

Internationalist Notes



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**Issue 2
Spring 2015**

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Cover: Detail from Petrograd Soviet Assembly
at the Smolenk Institute 1917

Internationalist Notes

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Against Capitalist War Against Nationalism in All its Forms The Only Perspective is International Class Struggle

May Day this year falls close to the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. In Western (May 8 1945) and Eastern (May 9) Europe there were joyful celebrations by those who survived 6 years of massacre in which perhaps 100 million died around the world. Despite the fact that there has been no outright conflagration on the same scale as 1939-45 the world has not endured a moment's peace since. A post-war boom, dominated by two rival imperialist powers who got what they wanted out of the war, ensured that proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, Angola etc never became global. Even the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) found neither side ready to plunge humanity into oblivion. But then the post-war boom was still in play.

The situation is different today. The end of the post-war boom in 1973 showed that capitalism's cyclical crisis had returned. It led to increased tensions and a racking up of the arms race in the 1980s. This led to the economic implosion of the USSR which had been devoting 25% of its GDP to maintain an unsustainable arms race. This was not the "end of history" for "history" never stands still, but it was the beginning of US hubris. The unilateral arrogance of the wars it (and its allies) unleashed on the Middle East have today reaped their reward in the increasingly brutal and bitter conflicts which are spreading from Syria and Iraq to Libya and Yemen as well as much of Africa north of the Congo. The situation worsened after the collapse of the global financial markets in 2008 and the subsequent austerity policies inflicted on populations around the world. This in turn provoked anti-austerity movements which culminated in the Arab Spring of 2011. The outcome was not the victory of "democracy", as Western imperialists originally claimed, but an increase in imperialist rivalries which have now torn so many of these states apart. Millions of people who wanted no part of these wars have been driven from their homes, raped and injured or have had their deaths dismissed as "collateral damage".

Everywhere the ruling classes feign moral disapproval (at the actions of other rulers naturally) and for many conflicts they claim that there are "peace processes" in operation. At best these produce ceasefires but the wars still go on and on and increase in number. The number of places hit by war from which people are fleeing around the world goes up every year. And what of those that flee? They take part in a version of real-life "Hunger Games", crossing deserts to reach coasts and then trusting their savings and their lives to people traffickers and unseaworthy boats in an attempt to get to the "rich" (for some) north. The "winners" of these "games" get to "enjoy" a low paid, insecure existence faced with racist attacks. The response of the main imperialist perpetrators of their misery is not to stop plundering and bombing their homelands but simply to make it harder for them to get to the north.

Can anyone doubt that this is a picture of a global system in crisis? Capitalism has created the possibility of a world of abundance yet continues to inflict misery on millions if not billions. The fundamental reason is to be found in the laws of capitalist production themselves. The same laws which drive capitalism on are also the ones which produce its crises. The law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall pushes capitalism continually to "expand or die". When the rate of profit is no longer sufficiently high to encourage investment the crisis kicks in. This happened before

the First World War and before the Second World War. The destruction of these wars caused a massive devaluation of capital which allowed for a new round of capital accumulation to begin. The capital destruction of the Second World War was so great that it produced the longest boom in capitalist history. But this ended in the early 1970s.



*Dimitry Mitroshkin
Mayday*

Since then we have had a system lurching from one expedient to the next to keep going. Thus far the capitalist states have managed the current crisis. This culminated in the massive bail out of the banks through a fiction of creating money from nothing. They have increased sovereign debt to levels which are unlikely to ever be repaid but they have reduced spending on wages, welfare and social provision in order to claim financial orthodoxy. They have no real solution to this crisis but their one consistent answer is to step up class war against workers everywhere.

This takes both material and ideological forms. Health and social security spending has been slashed. The only alternative is a job with lower wages, zero hour contracts and no security. This is followed up with media accusations that it is all the fault of “foreigners”. Either it’s those migrants who “steal our jobs” or it is some foreign government with its dirty tricks which are the cause of the problem.

Everywhere we find the rise of the likes of the Front National, UKIP, Jobbik in Hungary, the Italian Lega Nord, the German AfD and Pegida who all try to capitalize on the economic crisis to push their reactionary agenda. These racist and nationalist parties are playing on fear but they are nothing compared to the mainstream capitalist parties of both left and right who use it to divert attention from the real cause of our misery – the capitalist crisis. Their nationalism is more dangerous as it involves justification for participation in imperialist war. In Ukraine the masses are victims of two sets of gangsters acting as proxies for outside powers. The pro-US and pro-EU government in Kiev is playing on the tradition of a mass murderer like Stepan Bandera and the “struggle for national independence. In the East it’s the USSR’s “anti-fascist” struggle of World War Two which is at the basis of nationalist propaganda against the “fascists” in Kiev. And Putin will be taking the salute at the Victory Day parade in Moscow to celebrate the end of World War Two (or the Great Patriotic War as it has been known since Stalin’s day) on May 9. No leading Western politician has so far offered to celebrate alongside him.

The global economic crisis of capitalism has increased the imperialist rivalry that we are now witnessing. The desperate competition for energy resources, strategic and financial advantage and any kind of expansion that can relieve the pressure on any national economy lies behind the increasingly barbaric wars of our time. Under capitalism global debt forgiveness is entirely a utopian fantasy. All the capitalist powers would like devaluation of capital – but not their own. The road to a future generalized imperialist war has not been closed.

But neither has the alternative. The working class has no country. We are, and always have been, a class of migrants. We are the one force which is capable of fighting austerity, nationalism and the capitalist drive to war on a world scale. This is not because we are the bearers of any special moral virtues but because we are the one producer class which has the collective means to confront capitalism in the same way everywhere, and to surpass it. It is not yet immediately obvious but humanity is approaching a decisive choice. Either we follow the logic of capitalism towards more and more warfare and the ecological rape of the planet or we reconstitute society anew on the basis of a common ownership of the world's resources. We call this communism but it has nothing in common with the state capitalism of the old USSR. It is a society without states, without borders, without money and without war based on the principle "to each according to their needs, from each according to their abilities". To achieve it will not be easy. We must first reject austerity but only as a first step to rejecting everything else capitalism promises. In the course of this long struggle we need to create our own autonomous organs like strike committees, assemblies - outside and against the unions, which allow the maximum of participation of all workers and have recallable delegates immediately accountable to the assembly. Above all it is the task of the revolutionary political minority to frame the alternative in a political program to inspire and unite the majority of workers and in the final analysis create a political organization capable of spreading that program and leading the assault on power. This party will not be a government in waiting anywhere. It will have no country. It will be international and internationalist and act as coordinator for all those who seek to end the misery of capitalist existence. Our aim in the Internationalist Communist Tendency is to be part of that process.

Join us.

Internationalist Communist Tendency

May Day Statement 2015





The article which follows is a translation of the main item in *L'Internationale* (March 2015) the French-language intervention broadsheet of the Internationalist Workers' Group (GIO) which was distributed in the current student demonstrations in Montreal and Québec in which thousands turned out to protest not only over cuts in the education budget by the PLQ ((Parti Liberal Québécois or the governing Liberals) but also against the austerity attacks on the whole working class. Chanting "1,2,3 4, this is fucking class war, 5,6,7,8 organize and smash the state" in last Monday's (March 23) demonstration they have proclaimed a Printemps (Spring) 2015 of protests to equate to the year long protests which began in with the so-called Maple Spring of 2012. Union leaders have already refused to support the protests but the students hope that, as in 2012 their movement will be the catalyst for a wider class movement. This week's demonstration was met with fully tooled up riot cops who used batons, dogs, pepper spray and tear gas fired at point blank range which left one woman severely injured. More than 450 people have been arrested and many have been hurt (the worst injuries have been inflicted by the bites of police dogs). The students intend to demonstrate every week and have earmarked 2 April for a major demonstration. The article below was written as an initial encouragement to the movement to go beyond the current slogan of "Against Austerity, Against Hydrocarbons". There are already open assemblies and organizing committees not under any one organization's control in many educational institutions but the next step is to go beyond the universities and colleges to get the wider working class involved, as eventually happened in 2012.



It Won't Be Easy

Austerity. It's a word we have heard a thousand times in all the main media over the last few months. What does austerity mean? It means to work more, more accidents, more burnout, and more anger and irritation when you get home. It means to earn less and pay more for child care, for medicine, school and groceries. It means to live from hand to mouth with all its stress. If there are repairs to make, the car breaks down or the price of a metro pass goes up again then you have to cut down on the little luxuries which you still allow yourself.

Austerity is anything but an accident, anything but a decision of a bad government or a case of bad management. It is a direct result of a generalized crisis of the capitalist system since the 1970s. The bursting of the housing bubble in 2008 created through the indebtedness of US housing has narrowed markets and plunged the world into a recession from which some believe they can get out of but to be frank we cannot really see how they can do this. Even the capitalists of the World Trade Organization foresee a decline in the entire world economy until 2060. Because, let's be clear, the capitalist system will not be patched up at least not in the short term and not without it costing us dearly. Is the pain worth it? After the last crisis of this magnitude capitalism only got out of it thanks to the Second World War. With the weapons available to each State now a generalized imperialist war is anything but desirable.

So what is to be done? Resign oneself and swallow the poisoned soup of the Liberal Party? And we could add a touch of blue coloring for the Parti Québécois, or CAQ as well as orange for Québec Solidaire[1]? Accept the rules of the system and to see our lives become more and more miserable year by year?

The choice which remains is simple: to overturn the capitalist system, to build a society for ourselves, the workers, the proletarians. To accomplish the communist dream of a society without classes or a State. To unite beyond national frontiers and language barriers to fight this system. We have more in common with a worker on strike in Cairo, or a nurse in Seoul than with Pierre Karl Peladeau, Yves Thomas Dorval, Gaétan Barette,[2] or any other bourgeois. We know however that capitalism will not be beaten tomorrow morning. Whilst waiting we need to sell our skin dearly. We must make sure that each cut is passed with greater and greater difficulty. We fight for better not simply for "good" as there never will be "good" under capitalism. It is necessary just to assure ourselves that the steamroller will not crush us. Strike despite injunctions, the special laws and the cowardice of the union bureaucracies. Let's organize ourselves speak to each other not as "hospital worker", "primary school teacher", "student", "civil servant" or "private sector worker". It's necessary for us to form strike committees which go beyond the divisions imposed by the bosses and the laws of the State. Then above all through our struggles to regroup as revolutionaries to give ourselves an organization which allows us to act in an organized enough fashion to overthrow this rotten system.

Maximilien

[1] The Parti Québécois (PQ) is the main opposition regional party in the province, CAQ is the Coalition Avenir Québec (Coalition for the Future of Quebec) which is a right wing split from the PQ and Québec Solidaire, a leftist nationalist party founded in 2006 based on support for feminism, ecology and social equality.

[2] Pierre Karl Peladeau is a media tycoon known for his anti-working class posture now leading the race to become boss of the PQ, Dorval is leader of a bosses' organization like the CBI, and Barette is a Liberal Party MP in the Québec Parliament and Health Minister in the provincial government.

Friday, March 27, 2015



UW Madison Cuts: We're not all in this together!



About 7,000 or more workers in the Wisconsin university system, with 1,085 in the university are likely to be laid off in the latest round of austerity measures. The defeat four years ago carries its price. Of course, submitting to this without a fight simply invites more and greater ill treatment. University workers been assured that the layoffs will be spread evenly, so everyone's going to get hit. Chancellor of the UW Becky Blank assures us that "we are all in this together". Some divisions of the workforce have been convinced that somehow this won't hit them personally. Thousands of workers stand to be laid off, clearly some are more "in it together" than others.

There was a protest February 14th of 700 people or so, (remarkable considering that it was -10 below zero and windy). The protests marked the four-year anniversary of the start of the protests in 2011. There were similar protests around the state. The university workers were not well represented at the protest. Plenty of space was given to the faculty and the students. A student involved with the #blacklivesmatter campaign spoke. There was an official from the union local who read a statement as the sole representative of university staff, the workers.

Since the defeat of 2011 the university has been pushing for greater autonomy to control its own individual workforce.[1] In declaring the university in Madison a "public authority" they would be able to run the institution top-down as a private capitalist corporation would be run. In exchange for this "freedom" the state bosses of the UW Madison would be that they would have to make cuts of about \$300 million dollars worth. That is to say \$150 million in cuts for the next two years. Layoffs and privatization have already been happening at the UW Superior.

The state workers union AFSCME is represented on campus by several different union locals alongside other various union organizations. The workforce is completely divided and the only argument is how to divide it up further and who gets the spoils. AFSCME is combining the union regional councils in the southern part of Wisconsin, since the huge collapse in dues paying members. The national union leaders of AFSCME are considering asking for a \$10 dues increase per month, per member. A single dues increase of \$10 a month will cause what is left of the membership to collapse. No worker wants to pay a single cent more out of their checks for anything. A union doesn't stand a chance. So not only are the unions unable to fight they appear set on committing organizational suicide as a final duty to a capitalist class that no longer needs them.

Workers can shut the state down. They've done it before as the anniversary date suggests. If they unite, agree to step out and link their struggle with others. If they seek to extend it to all state employees, seek to extend it even into the private sector they can even win. The sentiment in favor of a strike actually does exist. All that is required is its organization.

The standard objections are the same excuses heard over and over, that taking a strike action is illegal therefore it can't be done, that workers aren't conscious enough of their interests to be ready to take action, that the state, the bourgeoisie, the National Guard and the police are too powerful to oppose. The message of the opponents of strike action is that all resistance is futile. Once four years ago, the state legislature sneaked out of a tunnel out of the Capitol building, out to a waiting bus because they feared the anger of workers after they voted to slash their pay. The capitalists in their Capitol know what fear is.

Today workers are faced with even harder cuts. The electoral route was a road to nowhere. We've done things the legal and peaceful way and it was a failure. While it is illegal for workers to take strike action in this situation not fighting back would be the real crime.

AS

[1] For a previous article on a similar theme see leftcom.org
Monday, February 23, 2015



Our Task Today

We need to bring back the idea of an alternative society

In the article "Let us commit ourselves to revolutionize this brutal reality," which appeared in the March issue of *Battaglia Comunista*, we stressed that the war on terror, exploitation, poverty, environmental devastation, are inter-connected phenomena and manifestations of the economic and social crisis. The article we quoted concluded by stressing the need to engage in political terms to bring out the real sense of the alternative society. We will try now to deepen this conclusion a bit more.

It should first be said that when we speak of "alternative society" we mean a real alternative. Not simply a reformist improvement of the current economic and social system, but rather a different society that completely replaces that of today.

The basis of real change must be the transformation of the economic structure, i.e. the way of producing wealth which humanity needs (goods, services, etc.). Today, all over the world, production revolves around the profits of a few. The same tools to produce and distribute "wealth" are under the ownership and control of these exclusive few. Breaking the link between profit and production, abolishing the ownership of the means of production by the few masters ("public" or private), these are the basic steps upon which a real alternative must be based.

The tools to produce and manage wealth should not have "ownership", if anything, they will become ... collective property, placed at the service of the satisfaction of human needs. Only starting from such a transformation will all other aspects of our lives - as a result - really be improved. Any other proposal, which does not embrace these assumptions, is only a fake - and unenforceable - alternative.


We are not idealists, we do not imagine heaven on earth, we only think that there is a compelling need for a different society for all humanity, where profit and the exploitation of one person by another disappear, and with them all the brutality that is, in fact, a consequence of exploitation and profit. We are also aware that such a transformation will not fall from heaven, and will confront many obstacles and much resistance. For this reason, this alternative will only have the chance to come about through the conscious and disruptive action of the international working class, which will create its own decision-making bodies, in which there must be maximum participation of the exploited but from which industrialists, bankers, bosses of all kinds, and their servile politicians must be categorically excluded.

There can be no alternative to the mass action and consciousness of the working class. Of course, looking at the state of confusion in which the exploited class is immersed today, it becomes easy to realize how far we are from such a transformation at the moment. The proletariat, casual workers, all workers and their children are - except for a few individuals - completely under the control of the dominant ideology. The "most committed" are mainly lost following the various fake alternatives (the 5 Stars Movement, Salvini, Landini[1], etc.) and where such illusions are absent, discouragement and resignation dominate. But this is not surprising. The "few" masters of whom we spoke own and also influence the means of intellectual production: the TV, newspapers, schools, etc. Through these tools a distorted view of reality is propagated, different ideological forms that are the opiate of the exploited class.

Among the proletarians today the sense of real alternative society, the communist perspective, is at a record low. This is also due to the defeat suffered at the beginning of last century. The October Revolution should have been the beginning of an international process of transformation of society. But the political revolution in Russia remained isolated. Despite the proletarian turmoil present in different areas of the world, nowhere else were the workers able to defeat the boss class. Even in Russia, given the impossibility of "building socialism in one country", there was no economic transformation in the communist sense and a counter-revolutionary phase opened, from which arose a particular form of capitalism, "state capitalism".

That was a heavy defeat for the international proletariat. When fighting, any defeat must be examined, but the great damage was that defeat was passed off as a victory. For decades, "state capitalism" has been touted by the "Stalinist" ideology as "real socialism". One can also learn from defeats but that false ideology has contributed strongly to hinder any analysis of defeat, creating political confusion among proletarians and many sincere comrades. This is a confusion that is still preserved and recycled in the various "myths" of the left. The icing on the cake was then applied with the collapse of "real socialism"[2], a collapse touted as proof of the impossibility of building an alternative to capitalism, further destroying the meaning of the alternative itself, making capitalism appear to the eyes of all as the only "possible world", but of course subject to reform within certain limits.





Our small organization was among the few who managed to critically analyze that defeat. Moreover, it remains active, not closing in on itself, always trying to measure itself against the events and struggles that concern the working class, and has made an important contribution over the years to the development of communist theory. But, frankly, we do not like living in the past. We believe we have an important political heritage that can be used, today, precisely to resurrect the idea of a social alternative*. But for us this is not just a slogan, rather it is the political objective we place at the centre of all our activities.* To the extent we can, we are active amongst other workers, supporting their struggles. We give make political propaganda on the ground. We carry out a job of training and debate internally, because we do not believe "myths", even ones about ourselves, and we have no dogmas. We publish newspapers, leaflets, books. We take part with our positions and our independence, in industrial actions and protests. We debate with other comrades. In all these activities we put political clarification at center stage in the fight against the dominant ideology and we put forward the need for a communist alternative. We are aware of the difficulties. We know that we are far from the development of a process of the communist transformation of society, but we also believe that this alternative is the only possible one, the only one for which it is worth engaging.

In the absence of revolutionary conditions today, we must act by setting realistic goals, to help build the political conditions necessary to ensure that one day, that alternative is achieved. Today the major political objective remains the commitment to build the international communist party of the proletariat. Not a parliamentary party and not a party that claims to "make the revolution" on behalf of the class. Rather, an organization able to connect to the rest of the proletariat, to guide, stimulate it, and at every turn making the meaning of an international communist alternative come alive in terms of a concrete political program. We are making our contribution, if you are motivated to commit yourself to liberation from the chains of capitalism, then you should start to lend us a hand.

(NZ)

from Battaglia Comunista. April 2015

[1] The Cinque Stelle (five Stars Movement) is led by the comedian (obvious qualification for a capitalist politician) Beppe Grillo which attracts voters disgruntled with all the main parties but has no program. Salvini is new boss of the racist Lega Nord (Northern League) which he has positioned close to the Front National in France and Landini is boss of the metal workers union (fiOM) which recently went on strike against the so-called Jobs Act of the Government of Renzi (who is an admirer of Tony Blair and wants to make the Democratic Left into New Labour).

[2] "Really existing socialism was the name given by the Stalinists to the system in the USSR which collapsed in 1990.

The Internationalist Workers' Group is the organization of members of the Internationalist Communist Tendency in the US.

"We are called internationalists because we believe that the interests of the exploited are the same all over the world, and that communism can not be achieved in a single geographic area, a myth peddled as true by Stalin. We, are therefore, bitterly opposed to Stalinism in all its varieties, for too long taken

to be communism, both by the bourgeoisie and many generations of workers who looked to it in good faith when the ownership of industries, distribution, land, etc. went from private to state hands, leaving capitalist relations and its components (commodities, money, wages, profits, borders etc.) largely intact. This was not 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."

Internationalist Communist Tendency – About Us

For more information about our organization and answers to frequently asked questions:

<http://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us>



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