being maintained that workers should have confidence that those organisations would be capable or willing of abolishing capitalism if only they had the right leaders ... or that, more honestly, the task is to elect people who will implement reforms and that workers should look no further.

These politics which have confused and demoralised generations of aspiring militants were transformed from the realm of ideas to the material world with Corbyn's election. Sadly, for the peddlers of left reformist snake oil, the reality of class antagonism rather than the sincerity or otherwise of those with left-wing credentials is the real motor force behind capitalism, whatever political forms it may choose.

### **Where Eagles Dare**

It is not our intention to speculate on the precise eddies that take place in and around the various layers of the Labour Party although, for example, a fraction of the previous involvement of MI5<sup>13</sup> is now public knowledge. We do not have the resources or ability to fully explore the detail of such matters but two facts are worth mentioning.

Firstly, if Corbyn had resigned when the coup was first launched, then a different “acting leader” would have responded to the Chilcot Report<sup>14</sup>. That coup appeared to be headed by Hilary Benn, who had already made clear that he is prepared to advocate and defend military adventures in the Middle East. As the *Independent* headlined on 2nd December, 2015 – “Syria air strikes: Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Hilary Benn makes impassioned speech supporting intervention. The MP defied his own leader [Corbyn - KT] to speak in favour of British intervention in Syria”.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that Corbyn was still in place, at least for the initial release of the report, was undoubtedly a blow to the Blair/Mandelson/Campbell faction in the British “body politic”. It allowed Corbyn and his supporters to re-establish their credentials as a voice of the “Anti-War Coalition”. They also reaped a quick bonus with the likelihood that more of the supporters of the ragbag (SWP and other leftists, Arab nationalists, liberal pacifists, families of combatants etc.) may be persuaded to part with £3 to see their figurehead kept in place for the next period. Secondly, it is worth taking a glance at Angela Eagle who, in the best traditions of establishment machinations, has emerged as the favoured replacement. Eagle’s supporters represent her as a radical but a brief examination shows some interesting wrinkles in the background of the Oxford graduate whose first job was with the CBI before becoming a Trade Union bureaucrat. In 2003 Eagle, unlike Corbyn, voted for the invasion of Iraq, but her “peculiar brand” of radicalism predates that issue.

Less than 10 years after her graduation and employment by the CBI, Eagle had an earlier “emergence”. In 1992, Eagle was shoehorned in as the successful Labour Party candidate in Wallasey, Merseyside. That first iteration as a “radical” favoured by the establishment came following the active intervention of the neighbouring MP, the equally “unique” Frank Field. Working with the Labour Party establishment under Neil Kinnock’s regime, Eagle was “in the right place, at the right time” to help the purge of the left in the Labour Party and start her quarter of a century as an MP. The Labour Party machine allowed her to replace the Trotskyist, Lol Duffy, who had stood as the Labour Party candidate in the previous election and come within 300 votes of beating the Tory Minister, Lynda Chalker.

However, such issues need to be left to one side. The “hidden state” (aka, the Department of Dirty Tricks) will continue until the working class revolution when the archives will hopefully be uncovered. In the meantime, the aim of Communists is to maintain the clarity of vision about what real socialism is about and to fight for it within the working class in order to contribute to the destruction of capitalism.

### **Break with Capitalism, Left and Right**

Capitalism has been in crisis for nearly fifty years. This is a crisis which capital itself cannot solve, but only try to offset at the expense of the working class. Since the current phase of the crisis opened in 2008, workers have suffered “austerity” and hardship throughout the “advanced” countries. In Britain, the Brexit referendum vote is simply another moment in that assault – one which has already ushered in threats of further attacks on our living standards as well as an

upsurge in generalised and foul racism and xenophobia.

The Corbynite promised land is a mirage projected by the left-wing charlatans giving false hope to a younger generation looking for some future in a bleak capitalist landscape. Opposed to the realities of existing austerity and the hopeless calls for a kinder capitalism, Internationalists stand for the destruction of the rotten world-wide oppressive system. It's a longer but surer road. The future of humanity will depend on the working-class organising to tear down the existing system and lay the basis for a "free association of producers" without states, boundaries or exploitation. The Communist Workers Organisation and the Internationalist Communist Tendency are committed to deepening and sharing the Communist "praxis" to help in that historic task. More than ever – "We have nothing to lose but our chains!"

KT

July 13 2016

## Notes

1 <http://oupacademic.tumblr.com/post/66321507640/misquotation-a-week-is-a-long-time-in-politics>

2 The current electoral hegemony of the SNP in Scotland set in several years before Corbyn's election.

3 Apparently 62% of Labour voters and 85% of Labour Party members voted "Remain". The fact the thousands who don't normally vote because de-industrialisation under Thatcher and Blair has left them economically marginalised and ignored by the political parties is more the fault of New Labour than the Corbynites (who will be no better at winning their votes than the previous Labour leadership).

4 Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), philosopher, founder of the capitalist philosophy of utilitarianism

5 The epithet, a "decent man" has been extensively used by Corbyn's allies and enemies during June and July

6 Imperialism is the system of class oppression that embraces the entire planet. The leftists' nonsense about anti-imperialist states or would-be states is part of a political framework which shares nothing with a Marxist understanding of the current situation. Only working-class revolution, consciously aiming at world-wide revolutionary reconstitution of society, offers an authentic "anti-imperialist" strategy.

7 The Second International was the political organisation founded in 1889 that acted as a forum for those parties that referred to themselves as "Social Democrats". For revolutionary Marxists the organisation died **politically** in 1914 when it failed to organise against the outbreak of the First World War and the large majority of the member parties joined their national ruling class's war efforts. Those pro-capitalist parties, now calling themselves variously Labour, Socialist or Social-Democratic, currently liaise via a so-called "Socialist International" formed in 1951.

8 See for example <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2012-10-29/unions-and-the-labour-movement-the-enemy-within> and <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2008-06-01/a-new-workers-party-or-an-old-labour-party>

9 The Communist International (CI) was founded in 1919 drawing together Socialists/Communists who had stood against "social patriotism" in 1914-1918 and rallied round the revolutionary wave heralded by the proletarian seizure of political power in Russia in 1917. That experience and the emergence of Soviets in Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and elsewhere allowed revolutionaries to understand the organisational form whereby the Dictatorship of the Proletariat could be established. Only the first 2 Congresses, 1919 and 1920,



reflected that revolutionary path. Thereafter, the CI was caught up in the ebbing away of the revolutionary wave and ended as a tool of the Stalinist state capitalist monstrosity which finally brought the organisation to an end in 1943 as part of a deal with their fellow imperialist Allies.

10 Epigone – a less distinguished follower or imitator of someone.

11 The roots of this strategy can be tracked to weak understandings and incorrect positions during the 1920s. In terms of a continuing strategic orientation, an ongoing thread can be seen from the 1930s. During that decade the Stalinist Parties adopted the Popular Front strategy to ally with Second International parties while the Trotskyists adopted a strategy based on their “French Turn” which involved their supporters joining Social Democratic and similar organisations.

12 The vociferous support of the Labour Left for the so-called Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela and the other left leaning regimes in South America is yet one more confirmation that these “socialists” do not know the meaning of the word. Socialism or **communism is an entirely different mode of production** and not capitalism with a more egalitarian system of distribution.

13 Many references can be found to this happening during the 1960s. For a history of Labour relations with the security services see, for example, <http://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/articles/rrtalk.htm>

14 The Chilcot Report on the Iraq War was finally due out on July 6 and as expected condemned Blair’s role in the decision to go to war in 2003 but after 9 years of waiting and 2.6 million words we only “found out” what was known all along. Blair had put the UK at the disposal of the US and refused to listen to warnings by all “experts” on the Middle East (like Professor George Joffe) that it would unleash hell in Iraq. The attempt to prevent Corbyn being Labour leader and thus get to speak for the Labour Party was thus launched on June 25 by a PR agency (Portland Communications) funded and staffed by over 40 Blairites including lie master general, Alistair Campbell. The first step in this was Hilary Benn’s ultimatum to Corbyn on the same day.

15 For our comment on this event see <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2015-12-05/british-parliament-votes-to-bomb-in-syria>

## **Sanders' Electoral Campaign in the US: The Working Class Breathing Life into Democracy or Democracy Sucking the Life from the Working Class?**

*The article which follows is a much-shortened version of a long debut piece written by a young sympathiser of the communist left in the USA. The full version will be published on our website but the main argument is contained here. It was written long before Sanders' predictable endorsement of Hillary Clinton as Democratic candidate for President but the reasons for its inevitability are laid out clearly enough in the article below. Just like the Corbyn campaign in the UK the Sanders' electoral bid has given "the left" something to get excited about. This article puts that excitement in its true perspective.*

### **Democracy's Function as Part of the Apparatus of Oppression of the Working Class**

Whenever confronted with signs of a potential future implosion of bourgeois society, the "progressive bourgeoisie" will rally every force they can in their campaign to "defend/restore democracy". The campaign by Bernie Sanders epitomizes this movement, heavily targeting the young (especially students). This was not some humanitarian section of the bourgeoisie deciding to keep the "bad sides" of capital in check, it was the precise opposite: it is none other than a defense mechanism of capital precisely to ensure its hegemony, and the Sanders campaign was the pinnacle of this. This is part of the class struggle, but from the side of capital against the working class.

For Utopians, the answer to any problem lies in the political sphere: get the right politicians + the right policies = problem solved. Often problems are even reduced to reforming the mere mechanism of election itself. We often hear the liberal "to-do list" for making the government run more smoothly and being more accountable/transparent/responsible: get rid of electoral college, use instant-runoff/ranked choice voting, things like that. It is assumed that if "the people" held more control, if they could think up and enforce better regulations for the "evil megacorporations" and banking institutions, if we could control the private donations to politicians' campaigns, etc. etc., then today's crisis can be solved and tomorrow's avoided.

In truth though, the problem we face is not one of some new deficiency of democracy or corruption of the government. The political system is simply the particular arrangement of the bourgeoisie's dictatorship, a determined structure atop the foundation of the particular arrangement of the relations of the productive process, which itself can only exist atop a particular development of the forces of production. It is completely irrelevant whether they insert candidates they have previously groomed for election into posts they want them to be in, if representatives are truly elected "by the people", if the bourgeoisie rules through diktats, or if policies must pass a popular referendum before becoming law.

Emerging from a society torn apart by contradictions in order to maintain and perpetuate that arrangement of society, the state presents itself as the quasi-social “glue” seemingly outside of the social system yet connecting it together: a medium through which the antagonisms (the working class and capital) which are at the very root of such a society must express themselves (i.e. politically) in order for the particular configuration of social relations to be stabilized. Consequently, the institutions provided by such an organ of society as the state are not the actual mechanisms of power, they are simply the administrative components of capitalism’s drive to stabilize itself, but the state, neutralizing threats to the status-quo as efficiently as it can, will present these institutions as the tools of power which can be captured and wielded by any force organized well enough. We, especially the young, are led to believe that, in the right hands, the political institutions of the state can become near all-powerful tools which can overcome social realities and gradually impose solutions to these social conflicts. This is not the case; in reality it is the other way around. These social conflicts in fact determine the political institutions.

Obviously this not specific to the USA, we can point to other countries to detail how the problem is not some special lack of democracy: Switzerland, well-known for its “direct democratic” mechanisms, has already passed draft revisions of laws in both sections of its parliament to *directly* allow the Federal Intelligence Service to intercept and collect data from internet connections coming out of or into Switzerland (collecting metadata, reading content of emails, users’ browsing histories) and the use of “govware”<sup>1</sup>. A referendum for the revised laws will be put up sometime in September, but there is no reason to expect that even if the population rejects these laws that it will do anything; “BundesTrojaner” (state Trojan horses) have been used by the Swiss bourgeois dictatorship before, such as MiniPanzer and MegaPanzer which were Trojans for monitoring Skype and other internet (VoIP) calls used by the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy, and Communications (UVEK) from 2006-2009<sup>2</sup>. New Zealand, consistently ranked one of the least corrupt governments on Earth<sup>3</sup>, still passed laws directly legalizing state hacking of citizen’s computers, spying on internet communication, etc. over a decade ago<sup>4</sup> (not to say it was considered “illegal” before then<sup>5</sup>). More to the point, New Zealand is part of the intelligence alliance with the Orwellian name “Five Eyes” (the other four being Australia, Canada, UK, and USA)<sup>6</sup> which allows them to pseudo-legally bypass national restrictions on data collection (which we know thanks to Snowden and Wikileaks), and which the bourgeoisie has even gloated will not be affected by any amount of public outrage<sup>7</sup>.

There are so many examples we can give, but you get the picture. The notion that the crisis we face is, or has its roots in, simply one of democracy or responsibility to the public is nothing but bourgeois ideology.

Democracy will only disappear when it no longer fools enough of the working class into believing it can be used by them to create real change, or when it has done its job and neutralized the revolutionary advances of the working class and the only task left is to stabilize capitalism from a crisis situation, which will be accomplished by openly “authoritarian” nationalism (Trump may be a step in this direction, **but the Democratic Party and the further-Left successfully limiting**

working class action to action within the confines of democracy is what will pave the way for something much worse).

### What Is the Real Nature of the Campaign by Sanders?

The Bernie Sanders campaign has a two-fold nature, it is both a typical attempt of the bourgeoisie to distract the working class from any independent action, but it is also the expression of the whimpers of the weak Holy “middle class” — a doomed class with a historical role consisting of nothing but its pathetic attempts to prevent its disintegration (often taking the form of social democracy and the occasional fascist regime after the working class has been defeated by the left). He is the exact opposite of “progressive” any way you look at it. His campaign is the natural evolution of the same processes that made up the majority of the Occupy movement: a middle-class populist reaction (albeit carried by workers) to capitalism’s centralization of wealth, power, and everything else which is the inevitable result of its centralization of production. A false fear of capitalism might as well be the defining characteristic of “radical” petty bourgeois politics; it leeches off the back of the real anti-capitalist movement that is the workers’ struggle, and it overtakes it in times of the proletariat’s defeat.

An illustrative example of this parasitism can be seen by several members of Sanders’ campaign team posing as union members to intrude into employee areas at four different hotels.<sup>8</sup> The unions, especially in an advanced capitalist country like America, are in this stage of capitalism undeniably appendages of the bourgeois state apparatus with which it manipulates and hinders class struggle and can impose and implant itself as a filter to prevent the natural attempts by workers to defend their livelihoods from developing into proletarian self-activity. This is a fantastic demonstration of how the petty bourgeoisie, while pretending to be for some kind of change (e.g. “Political Revolution”), assists in the domination and distraction of the only entity capable of change (the working class) by the bourgeoisie — the actual middle-class (the various professional classes [which should not be generalized to mean “complex labor”], middle management, and the petit-bourgeoisie) will jump at the opportunity to push their agenda (i.e. maintaining its existence at any cost). Anything to avoid a **social** response by the proletariat. When Sanders says there needs to be a movement, “more than just getting Bernie Sanders elected”, he is very explicit that the purpose of this is: getting workers into the unions and to force even Republicans to vote for social reform, i.e. to focus all attention and energy into the bourgeois political system and the state’s union appendages (and with a goal of minimal reforms like raising taxes on the wealthy, a higher minimum wage, etc.), to prevent the working class from fighting for its interests outside of the parliamentary-democratic machine and union structures. The “workers’ party” + trade union model proved itself to be nothing but a method of limiting the working class over a century ago.

*“We have got to end this outrageous voter suppression which is taking place in dozens of states — efforts that are intentionally denying low-income people, people of color and seniors the ability to participate in the political process ...*

*“As President, my job will be to increase voter turnout, not decrease it. My job will be to see that the United States has one of the highest voter turnouts in the world, not one of the lowest.”*

The bourgeoisie cannot let the proletariat come to the realization that they actually have no power in the capitalist state organized as a “democracy” (or any other way, for that matter), and that there is a communist alternative, so the bourgeoisie have two options: either they must make sure the working class is completely pessimistic and apolitical and has no inkling of an idea of its own power — the Republicans’ strategy, or they must be deceived into believing they do, or can, have power inside the bourgeois parliamentary system — the strategy of the Democrats and the Left which is in orbit around them. These are the choices confronting the bourgeois class, that is, unless there is any re-emergence of communism, if the proletarian class begins to fight on its own terrain — the streets, the workplace, the neighborhood — then, of course, option number three becomes open to the bourgeoisie: unrelenting force, the shedding of the democratic illusion as the democratic nation-state reveals what it truly is: the apparatus for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Sanders is simply advertising himself to be the most effective at deceiving the working class. The choice is power being held solely by the class which owns the means of production and commands the productive process — the application of labor, which it must exploit — in pursuit of the accumulation of capital, a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, a dictatorship with the aim of preventing change, or power being held solely by a class — the class which has nothing to sell but its labor power — dissolving itself, a dictatorship of the proletariat, the only actor of change, a dictatorship with the aim of the negation of class society. A dictatorship which becomes more ruthless the more the capitalist crisis deepens or a dictatorship destined to dissolve as wage labor disappears and the whole population is absorbed into a classless society of associated producers.

### **The Fictitious “Independence” of Sanders**

Sanders has received support from “the Democratic Party apparatus” and raised funds for it in return, such as hosting events at resorts in Palm Beach for big donors,<sup>9</sup> but it’s okay because he says he did not explicitly “go and ask financial people for money”,<sup>10</sup> so I guess it’s also okay that he took \$10,000 from Hillary Clinton’s Political Action Committee when he was running for senate in 2006<sup>11</sup> (Senator Sanders the “socialist” 2006, supported by the representatives of Allen & Company [the head of which had and still has a place on Coca-Cola’s board of directors], Farallon Capital Management, Atlanta Sosnoff Capital, Silverstein Properties, Citigroup, and — I kid you not — a group called International Profit Associates<sup>12</sup> {run by a marvelously horrible capitalist who sexually harasses female workers, has attempted to buy sex from a teenage prostitute, and has attempted to commit larceny<sup>13</sup>}). It doesn’t leave much to the imagination about what kind of relationship he has to the Democratic Party when in 2004, he, an “independent”, stated his position on Nader’s run:

## United States

*“Not only am I going to vote for John Kerry, I am going to run around this country and do everything I can to dissuade people from voting for Ralph Nader. . . I am going to do everything I can, while I have differences with John Kerry, to make sure that he is elected.”<sup>14</sup>*

Tied to the bourgeois state like all other politicians, his “independence” is, and always has been, fictitious. He almost seems like a robot specifically designed to spout the most typical rhetoric of bourgeois leftism, proposing magic solutions to the crisis predicated on a belief that the state can distribute the money it collects however it deems most ethical, magically without consequences, an essential part of the typical Leftist “democratic belief in miracles”:

*“...in terms of income, the last statistics we have seen from 2009 to 2012 tell us that 95 percent of all new income in this country went to the top 1 percent ... the wealthiest family in America [the Waltons], the family that is worth \$100 billion, does that family really need government assistance in the operation of their business? I think the answer is obviously no.”*

The answer is actually yes, no matter if it does not make sense to liberals (“All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.” Marx). The amount of “profits” that any particular firm(s) record(s) on the books is irrelevant. What matters to capital is surplus value extraction (a.k.a. exploitation of workers) and its realization in the sale of commodities. The capitalist system is in crisis, the rate of profit has fallen to the point where the ability for capital to accumulate (and thus for society to reproduce itself) is endangered; in order to engage in real production, capitalists require huge subsidies, they are not extracting enough surplus value from workers relative to capital invested, hence the shift towards speculative activity and credit, creating commodities out of expected streams of capital. When those profits don’t appear, the capitalist system can only pretend for so long like everything is fine, eventually large amounts of capital are revealed for what they are, fictitious, and capitalism falls into crisis (in this case, the crisis will deepen). One of the ways capitalism “pretends” it can continue to operate is by using the bourgeois state to mobilize production, using taxes, but this can only go on for so long until it is revealed by the growing debt to be no solution to the crisis. What comes next? Austerity (known here as “bailouts” alongside cuts to social spending). Which politicians are in the White House only affects how long it will take before the force comes in full, and how much debt is piled up when it happens (the more the debt the worse the crisis will be later on). The working class will pay, sooner or later, unless it stands up and responds by abolishing the capitalist mode of production.

“I would say that while the American people feel very strongly — and this is, by the way, across the board, Democrats, Republicans and independents — in opposition to cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, inside the Beltway, the political establishments, there is support for cuts to those terribly important programs.”<sup>15</sup> It doesn’t matter how much those programs are needed, how many people support them, or if they say it in the poll booth. Capitalism requires them to be cut, so they will be, unless the working class really fights. Sanders just works to make sure that the working class will never realize that it is inherent to capitalism, and not to do with bad politicians, (exceptionally) greedy bankers, etc.

His most “left-wing” stance is his support for worker co-operatives, which again have nothing to do with socialism. In fact, he even sounds like a Trump with the same supposed goals, but just different methods:

*“Instead of giving huge tax breaks to corporations which ship our jobs to China and other low-wage countries, we need to provide assistance to workers who want to purchase their own businesses by establishing worker-owned cooperatives”.*

When the bourgeoisie aren’t being effective enough at exploiting workers, capital will get workers to exploit themselves in their place. Neither shares in the company nor complete self-management is a cure for the horrors of capitalism, they just make them harder to fight:

*“Study after study shows that when workers have an ownership stake in the businesses they work for, productivity goes up, absenteeism goes down and employees are much more satisfied with their jobs.”<sup>[20]</sup>*

The last thing socialists want to do is increase productivity (and increased satisfaction can only mean that those who work in co-ops are only that much more alienated). Typical of Social Democracy (and its descendants [part of the “proof” of the “socialist” nature of the USSR which Stalinists love to point to was its hyper-industrialization, which is in actual fact proof that is was nothing but a particular form of state capitalism]), socialism is equated by Sanders to an increase in productivity led by the state. The left is deployed by capital to create “opportunity”, yes, but opportunity for further exploitation of the working class, Sanders is far from an exception. Bernie is the puppet of capital and its state, like Hillary, Trump, Cruz, etc. There is no “lesser evil”. There is just “austerity now, or more later”.

He can spout all the rhetoric he wants — and I don’t wish to imply he necessarily doesn’t believe it himself — but the actual facts of the matter show that like the rest of the functionaries of the state, he doesn’t work for the working class. Take, for example, his good work for the people of Sierra Blanc:

Sanders was a co-sponsor of and pushed through a bill in congress for a project to dump the waste from Maine, Texas, and Vermont’s nuclear power companies into a working class town<sup>16</sup>, with a population that was 60% Hispanic (and it is 16 miles from the border), a third of households below the poverty line, where the per capita income was \$10,500 (and the county’s \$8,000)<sup>17</sup>. The town, Sierra Blanca, was not better for nuclear waste than anywhere in Vermont, when citizens from the town went to Vermont to explain and protest, multiple Vermonters in the crowd who heard stood up and apologized, explaining that they were unaware. When the citizens from the town went to an anti-nuclear weapons march where the Sanders campaign had a platform, they were kept away from the platform by Vermonter marchers, as they had been warned by the Sanders campaign that if the Texans were protesting there, Sanders wouldn’t come. Before a later rally, Sanders had a meeting with a few of the protestors. He refused to budge, “My position is un-changed, and you’re not gonna’ like it.” When asked if he would at

least visit Sierra Blanca, before he dumps all the waste there, he responded, “Absolutely not. I’m gonna be running for re-election in the state of Vermont.” During a speech by Bernie later for his campaign, one of the protestors yelled “What about my home, Bernie? What about Sierra Blanca?” A few others joined in, “What about Sierra Blanca, Bernie?” Sanders simply left the event.<sup>18</sup>

### **“Restore Democracy” Is the War-Cry Of The Imperialist**

When we go to Sanders’ website, we are redirected to a splash page that says:

*“Nobody who works 40 hours a week should be living in poverty.”<sup>19</sup>*

Funny he should say that, as he doesn’t even support a \$15 minimum wage anywhere in the near future, “over a period of years, not tomorrow”, he says<sup>20</sup>. Meanwhile, he supposedly recognizes \$7.25/hour as a “starvation wage”<sup>21</sup>.

Sanders’ campaign is not an attempt to improve the conditions for those who make all of the wealth in society, this is an attempt to blindfold the historical protagonist and prevent it from dwelling on and developing via practice its instinctual understanding of the true fork in the road of history:

A society where there is no such thing as poverty and each will “work” less than half (possibly a fourth) of the hours per week that are mandated by commodity society, and the word “work” becoming almost immediately an immensely less accurate term for the production process, as labor becomes directly social and the walls, erected by the earliest class society — but cemented and swollen to previously unimaginable heights in capitalism — between production and play, labor and sociality, mental and physical labor, are knocked down by the empowered proletariat (as it ceases to exist as the proletariat), where gender, race, and sexual orientation have zero significance in social status and indeed no longer are applicable categories/abstracted social relationships in the sense they are today, and the disabled are taken care of: communism

Or,

A society which bases itself on alienation, exploitation, and centralization of power, and can only survive via increasing assaults on the working class, and more and larger orgies of carnage and destruction: capitalism in its highest stage, imperialism, the phase of parasitism and decay. In this stage of capitalism, every nation-state must take aggressive measures, both economic and militaristic, to plunder resources and restrain its enemies. The bourgeois nation-state must, in order to survive on the individual level and to destroy and devalue capital on the collective level, use surplus value extracted from workers in the “private sector” and any of the enterprises operated by the state, redirect it to waste production to maintain and advance its military, and to creating a more invasive and repressive police state.



Each bourgeois dictatorship must invent some way to mobilize the masses to support the bourgeoisie against each other, the particular circumstances within each country determine what this is: in the name of Allah, a right to the Holy Land, protecting the “socialist” motherland, defeating fascism, defending democracy, spreading democracy, upholding “human rights”, combating terrorism, protecting “our way of life”, etc.

From his website, under “Protecting America and American Values”:

*Senator Sanders believes our country must remain vigilant to protect us from terrorist attacks at home, whether from organized international terrorist networks, or from “lone wolf” extremists. The threat is real, and he will aggressively pursue those who would do us harm.*

Sanders earnestly supports the bourgeoisie and their politico-ideological hold over the working class. Sanders’ campaign cannot be further from any step towards communist revolution, proletarian self-liberation, the ending of alienation and exploitation as the mechanics of social reproduction, it is largely simply a call for the bourgeoisie to more adequately fund their apparatus of dictatorship. The bourgeoisie must do everything it can to uphold the illusion that the bourgeoisie have the same interests as the working class, or at least that these interests are reconcilable in order to defeat a common enemy. The bourgeoisie must turn the working class against itself, using racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. (and later use identity politics to further divide using those conflicts which they had fostered).

### **Sanders’ Imperialist Dimension**

Above all else, we must look to the imperialist activities Sanders maintains are necessary to reveal the true underlying mechanisms at work: The campaign is an attempt by capital to lock down and prevent disruption by the working class as it continues and prepares further assaults on it; it is the machinations of the bourgeois dictatorship as it makes its preparations to accelerate the descent into barbarism.

*“Together, leading the world, this country will rid our planet of this barbarous organization called ISIS.”*

While Sanders accepts that the US created ISIS by intervention in the Middle East, half of his rhetoric asks the listener to imagine that the US can magically “stop” intervening, the other half, however, makes exceptions for just about everything, overall meaning “business as usual”.

We often hear of his “diplomatic” bent, of his imaginary aversion to the imperialist bloodbath, but any even cursory glance at his voting record will reveal that he, like all good little Keynesians, wouldn’t have created any real dent in the military, there would be no significant redirection of funds away from the war machine, it would kill too many “jobs”; the entire nation-state in the imperialist stage of capitalism is a war machine, and this reality will present itself to the Left as a choice between a “war economy” or “no economy”.

From maintaining a massive military and continual imperialist “foreign intervention” (whether by sanctions [Russia<sup>22</sup>, Iraq {calling it “non-violent”, then saying it is destroying the economy}<sup>23</sup>, Iran, Libya<sup>24</sup> {in fact, he supported it being 3 years longer than Bush proposed on one occasion}<sup>25</sup>, North Korea<sup>26</sup>, etc.] other “pressures”, or actual invasion [Somalia<sup>27</sup>, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.]), to state-led increases in productivity, **nothing** Sanders represents are in the interests of the working class.

*“The Cold War is over. And our focus has got to be on intelligence, increased manpower, fighting international targets.”<sup>28</sup>*

Sanders voted for and supported the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia<sup>29</sup> — he said he supported the bombing because he wanted to minimize American casualties (he didn’t want to see “thousands and thousands of our men and women coming home in body bags”)<sup>30</sup>, the next day, one of his advisors, Jeremy Brecher (who had earlier worked with, among others, Paul Mattick Jr. on a magazine in the early 70’s, and is now a respected historian of the labor movement) drew the line and resigned, his resignation letter calling Sanders’ out on any bullshit about the bombing being for “humanitarian” reasons<sup>31</sup>. Human Rights Watch found 90 different instances where civilians were killed, with a total of 489-528 civilian casualties, many times from using cluster bombs on densely populated urban areas, while several times US forces declared that there were only 20 instances of civilian deaths / “unintended consequences”, only one time saying that there were even 30 instances<sup>32</sup>.

He voted for the Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998, which was to provide support (training, arms, funding, etc.) for “democratic opposition” to the Hussein regime in Iraq in 1998, and stated that “It should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime.”<sup>33</sup> The Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998 was cited by the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (a.k.a. the Iraq War Resolution) as part of the justification for using military force<sup>34</sup>. He also voted for the Authorization for Use of Military Force in 2001 (to give Bush the ability to use 9/11 as an excuse for military intervention [“against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001”])<sup>35</sup>. The White House has over and over maintained the AUMF as a significant legal basis for the drone program and detaining and killing of “suspected” terrorists<sup>36</sup>, and so has the Department of Justice referenced the AUMF as a legal basis for NSA spying<sup>37</sup>.

Sanders voted on numerous occasions over the years for bills to allocate billions to the military. The fuller version of this article will give details for many years of his voting regarding defense spending but he has voted for the construction in, around, and of US bases overseas as well as for “ballistic missile defense programs”<sup>38</sup>. He also voted for a bill that authorized the use of Vieques, an inhabited Puerto Rican island with a population (at the time) of a little over 9,000 and 64.6% of said population below the poverty line<sup>39</sup>, **for Navy and Marine bombing exercises (including the use of depleted uranium)** despite protests two years prior, and the scientific

evidence of mass contamination and extraordinarily high cancer rates, the direct killing of at least one civilian and injury of four others, and a documented instance of live bombs being dropped within a mile of the main town<sup>40</sup>. He also voted \$25 billion for “emergencies and extraordinary expenses” **in Iraq and Afghanistan**, \$77.4 billion to obtaining new weaponry, \$104.2 billion to military persons, and \$120.6 billion for military operations and maintenance for 2005<sup>41</sup>; **\$50 billion to fund the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan**. He voted to override Clinton’s line item veto of 38 projects in a 1998 Military Construction bill (meaning that Sanders voted to keep \$286.7 million of funding for the military in addition to the rest of what was in the bill)<sup>42</sup>,

He even voted to prevent the closure of Guantanamo Bay (his press release ends, hilariously enough with: “I think that it is prudent to review that plan they develop before we spend \$80 million in taxpayer money”)<sup>43</sup>. He, of course, said it was because there wasn’t any kind of comprehensive plan. Hmmm, for an independent, it sounds awfully like he was following the commands of the Senate Majority Leader, “Democrats, under no circumstances, will move forward without a comprehensive, responsible plan from the president. And we will never allow terrorists to be released into the United States. I think the President will come up with a plan. Once that plan is given to us, then we’ll have the opportunity to debate his plan. Now is not the time to do it.”<sup>44</sup>

Sanders presents no alternative to the imperialist necessities of capitalism, he simply likes to dress it up in democratic garb.

*“I believe that the United States should have the strongest military in the world.”*

With America having 5% of the world population, and being a distant third in ranking of country by population, this surely seems to be contrary to his rhetoric around how the US shouldn’t and can’t be the world police.

*“As President and Commander-in-Chief, I will defend this nation, its people, and America’s vital strategic interests”<sup>45</sup>*

So says the supposed “internationalist”. We all heard his pretend aversion to military action, but let’s look at the reality of the kind of strategy Sanders proposes, we have already above detailed some of the effects of sanctions, and his support for them, but let’s look at a gruesome program he has vowed to continue (one which, of course, is also hailed as an alternative to ground war):

After a Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Afghanistan was deliberately hit by the US with AC130 cannon fire, which caused horrors such as people trapped in their beds being burnt to death<sup>46</sup>, medical staff having limbs blown off (one was decapitated), where gunfire followed and shot people that were trying to run away, as the staff frantically contacted NATO and D.C. to no avail (getting no response at all, something like that ground troops would be contacted, or simply “I’m sorry to hear that...”)<sup>47</sup>, and three MSF hospitals in Yemen being bombed by a Saudi-led coalition backed by the US, again knowing that they are

## United States

hitting MSF hospitals<sup>48</sup>, Sanders thinks that American role in the inter-imperialist bloodbath in the middle east should increase, just through the “diplomatic” method of supporting and often funding other countries’ imperialist campaigns. With official UN reports saying that more civilians have been killed in Yemen by US drone strikes than by Al Qaeda, Sanders states firmly that he will continue the drone program (in fact his exact response to a question about whether he will continue the drone program and use special forces was “All of that and more”, only when pressed to further clarify did he add that it was “terrible” when drones, “a weapon”, “work badly”<sup>49</sup>. Things get even better when you take into account the fact that the Obama administration redefined “militant” to mean “military aged male in the area”, regardless of if they are working with/for any terrorist organization, so they can massively lower the official civilian kill count<sup>50</sup> (not that they would tell the truth about the kill count anyway<sup>51</sup>). This is all, of course, because the US does not care about preventing the deaths of, for example, the Yemeni, if it will get in the way of American capital, the class personifying it, and their apparatus of dictatorship maintaining its imperialist interests around the globe, it does not matter if they want to do these directly or through “pressure” and sanctions to get other countries to do it for them. These instances are nothing but examples of the US “supporting other countries” without sending in ground troops themselves, precisely what Sanders is supporting (albeit, he says wants the Saudi’s to focus on ISIS rather than the Houthis in Yemen).

*“I think the people of America are getting sick and tired of the world and the region, Saudi Arabia and the other countries saying ‘hey, we don’t have to do anything about it. The American taxpayer, the American soldiers will do all the work for us.’”<sup>(62)</sup>*

To this sickening display of “social” chauvinism, there is no response but fighting for proletarian self-activity, culminating in the construction of the world communist organization, not to fight on behalf of and instead of the proletariat, but as the concentrated expression of the proletariat itself. Ceaselessly fighting for independent working class action, the formation of independent organs of class power, and (dialectically) consequently the development of class consciousness, and building the world party to maintain the lessons from past struggles and clarify the communist program, this is the duty of every class conscious individual.

### No Politician Is On the Side of Socialism

For those liberals who think that the problem comes down to checking the power of the multinationals, “Big Money”, and that Sanders presents any opportunity to do so, let’s put it this way:

Bernie Sanders voted the exact same as an ex-member of the Walmart board of directors 93% of the time. No other two senators running for president in 2016 voted together more often than Sanders and Clinton. On average Democrats vote with other Democrats 89.3%. of the time<sup>52</sup>, Sanders, the “democratic socialist”, voted with the majority of the now-leading party of the ruling class in the most advanced capitalist and most powerful imperialist nation between 95% and 99% of the time between 2001 and 2010<sup>53</sup>. In 2005, the then-Chair of the National Committee of this party put the number at 98%<sup>54</sup>. The congressperson he voted the most with

is a multimillionaire<sup>55</sup> ex-Senior Vice President of Consumer and E-Commerce (earlier the Vice President of Marketing) of RealNetworks<sup>56</sup> (when it was worth on average \$190 million and grew to \$462.9 million<sup>57</sup>) described as a “business-oriented Democrat”<sup>58</sup> (and who presents the same image on her website<sup>59</sup>) who spent \$11.6 million to win her 2000 election, outspending her opponent by over \$4 million<sup>60</sup>, which at that point broke the record for the most a woman in the country’s history had spent of money she had “earned” “herself” on a race for major elective office. This included a campaign claiming her goddamn dog was diabetic<sup>61</sup>.

There is no parliamentary way out. The factors deciding the course of history are not ones of how many “socialists” we can stuff into the bourgeois government. There can be no legislation or “executive action” to emancipate the class which makes all of society’s wealth and in doing so finally solve the contradictions wrought on the social organism by modes of production based on the exploitation of labor and perfected in the society dominated by capital accumulation. There is only a social solution, in which the state apparatus and the façade that is bourgeois democracy will be smashed, in the unlikely case that the bourgeoisie does not drop the democratic act first in order to fully mobilize its state machinery to crush the revolution, and the proletariat must not hesitate to strike first.

Every noise from Sanders’ mouth that even refers to the working class or its movement, every utterance of the word “socialism”, every bare mention of the word “worker”, is nothing but a slap in the face of every worker around the world, the same to women, minorities, and every other victim of bourgeois society whenever he attempts to rally them to his side. In fact, if all it was a slap in the face it would be much less horrible than it actually is, it is no less than an attempt to shackle, hogtie, and silence the working class in the most advanced capitalist country (i.e. the most imperative economy [the most centralized and advanced concentration of the productive forces] and bastion of imperialism for the proletariat to conquer/begin socializing and put in the service of the world revolution as quickly as possible).

While the capitalist crisis we are currently in may not break into world war any time in the next president’s term(s), and of course for now the main strategy will be using the proletarians of other countries (“...Russia should be part of it--U.K., France, the entire world...”, “but I do not support American ground troops in Syria”<sup>62</sup>) to do their dirty work, part of maintaining the illusion that they care for members of the “Greatest Nation” (and that the US should still get credit even if it made the workers of other countries do it [“...leading the world, this country will rid our planet of this barbarous organization”]), we can be sure of what Bernie’s attitude will be if it does:

*“Winston Churchill’s politics were not my politics. . . . But nobody can deny **that as a wartime leader, he rallied the British people** when they stood virtually alone against the Nazi juggernaut and rallied them and eventually won an extraordinary victory.”<sup>63</sup>*

His campaign might yet have unintended consequences for the bourgeoisie. But, while it might be true that the consequences of Sanders’ campaign might in the end help push the proletariat

into action, this does not mean that Sanders himself or any of his politics should be supported — he is an attempt by the bourgeoisie to prevent *independent* proletarian action — nor does it rescind the duty of communists to fight every illusion in the bourgeois system and denounce every element of his campaign. Communism will only re-emerge as a proletariat engaging in independent practical activity and subsequently developing communist consciousness through it, clarified by the party. Sanders' campaign might end up propelling the proletariat towards independent activity, but the test for this is if it leads the proletariat towards shattering their illusions in Sanders and fighting for their interests against bourgeois democracy.

All those who believe that Bernie should be supported because, even though he isn't any closer to being a socialist than Rush Limbaugh<sup>64</sup>, he might push the working class to the "left" politically, are making a very large mistake. No amount of pushing the working class to the "left" will make them socialist. Communism has nothing to do with bourgeois leftism. Pushing the proletariat to the left just pushes them towards taking *capitalism* into their own hands and solving the capitalist crisis on behalf of the bourgeoisie. Neo-liberalism is how the bourgeoisie is *managing* the crisis, they are at the moment fairly clueless how to solve it. Driving the proletariat to "radical" leftism is to encourage the proletariat not to revolutionize society, to become conscious of itself and its interests, to truly become the historical subject, but to accomplish the task of the restructuring of capital necessary to begin a new cycle of accumulation, which at this stage requires mass-scale inter-imperialist warfare. To drive the proletariat to the left is to do nothing but to encourage the proletariat into leading the descent into barbarism.

GSE

### Notes

Fuller and more detailed footnotes will be available in the full version published on the website.

1 <https://www.parlament.ch/en/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=37004#votum2>

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3 <http://www.transparency.org.nz/Corruption-Perceptions-Index>

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"American information is so valuable, experts say, that no amount of global outrage over secret U.S. surveillance powers would cause Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to ditch the Five Eyes

relationship.

The broader message is that the revelations from NSA leaker Edward Snowden are unlikely to stop or even slow the global growth of secret-hunting — an increasingly critical factor in the security and prosperity of nations”

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64 [Rush Limbaugh is a conservative political commentator and radio talk show host.](#)

## **The Revolutionary Party and the Working Class**

The document by the internationalists of *Battaglia Comunista* on “The Role and Structure of the Revolutionary Organisation” comes from the Second of the International Conferences called by the Internationalist Communist Party [Battaglia Comunista] which took place in 1978. It has never been published in English by us before<sup>1</sup> but we are doing so as part of a discussion on the role and structure of the revolutionary party inside the Internationalist Communist Tendency which will culminate in a meeting later this year. It is the first of a series of such documents dealing with different aspects of the party question so we are prefacing this with a few words by way of background.

One of the central and most vexed questions (at least since the failure of the revolution in Russia) has been the question of the role and nature of a revolutionary minority of the working class, the party. Each generation it seems has to confront the question anew but can only do so adequately if it takes into account the real achievements of previous struggles and previous generations of proletarians. This was the case for the forerunners of the Communist Workers’ Organisation in the UK which like other left communist organisations was formed following the end of the capitalist post-war boom in the early 1970s. It was a time of great suspicion towards the failed legacy of the Russian Revolution as exemplified in the Stalinist USSR and there was much sympathy for the views of Otto Rühle that “all parties are bourgeois”. After all the collapse of Social Democracy, in the face of imperialist war, followed not long after by the rise of the partyocracy in the USSR, alongside the abandonment of world revolution by the Third International seemed to wipe out the idea that mass parties and “vanguard” parties alike had anything to offer the working class. For those who entirely rejected the notion that the USSR had anything to do with socialism but was in fact a peculiar form of state capitalism the whole party question was problematic. So much so that councilism and the cult of “spontaneity” exerted an enormous influence at that time.

However, the real nature of working class revolution stubbornly keeps coming back to confront revolutionaries. Unlike other antagonistic and subordinate classes in history, the working class has no form of property to defend. It is the propertyless class. Unlike the bourgeoisie it cannot make incremental gains by getting rid of this law or abolishing that privilege under the old regime. Its only “property” is its ability to labour (and produce surplus value for the exploiting class) and its only weapons, as Anton Pannekoek noted, are its “consciousness and its organisation”. And here lies the problem which Marx confronted in *The German Ideology*. If the following is true:

*“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”*

How can the working class ever break free from such dominance? The answer lies firstly in the insoluble contradictions of the system. These include regular and periodic economic crises and the fact that its continued existence depends on the increasing exploitation of a class which is “in civil society but not of civil society”, the working (proletariat). The class responds to this situation by coming together to resist exploitation by collective action which occasionally takes the form of wider insurrections. The class struggle is the school for an alternative to capitalist exploitation. But in the course of the struggle it is inevitable that some workers (and some non-workers who can see through the system and identify with the working class) come to an awareness, a consciousness, of the need for something more than the daily guerrilla war against capitalism. They perceive the need for a political programme which goes beyond the system itself. However, as a minority in the class, they have to organise themselves to take their aims further so what more natural than to create an organisation, a party, which unifies both them and all the gains in consciousness that the class struggle has historically produced?

The problem of the nature, role and structure of the proletarian political party was now posed. And it would not be answered in the short term. Marx initially thought he had found it in the International Workingmen’s Association or First International. In its Rules he posed its key ingredient. “The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves”. By this he meant not that the workers did not need a party (as the councilists misinterpret that quote) but that at last the working class had its own political body independent from all bourgeois organisations. However the First International was riven by disputes, particularly with the followers of Bakunin and Proudhon and died as a real force after a decade or so. In its place came Social Democracy which in some ways was a step backward since it was based on national parties. It sank deep roots in the working class at a time when bourgeois control of the media and ways of reaching the mass of the population were largely ineffective. Social Democracy grew into a movement of millions and began to create the illusion that capitalism could be gradually conquered through the ballot box or at least peacefully. The revolution which Marx saw in *The German Ideology* as essential for wiping the slate of past domination clean (see Thesis 5 in the document which follows) was relegated to some distant and unspecified future (the so-called maximum programme).

In fact, far from acting as a repository of communist consciousness in the class the opposite was happening. The presence of genuine revolutionaries in Social Democracy only served to disguise the fact “the movement”, increasingly riddled with nationalist and imperialist notions, was actually integrating the working class into capitalism. This was not clearly revealed until 1914 when the vast bulk of Social Democratic parties of the so-called Second International voted to support the machinations of their “own” government and marched the working class off to imperialist war. And in the revolutionary wave after the war Social Democracy provided its second service to capitalism by continuing to support the capitalist suppression of the first genuinely international attempt at working class revolution. The Social Democrats in Germany (in particular) mobilised their masses against the masses who followed the newly-founded Communist Parties, thus ensuring the defeat of the revolution outside Russia. This in turn led to the final victory of counter-revolution in an isolated Russia. That counter-revolution was to be

## ***Revolutionary Organisation***

carried out by the very party which had led the revolution in the first place.

The Bolsheviks were one of the few parties in Social Democracy to reject nationalism and imperialism, and as a result came to wield an enormous influence inside the revolutionary class movement in Russia. Here the war had brought death, destitution and quasi-starvation and, in the weakest link of the capitalist chain, revolution was on the agenda. The Bolshevik Party was not a disciplined mass as later Stalinist (and Trotskyist) mythology would portray it. It was full of lively debate about what the revolution should be and how it would come about. What, however, was significant about it was that, though relatively small in 1914 it was present within the wider working class and perceived to stand for clear positions against both Tsarism and the war. This marked it out as did its unwavering support for the soviets as real working class bodies capable of replacing capitalist rule. This made it a rallying point for all those who saw that proletarian revolution was the only solution.

What it did not debate very much was the role and position of the party in the coming revolution. In this respect it assumed that the main aim was for the party to grow and once it had enough support to “take power”. In short it still largely accepted the Social Democratic notion that the party represents the class and thus carries out the revolution in its name. Thus, when the Provisional Government made up of Social Democrats of various hues, was overthrown instead of passing power to the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets it was decided that a new government would stand above it, the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom). And once the Left Socialist Revolutionaries abandoned it this became a single party government. The party thus came to be the state and there was no separation between them. Few at the time saw the danger, not only for the revolution, but also for the idea of a revolutionary party, especially once the consequences of the isolation of the revolution became apparent.

The Russian Revolution we have dealt with, and will deal with, further elsewhere. Here we simply want to make a brief comment about revolutionary organisation. The Russian Revolution demonstrated that the party, revolutionary minority or whatever else you want to call it doesn’t start the revolution and it doesn’t finish it either. But it exists in the class before the revolution and participates in the revolution from the beginning. Its influence goes beyond its membership. It exerts a leadership as a guide pointing the way forward and criticising all those who aim to halt the revolutionary process. It may even lead insurrection wherever this is necessary but insurrection is not revolution and this ultimately can only be carried out by the mass of the class once they have gone through the revolutionary experience themselves. And it is the class-wide organs (councils or soviets, local committees etc) which are the real transformers of society. This is simply because socialism cannot be brought in by decree but only by the conscious self-activity of the mass of the class once it has taken up the programme proposed by its own revolutionary minority, its party.

It is a complex issue and has many aspects which pose many questions which we will be addressing in the coming months. One thing though is clear – the idea of a mass party in advance of the revolution belongs to the past. The collapse of Social Democracy revealed this in 1914

as did the abortive attempts of the Comintern to form united fronts with Social Democracy as the revolutionary wave declined in 1921-2. It was an error repeated by the Trotskyists from the 1930s onwards when they went into “entryism” into the Social Democratic parties and which wiped them out as a revolutionary tendency. As the Platform of the Committee of Intesa put it in response to the united front

*“It is mistaken to think that in every situation expedients and tactical manoeuvres can widen the Party base since relations between the party and the masses depend in large part on the objective situation”.*<sup>2</sup>

The first task of revolutionaries is to defend a revolutionary perspective whatever the situation and not chase this or that opportunist or short-term policy to attempt to build an organisation on false (and dishonest) premises. The brief document here is a starting point for what we hope will be renewed debate on the various issues facing the formation of a truly international and internationalist class party.

**CWO**

## **The Role and Structure of the Revolutionary Organisation**

### **Communist Consciousness**

We hold to the acquisitions of revolutionary theory elaborated by Marx in *The German Ideology*, confirmed by the practical and theoretical work of Lenin, reaffirmed by the first two Congresses of the Third International and in the formation of the Communist Party of Italy. They were defended by the Italian Left inside the Committee of Entente, and throughout the 1930s and 1940s according to which:-

1. Since history is the history of class struggle, it is the proletariat which will accomplish the decisive step that will take humanity from the realm of necessity to the world of freedom.
2. The proletariat cannot gradually conquer a position of strength within capitalist society; the continued existence of the capitalist mode of production does not gradually diminish the power of the bourgeoisie, as was the case where previous rising classes were confronting earlier exploiting classes. On the contrary, the power of capital over society tends to become absolute and to exert itself on the deepest layers of civil society.
3. From the very existence of a class forced into a position of decisive antagonism against other classes concretely *“emerges the consciousness of the need for a fundamental revolution, communist consciousness”*.

## **Revolutionary Organisation**

4. It is during periods of crisis, when the bourgeoisie is no longer able to control the explosion of the contradictions inherent in its mode of production and its social relations, that the possibility of a revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois power is put on the historical agenda.

5. This revolution *“is necessary ... not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew”* (Marx). And *“both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution”*. (Marx)

6. During the period leading up to it, and during the revolutionary process itself, communist consciousness is found amongst a minority of individuals from the working class and other classes, but it derives from the very existence of the proletariat, from the objective nature of class antagonisms, and continually refers back to it. It draws from this objective situation its strength and its materialist nature, and is thus the patrimony of the whole class.

7. As the expression of the historic movement and programme of the proletariat, communist consciousness cannot be defined as ‘ideology’ in the Marxist sense; on the contrary, it is the most complete instrument for grasping social and economic reality as a whole, since its aim is to change this very reality. Whereas bourgeois revolutionary consciousness was directed against the external aspects of aristocratic rule and was based on the necessity to substitute one exploiting class (the bourgeoisie) for another, communist consciousness is directed against the very class nature of present-day society and all previous societies: its goal is the elimination of class divisions. It is not the last theory in the proper sense of the word, but it is certainly the last revolutionary theory. The proof of this is the fact that the ideologies which have broken away from revolutionary Marxism in the so-called ‘socialist’ countries (which for communists are a form of state capitalism fully integrated into the class enemy’s international line-up) have no road to take except the traditional one of classical bourgeois ideology – even though they don’t even do this very well.

8. The relationship which links the class to its communist consciousness is the same one which links the class to the future exercise of its dictatorship: it resides in the objective social and economic contradictions, in the very dynamic of history. It will not be present in the minds and psychology of all proletarians until the time when they are ready to make their own history.

9. It is necessary to definitively reject and fight against the theory – alien to Marxism and typical of petty bourgeois idealism – which maintains that communist consciousness can grow and become generalised outside of the revolutionary process itself. It is based on the idealist principle of the superiority of ideas, and can only deceive potential revolutionaries with an impossible vision of reality, drawing them away from their unavoidable duty as communists and obstructing their work.

10. This fundamentally anti-Marxist thesis was adopted by the council communist movement, which, beginning from an **erroneous evaluation** of the process of revolution and counter-revolution in Russia, arrived at positions alien and opposed to those of the communist movement.

11. A position close to that of the council communist movement, and which also has to be rejected, recognises that only the revolutionary process makes it possible for communist consciousness to become generalised, but which reduces this to a “consciousness of the need for revolution”, thereby renouncing the organised struggle against the highly organised forces of the bourgeoisie; although the defenders of this position talk about the revolution, they are actually working for the preservation of capitalism and for the hegemony of one of the two imperialist blocs

12. Similarly we have to reject the position that communist consciousness, the entire inheritance of principles, theses, and positions pointing towards communist revolution, is something given once and for all, and doesn't change from one historic phase of the movement to another. Those who gravitate around this position forget that communist consciousness is something directly attached to the class and to the experiences it objectively goes through in its subordination to capital. They therefore forget that theses and positions have to alter with changes in the real situation in which the class lives. The main problem is to recognise the characteristics of the class struggle through all these changes, and to draw the necessary lessons from it. Naturally all the variations in the capitalist mode of production cannot, despite the bourgeois theories of the national communist parties, alter the basic substance of class society, or the fact that the proletariat is, and remains, the class which is economically exploited and socially and politically dominated.

### **The Organisation of Revolutionaries: The Party**

1. In the entire period leading up to the revolution, and even during the initial phase of the revolution itself, communist consciousness is possessed by a minority, i.e. only a minority possesses and acts on the basis of this consciousness. This is a real and concrete fact which is beyond discussion. This minority has the duty of forging the tools necessary for the class to develop, in the moments of crisis in the capitalist mode of production, this “practical movement”, the revolution – the only way that mass communist consciousness matures within the class itself. In the fullest sense the organisation of the revolutionary minority is the party.

2. The party has the permanent task of giving back to the class the entire legacy of theses, principles, and expressions of the struggle for communism, as that communist consciousness which has come about through the experiences which the working class itself has lived through.

3. The party is therefore the medium through which the relationship between the class and its consciousness has been expressed throughout the entire history of capitalism's existence, just as it will be during the period of transition from capitalism to communism.

4. The seizure of power by the working class, and thus the beginning of the revolution for the whole of society, is only possible during the crises of capitalism and when the class recognises, in the principles and programme of revolutionaries, its own historic interests; when, during the assault on the bourgeois state, it rallies around the party and its programme.

5. The ups and downs of the party-organisation faithfully reflect the ups and downs of the life of the class. It almost disappears during periods of profound reflux when the bourgeoisie reigns supreme on the economic and political level. But just as the objective antagonism between the classes can never disappear, so communist consciousness which is nourished by this antagonism can never disappear either. It may though be reduced to the point where the organisation of revolutionaries seems to have disappeared. This is particularly the case when the defeat of the class leads to fear and disillusionment in the ranks of revolutionaries themselves, and thus to confusion and aberration on the level of communist consciousness. This was confirmed in Italy in the period around 1948, when the definitive victory of Stalinism<sup>3</sup> – which had disarmed the class and led it to re-forge its own chains – provoked division in the ranks of the unified organisation, the Internationalist Communist Party, which had arisen in 1943 as a response to a potential reawakening of the class from the profound depression of Stalinism.

6. The existence of several organisations claiming the title of the party in no way undermines the continuity of the party and the necessity for militants to defend it. This was the task of the comrades of the left fraction in France and Belgium vis-a-vis the party founded at Livorno in 1921 throughout the period in which the Third International and the Soviet power had not yet, in their estimation, completed their cycle of degeneration. This was completed with the Soviet Union's participation in the war in Spain as an agent of the counter-revolution, and in one of the blocs in the world imperialist war. The defence of revolutionary continuity was then crystallised in the new Internationalist Communist Party, which reunited in its theses and programme the whole corpus of experience and elaboration from the previous period. The fact that this party was later divided into two trunks<sup>4</sup> and that one of them gave rise to groups and currents that were often openly counter-revolutionary (we are thinking of **Invariance**)<sup>5</sup> has not led to the total disappearance or betrayal of the bases of the 1943 programme.

7. Although we cannot exclude the possibility of a revolutionary upheaval in one country under the guidance of a 'national' party at a time when the world party of the proletariat has not yet been formed, past historical experience and the growing supra-national concentration of imperialism teaches us that revolutionaries must seek to forge the international party on the basis of the theoretical and programmatic platform expressed by the communist consciousness of revolutionaries for half a century. The supra-nationality of capital, i.e. the identical class interests of the bourgeoisie in all countries, is matched by the supra-nationality of proletarian interests. A revolution that is victorious in one country will not survive for long if it does not have the active solidarity of the world proletariat, not only on the defensive level, but also through revolutionary assault on the whole capitalist system. The world party of the revolution is essential for the execution of this vital strategic plan; and, because it is so concerned with the generalised attack on capital it will subordinate to this plan the tactics of its section in the



country where the revolution first breaks out.

8. This is the perspective the party will have for its international work. The supra-nationality of proletarian interests and of the party's strategy will be reflected in the centralised organisation of the party. The party is the indispensable tool of the proletarian revolution, because only the party can incorporate into a programmatic political platform the ongoing developments coming out of the objective situation of the class, developments which would otherwise remain extremely incoherent and easy prey to sectarianism and corporatism – both expressions of bourgeois ideology – even before being hit by the repression of the bourgeois state. It is essential that the party is solidly regrouped around its central positions, that it is organised on the principle of centralism and not of federalism. Just as the class transmits to the party the multiple and sometimes contradictory experience which the party has to elaborate in a unifying programme and then return to the class, so within the party itself experiences of militant activity and strategic and tactical positions can go from the periphery to the centre and back to the periphery.

### **The Class and the Party**

The notion that the party is only forged immediately before the revolution and even during it completely deforms the concept of the party. If in effect the class is capable of carrying through the revolutionary offensive – which demands a particular level of political homogeneity in the class without the intervention of the politically unifying factor represented by the party, then the party itself is superfluous. If it is the class which, at a certain moment in the development of its struggle “equips itself” with the party, then the latter becomes an operational instrument which has no connection with the problem of consciousness. Once again we are back at the famous theory of the councilists.

This is why, within the left communist movement it's necessary to fight against the conception which, while recognising the necessity of the party in carrying out the revolution, postpones the constitution of the party to a “riper” period. It is based on an underestimation of the practical tasks of the party (or organisation of revolutionaries as certain comrades like to express it). We have seen that one of the essential tasks of the party is to equip itself with operational instruments which can, in the most concrete way possible, return to the class the programme of working class emancipation, elaborated by the party on the basis of the historical experience and existence of the proletariat. The formula “the party acts as part of the class in the class itself” says nothing, because all it means is that revolutionary militants are part of the proletarian struggle wherever they happen to be present and thus bring to it the critical positions and general orientations of the party. This is necessary but not sufficient if the party is to fulfil its role as a guide, unless one is saying that the party will undergo such numeric growth that it has a mass presence everywhere which contradicts the generally held idea that it is a ‘minority’ of the class.

It is a definitively acquired revolutionary principle that intermediary organs between party and class must exist for the entire period before and after the revolutionary offensive. These are

organs the party uses to extend as far as possible the influence of its platform and orientations throughout the entire class. The class moves and struggles on the level of economic or, one might say, contractual demands. Only revolutionaries have a precise awareness of the limitations of these struggles, their inability to emancipate the class. Communists distinguish themselves from the mass of workers by the fact that even while they fight alongside the whole class in its defensive struggles they denounce the limitations of these struggles and use them to propagandise the necessity for revolution. Communists have to link the struggles of the class to a political strategy for attacking the bourgeois state. They must prepare the instruments which the party will use concretely to orientate the proletariat's offensive when the whole system is in crisis and the struggle is becoming generalised.

The party would be failing in its fundamental duties – indeed it would be unable to function as an organisation of revolutionaries, as a party – if it neglected to work within the class with all the necessary instruments in the period leading up to the revolution, It would mean that, when the situation was objectively favourable, it would be unprepared and isolated from the class, which would result in the class being disarmed and disorientated.

The concrete possibility of making progress in the arming of the party is naturally closely linked to the degree of maturation of the class struggle and the real relationship in the class between revolutionaries and the agents of the left wing of the bourgeoisie. This does not mean that the kinds of tools to be used cannot be exactly envisaged in the programme of the party. The proof of this is that the 'internationalist factory groups' envisaged in our programme, and which must be an integral part of the platform of the international party whose creation we want to contribute to, may have a difficult life today, but in other times they have had an enormous importance (from 1945 to 1948 for example). Their task is not to simply 'incite the struggle at the economic level' as certain comrades seem to believe, but to transmit to the class the general political principles of the party, solidifying a sympathetic layer of the class and creating a reference point for future revolutionary struggles. The difficulty of the present situation, the low level of class consciousness, is reflected in the enormous difficulty of strengthening and extending this workers' network. But if we miss out this point in the programme, putting it off to better times, we will render ourselves incapable of carrying out our duties when the time is ripe, since we will lack the cadre and the experience which the party can only develop through a long and combative presence in the working class.

Among the instruments which the party must equip itself with in its work towards the class and towards the revolution, the network of factory groups is the most urgent and important, but others must be studied and prepared<sup>6</sup> even though they don't yet seem to be necessary owing to the numerical weakness of revolutionaries and the unpropitious political situation. On the other hand, other organisations, such as the 'communist youth', must be considered products of a previous phase in both bourgeois society and the revolutionary movement and are thus now superfluous.

We reaffirm the principle that there is no class party without the instruments which really link the central organisation of the party to the class; those who underestimate or deny this

affirmation are not working for the party.

1. The dialectical relationship between the class and its party does not disappear or go through qualitative changes during the seizure of power and the construction of the proletarian ‘semi-state’. Both are only possible when the class is concentrated and united around this objective.

2. The proletarian ‘semi-state’ will be characterised by the soviet form discovered by the proletariat itself during the experience of the Russian revolution. The gradual disappearance of classes carried out by the practical revolutionary movement of the proletarian masses will be accompanied by the mass production of communist consciousness and, consequently, by the gradual disappearance of the party.

3. The party will in no way identify its own structure with the structure of the “workers’ state”, but will accomplish its role as a political guide as long as the class recognises its own interests in the orientations it defends.

4. The need for groups of the communist left to deepen their understanding of the problems of the transition period must begin from the clear and fundamental affirmation that without a party there can be no revolution and proletarian dictatorship, just as there can be no proletarian dictatorship and workers’ state without the workers’ councils.

**Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista)**

October 1978

## **Notes**

1 The original translation was printed in the pamphlet *Second International Conference of Groups of the Communist Left November 1978 Volume One: Preparatory Texts* by the International Communist Current (ICC). This translation is of the version on the Italian section of the leftcom website at <http://www.leftcom.org/it/articles/1978-11-11/ruolo-e-struttura-della-organizzazione-rivoluzionaria>

2 See our pamphlet *“Platform of the Committee of Intesa 1925 – the Start of the Italian Left’s fight against Stalinism as Fascism increased its grip”*. For details see back cover.

3 Stalinism was obviously victorious in the USSR in 1928 but this refers to the role of the reformed Italian Communist Party under Stalin’s loyal henchman, Togliatti in helping to establish social peace in Italy in the post-war period.

4 This is a reference to Bordiga and the Bordigists’ split from the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista) in 1951-2. A future article will outline the organisational differences between the two tendencies but details on the split can be found in Bordiga; Beyond the Myth by Onorato Damen (see advert in this issue).

5 “Invariance” was the first split in the Bordigist camp (in 1966 but there have been many more since) and the only one when Bordiga was actually alive. Led by Jacques Cammatte, it denounced the Bordigists for their “activist” turn. Eventually Cammatte concluded that all political organisations were “rackets” and that

## Revolutionary Organisation

the working class was a “class for capital” with no hope of making a revolution.

6 This was written 38 years ago and since then the restructuring of the working class over the last 30 years has also led to the attempt to organise in localities which our Italian comrades call “territorial” groups. The CWO itself has experimented with groups which fight in each area around such themes as “No War but the Class War” at the time of the Iraq War. We should point out that this is not an attempt “to organise the class” (as the ICC said in 1978) but to organise revolutionaries and widen their impact within the class. The revolutionary political organisation or party cannot simply be an ideological construct which simply propagandises in a vacuum as this document tries to stress.

### The English translation of **Bordiga - Beyond the Myth** by Onorato Damen

with an introduction for English readers of the debate between Bordiga and Damen and its significance for revolutionary politics today. The work is divide into two halves, the first dealing with the exchanges between Bordiga and Damen and the second focussing on a critique of what Bordigism later became in the hands of Bordiga’s ‘epigones’ or followers.

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### About Us

**T**he **Communist Workers' Organisation** is affiliated to the **Internationalist Communist Tendency** headed by the **Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista)**. This was founded during the Second World War (1943) condemning both sides as imperialist. Its roots are in the Italian Communist Left, which from 1920 fought the degeneration of the Communist International and Stalinisation imposed on all the parties that belonged to it. Today there are ICT affiliates in several countries.

We are **internationalists**. We believe that the interests of the exploited are the same all over the world, and that communism cannot be achieved in one country, a myth peddled by Stalinism. Stalinism was never communism but a particular form of capitalism, state capitalism. After 1917 the economic blockade of the Soviet Union and the failure of the world revolution in the West meant that the revolution was transformed into its opposite, eventually becoming an imperialist bloc that would collapse after only seventy years. We are opposed to all (Trotskyists, Maoists) claims that state capitalism in whatever form is socialism.

We see ourselves as a political reference point for the working class, first of all to those sections who are tired of the **unions**, all unions: this does not mean the fight to defend our immediate interests (wages, hours, workrates, etc.) is over. On the contrary! But the union is no longer the form through which workers can (effectively) organise and carry out these struggles in any way. The unions are now openly a tool to control the class struggle and manage the labour force on behalf of capital, whilst rank and file unions, despite the intentions of their militants, are a blunt instrument for workers, because they put forward radical economic demands without questioning the legal and economic framework imposed by the bourgeois state. The activity of rank and file unions has been further shown up by the crisis, which has severely restricted the opportunity for their reformist political practice.

For us the real alternative to unions is the '**self-organisation of the struggle**', which has to start spontaneously from the working class, outside of and against the unions, to choose for themselves the most effective forms of mobilisation, which of necessity go beyond compatibility with the system. The struggle for immediate interests must not, however, ever forget that the general interests of the class lies in the overthrow of capitalism, and this must be constantly linked to it.

We are **anti-parliamentarian**: the idea of pushing these institutions in a proletarian direction "from inside", means mistakenly seeing them as a neutral entity, when in fact they are the structures which the bourgeoisie gives itself in order to impose its rule. The participation in bourgeois parliaments and legislatures of the various communist parties, is the result of renouncing - for ever - the revolutionary perspective and means acceptance of democratic peace (which ultimately rests, let's remember, on bourgeois guns).

The overthrow of capitalism is only possible through a **revolution**, i.e. the conquest of political power by the proletariat, against all bourgeois pseudo-democratic channels (elections, reforms, etc ...) which are specially designed to avoid any radical change in society. The forum of our "democracy", the bodies of power of the revolution, will instead be the **workers' councils**, mass meetings in which delegates will be entrusted with specific mandates and will be recallable at any time. But these organisations will never become real bodies of proletarian power, without a clear programme aimed at the abolition of exploitation and, therefore, the elimination of classes, for a society of "**freely associated producers**" who work for the human needs. This programme does not fall from the sky, but is articulated by that section of the working class which tries to grasp the lessons of past struggles, regrouping themselves at an international level to form a party that fights within the workers' councils against capitalism for socialism. This is not a party of government that would replace the class, but a party of agitation and political leadership on the basis of that programme. Only if the most advanced sectors of the proletariat recognise themselves in the political leadership of the party will we be on the road to the revolutionary socialist transformation.

We are for the party, but we are not that party or its only embryo. Our task is to participate in its construction, intervening in all the struggles of the class, trying to link its immediate demands to the historical programme; communism.

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