

# the internationalist n.3

a publication of the International Communist Party

June 2016

£.2.00, \$.3.00, Euros 3.00

What distinguishes our Party is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Livorno, 1921); the struggle of the Communist Left against the degeneration of the Third International, against the theory of "socialism in one country", against the Stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of the Popular Fronts and the Resistance Blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in close interrelationship with the proletarian class, against all personal and electoral politics.

## "The Internationale" Is Our Hymn!

Confronted with the new bloody attacks in Paris (November 2015), let us not waste our time by asking ourselves "who is behind them" – whether they are really the work of the so-called Islamic State or of some other organisation that makes use of its cover for terrorist activities in the service of this country or that. Rather, let us ask ourselves whether all these attacks are not a further step forward in the ideological preparation of a new world slaughter: the most powerful imperialist States, with their following of obedient, weaker ones, *will be obliged* – by a situation of systemic economic crisis – to fight each other, on the basis of the principle, rust-proof in the capitalist universe, of "*mors tua vita mea*" ("your death, my life"). Rather, let us ask ourselves whether this mode of production based upon the most pitiless competition, the exploitation of immense masses of proletarians, the conflict of all interests, the contempt of human life, the indifference to the environment, with the sole purpose of extracting profit, has not reached a stage in which it can only produce devastation, suffering, bloodshed. For a century and a half now, wars have been raging in all corners of the globe, and in the past fifty years they have been escalating and coming closer and closer: certainly, they are not ethnic or religious wars, nor are they aimed at proclaiming this or that specious "nationality principle". They are wars waged to defend and extend national economic interests – above all, they are *acts of war against the world proletariat*. Thus, let us rather ask ourselves whether the moment has not come to recover, with courage and pride, the whole tradition of the revolutionary communist movement: the fight to defend the proletarians' living and working conditions, the active and organized refusal of every call to national unity and of any patriotic mobilization, the open revolutionary defeatism, as instruments for preparing the final assault to the bourgeois class that, by means of its State terrorism, promotes everywhere and day after day its own wars in the name of "homelands", "nations", "races", "religious confessions"... The moment to organize ourselves in the international communist party, in order to get rid, once and for all, of this monster which, in peace as in war, devours human lives. No solidarity to the national bourgeoisies and, first of all, to "our" own! For the exclusive defense of the economic and political interests of the world proletariat!

**International Communist Party**

(il programma comunista – the internationalist – cahiers internationalistes)

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Supplement to no.2/2016 of "il programma comunista"

## The Need for Class Organization

The proletarian class is under attack in all countries. The measures taken by the various national bourgeoisies in the attempt to “exit the crisis” (a vain attempt, since these same measures merely favour the approach of new, even more catastrophic ones) are dealing the class a hard blow. Unemployment is high everywhere and destined to grow, apart from momentary, illusory dips. Working conditions are getting worse day after day due to more intense exploitation, the race towards even greater productivity, the high pace of work, causing stress, illness, fatal accidents. Living conditions are deteriorating, as all types of welfare (in any case paid for dearly by proletarians at the times of economic boom) are dismantled. Growing and increasingly vulnerable sectors of the proletarian population (young people, the elderly, women) feel the whiplash effect of the crisis more keenly day by day. Precarious employment and the uncertainty of the present and future weigh on them like tons of bricks, suffocating lives and legitimate desires and needs. Political parties and official trade unions compete to come up with increasingly binding and limiting measures towards all forms of working-class struggle, real or potential. The executives that the ruling class comes up with, in the vacuum of the parliamentary game, to manage difficult social situations, both present or future, are becoming ever stronger and more authoritarian, a clear example of the “iron-clad democracy” that emerged the day after the second world war. The militarization of social life by a State which increasingly reveals its true nature (the armed wing of capitalism), mows down victim after victim, whilst progressive alienation seems to be claiming young people

devoid of all hope. The war between imperialisms for the control of energy sources and routes and geo-strategic zones is devastating whole areas of the globe and multiplying the ranks of landless and resourceless people, chasing them from one place to another and exposing them to the misery of suffering, deprivation, hunger and illness, bodies and minds marked by mortal wounds. Social and economic divides grow wider, poverty increases and the gap between the “rich” and the “poor” gets even bigger. Meanwhile, deep within bourgeois society, the objective conditions are being created for a new world bloodbath.

Faced with all this, the responses of the proletariat, generous as they are, still remain fragile, dispersed and episodic. After decades of open counter-revolution and reformist mirages, the world proletariat is alone and defenceless in the face of its historical enemy, Capital, and is not yet capable of reconnecting to the glorious tradition of struggle and organization which belongs to it and has offered so many magnificent examples of courage and abnegation, the will to fight for better living and working conditions and, at peak moments, to “storm the heavens” and put an end once and for all to a mode of production that has now become merely destructive.

As materialists, we know that the proletarian class will be obliged, due precisely to the miserable conditions in which it is forced to live and work (or not live and work!), to resume the path of acute and extended struggle. It is in this perspective, near or far as it may be, that the urgent need arises for class organization, on the two planes that go with it and are *distinct but equally*

*indispensable*: the plan for defending its living and working conditions and the plan for preparing the revolution to destroy bourgeois power.

*Class organization* therefore means creating *new territorial organisms* that reach beyond contingencies, compartmentalization and segmentation into categories (or, worse still, regional and national ones), open to all proletarians, *employed or unemployed*, young or old, precarious or pensioners, without any differences of origin, language, culture, age, gender; organisms that will take responsibility for all aspects of the proletarian condition - in the workplace (hours, salary, pace of work, health risks, contracts) as in everyday life (housing, transport, bills), striking hard where Capital is the most sensitive (profit), recovering the use of the classic weapons of the class war (pickets, embargoes, unannounced strikes without time limits) and forming a real class front against the State, the bosses and their legal or illegal armed bands... Organisms determined to put into practice the old battle cry of “Attack one and you attack us all” and able to retaliate blow for blow. The new emergence of these *territorial organisms*, as the basis for a future class union, is urgent and necessary, in order to give back to the class the sense of its own power, its solidity and decision to return to the battle ground.

But (and this is the other level of this necessary and urgently needed class organization), however urgently needed and necessary it is, the re-emergence of these organisms is not sufficient, unless it is accompanied by *the internationally rooted revolutionary party* – the

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party which, over the high and low points of over a century and a half of history of the working class communist movement, punctuated by extraordinary episodes and bloody defeats, has proved capable of maintaining the path of communism, despite all the furious attacks made on it, both by the ruling class in all its various manifestations (democratic and fascist, liberal and socialdemocratic) and by all kinds of counter-revolutionary revisionism, which have done all they can to suffocate it, without ever succeeding. *The science of revolution* is concentrated in this party, as the fruit of theory and practice, of the historical experience of generations and generations of revolutionaries – a science of revolution that cannot possibly belong to the individual proletarian as such, or to his or her immediate organisms of defence, combative as they may be. *This is the political organization* that is so urgently needed today by the proletariat, because, as the struggle develops, in its advances and retreats, in close contact with the class within

the limits of its own forces, *this* organization is what knows and can point to the path to follow in order to find the way out of the abyss.

The two levels - that of immediate defence and that of revolutionary political organization - *are not the same and do not overlap*. Any organism of immediate defence that also wished to act "as a party" or take on a specific political orientation, would have to give up its primary task, which is to *organize the largest possible number of proletarians*, with no political, ideological, cultural or religious distinctions. Any revolutionary political organism that fell into line with the struggling class movement, modelling its theory, tactics and organization on it and making it into a kind of "water bearer" would, for its own part, give up its own specific *task of political direction*, which reaches far beyond today's contingencies, whilst still remaining rooted in this today and not separated from it.

We communists work to establish the international roots of the revolutionary party, in the conviction – the

fruit of our theory and our now century-old experience – that the establishment of these roots cannot be put off to some vague future time or – worse still – to the "eve of the revolution" (when it will already be too late, as experience teaches us!). And we do this, to the extent our forces allow, in close contact with the class in all aspects of its life, the darkest and the most luminous, and in all its efforts to equip itself with the defence organisms that it so desperately needs, today more than ever.

We communists do not have the task of sitting down to create immediate defence organisms (or of applying empty labels to one organism or the other): it will be the real experiences of the struggling proletarian class to exert pressure in this direction, whilst our task will be to accompany these experiences with the aim of guiding and directing them – if possible leading them. What is certain is that it is up to us to work today for the united and powerful party of tomorrow.

## What Is the International Communist Party

a presentation of our organization.

You can read it on our website ([www.internationalcommunistparty.org](http://www.internationalcommunistparty.org)) or order copies from:

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# Murderous Capitalism HOW MUCH LONGER...?

(after the drowning of some 900 migrants – men, women, children –  
when the boat carrying them from Lybia to Sicily sank in the Mediterranean Sea)

In their hundreds of thousands they flee from all corners of the world in search of safety... safety which means merely sorry and uncertain survival and which for many ends in a horrific death, drowned, burned alive, beaten, killed by machine-gun fire. They flee from devastating theatres of war, from poverty that has been handed down for decades and centuries, from the oppression of régimes created and propped up first by colonialism and then by imperialism. They flee from lands made barren by successive hordes of exploiters, by “natural” disasters that are really the tremendous result of the race for profit. They flee: but where to? The illusion of a “better life” has always triggered huge waves of migration by the proletariat and proletarianized masses under pressure from a capitalism that is by nature aggressive and destructive, and not due to the cruelty of one dictator or another, or the “incompetence” or “corrupt” nature of one régime or another. *Murderous capitalism*. For how much longer do we want to close our eyes to this reality, confirmed now by centuries of massacres in times of peace as of war? For how much longer do we want delude ourselves that the empty rhetoric of the mainstream ideology or the sticky sweet sentiments of the petit bourgeoisie are sufficient to deal with this ceaseless genocide of proletarians? For how much longer are we going to limit ourselves to being scandalized by the obtuse braying of despicable and decrepit half classes (including sectors of the working class aristocracy who flirt with the illusion of being “protected” and “guaranteed” and vent their fears and frustrations on the “foreigners”)? For how much longer do we intend to cradle ourselves in reformist and pacifist illusions, instead of openly facing the current enemy of humankind: the *capitalist mode of production*?

For how much longer do we want to delude ourselves that we can entrust the future of our species to individuals and parties that are only interested in keeping alive this corpse that still totters forwards, sucking the blood and devouring the flesh of millions of proletarians, in peace as in war, exploiting them daily in their jobs (or non-jobs) and under the bombs of armies making war one upon the other, but most of all on the proletariat?

The over 900 proletarians who drowned in the Sea of Sicily add to the hundreds of others that preceded them in the waters of the Mediterranean, to the tens and hundreds of thousands who have been massacred by arms of mass destruction everywhere in the world for decades upon decades: pure proletarians and proletarianized masses fleeing in the closed pen of a mode of production – the capitalist one – which, while it caused humankind to make a leap forward with respect to previous modes of production two centuries ago, is now merely destructive and destined to become even more so, in the course of the repeated and increasingly devastating economic crises that are gradually preparing the way for a new and bloody world massacre.

Resume the path of open class war – Organize ourselves independently of the parties and unions belonging to the régime and the State, their armed representative – Recognize that the need to strengthen and put down international roots for the communist party can no longer be postponed – Take the direction of revolutionary defeatism against our own bourgeoisie, on an economic-social level today and a military level tomorrow – Work with passion towards the prospect of communism, a classless society, a society of the species, the only perspective in which it is possible to end the bloodshed that is spreading everywhere, day after day.

19 April 2015

**International communist party**

(il programma comunista – the internationalist – cahiers internationalistes)

## This loathsome society of profit and exploitation

If it were possible to measure the depths of loath generated by this society based on profit and exploitation, one (but only one!) of the most effective criteria would certainly be to see how migrants are treated: the refugees, those with no reserves to fall back on, the “miserable” victims of the iron law of “growing misery”, an army of the desperate, fleeing hunger, famine, unemployment, war, environmental ruin, “natural” disasters, and so on. From Africa, the martyr first of centuries of colonialism and then of imperialist penetration; from the Middle East, shaken by endemic wars, fruit of the constant and merciless redrafting of geographies by the leading world powers; from the East, shaken by the upset of an impetuous and devastating transformation to capitalism; from Central and South America, where the poisonous fruits of capitalism are now over-ripe – from all these areas of the world flows a tide of millions of proletarians, semi-proletarians, sub-proletarians in search of... of what, if not the bare and precarious minimum for survival?

To understand who they are and why they are in such a desperate state there is no need to get smeared with the sticky-sweet benevolence poured forth by a Pope who is doing his utmost to take the place of “socialistoid” reformism, now short of breath and unable to play its role of control and skull-stuffing to the full. Better, instead, to go and read or re-read Book One, Section One of Marx’s *Capital*: “The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as ‘an intense accumulation of commodities,’ its unit being a single commodity. ” *An enormous accumulation of commodities*: the

products of work, fruits of the earth, physical and intellectual capacities, human beings... Everything is a commodity, everything is exploitation and speculation in the capitalist mode of production. And the horrendous tragedy of the migrants shouts this aloud. They are the “surplus products” of a mode of production that knows only the categorical imperative to produce and go on producing, so as to sell and gain profit.

It is therefore a mode of production that encounters cycles of surplus production and is at a loss as to how to “place” its excess goods – except by destroying them, alternately in small doses or in huge masses. Human beings as commodities, bought or sold on the market, who serve capital as cheap labour to keep down salaries in the countries they manage to get to, and are discarded as quickly as possible when they are no longer of use. This is a long story, which began with the birth of capitalism: it is the story of the Irish and Indian proletariat at the time of the industrial revolution and of the millions of other proletarians that have followed them all over the world – commodities to nurture the voracious machinery of capitalist production, tossed from one side of the world to the other in search of... we know quite well what: the bare and precarious minimum for survival. Towards England, then towards Australia and towards America – and today towards all corners of the world, because the whole world is now crushed beneath the iron heel of capitalism in its imperialist phase.

Boats loaded to the hilt sail the waters of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, processions of refugees try to cross the border between

Mexico and the United States, waves of farm workers without land flow to the cities of China and Vietnam, masses of refugees attempt to leave behind them the smoke and flames of bombardments halfway over the world. And Europe, “cradle and guiding light of civilization”, lives under the illusion that it can lock its doors: at Ventimiglia in Italy and in Calais in France, at the beginning of this 2015 summer, the borders are closed and the desperate are chased from place to place, trapped on the cliffs, hunted down on trains and buses; in Hungary and elsewhere walls are built to stop them. Surplus commodities. There is no end to the disgust this society generates.

And the many ways in which profit is extracted from these desperate people (literally on their skin) shouts even more loudly that everything is a commodity. There is the obscene migrant business, from which politicians, local councillors, cooperatives, various sizes and shapes of criminals from various backgrounds have never ceased to speculate and profit in the very same days and months when some of them were raising their voices and protesting (or crying crocodile tears) over the “indiscriminate flux” of fleeing unfortunates: two euros per immigrant in the *Centro d’Accoglienza Richiedenti Asilo of Mineo*, just outside Catania (Italy), formerly the Residence of the *Aranci*, where the US soldiers stationed in Sigonella were housed (a significant coincidence – war is always on the cards!). An obscene business which, in Italy as elsewhere (the whole of the capitalist world is part of the same village), develops in a myriad of different ways: through the dubious charity of a whole series of organizations, more or less NGOs, more or

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less non-profit, in the cynical or whining tones of newspaper articles or TV programmes, in debates and initiatives (the maxi-meal for five thousand "poor people" at the Milan Expo!). In the meantime (as we never cease to emphasize) police control is increasing and getting stricter, the military control of society is extending through a fine network, the repressive function of the State is becoming more and more explicit, plans are made to bomb here and there to stop the migratory flow (by the way: bombs, too, are "surplus products" that have to be got rid of!) and the mechanism of

ideological elaboration which, particularly amongst the stunned half-classes, makes of the "migrant", the "outcast", the "poor man" (or simply the "foreigner") a potential "enemy", is operating at full blast.

We don't wish to repeat here what we have already said and written many times on this subject<sup>1</sup>. We confirm that the essential slogan for communists is "*No to any control over immigration!*". No to any form (military, bureaucratic, cultural) of limit on the movements of refugees, migrants, the landless and the homeless – proletarians amongst proletarians, the enormous army of

those lacking any reserves that capitalism creates minute after minute in its greed for profit, its need for flexible and blackmailable labour. But this "No" (unconditional and without any hesitation) is accompanied by the awareness that we communists must restore in the rank and file of *all* proletarians: precisely because it is the bastard child of capitalism, this immense tragedy can *only* be cancelled from human experience by eliminating its prime cause – only by overthrowing capitalism once and for all and finally clearing up all the disgusting mess (material and ideological) that it has produced and left behind it.

#### NOTES

[1] For example, "La questione dell'immigrazione", *Il programma comunista*, n.4/2008; and "Clandestini", *Il programma comunista*, n.6/2013.



## EUROPE BETWEEN ECONOMIC CRISIS AND INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS

Recent events in the Eurozone, the single-currency area, which for petit-bourgeois Europeism represents the most advanced stage on the path towards a “concordant and politically united Europe”, confirm the frailty of this fanciful vision, only too ready to convert to outright nationalism as soon as the contradictions in the capitalist mode of production aggravate imbalances and inequalities, fuelling conflicts between states, as well as the class struggle.

### 1-Stubborn illusions

Five years on from the “sovereign debts” crisis, the developments of the Greek debt negotiations have again highlighted the limits and imbalances of the Community’s equilibrium and the contrasts between its members. The illusory nature of the plan for a peaceful integration of nations on an equal footing seems increasingly evident, to the extent that today even the most determined supporters of Europeism are faltering, faced with a small nation being condemned to economic ruin and social catastrophe due to the imposition of policies imposed on it by the ruling power. The other myth that continues to drag on by inertia - though increasingly clouded by the social effects of the crisis, the spread of poverty and migratory pressure - would see a “Europe that is a model of well-being, welfare and respect for human rights”.

It is in the name of this model that the nation crushed by the claims of its creditors has expressed itself in an anti-austerity referendum and, at

the same time in favour of Europe and keeping to the single currency. Obviously the mirage of a European federation<sup>1</sup> which, according to the vision of the founding fathers, was to have acted as a guarantee of stability and cooperation both on the continent and worldwide, continues to hold some rather faded but die-hard fascination.

Reality, however, is proceeding in a different direction. The world order emerging from the second imperialist conflict, already upset by the collapse of the Soviet block, is revealing new and more serious symptoms of instability. Today, Europe can be seen as the meeting point of complex international tensions dividing East from West along a line joining the Baltic and Black Seas, and North from South along the Mediterranean axis, with its magnetic pole the other side of the Atlantic (the USA) more active than ever in maintaining the continental area within its own orbit. The theatres of the European agreement belong to a time when the tensions involved far-off areas or the outskirts of the continent: but with the economic crisis and geopolitical tensions bringing into play the vital interests of national capitalisms, power relations are becoming brutally explicit and the ghosts of past, not-so-distant nationalisms, abuses of power and wars that were to have been banned from history forever are once again looming large. Who knows if the other ghost, constantly exorcized but always lurking somewhere in Europe, may appear again...

The most die-hard illusion is that

this crisis, dating from as far back as 2008, will be overcome sooner or later: that, “when the night is over”, the whole, splendid mechanism for creating wealth will start up again, including salaried workers in its beneficial upward spiral. But the trend, particularly in Europe, is not following the pattern of a cyclical crisis: the extremely high level of development reached by the forces of production reduces average profits to too small a fraction of the total capital invested, so that the *dynamics of accumulation* are slowed down, investments are scarce and there is a swell in the plethora of fictitious capital in search of income outside the sphere of real production. This GDP that fails to grow, or fails to grow sufficiently, is the *original reason* for harsher political and diplomatic relations: the slice of the cake is getting smaller and smaller, so that between classes, as between nations, social and state-to-state conflict is flaring up. It is the *need intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production* that condemns the present European crisis to evolve, and certainly not towards renewed harmony between States, but towards *growing instability*, which does not exclude traumatic splits and radical changes in the area’s political balance.

### 2-Crisis of the Eurozone and crisis of world capital

Interviewed about the prospects for growth in Europe, an Italian industrialist who has relocated to China declared: “Someone should be investing”; however, his answer to the question of whether he would do so was, “I wouldn’t be able to compete

#### NOTES

[1] Cfr. Our article entitled “United States of Europa”, which appeared in what was then our theoretical journal, *Prometeo* (no.14/1950).

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any longer."<sup>2</sup> In the rest of the interview the industrialist, backed by the authority of his experience in the field, stresses that there is no comparison between the cost of production in China and in Europe. Despite subsidies, tax relief and the Jobs Act, the cost of a worker in Italy is still too high compared to his or her counterpart in China. It is not possible to make comparisons between the other costs involved in the efficiency of the country's system (legislation, bureaucracy, corruption, infrastructures, taxes). Nonetheless, an advanced capitalism such as Europe's is marked by an advantage in the rate of hourly production when compared to younger capitalisms, however rapidly they may be growing. The higher ratio of the constant component of capital with respect to the variable component lowers the "cost of work by unit of production", compared to types of production where there is a lower component of constant capital. This means that the unit price of production is generally lower and therefore more competitive than a product with a larger component of human capital. Why not invest in Europe then?

When our industrialist thinks of possible investments in Europe, he undoubtedly has in mind production with a high proportion of technology and constant capital. Any decision to rely on reduction of the so-called "cost of labour" will in no way make salaries comparable to Chinese or other emerging economies' rates, at least in the medium term. No sort of Jobs Act could do that! In accordance with these considerations, however the industrialist's reply is taken, the investment proves *unprofitable* in capitalist terms. The

capitalist's summing up confirms our theoretical picture of the problem: there is no investment in Europe because the high organic component means that profit margins are already too small. Better to invest in China where this ratio is lower and guarantees higher profit margins. Here in Europe attempts are made to contain labour costs but they are insufficient. It becomes necessary to dismantle indirect and deferred salary, or so-called welfare. Politicians all agree here, when they insist on the "need to do away with wastage" in schools, in healthcare, in pensions, wherever spending has become "unsustainable" for capital.

This is where the "problem of Europe" lies: in the *increasing difficulties of accumulation*. On a world scenario of economic growth at falling profit rates, European capital aggregate reveals *the slowest recovery*, with average increments in GDP only a little over 1%, as against the 2-3% of the USA, the 7% of China and an average of around 3% in the G20. The scarcity of investments in the whole of western Europe (in particular in Germany) is a symptom that the difficulties in accumulation affecting the whole of the world economy are strongest in the old continent of Europe. The lasting troubles of Europe's banking systems, which are what, in the final analysis, lie behind the tribulations of the Eurozone, are a consequence of the failure to re-launch production after the 2008 crisis. At the time, with the burst of the world financial bubble seriously hitting European banks laden with toxic assets, huge public bailouts were necessary to transfer the losses to state balances and sovereign debts. The inflow of capital to banks was not, however, directed towards production – still

engulfed by an excess of production capacity and low profits – as had been hoped by their saviours, but contributed further to fuelling speculation, so that by the end of 2011 the financial bubble of derivatives amounted to almost ten times world GDP!<sup>3</sup>

In turn, the sum of sovereign debts in OECD countries had almost reached the level of the whole world GDP. The situation was particularly critical in Europe, where it became necessary to place a growing amount of State bonds on the market, with increasing interest rates, especially for financially and economically frailer countries. At this stage, international speculation (i.e. banks) began to get rid of bonds they considered to be at risk, bringing down the price of them and allowing the interest rates to soar. Since these rates revealed the imbalances between strong and weak countries, the "virtuous" North and the "wasteful" South, there arose the risk of the explosion of the monetary Union. The risk weighed heaviest on German and French banks, highly exposed to the outlying countries in difficulty, because of credit that had been allowed in the phase of expansion and also the heavily devalued State bonds. *To cope with a new banking crisis and to sustain the value of State bonds*, the ECB intervened several times: first through new loans to banks in exchange for sovereign bonds, then through financing at extremely low interest rates (Ltro) and finally through Quantitative Easing (QE) in February 2015. All this without providing a solution to the crisis: from 2009 to 2014, losses by the big European banks came to a sum equal to a year of Greek GDP. To save the big credit leaders – excluding the

#### NOTES

[2] F. Fubini, "L'Europa anemica" ["Anaemic Europe"], in the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, 15/8/2015.

[3] In 2009, the European banks used around half of ECB credit (440 billion Euros) to purchase Greek and Spanish State bonds

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sea of medium- and smaller-sized institutes, *Landesbanken* included – between spending on bailouts and lower fiscal income, in the same period the public coffers of the Eurozone countries lost a little under 240 billion, destined for “saving” Greece<sup>4</sup>. The policy of *budgetary rigour* imposed by international capital – through the European institutions – on the whole continent is thus a consequence of the banks’ difficulties: it is the price that the European proletariat pays to bailout the *creditors* and not those in debt.

The Greek crisis is only the tip of the iceberg in a *general debt crisis*: it is the scapegoat and at the same time an opportunity for creditors to profit from interests on the new loans. Those in debt are “saved” by being stripped to the bone and obliged to renew credit that strengthens the chain of debts in a sort of continental system of usury. But we certainly cannot hope for Greece, or better the *Greek proletariat*, to save Europe’s banks. Instead, capital relies on the whole of Europe’s *proletariat*, which finds itself facing higher and higher bills to pay. The cost of bank bailouts is loaded onto the shoulders of the proletarians and the half classes on their way to proletarianization: taxes and tariffs increase and the so-called welfare services – the boast of a worn-out “European model” – decline.

### 3-The internationalization of capital and Europe

The struggle of European capitalists, including Germany’s, is a consequence of the senility of their social systems and the *supreme development* of production forces. What is more, compared to competing capitalisms, Europe’s aggregate capital pays for the *lack of a central political organism* able to draw up the necessary measures for facing world competition that is more aggressive than ever before. It suffers from a low capacity for manoeuvring the levers of the economy, which other capitalisms organized in the form of central States can adjust in good time. Although these interventions (monetary manoeuvres, expansive manoeuvres and tax adjustments) cannot solve the ills of a capitalist economy as such, as an immediate effect, they serve to fill up the cracks and unload the difficulties onto other shoulders. The ECB has intervened actively to finance the banking systems but it still suffers the great limit of not being a real creditor able to finance States directly. Draghi’s “whatever it takes” is not enough to hold Europe together. *Greater political integration would be needed but this prospect clashes with the continent’s historically ingrained national divisions and no amount of “pro-Europe” willpower can make it happen. Europe’s unsolved problem is national fragmentation and no supra-national form will be able to find a definitive solution to this. Nonetheless, for European capital it remains an unavoidable issue that*

*conditions development in the area, aggravates its crisis and at the same time provides an impetus towards overcoming it.*

The trend towards some higher form of integration amongst the member States of the Eurozone is driven forward by the process of the internationalization of capital and the actions of financial capital and the large multinational groups, which tend to impose their rules on a world scale: maximum freedom for capital, maximum of free trade, internationalization of economic law, the overcoming of national barriers to this expansion. The movement, which starts out from the USA and involves all the large, European, industrial-financial groups, implies a *conflict between the international and national dimension of capitalism* on various levels.

The annulment of the sovereign prerogatives of national States<sup>5</sup> and the *consequent supra-national concentration of powers* is guided by the strongest *national capitalism*, which urges the creation of free trade areas in which its own economic predominance can be brought into play. The United States plays this part full-scale, from the Pacific to the Atlantic. In turn, Europe is forced towards greater integration by the dynamics of the world crisis. *Yet here, too, it is the strongest capitalism that guides this aggregation, directs it and tends to subordinate it to its own interests. On a continental scale, Germany carries out the*

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[4] V. Da Rold, “R&S Mediobanca: la crisi delle banche costa alla Ue più del Pil greco” [“R&S Mediobanca: the bank crisis costs the EU more than Greek GDP”], in the Italian financial daily *Il Sole-24Ore*, 28 July 2015. Unlike Athens’ bailout, the journalist comments, these other bailouts did not meet with any opposition, either from the North or from the South of Europe.

[5] Last February’s *Quantitative Easing* is itself a move towards the transfer of powers to a supra-national level. According to Paolo Savona, former Minister for Industry in the Italian Ciampi government, “QE works as a further barrier to stop the country from making alternative choices to staying inside Europe, obeying Berlin-Brussels, with the risk of it turning into a political colony” (Min .V. Lo Prete, “Quel truccetto di Draghi per incatenare l’Italia all’Euro” [“Draghi’s little trick to chain Italy to the Euro”], in the Italian daily *Il Foglio*, 12/2/2015.)

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action that the USA carries out on a world scale: the attempt to impose a series of rules to facilitate the subordination of national economies to the ruling economy. There could be no better demonstration of the contradiction between the international vocation of capital and its unavoidable national rootedness, its identification with the national bourgeoisie. A supra-national entity of capitalist nations cannot be attained by ideal, fraternal impulses but only by acts of imperial dominion sustained by real coercive force. In the Eurozone, the weapon of internationalization is the economic blackmail of the debtor by the creditor, just as the control of capital flow is at a world level. It is real power, not in the form of armies but of effective acts of economic warfare<sup>6</sup>.

The Eurozone is the ideal space for placing the strongest capital in a position to effectively exercise its drive towards the concentration of production and finance on the one hand, and, on the other, towards the expropriation of growing masses of people who are plunged into a condition where they no longer have any reserves. Free from sovereign limits that must, to some extent, take into consideration the "national interest", this basic act of capitalism can play out its role in concentrating wealth on the one hand and poverty on the other: wealth for the bourgeoisie and poverty for the proletariat, wealth in central areas and poverty in outlying ones, whether urban or continental. The question of the debt has become the lever for accelerating this process.

#### 4- Continental supremacy

The latest Greek debt crisis has made Germany's position of supremacy more evident. What the military force of two world wars failed to achieve is gradually being brought about by the forces of industry and finance. The German vision is imposing itself with the unconditional support of a vast area of direct influence and the blessing, *ob torto collo*, of the continent's medium-sized powers, including France. After the reunification of Germany and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, sparked off by the immediate recognition of independence in Slovenia and Croatia by the pro-Europe Chancellor Kohl, Germany's European policy moved in the direction of greater affirmation of its leadership on the continent and freedom both from conditioning by its major European partners and (with far greater caution) dependence on its US ally-and-leader.

The euro, initially presented as the counterweight to unification with the abandoning of the Deutschmark, was a decisive factor in this process: it increased the differences between more or less developed areas in Europe and favoured the acquisition of continental markets thanks to the greater productivity of the German industrial system combined, at the beginning of the new century, with a competitive policy of wage restraints. At the same time, the German banks financed exports through generous loans, which were the origin of their present difficulties. The Community currency was valued low enough, compared to Germany's economic force, to work to its advantage for exports outside Europe, but at the same time strong and stable enough to take its

place alongside the dollar as an international currency and attract foreign investments. Starting from these bases the Eurozone became a platform for Germany's global projection and, at the same time, the area of incubation for successive crises and probable dissolution.

The strength deriving from the euro's relative weakness has been an important factor in directing the recent course of German capitalism. Since the introduction of the euro, German capitalism has invested very little in increasing productivity by means of new technologies saving on human labour, with the result of slowing down the trend towards a falling profit margin: it was able to do this because the particularly favourable economic and monetary context in the area still allowed it to maintain its competitive edge and accumulate enormous foreign surpluses over the years. *On finding difficulty in valorizing itself in the production process, this overproduction of capital fuels the financial circuits and encourages relocation and the purchase of production capacity abroad. The weight of German capitalism in the continental and global context also increases through the process of centralizing capital and production in the hands of the large groups that form the industrial and financial fabric.*

#### 5-Centralizing and disaggregating action

The story of the action taken over the Greek debt demonstrates that Berlin is now strong enough to use the Eurozone's supra-national dimension to consolidate its own leading position. After a show of

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[6] In connection with this, it is worth reading "La grande strategia cinese" ["China's great strategy"], in the Italian geo-strategic journal *Limes* (July 2015), where a general of the Beijing people's army argues that "finance counts more than aircraft carriers".

continuation from page 10 "Europe Between..." (rather than actual) "resistance" to the Troika's demands, the Greek government, which rose to power on the strength of a mandate to contain the stranglehold claims of its creditors, finally gave in to worse conditions than had been established before the theatrical referendum coup. The fact that the Greek parliament is now drafting and approving the reforms dictated by Brussels/Berlin shows that the force brought into play by Germany and vehicled by the Community institutions does have the power to condition events.


During the latest negotiations on the Greek debt, the German government brought its whole weight to bear to get Greece out of the monetary Union. Greece remains a member but the agreement reached in mid-July with representatives of its creditors makes the bailouts dependent on a radical series of reforms promi-

sing saving, lay-offs, privatization. Thus, the noose around the country's (and therefore first and foremost the proletariat's) neck is given a further twist and the agony is prolonged. The German policy line on austerity is confirmed and the possibility of Greece abandoning the euro is certainly not excluded. Even more so now that "Grexit" would be less of a risk, thanks to a series of moves that have contained the cost to Germany and its banking system, to the detriment of other member States<sup>7</sup>. However, Germany's position has upset the apple-cart: the United States considers it a serious threat to the stability of the Eurozone and fragile international balances, France and Italy have opposed the exit of a Mediterranean country in order to avoid further imbalance in the Eurozone in favour of Germany and the group of "creditors"<sup>8</sup>. Added to all this is concern over the consequences of an *implicit declaration of non-irreversibility of the euro*. New

speculation on the endurance of the Eurozone with a massive sale of sovereign bonds from its outlying areas would once again dramatically raise the question of the continent's banking stability with inevitable repercussions on the world financial system. As though in a planetary contest of Snakes and Ladders, the game would start again from square one of the banking crisis, with far greater difficulties to limit it and with inevitable effects on world credit systems.

Nonetheless, after moving like a bull in a china shop, the German government has advanced proposals for reinforcing Community interaction<sup>9</sup>, followed by the plan to create a "Finanzminister" with authority to control the financial and fiscal situation in each member State of the Eurozone<sup>10</sup>.

Germany's wish to proceed towards integration is obviously stronger

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[7] "In 5 years the Troika has off-loaded the risks of two-thirds of Greek's national debt onto the Eurozone, moving over 140 billion to the EFSF (ex Fund for bailing out member States), over 50 onto the GLF (the account for bilateral loans between the Eurozone countries and Greece) and almost 30 to the ECB [...]. It was necessary to allow French and German banks to off-load their risks onto the governments of the Eurozone and thus 'avoid' losses on their investments. The first, 2010, intervention transferred *de facto* a good proportion of the risks from the banks to their respective governments and central banks (through the ECB): the second, 2012, intervention saved governments' and central banks' credit and halved the amount of the public debt held by Greek banks and investors. As well as useless austerity, the Greek people thus suffered losses of over 70 billion and the disintegration of their banking system." (M. Di Menna, "L'Europa alla tedesca: rischi condivisi, ma vantaggi a senso unico" ["German-style Europe: shared risks but one-way benefits"], in the Italian weekly economic supplement *Corriere economia*, 16/2/2015). What should be added – and is reported by the German IWH Institute – is that 100 billion in interest was saved thanks to the flow of capital to Germany's sovereign debt, as against the 60 for aid to Greece. Some saviours!

[8] "If Greece exited the Euro, the balance of financial power between creditor and debtor countries would be even clearer. The risk of abandoning the single currency would raise the risk premium making the costs of sovereign debts more unequal. How long will it be before the French debt rises to 100% of GDP, whilst the German debt drops to below 60%? But as this crisis has shown, the financial balance of power is also a political balance. Behind the solution to the Greek question, relations between the two countries heading the European Union thus come into play. The two countries whose peaceful coexistence was the reason for starting all this." (C. Bastasin, "Se si spezza l'asse Berlino-Parigi" ["If the Berlin-Paris axis splits"], in the Italian financial daily *Il Sole-24Ore*, 13/7/2015).

[9] Schauble suggested a mutual fund for guaranteeing bank deposits or, alternatively, a mutual insurance fund against unemployment. "In the first case, the structure of banking unity would be completed, stabilizing credit in the area of the Euro. In the second case, the first shared anti-cyclic tool would be created for managing economic policy, in a position to attenuate the differences between economies. It would not have been the move towards fiscal union or eurobonds. But it would nonetheless have meant a considerable offer of support and the sharing of risks linked to economic and financial instability." (C. Bastasin, "Berlino e le due velocità" ["Berlin and the two tracks"], *Il Sole-24ore*, 14/7/2015).

[10] "The Schauble-Lamers plan is based on two ideas: 'Why not set up a European budget commission with the power to disapprove national budgets unless they correspond to the rules jointly agreed?' Schauble and Lamers ask themselves. "Moreover, we look favourably on the creation of a "Eurozone parliament" with members of parliament from the Eurozone, in order to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of decisions regarding the single currency." [...] According to Schauble's calculations, Grexit represents a crucial passage for initiating Dr. Schauble's plans. Controlled escalation of the Greeks' suffering, intensified by the

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than that of the French government, which, as per tradition, is entrenched in its refusal to lose any sovereignty in the name of national prerogatives. The proposal for a centralized executive organism with powers of intervention and veto in the fiscal policies of individual countries, legitimized by a parliament of the Eurozone, is a specific, national manifestation of German-style Europeism and an expression of the *desire to impose its own vision on the whole of the European context*, which is the German response to the questions posed by the internationalization of capital and the challenges of global competition. However, the integration project under German guidance is encountering enormous obstacles, though destined to proceed in the long term, but not in time to keep up with the relentless pace of the world crisis. *Even if the process leading to a supra-national centralization of powers were to proceed according to the German perspective, it would be unable to take concrete shape in a context that is still a mere aggregation of nations without causing a situation of chronic instability and conflict.*

#### 6- Nations and classes

This power battle in the European area results in the destabilization of the old relations and the start of a phase of greater instability. The attack on sovereign prerogatives reignites nationalism and *threatens the balance of the Union, as it reveals its real prospects*: the only way to integration is to take away national sovereignty and this cannot take

place by means of a peaceful and concordant process. Europe is increasingly destined to become a *place of political clashes between nations and within them, to contrast or support the tendency towards the supra-national dimension, which seems to be looking more and more like a "German Europe"*.

European nationalism manifests its renewed vigour both in the exaltation of the German model and in anti-German resentment in Mediterranean Europe. New walls are raised to protect national borders from the contamination of migration (after Hungary, there follow Germany, Austria, Croatia, France, Switzerland, Denmark...), whilst the refugee emergency fuels xenophobia from Slovakia to the Baltic and from the United Kingdom to Germany. The impulses towards independence and separatism in small nations incorporated in larger national units (Scotland, the Basque country, Wallonia) re-emerge and those forces in favour of exiting the Euro or the European Union itself (United Kingdom) are gaining ground more or less everywhere. *The return to nationalism* is a sign of agitation amongst the half classes, who perceive the danger of instability and identify the defence of their own status with the defence of their country's borders. In the ongoing absence of an internationalist class party, the proletariat feels the attraction of these deviations, sustained by the trade-union bosses who appeal to "industrial policies" to defend national employment.

This blossoming nationalism is the fruit of capitalist concentration pro-

ceeding on a continental scale, of the attraction that the German magnet exerts on capitals and the labour force, of the hard conditions that the strongest capitalism imposes on subordinate nations, so that they will meet *the parameters compatible with capitalism imposed by worldwide competition. These parameters are basically linked to the capacity of the State machinery to provide capital with the most favourable conditions for the exploitation of salaried work.* The demand for efficiency in smaller nations to be raised closer to the level of the strongest capitalism prepares the ground for economic colonization, for their resources to be divided up amongst the big multinational groups and the subordination of their territory to the interests of the dominant capitalism in terms of infrastructures, communication routes and power lines.

In the end, behind all the disorder and instability rages the *eternal war of capital against the proletariat, raised to an international level.* The objective is to make capital more profitable, ensuring the availability of growing masses of labour to be exploited without excessive limitations and at competitive prices. An iron hold over the proletariat, labour legislation more and more in the interests of the employers, limits on the field of action of the unions, closure towards any form of independent class organization, the repression of any hint of rebellion: these are the conditions necessary for a ruling capitalism – once the smaller nations and their proletariat have been subordinated – to be in a favourable position for competing

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closure of banks and attenuated by a little humanitarian aid is considered a stage pre-announcing the new Euro zone. On the one hand the destiny of the 'wasteful' Greeks would serve as a warning to those governments that are playing with the idea of challenging the existing rules (for example, Italy) or that still oppose the transfer of national sovereignty to the budgets of the Eurogroup (for example, France). On the other hand, the prospect of (limited) fiscal transfers (for example closer banking union and a mutual aid fund for unemployment) would represent the 'carrot' for winning over the smaller nations" (Y. Varoufakis, "Il dottor Schauble" ["Doktor Schauble"], in the German weekly *Die Zeit*, 15/7/2015).

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with other powers, *economically today and in the form of active warfare tomorrow*. German capitalism first began this war against the proletariat at home, with labour legislation (the Artz law) on which the Italian "Jobs Act" and the various "reforms on the side of offer" are modelled (affecting production conditions in the interests of capital), systematically evoked and imposed as the universal condition for exiting the crisis.

*What is really at stake can always be traced back to the clash between capital and labour:* by recognizing this the European proletariat can avoid being drawn into the net by the nationalist sirens and respond on the same terrain as that imposed by capital – international and class terrain.

### 7- Shifting imperialisms

The way in which events in Europe are proceeding confirms the delineation of a more homogeneous northern area of the continent<sup>11</sup> integrated around the hub of Germany on an industrial level and incorporating the old *Mitteleuropa*, the line running from the Baltic to Finland (the old Germany's direction of expansion), the Rhine axis (France-Benelux) and northern Italy. This industrial integration corresponds with partial monetary integration (an important part of *Mitteleuropa* is missing) and political balances increasingly revolving around Germany. This process links France and Italy, intermediate powers, more and more closely to the fate of German capitalism and limits the potential for independent imperialist

tendencies. Playing against the German proposal to become the sole, dominant hub of a more restricted and cohesive area, is the fact that France and Italy would thus be taking on the thorny issues of the turbulent Mediterranean, starting with intervention in Libya, management of migratory flows and the fight against Islamic terrorism.

*France*, no longer in any condition to reassert its own grandeur, sees itself obliged to bend to a subordinate role, perhaps masquerading as joint French-German, in ruling the continent, attenuated by its condition of "privileged nation", dispensed from the stability pact.


Italian imperialism emerges even more downsized. Despite its industrial decline, Italy remains the second largest manufacturing power in Europe but has become more dependent on the value chain headed by Germany: and German capital is taking over the most attractive companies. Its independent guidelines on export are weakened by the instability of the Mediterranean area and the sanctions against Russia, supported up to now by Berlin. In these conditions and once again in line with historical precedents, Italy will be driven to align with the strongest power.

On the eastern front, relations between Germany and Russia are becoming ever closer. Germany's approval of sanctions against the "invasion" of the Ukraine was more the result of obedience towards the US ruler than of real conviction (German industry itself loses out here); on the other hand, the essential dependence of the German production system on Russian power

supplies (which already cover 40% of her demand) is destined to step up following the announcement of a double "North Stream", the pipeline that crosses the Baltic Sea, runs round the Ukraine and other countries once under Soviet dominion, and directly into Germany. The dual line decrees the end of the South Stream project which was supposed to run through the Black Sea and cross Greece, linking up to the Balkans and Italy – a project which was to have involved and enriched Italian companies. This is another hard blow to Italic imperialism and one which confirms the northward shift of Europe's barycentre, whilst Mediterranean Europe, grappling with growing instability, assumes the contours of a buffer zone, destined to absorb the tensions of the middle-eastern and north-African area, filtering and monitoring the huge migratory flows towards northern Europe and the German pole of attraction.

If the close links with Russia in terms of energy supply are seen in conjunction with the importance assumed by the Chinese market, the second most important after the EU for German exports, the expression "important Eurasian aggregate" may be a good definition of relations between German Europe, Russia and China<sup>12</sup>.

Relations between Germany and China have even been defined "symbiotic", because of the exchange of technology and investments. Grappling with overproduction of goods and capital, which force it to integrate with new markets, the Asian power is working on a project for new "Silk Roads" and a high-speed Berlin-Beijing rail

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[11] C Bastasin, "Berlino e le due velocità" ["Berlin and the two tracks"], cit.

[12] G. Rossi, "Il coraggio che serve per salvare l'Europa" ["The courage needed to save Europe"], *Il Sole-24Ore*, 31/5/2015.

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connection, passing through Moscow (a journey that would take only two days!). The project would allow China to cut down on the use of sea routes and reach the Mediterranean and Europe overland, not forgetting a certain political-military value of an anti-American nature<sup>13</sup>. The German-guided EU has supported China in the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, smoke in the eyes of the United States and Japan, since it is the financial basis of Chinese strategy. Just as significant here are the increasingly important Russian-Chinese relations in terms of the exchange of energy and industrial technology. If these relations strengthened, they would already trace the outline of a possible imperialist alliance to counter the Atlantic block, along the line of demarcation between the "Tellurocracy" ("Eastern" Land) on the one hand and the "Thallasocracy" ("Western" Sea) on the other, theorized by certain European neo-fascist currents, in particular Russian ones<sup>14</sup>.

This tendency, *which has material bases but has not yet taken shape as a definite strategy by German imperialism* (whilst it has in China), is nonetheless destined to clash with stubborn resistance from the United States, starting with the NATO's warlike activity on the Ukrainian front and in the Baltic, useful for involving its European allies, in particular Germany, in the growing tension with Russia. US pressure to reach a quick agreement on Atlantic


trade (Ttip) is moving in the same direction, all to the advantage of the multinationals and western economic ties in a common legislative framework, with the effect of consolidating present military alliances<sup>15</sup>.

As to the Greek crisis, first through the IMF and subsequently in a statement by the Secretary of the Treasury, the USA has openly distanced itself from Germany's refusal to accept restructuring of Greece's debt, pressing for a cut of at least 30%. America's irritation with its ally is well founded: Greece's exit from the single currency would undermine the southern flank of the NATO right in the midst of growing tension in that area and would weaken the European Union, founded to consolidate the *pax americana* on the continent in an anti-Soviet and now anti-Russian perspective. Most important of all, Germany appears reluctant to assume the role of privileged delegate for American interests in Europe, has a stubborn attitude to several issues (we might remember the refusal to intervene in Iraq and Libya) and devotes too much enthusiasm to relations with Russia and China. Whether the German government and the social and economic forces it represents is aware of this or not, the politics of austerity are undermining the very bases of stability in Europe and perhaps conceal a temptation to be truly free from the guardianship of Big Brother on the other side of the Atlantic. All this comes whilst diminishing US power, having moved the bary-

centre of its global strategy to the Asian scenario, is in dire need of reliable support from Europe to the west.

China, too, needs European stability revolving around Germany, not to maintain the old order but to subvert it. Having already got its hands on the Piraeus, China is now making a similar attempt on the Greek railway network, to turn Greece into the hub for a commercial drive into the Balkans and East Europe. Right now, taking advantage of privatization and a steep reduction in prices, a large German *public* company (the mysteries of neoliberalism: privatization at home so as to sell to a foreign State!) is gobbling up the Greek regional airports. The two powers seem to have reserved for Greece the key role in an international network of infrastructures as part of the new Eurasian order. In the end German capital does not seem so indifferent to Greece's destiny... Perhaps a return to the dracma would make it possible to buy up Greek property at even lower prices.

What is certain is that, driven by the tumultuous development of world capitalism and the crisis of overproduction, *relations between imperialisms have entered a transition phase*. The leading American imperialism, whilst still dominant from a political and military point of view, is encountering growing difficulty in exerting its global supremacy. Added to the rise of the young Asian capitalisms and chaotic instability in

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[13] M. Spence, "Pechino ha fame di mercati: la domanda interna non basta" ["Beijing is hungry for markets: internal demand is not enough"], *Il Sole-24Ore*, 12/7/2015. As regards the project "Via della seta" ("Silk Road"), contacts have already been made between China and the EU: Hungary has already signed a memorandum in relation to this (cfr. [www.cinaforum.net](http://www.cinaforum.net)). On the political and military significance of the "Silk Roads", see also note 6.

[14] Fully coherent with this outline is the re-emergence of the old contrast between the Countries of the Earth and the Countries of the Sea, upheld by C. Schmitt (cfr. P. Bricco, "La strategia dei due forni di Berlino" ["Berlin's two-ovens strategy"], *Il Sole-24Ore*, 16/7/2015).

[15] Parallel to this project, the Americans are working on an Asian trade agreement excluding China, who retorts with a strategy of control over land routes towards the West.

continuation from page 14 "Europe Between..." the Middle East, comes Europe now; and Europe is the basic pivot of the old, Atlantic-centred world order, always hinged on it. And the problem certainly does not arise in Athens but in Berlin, no longer physically divided into East and West but for this very reason a bone of contention between the Atlantic and Eurasia.

#### 8- Our perspective

The crisis of the Eurozone provides the umpteenth confirmation that there is no enduring peace or harmony between States and nations that can withstand the impact of the contradictory and declining historical course of capitalism. The upset of balance in Europe is a prelude to political upheavals destined to affect worldwide balances of power and alliances. The economic crisis has not found a solution by re-launching accumulation, so that hiding behind every turn is the risk of fresh outbreaks, caused by one of the many threats looming on the horizon: a financial bubble bursting, a sudden slowdown in the emerging economies, speculation on sovereign credits, a country exiting the Eurozone, a rise in FED rates and whatever else may come to mind. On a scenario of constant and growing instability like this, the silence of the proletariat is sooner or later destined to transform itself into a planetary howl of rage.

Nothing could be further from our

minds than to point the finger at one nation or another as being responsible for the sufferings of the proletarians in presumed "oppressed nations"! Though it has no rivals on the continent, the power of German capitalism actually conceals some seriously weak elements, starting from its huge dependence on exports, which exposes it more than others to the risk of a dip in world trade, to protectionism and to the effects of currency wars<sup>16</sup>. Although it has drawn and continues to draw great advantages from monetary union, Germany cannot escape the crisis and the trend towards a falling profit rate, so that sooner or later it will have to confront its own proletariat.

As previously mentioned, the new and fierce attack on the condition of the Greek proletariat pre-announces *an attack on the whole of Europe's proletariat*. If the response of Greek proletariats takes on a class nature, this will be the signal for Europe's proletarians, first and foremost Germany's, the first to shake the world order in the second post-war period with the great anti-capitalist movement of 1953. *Today, as yesterday, the German proletariat has a central role to play in a general recovery of the class movement*. When the new internationalist rallying cry of the class rebellion is raised from Berlin, it will signal the death toll for all nationalism, whether triumphant or second-rate. The only "exit" worth undertaking will once again take centre stage: the exit

from capitalism and with it the prospect of real European unity will become a reality (see here our article "Il mito dell'Europa unita" ["The Myth of United Europe"] in *il programma comunista*, nos. 11-12/1962). And though on a profoundly different scenario, the words of our comrades in far-off 1953 are still relevant:

*"If a solution to the problem of Europe's organization comes from the rise of the – both quantitatively and qualitatively – powerful proletariat of great Berlin, this will only happen by means of a – theoretical, organizational, political, military – programme to build a Berlin commune, in a civil war against the armies coming from the East and from the West. A commune of the whole of Berlin. This would mean a workers' dictatorship in Germany, the world revolution in Europe."* ("La Comune di Berlino. Dura e lunga la strada, meta grande e lontana" ["The Berlin Commune. A long and hard road, a great and far-off objective"], in *il programma comunista*, no.14/1953). Whatever direction German imperialism takes (whether directed to the East or the West), in all cases and in all places the task of the proletariat remains unchanged: defeatism against its own bourgeoisie and against all bourgeois coalitions, whether enemies or allies. We are aware that the prospect is still a long way off but it is the only non-illusory alternative we can trust to halt the catastrophic spiral in which the world of capital is enmeshed.

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[16] The recent devaluation of the renminbi deals a severe blow to the export market of German automobiles to China.

**Do you want to know more about Stalinism in Italy and Antonio Gramsci's counter-revolutionary role? Read our articles "The Laboratory of Counter Revolution" and "Gramsci, or the Poverty of Philosophy", in nn.10/2001 and 11/2002 of our review Internationalist Papers.**

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## THE GREEK CRISIS IS THE CRISIS OF WORLD CAPITAL

### *National "Resistances"*

The Greek situation has bounced back into the headlines following the election victory in December 2014 of Siriza, the "radical" left group which had no scruples about jointly forming the new government with an openly right-wing party: uniting these two spirits *apparently* so far removed from one another was their anti-European, or rather anti-German nationalism, which holds Germany responsible for starving the Greek people, victims of the harshest austerity measures. 'Starving' is to be taken quite literally for the percentage of Greeks below the poverty level (i.e. with an income lower than 60% of the national average), which has risen from 14% in 2009 to the present 30% due to policies of deficit correction which, when government passed from the centre-right to Papandreu's Pasok (end of 2009), had touched on 13% of the GNP.

In their negotiations with the "European Cerberuses" Siriza placed the weight of this suffering on the scales, requesting that the pressure be taken off, so that they were in a position to *manage the social tension* that might explode into *open class warfare* if the austerity measures were prolonged. The election campaign promised a series of interventions in favour of the neediest categories, the return of the thirteen-month pension payment, limits on the price of fuel. As to the measures relating to employment, which were to have been a particular characteristic of the government's policy, Syriza promised a rise in minimum salary, 300 000 new jobs, re-

employment of 100 000 civil servants who had been laid off, the recovery of collective work contracts and limits on the freedom to lay off employees.

The confrontation with the Eurogroup, however, ended with a real thrashing because of the habitual and foreseeable intransigence of Germany and her allies. Thus, the government of Athens had to draw up a new plan to submit for the approval of the Eurogroup, in which it was agreed to subordinate any rise in salary to budget restrictions and to collaborate with the OECD on a reform of labour laws, from which all that can be expected is the dismantling of remaining "guarantees" in the name of flexibility and productivity. On this front, therefore, *"the about-turn... is total, almost embarrassing."*<sup>1</sup>

Little or nothing remains of the proclamations regarding other points in the new plan. Privatization, which was supposed to be reversed, has had more or less free rein; the previously announced shift of taxation away from lower to higher income brackets and real estate has been completely abandoned; what remains is merely the declaration, of no real significance, of an "unrelenting battle against tax evasion and corruption". The inevitable chapter devoted to the "spending review" now foresees a reduction in the number of ministers, a restriction on early retirement and a check on health spending, all measures perfectly in line with the well-known European-style diet. As for the banks, bled dry by capital flight (70

billion in 5 years), with 33.5% of loans non-performing, the self-dubbed "lefties" threatened to nationalize them and place them under control by means of measures that would prevent foreclosure on a primary residence or seizure of current accounts or salaries due to bankruptcy: none of this has been confirmed and neither will the 11 billion euros from the Greek credit stability fund be touched, which Syriza stated that it meant to use for financing social measures. The country's banking system now depends on emergency financing from the ECB, which since February has no longer accepted Greek debt bonds as collateral. The alternative to complete obedience to the dictates of the ECB, the IMF and the European Commission would thus be to strangle the Greek banking system and take a leap into the dark with unforeseeable developments.

Thanks to the commitments made by the Greek representatives after giving up their original intentions, the Eurogroup has conceded a further four months of financing from the ECB to allow maturing payments to be made. Nonetheless, in March relations with the ECB became particularly strained. The Greek government, accused of getting round Eurotower's block on financing by selling public debt bonds to the banking system, in turn accuses the ECB of keeping the country "with a rope round its neck". Greece thus continues to suffer from a liquidity crisis and has difficulty in meeting upcoming payments. The "war" behind the temporary, or surface agreements is thus

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[1] V.Da Rold, "Il brusco risveglio per Syriza", *Il Sole-24 Ore*, 25/2/2015.

continuation from page 16 "The Greek Crisis..." still being waged but its outcome is already being signalled. The Syriza government opposes the diktats of the European bourgeoisie, pushing the Greek proletariat into the stranglehold of a national people's war and condemning it to surrender, to *new forms of subordination to domestic and international capital*. The first concessions to the Troika will be followed by others, until these "defenders of the people" will be obliged to admit defeat and stand down, or agree, like their predecessors, to face the wrath of the Greek proletariat, who have once again been let down.

### ***The origin of the Greek crisis is part and parcel of the mechanism of capital accumulation***

This is the story of the recent developments in a pre-announced crisis and a defeat which, nonetheless, in no way solves the situation and does not exclude the, however remote, possibility of Greece's bankruptcy and exit from the euro. It is, however, necessary at this stage to recall at least a broad outline of the origins of the country's present difficulties.

In the years preceding the collapse of world production in 2008, Greece had recorded a growth in GNP which was amongst the highest in the Eurozone (around 30% since 2000), lower only than "super virtuous" Ireland (+40%). Whilst for Ireland the progress was due essentially to a flow of speculative capital into the


country's banking system, thanks to a taxation rate equal to that of a tax haven, for Greece the growth had been financed by the public debt and by the State's heavy budget deficit and deficit in its current accounts. On a surface level, it is thus true that Greek society – the bourgeoisie and parasitic classes, given that the proletariat only gets the crumbs – had been living "above its means", yet to no greater extent than the United States with their *subprimes* and unlimited spending allowed on credit cards, or the real estate bubbles in Ireland, Spain and elsewhere. Credit generally serves to push production beyond its limits, so that the subprimes kept the real estate market, building industry and, indirectly, USA's consumer spending afloat, while the German banks that purchased Greek public debt bonds financed themselves with the returns and, at the same time, the German export business won large slices of the market for itself. The growth in GNP and the public debt depended on a cycle of expansion which, in countries with advanced capitalism, in view of the surplus of loan capitals compared to the possibility of investment in production with satisfactory profit margins, was fuelled by speculative bubbles (in credit, in real estate, in finance itself). What is more, in a general context where valorisation was problematic, the structure of Greek capitalism was not particularly attractive to investors, so that, rather than creating value, the country's role was to *realize* plus-value produced elsewhere.

When the cycle of expansion suddenly came to a halt in 2008, Greece was left with the debts and few resources to repay them with.

### ***The problem of the debt reflects the difficulty in accumulation***

The debt crisis only reveals the surface of the problem. International "aid" should have put the country in a position to finance itself independently on the market and honour the loans it had negotiated with the banks and other States, as well as dealing with the repayment schedule and interests. In fact, the Greek debt has already been restructured on two occasions, is modest from a quantitative point of view and the deadlines have been postponed over time (60% is due in 25 years) at relatively low rates of interest.<sup>2</sup>

The conditions established by the "Troika" in 2012 for the restructuring of the debt included policies of adjustment to the government budget and removal of the deficit in foreign exchange. Up to the present Greek governments have carried out their assignments dutifully: *"Today Greece has a primary balance [a net budget margin remaining after paying interest on the public debt – ed.] of about the same entity as Italy's and superior to that of the Eurozone. There has been an increase in income from taxes, whilst expenditure has been cut. Wages have fallen from 180 towards the end of the last decade (base 2000=100) to 120. The decrease in demand linked to containment of the public debt and*

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[2] In absolute terms, the burden of the Greek debt is modest: "Greece's public debt has mostly been restructured and 80% is in the hands of the Institutions or, if you prefer, those of the Troika: the European Central Bank, the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund. More precisely, 60% is due over 25 years (average) and the remaining 21% is due over 13 years (average). With such a 'long-term' debt, there are no real problems of renewal except for very low amounts, though high for the precarious state of Greece's public accounts. Moreover, on the 80% of the restructured debt, the interest payable is 2%. For some this is an 'extortionist' rate, in actual fact it is tiny: Germany pays around 2% on her debt and Italy 4%." (G. Arfaras, "Il compromesso possibile e la debolezza strutturale della Grecia", official website of the geo-political review *Limes*).

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*lower wages has greatly reduced imports, thus the foreign debt.*"<sup>3</sup>

The price paid for achieving these fine results has, however, been a 25% crash in GNP so that, whilst in 2010 the debt amounted to 140% of GNP, today it has reached 180%. At the same time unemployment has risen to 25.8% (1.2 million at October 2014), the risk of poverty affects 23.1% of the population, 230 000 small and medium-sized businesses have gone bankrupt, since 2008 the stock market has fallen by 83.8% and compared to 2009 fiscal pressure has risen nine-fold for free-lance workers and seven-fold for employees. *These are the figures of a society on the verge of collapse.*

The crash of the Greek economy, which had been sustained mainly by the public sector, now involves growing tax difficulties: in 2014 income fell by 1.3 billion, with as much as 1 billion in January 2015 alone. Those conditions which, with a positive state balance, should have been a guarantee for dealing with debts, started to fail. The evolution marked a turning point which broke the precarious balance on which Greece's "salvaging" relied and opened the doors to Syriza's victory and the present crisis.

In the meantime, the structure of the Greek debt has changed radically:

now loans weigh far more heavily (80%, as against 20% in 2008) compared to bonds and 90% of credit is due to public institutions (EU and IMF loans, and bonds held by the ECB and national banks). On the other hand, the exposure of foreign banks has been drastically reduced (in 2013 those in the Eurozone were one tenth less exposed than in 2008). From 2013, when it appeared that the situation in Greece was stabilizing, a return in exposure was recorded, especially by Anglo-American and German banks, but the basic fact remains that French and German banks – the most exposed – were saved by the intervention of the ECB and their national banks, which assumed most of the risk<sup>4</sup>.

The fact that all this deployment of national and international financial armies essentially aims *to save the banking systems* is confirmed by the nature of the keenly desired "Quantitative Easing", announced as the "Saviour of Europe", which finally saw the light of day in the manger of the ECB: as well as purchasing State bonds – with the precise exception of Greek ones, rated "junk" – the ECB will provide liquid funds in exchange for bonds to four of the large "systemic" banks, including two German *Landesbanken* laden with speculative dealings at risk, a French bank and a Spanish one. The trick of pri-

vatizing profits, making losses public and filling holes in bank balances with income from taxation, continues in a general climate of hypocrisy: yet, whilst the banks are paying nothing for their excessive speculation in the pre-crisis phase, in order to earn its "aid" Greece must flay its proletariat to the bone, with the risk of killing the beast.

If it were not a question of the blood and flesh of millions of proletarians, it would be laughable: of all the generous "aid" provided to Greece (254 billion from the EU and the IMF), only 11% has gone to the country's economy, the rest serving to pay off creditors and the interest due to them. The banks having been saved and the risk of a systemic crisis having been avoided, it would seem that now Greece can safely drown without causing too much damage, yet this will not solve the difficulties with which world capitalism is struggling.

It is not only Greece that faces the problem of the debt: it is the *world* debt that has grown considerably since the 2008 crisis up to the present.

The fact that still today, seven years after the outbreak of the crisis of overproduction in 2008, the debt has grown 40% throughout the world, means that the crisis has not been overcome in the least, and that

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[3] G. Arfaras, idem.

[4] "Debito pubblico: chi è (ancora) esposto al rischio greco", *Lavoce.info*, 31/1/2015. And again: "As to international debts, we must remember that around 2/3 of Greek State bonds are in the hands of different public entities: the European Stability Mechanism, ESM (142 billion euros), the countries of the Eurozone (53 billion), the International Monetary Fund (34 billion) and the European Central Bank (20 billion). If these debts remained in euros, the Greek public debt would increase by at least 50% in the new devaluated dracma – Commerzbank estimates – to 230% of GNP. There are no great risks for the European banking system, since after the peak of the debt reached during the 2011 crisis, the foreign banks adjusted their credit with Greece, which fell from over 300 to 50 billion euros, most of which probably covered by international collateral guarantees. Now, as far as the European banks are concerned, Greece can go to hell, the euro along with her, because from that moment onwards it will be clear to everyone that the single currency is no longer reversible." (V. Da Rold, *Il Sole-24 Ore*: <http://24o.it/1qMV5v>).

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Greece is just a particular symptom of a European and world crisis. Then the burden rested mainly with businesses and the financial sector; today it is the States that take responsibility for most of the debt and for managing it. From 2007 to today, the highest portions of the debt compared to GNP have shifted from business enterprises and financial institutions to States, whose debts have grown by 76% as against the 11% of banks and finance companies. The burden of the State debts is loaded off onto the tax systems and public balance sheets and takes the form of harsher taxation and cuts to welfare spending.

Thus, the problem is not the debt in itself but *the absence of growth rates in the economy* capable of increasing the denominator in the debt-to-GNP ratio. In other words, *the growth rate in production (plus-value)*, determined solely by *live labour*, is not sufficient to compensate for the debt's rate of increase, determined by the level of interest rates, i.e. of the quota of plus-value devoted to income. The Greek case is merely the personification, at a more problematic level than average, of the difficulties of valorisation which, taken as a whole, characterise the mode of capitalist production in this period of history. Greece's chances of escaping from the crisis depend on a new phase of expansion in world production and the role she is assigned in it by the stronger imperialisms.

In connection with this, a Chinese expert in strategic investments has declared: "*China has no interest in prejudicing relations with Europe by rushing to help Greece, a country*

*that is of little interest from the point of view of natural resources and private investments [...] The weight of Athens in Europe carries no particular influence, the industrial sector is not strongly oriented towards export and the technological sector is not highly developed.*"<sup>5</sup>

If Syriza was hoping for support from China in its standoff with the Eurogroup, that is its answer. For Chinese capitalism, the Greek government must obey its master and its master is Germany. China, now the third largest investor in the world after the United States and Japan, is not interested in Greece in itself, except as a possible way-station on a new "silk road" for Chinese-European exchanges through the Balkans, which would have its hub at the port of Piraeus. From this point of view, the launch of privatisation and concessions for the management of port activities already assigned to Chinese companies by the previous governments are essential to Beijing's strategy in Europe, which hinges on Germany and aims at keeping the area stable under German guidance. As far as the Greek case is concerned, China has taken sides unequivocally and is pressing the Greek government to respect and confirm the agreements already made. From a geopolitical point of view, too, Syriza has no allies and lacks the strength and lack of scruples to launch into a pro-Russian adventure and up the odds in its match against the EU and the United States. From an economic, as well as from a geopolitical point of view, the country has little room for manoeuvre and no real sovereignty outside the limits conceded by the balance of power between the great imperial poles of interest. In the

context of an ongoing crisis, Greece's main fault is to be one of the weakest links in the chain of potential bankruptcies weighing on the future balance of world capitalism.

***There is only one prescription for capital: intensify exploitation of the proletariat***

The root of the debt problem, from the point of view of the interests of Capital, too, is growth: without *growth there is no solution to the debt problem*. But no "expert" on capital can offer convincing answers to the question of why growth is absent, or at least now fails to record past growth rates. The post-war phase of expansion ended *once and for all* with the crisis in the mid-Seventies, after which, amidst peaks and dips, the growth in world production and trade was accompanied by a progressive decline in growth rates, more markedly in the old capitalist countries but also common now amongst new international competitors. From the capitalist point of view, *the truth of the Marxist law on the declining increases in production, reflected by the tendency for the profit rate to fall*, cannot be acknowledged: it would mean acknowledging that this mode of production is *transitory* and that a critical point has been reached in its evolution.

For the same reasons, the "solutions" open to capital are unable to get to the root of the problem but merely move round it. The policy of containing the budget deficit has revealed its disastrous effects on Greek society and continues to prostrate the economies on the periphery of the Eurogroup. In theory, making the debt lighter, imple-

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[5] Mara Monti, "Se Pechino si tira fuori dal dossier su Atene", *Il Sole-24ore*, 7/2/2015.

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menting cuts on state spending and salaries, reducing consumer spending and the foreign debt should lead to a smaller tax burden and encourage economic recovery. Where it has been applied, in particular in Greece, this prescription has resulted in *disastrous outcomes*: the debt-to-GNP ratio has increased and no kind of recovery has taken place (or been proclaimed for the future), apart from a modest positive sign in 2014, after years of decline.

The other solution, the mirror image, suggests deficit spending to launch consumer buying and investments again and criticizing excessive austerity. As one Italian analyst wrote, in the country's main economic daily: "*Europe desperately needs strong growth to cut down the enormous numbers of its unemployed and increasingly numerous poor, to escape deflation, which in January bordered on -0%. To succeed in this, it needs to be reasonably strict and make many reforms and even more investments.*" (A Cerretelli, "Il rischio del default e la bandiera del realismo", *Il Sole-24ore*, 25/2/2015).

Both solutions get the terms of the issue completely upside down. The debt is a *product* of the crisis of the mechanism of capitalist accumulation: it is *not* responsible for it. Its increase reflects the growing weight of the financial sector: this is the means by which production is forced forward, pushed beyond its limits, fuelling speculation and all sorts of adventures. On the other hand, the drop in investments and consumer buying is also produced by the crisis, and not the cause of it. This

means that too much has been invested and consumed and this expansion, driven to the extreme by the use of credit tools, has generated an enormous debt, *a mass of dead labour* represented by financial bonds which claim a quota of plus-value on real production. Overcoming the crisis can only come about by means of *the massive destruction of fixed and circulating capital*, but also debt. The latter prospect is one to which financial capital, an independent force dominating real capital, opposes strong resistance in order to contain losses as far as possible. It is a vicious circle, because financial returns will not increase as long as there is no recovery in the mechanism of accumulation, as long as the extraction of plus-value fails to recover at a higher level of concentration and organic composition. It is significant that at present returns on bonds, both public and those of large business companies, are close to zero, when not actually *negative*. *The big absentee is plus-value!* A lot of liquidity is circulating but there are scarce opportunities to make profitable investments.

It is therefore no use continuing to try and reduce the debt or relaunch investments and consumer buying, flooding the banks with liquid assets by means of ultra-expansive moves and monetary bazookas from the central banks, if the mechanism of accumulation is hindered by an excess of production capacity, by too high a ratio between capital in the form of machinery and raw materials (*constant capital*) and the valorisation factor represented by the use of human labour (*variable capital*),

and by the fall in profits in relation to the growing amount of capital used.

The problem does not arise from the size of the debt but where the new value produced proves to be insufficient to satisfy the "right" of the financial sector to claim it as its own. The reimbursement of Greece's debts – with interest – is based today on *the exploitation of the live labour of the Greek proletariat*, on the compression of direct wages and all the indirect forms of income from employed labour, on its being rendered extremely flexible and extremely precarious. This is basically the content of the *reforms on the side of offer* (reduction of salaries, cuts in welfare, flexibility of labour), invoked by all bourgeois factions as the key to solving the crisis<sup>6</sup>.

### **To get back to Greece...**

The depth and duration of the crisis have sparked off competition between States, causing the weaker capitalisms to succumb. Greece does not possess a capitalist structure strong enough to allow the independent re-launching of production, nor can she depend upon technological sectors competitive on the world markets. Her recovery can only come about thanks to worldwide recovery – increasingly uncertain and precarious – that would relaunch her vocation as a tourist and commercial destination, hinging on her ports and sea transport. *But the basic condition for this is that the proletariat be reduced to a production force enslaved by even harsher conditions of exploitation.*

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### **NOTES**

[6] "The large public debt was run up because of senseless expenditure and lack of a tax base. The public debt signed abroad has ended up in the hands of foreign institutions. The latter are asking for it to be reimbursed, which is possible if growth is relaunched and the state accounts remain positive. This means that growth does not come through public spending but by reforming offer – a flexible labour market, privatization, etc." (G. Arfaras, cit.).

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Probably the new governors of Greece hoped they would not have to undergo the confrontation with the Eurogroup alone, and that their initiative would open up the path for a turning point in European politics: "if" a coalition of States in favour of abandoning or easing off austerity were created, "it would be" possible to counterbalance the weight of Germany and her allies and "it would be" possible to launch a policy for restoring public spending and investments. Apart from the paternal claps on the shoulder from some heads of government, actually little inclined to assume a tough attitude towards the Germans, the Greek representatives even attracted the hostility of Portugal and Spain, who had surrendered to the harshest conditions and where elections will be held this year. Any concessions would, indeed, provide breathing space for movements opposed to austerity (such as the Spanish Podemos, the Cinquestelle in Italy, the various populist and nationalist parties). And so the perfect picture of a quarrelsome little European family, with its unblinking lady chancellor ruling with an iron rod, has, for the umpteenth time, put pay to the illusion of a "people's Europe", as an alternative to the "bankers' Europe"!

*A similar alternative does not, of course, exist.* In a phase like the present one when accumulation is problematic, Capital has no alternative but to crush the proletariat beneath increasingly cast-iron and repressive legislation. This is equally true both for Greece, which has been cohabiting for years with the debt in her balance of payments,


and for Germany, who, whilst remaining in the context of the Eurozone, enjoys a position of absolute privilege and continues to accumulate surplus in foreign exchange. The formula Germany would apply to Greece and to all the other countries in the Eurozone is the one that she has partly adopted at home and which has allowed her to strengthen her lead in Europe and rank first in terms of exports: *raise the average profit rate, limiting wages and at the same time increasing the competitive edge of her companies.* The single currency has made it impossible for the other members of the Eurozone to fight the invasion of German goods by means of competitive devaluation<sup>7</sup>.

The *law of increasing poverty* applies equally to the opposite poles of capitalist development and is not a Greek prerogative. From 2000 up to the present, German wages have increased very little in real terms but above all the portion of indirect wage that was covered by welfare has fallen drastically. Today, in order to keep their right to unemployment benefits, millions of German unemployed are obliged to accept *any type of offer on any condition*, with pay that can plummet to one or two euros an hour. This is the secret of German success: *the return of exploitation to a level equal to that of the industrial revolution for a considerable portion of her proletariat.* German capitalism has taken the lead again not because of technological progress or because productivity has increased thanks to a rise in the size of the labour force – already large – but because it limits the value of live labour and at the same time extends employment by *adding*

*more and more forms of precarious and temporary work.*

If a formula like this is applied for great Germany, why should little Greece be spared it? Forcing the hardest of conditions on the Greek proletariat means disciplining *one's own* proletariat, showing it that there are no limits to the depth to which the hellish conditions of proletarians can plunge. *The truth is that the attack on the Greek proletariat is merely the expression of the most advanced attack on the proletariat throughout Europe.* In this context, the clash in the Eurogroup represents just the momentary insubordination of a bourgeois fraction towards the imperialism dominating the area, motivated by the difficulty of managing the social crisis and differing points of view on the treatment that should be reserved for the proletariat.

The trick which the Greek proletarians have fallen victim to by placing their confidence in Syriza (actually highly "patriotic" and very close to Italy's own "Renziani")<sup>8</sup> derives from a superficial interpretation of the crisis, according to which it would suffice to combine the "reforms on the side of offer" with the re-launching of investments and consumer buying to set off a new cycle of expansion. The illusion of a "gentle" escape from the crisis and a return to the good old days of "consumer well-being" has disappeared in the face of German intransigence. On the other hand, those who, like Syriza, are able to win over the proletariat with vain promises are providing a *very useful service* to capital, by preventing the anger from finally being channelled

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[7] 7- Luca Ricolfi, "Gli squilibri mai corretti e il silenzio dell'Europa", *Il Sole-24 Ore*, 22/2/2015.

[8] "Con Syriza e Podemos, la sinistra europea riscopre la patria", <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/>

continuation from page 21 "The Greek Crisis..." towards open class warfare. The increasingly patriotic nature of their claims, the emphasis on the *national, folk character*, is preparing the way, as during the period of Weimar, for the affirmation of quite different forces, far more radical in their interpretation of the hostility towards a Europe crushed beneath Germany's iron heel.

The story gives us *the umpteenth confirmation of social democracy's historical function*: to offer a pacific solution to the contradictions of capitalism, to disarm the proletariat, push it into the arms of the most extreme nationalism and prepare it

for war, the extreme bourgeois solution to the contradictions of capitalist development.

The task allotted to the Greek bourgeoisie by international capital is to reduce its proletariat to obedience, obliging it to accept the brutal decline in its living conditions and, if necessary, crush any attempt at self defence with an equal degree of brutality. Syriza will thus have to announce its political failure and vanish from the scene, or else carry out the task of social democracy to the bitter end: to defend the instances of Capital at the cost of the proletariat. In this perspective, the proletariat, in Greece as

elsewhere, has no alternative: either to give in or to face the harsh trials that await it by means of open class war, which, as we wrote in 2010, *"requires strategic preparations and internationalist, not national, tactics; it demands a militant, centralized, political organization and organisms of economic defence that have distanced themselves from the whole of the democratic or Stalinist front [...] under the guidance of a political, class organization, the international communist Party. Without all this, defeat will be inevitable, in Greece as elsewhere"* ("Ultimatum to the Greek proletarians", *il programma comunista*, n.1/2010).

## After the Referendum. In Greece, another "great show" of democracy and nationalism

The Greek situation (or better: the Greek side of the crisis in world capitalism) has not been disappointing on this first Sunday of July. Indeed, it has demonstrated, emblematically, the putrefaction of the present political and ideological system. The political and economic positions that "confronted" one another in the recent referendum called by the government (which – it is as well to remember – contains elements from the "left", the centre and the right), apart from the variegated recourse to rhetoric, were really basically identical. Above all, they were equally *antiproletarian*. And they ended with the operation of castration carried out, as always, by democracy, which infects the proletariat with hopes and illusions, sending it hurtling down an endless precipice. In practice, the referendum's presumed alternatives posed the following question: "Do you accept the Troika version or the Syriza version of the attack on the living and working conditions of the proletariat?" The "Syriza version" won 61 to 39. Thus, national pride blended with popular democracy.

Will the flood come now? No. More governments will follow – right, centre or "left". Perhaps a government of national unity will be formed. Perhaps a "new pact with Europe" will be signed, for a soft or rapid exit from the euro. Perhaps a new, parallel currency will come into being. What is important for the governments to come is that the proletariat has been tamed and pacified, with no need (for the moment) for bloodshed. *Only one* alternative exists: either the extreme battle of the proletariat, aimed at crushing the bourgeoisie (and not only in Greece!) or the outbreak of open repression by the bourgeoisie. "The colonels will be back!", the "guardians of democracy" hasten to warn us. "It's in our interests to support Syriza anyway, putting a peg on our noses," squawk the many geese.

Tsipras and his party have obtained an electoral mandate, with the brief to negotiate with the most important shopkeepers. This mandate really meant nothing more. In the January 2015 elections, New Democracy and Pasok passed on the hot potato to them: and all they can do, so as not to lose face, is to pass it on again – unless they are ready to impose "blood and tears", as they have been asked to do for months. At that stage, the mandate would become legal tender. Nonetheless, to the left of the "left" there is always another, more democratic "left", capable of doing the dirty work.

One thing is certain. For the bourgeoisie (*which, don't let us forget, is one alone!*), faced with its own world economic crisis, it is urgent for so-called United Europe to impose a single Order and a single Law on all the small, political, state entities: intensification of the attack on the living and working conditions of the proletariat. Which then implies the need for the outcome to be *a terrifying dictatorship and a new world conflict*.

In order to break the isolation of the proletarian class, what is needed is for the Communist Party to come to life again and put down its roots internationally: its general staff, united in terms of programme, organization, tactics and strategy, whose aim be, starting from the weak points or breaks in the chain of capitalism, to seize the power and wield it – the dictatorship of the proletariat, the bridge to a classless society, the society of species, communism.

July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015

## Something Is Rotten in the United Kingdom!

### Notes on the Social Situation

The election on 12 September 2015 of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of that ultra-opportunist charabanc that is the British Labour Party has stirred up a new wave of stolid enthusiasm, particularly amongst that part of Europe's petit-bourgeois "left" which, in the attempt to keep its head above water as the tsunami of the crisis overwhelms it together with its miserable privileges, desperately tries to cling to one lifebelt or the other, so as not to sink deeper and deeper into the social chasm: the "socialist" Pope, the Spanish *podemos*, the US "democratic left" and, naturally, "Tsipras now and forever" (by the way: there has been no more talk of Greece since the massive dose of parliamentary-democratic tranquillizers and opiates handed out so liberally a few months ago; in the meantime, however, the Greek proletariat continues to spit blood!).

Lamenting that "over here" there is no-one of this calibre, Alberto Burgio, for example, in an article of 20 September in the Italian daily *Manifesto*, invoked the "Corbyn model". "We have all [??] read about Jeremy Corbyn's victory and rejoiced [!!!], in the hope that this is the first step along a path that will not only lead the Labour Party to evict the Right from Downing Street at the next elections, but will also, after a half a century restore the British left to a tradition of struggle in defence of the proletariat, social rights and peace. To a glorious history of battles alongside the Unions and the more advanced social movements, which has been abandoned since the twenty years of Thatcher's rule." Boom! The Labour Party as

the spearhead of the British proletarian movement? What compendium of jokes has the ineffable Burgio been using for his studies?

The Labour Party has always been His/Her Majesty's Royal Firefighter, with the precise role of appeasing, containing, deviating the fighting spirit of miners and railwaymen, dockers and metalworkers, teachers, janitors, bus and underground drivers and so on, skilfully taking turns (the stick and the carrot) with the Tories and their governments. Are we forgetting the great 1926 General Strike? The battles of the unemployed in the '30s? The miners' strikes by which the whole of the post-Second World War period was punctuated right up to the – long and bitter – one of 1984-85? The amazing arm wrestling between the Ford Dagenham women workers in 1968 or the Grunwick, Willesden (North London) workers, many of whom of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origins, which lasted two years between 1976 and 1978? The constant turbulence linked to the living and working conditions of the huge mass of immigrant proletarians from all parts of the ex-Empire? All episodes (*amongst so many*) in which the Labour Party, scientifically and con-scientiously, played its role as firefighter and saboteur, reposing each time in its union base, the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

And so, after the "disappointments" (of differing sorts) coming under the names of Blair or Milliband, up pops Corbyn the populist, a sort of pale maximalist *à la Serrati* (but reduced to... less than a half size!), an expression of the bourgeoisie's parasi-

tism and thus also of its left wing, or the "labour lieutenants of the capitalist class", in Lenin's words. When all is said and done, we are well aware of this. The ruling class dominates thanks *also* to its *own* historical memory, its *own* century-old experience. And memory and experience remind it where the great threat to its power comes from: the proletariat, even when prostrated as it is by defeat upon defeat and seemingly incapable of reacting. The stick and the carrot, this is the only alternative the bourgeoisie knows: and the carrot is steeped in sedatives. "So, Viva Corbyn!", hisses the ruling class to itself, "if he manages to rein in the rearing horse, which is nonetheless a thoroughbred, despite the stick." Literally, "We're in for hard times! Let's call up the firefighters!" And without doubt times are going to be hard... indeed, they already are.

#### *A few figures*

It was sufficient to glance at the British press around the time of Corbyn's election, to get an idea of the explosive situation reigning in Great Britain. Let us try to sum it up, without claiming to be exhaustive<sup>1</sup>:

- The July Budget approved by the government represents a further step along the path to dismantling the welfare system the country was so proud of in the past. London's Institute for Fiscal Studies (an *institutional* organism for analysis and research)<sup>2</sup> calculates that the poorest 10% of the population of working age will lose an average 800 pounds

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[1] The following figures are taken from *The Times* of 3/9, *The Independent* of 8/9, *The Guardian* of 7/9, 9/9, 12/9 and 15/9.

[2] See: <http://www.ifs.org.uk>.

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a year of net income (almost 7%); the second 10% will lose 1,300 (over 7%); the third 1,100 (over 5%); the fourth more than 600 (over 3%). As opposed to this, suffice it to say that the richest 30% will lose at most a fraction of 1%: *the gap continues to widen*. Starting from April 2016 (and remaining unchanged for four years) there will be cuts to housing and unemployment benefits for the population of working age and to tax relief for workers and their families, whilst the threshold for progressively reducing benefits and allowances will be lowered (from 6,420 pounds a year to 3,850).

- Meanwhile, the number of workers on zero-hour contracts has leapt by one fifth in a year, with 744,000 people now having no guarantee of working hours or wages in their main job. 2.4% of the workforce is

now employed in this way in their main job (according to employers, however, the figure could be higher: 1.5million, up 6% on last year; of these, there are more women than men and 20% of the jobs are held by students). Income levels can fluctuate wildly, with a general downward trend (£300 a week less on average than workers in secure jobs): if the living wage (in practice the minimum hourly rate) of £7.20 is taken as a basis, something like 3.2 million workers are earning less than this<sup>3</sup>.

- Because of cuts to tax credits, 2.7 million working-class families (with 5 million children amongst the country's poorest) will lose an average 750 pounds a year *pro capite*. It goes without saying that this will reflect on the children's living conditions: the National Children's Bureau seems to be merely stating the obvious when it stresses that in vast areas of the country (the north,

west and certain areas of London), children under the age of five are more and more likely to suffer from tooth decay and obesity... To repeat the scandalized words of Carol Ewing, Vice-President for health policy at the Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health: "In a country that boasts it has one of the best health services in the world, this sort of health inequality cannot and should not exist." Yes, well... *Should not...* In addition, the 6.2% cut (equal to 200 million pounds) in public health financing for local authorities, resulting in cutting back on services and staff (health visitors), will only make the situation worse.

- Again "stating the obvious": life expectancy is soaring...for the rich. According to the organization Public Health England, quoted in the *Lancet*, 40% of ill health is caused by "lifestyle, diet, etc.", with huge regional variations that do not de-

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[3] It should also be remembered that the difference between male and female salaries now stands at 19%. According to government plans, the living wage of 7.20 pounds (as from January 2016) should be raised to 9 pounds in 2020: fat chance! In any case, young people under 25 will not be amongst those who are "entitled" to the new National Living Wage. With youth unemployment on the rise everywhere ...



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pend on geography but on income. The enlightened and enlightening statement by Prof. John Ashton of the Faculty of Public Health (another *institutional* organization) goes as follows: "healthy life expectancy powerfully reflects our social environment: having a living wage, living in decent housing and eating healthy food." Well done, Ashton!

- The number of households with problem debt has soared 28% in the last three years leaving 3.2 million people struggling (hardest hit are young people, the self-employed and low-income families). An extra 700,000 more households have fallen into problem debt since 2012, leaving them to spend a quarter of their monthly gross income on repaying credit cards, loans and overdrafts. In the next five years low-income lone parents will find their standard of living falling more and more, even if they are working full-time.

These few figures are sufficient to trace an alarming picture. The law of increasing misery strikes mercilessly: yet there are still those who dare deny it.

### The "housing question"

As if all this were not sufficient, here is another, equally dramatic "issue". London and other medium-to-large scale cities, especially their city centres, may seem like so many open-air building yards (excavations, cranes, scaffolding for horrible constructions issuing from the nightmares of some richly paid

*super-star*: building yards nonetheless subject to the peaks and dips of the market, with long pauses and sudden accelerations). But the reality hidden behind (or beneath?) them is quite different. As has been happening for a good century and a half now, in Great Britain as elsewhere, the *housing issue* is once again cropping up: the other face of land rent, building speculation by capital in its perennial, breathless search for oxygen... Here, too, a few figures will help sketch out the situation<sup>4</sup>:


- House prices rise unceasingly: today houses cost roughly seven times the average family income; on top of this, for those who take the daring step of buying a home, come the mortgage and loans to be paid back monthly. In 2013 alone, the number of repossessed houses amounted to 28,900: returning to their original owners (individuals, banks, building societies, institutions, etc.) due to failure to pay mortgages. The famous "right to buy", reminiscent of Thatcher ("Everyone a home-owner!" was the slogan), shows its true face. Moreover, the project – in some cases already put into practice – of extending the "right to buy" to tenants' associations will make the situation even more difficult.

- The number of families that prefer to rent privately rather than buy is on the increase: today there are over nine million of them, of which 1.3 million families with children. But rents are also going up, as well as the incidence of hidden costs and threats of eviction for failure to pay the rent. Moreover, in many of these

flats living conditions are dreadful: a third of the homes rented privately do not come up to the Decent Homes Standard...

As a consequence, the number of homeless people is rising: more than fifty thousand family units a year find themselves in this condition, with over 2000 people obliged to literally live out on the streets. Rough sleeping<sup>5</sup> has increased by 55% over the past five years: in London the number of homeless rose by one third between autumn 2013 and autumn 2014, whilst, in December 2014, 62 thousand families throughout England were in temporary accommodation, with another 280 thousand at risk and the number of families surviving on a day to day basis in bed and breakfast accommodation had tripled (from 630 in 2010 to 2,040 last year). Evictions, making ample use of the "forces of law and order", are a familiar scene here as elsewhere: it's a small (capitalist) world! In particular the phenomenon of *revenge evictions* is gaining ground, with evictions aimed at tenants who dare complain to owners about the conditions they are obliged to live in: 200 thousand in 2013! (What is more, as a consequence of the July Budget, young unemployed people under 21 will automatically be ineligible for benefits or allowances for buying a home).

- It is estimated that 250 thousand new houses a year would be needed to cover the needs of the British population, whilst less than half that number are actually built. Contrasting with this pure and simple fact,

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[4] These come from the Shelter England website (<http://england.shelter.org.uk>) and from *The Guardian* of 28/4/2015 and 12/9/2015 (as well as from various pages taken from its website [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)).

[5] A hundred and ten years ago, in *The People of the Abyss*, Jack London gave us a striking description of the night-time population of the homeless, chased from one end of London to the other by the "forces of law and order". At the time *rough sleeping* was termed *carrying the banner*: the terminology changes, the condition remains the same.

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the model skyscrapers soar into the air and the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie puff out their chests with national pride...

Naturally there are many who compete to offer solutions to this problem. But in 1872 in *The Housing Question* (Part 2: How the Bourgeoisie Solves the Housing Question), Friedrich Engels wrote: "In reality, the bourgeoisie has only one method of solving the housing question after its fashion – that is to say, of solving it in such a way that the solution continually reproduces the question anew... This method is called *Hausmann*. By the term 'Hausmann' I do not mean merely the specifically Bonapartist manner of the Parisian Hausmann – breaking long, straight and broad streets through the closely-built workers' quarters and erecting big luxurious buildings on both sides of them, the intention thereby, apart from the strategic aim of making barricade fighting more difficult, being also to develop a specifically Bonapartist building trades' proletariat dependent on the government and to turn the city into a pure luxury city. By 'Hausmann' I mean the practice which has now become general of making breaches in the working class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in those which are centrally situated, quite apart from whether this is done from considerations of public health and for beautifying the town, or owing to the demand for big centrally situated business premises, or owing to traffic requirements, such as the laying down of railways, streets, etc. No matter how different the reasons

may be, the result is everywhere the same: the scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise from the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else and often in the immediate neighbourhood." Brief, to the point and, above all, topical.

#### *Antiproletarian repression*

On this scenario, in itself a dramatic one, the attack on the proletariat is rounded off with the preventive work of repressing any possible, organized reaction in the future. The Trade Union Bill debated in September foresees a series of mechanisms and regulations that do not vary much from those that have been or will be put in place by (right, central-left or "left") governments in other countries<sup>6</sup>: all of them aim to cage in the fights and strike down any attempt at grassroots organization.

Thus, in *The Guardian* of 15/9 we learn that the Bill foresees a 50% threshold of votes in favour, in order to initiate any industrial action (and one of 40% of eligible voters, in "services of importance to the public sector"), and lifting the ban on using agency workers to replace staff on strike (in practice the *legalization of blacklegging*): in addition, the unions must inform police and employers two weeks in advance of any strike plans, including details of the planned use of placards and loudspeakers, blogs and other social media, whilst the "head" of each picket line (consisting of not more than six strikers) will have to wear an armband and provide police and

employers with their personal details (in practice *legalized informing*). Heavy fines (up to 20 thousand pounds) will be inflicted on union organizations if they fail to observe these rules (in practice *the legitimization of official trade unions*, able to pay such high penalties, and contrary to all grassroots organizations).

Faced with these proposals, comes a revealing comment from Angela Eagle, Corbyn's newly appointed shadow business secretary: "With the number of days lost to strike action down 90% in the last 20 years, there is absolutely no necessity whatsoever to employ the law in this draconian way"<sup>7</sup>. Need we say more? With "supporters" like this, the British proletariat is done for!

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Yes, there's something rotten in the State of Great Britain and only a widespread and determined revival of class antagonism can sweep it aside. The British proletariat (by which, let it be clear, we mean its native components as well as past and recent immigrants) have a great tradition of struggle, often spontaneous and conducted with great determination and generosity: and we are certain that it will soon give proof of its wish to continue in this tradition. But this is not enough. In Britain, as elsewhere, the dramatically urgent question arises of the political direction of the fights that are bound to break out: the question of the revolutionary party, absent from the scene for too long in Great Britain and in the rest of the world.

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[6] See, for example, in Spain, the so-called "Legge Bavaglio" (Gag Law). See: "Il mondo-lager del capitalismo", *Il programma comunista*, n.3/2015.

[7] Again *The Guardian* informs us that, in the 12 months preceding April 2015, the number of working days lost due to industrial action amounted to 704 thousand, compared to the almost 13 million a year lost on average during the '70s. The question arises: where was the Labour Party in all those years?

## Always the Middle East

### A few considerations on the imperialist States, the Caliphate, nations without history, oil and proletarian concentration camps

We continue to discuss the Middle East, because it is affected by boundless violence on the part of the bourgeoisie, generalized violence that will sooner or later result in a world conflict between the great imperialist powers. For months the Turkish-Kurdish-Syrian area has been subjected to merciless attacks from the air, with towns and cities devastated, slaughter, the decimation and massacre of defenceless populations - the prisoners of criminal powers: a civil war which, according to all the news, has already caused 200 thousand deaths. This is organized war, fuelled and armed by the great powers, "politically and militarily contained" (so they say!), controlled by an agreement on the use of chemical weapons and with periodical truces. It is a civil war in which the forces loyal to Assad, supported by Iraqi, Iranian and Lebanese Shiites clash with the various "Jihadi" bands, in turn supported by western military forces interested in bringing down the regime and imposing their control over Syrian territory - all of them in headlong opposition to the armed bands of Isis, which have occupied half of Syria and a third of Iraq and threaten to bring ruin to the whole region. *A war of all against all.*

In the midst of this devastation, the bourgeois media speak in a tearful and hypocritical tone of a Biblical exodus of asylum seekers abroad and refugees at home: a variable mass of displaced people along the various fronts, between 8 and 10 million (out of a total population of 23 million in Syria!), which continues to grow, passing through various countries (Turkey, Greece, Hungary, Serbia etc.) and scattering.

Authentic, permanent concentration camps (barracks, tent cities, make-shift camps) are establishing themselves over vast areas; from time to time these permanent camps are transformed into masses of desperate nomads, trekking across deserts, crossing borders under pressure from local interests or getting blocked, their routes channelled and deviated by walls or barbed wire. Here the imperialist bourgeoisie has left its own trace of violence, as always accompanied by charitable blessings: fuelling ethnic, religious and "national" differences"; exporting its own "humanitarian" and "democratic" wars during the many cycles of economic crisis; sparking off its *own* battles for oil.

Next, after setting up a financial basis of support (military training) and transit for the anti-Assad Jihadi and the Isis fighters, to block the Kurdish Peshmerga on the Syrian and Iraqi fronts against the so-called Caliphate, Turkey has entered the field: there was no delay in its intervention. The prime public enemy was, and continues to be, the Kurdish movement, the PKK (Workers' Party of Kurdistan) with whom there is a mortal clash, as proven by the thousands of deaths amongst the Kurdish population over so many decades: *at least 40 thousand over a thirty-year period.*

By stopping Erdogan from obtaining an absolute majority in Parliament, the recent affirmation of the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) at the Turkish elections, obtaining 13%, has aggravated conditions at home: during the victory celebrations terrorist attacks of Islamist (or

Turkish) origin caused dozens of deaths. Over time the manhunts in the mountains, massive intervention by tanks, bombings, arrests have resulted in a huge toll of fighters for *a national cause that no longer has a history*, involved as it is in a mass of interests juggled by the many business groups and Kurdish bourgeois parties, always in conflict one with the other: for the umpteenth time the sacrificial victim *is the proletariat, whether Kurdish, Iraqi, Turkish, Syrian*, etc. The greater or smaller bourgeoisies that negotiate their miserable existence with the great powers hurl themselves against their own present - its defensive economic battles and political future - , hoping to prevent their own inevitable collapse. In this context, the siege of Kobani by Isis on the Turkish-Syrian border witnessed the emergence of a natural alliance between the Caliphate and the Turks *against the Kurds*: the protests that followed left 52 dead in clashes with the Turkish police, followed by searches, arrests and sentences for terrorism. The pretext that encouraged Turkey to intervene was the PKK's participation in the war and the arrival of arms made available to it by western countries. The military offensive was launched after the NATO summit in Brussels at the end of July: 260 dead and 400 wounded were estimated amongst Kurdish and civilian fighters in a week of Turkish air raids that struck a series of villages in the whole of the border zone, making no distinction between Kurdish-Syrian villages, Isis positions and Iraqi villages. The offensive went hand in hand with the establishment, approved by the NATO, of a neutral area north of Syria (the first contribution towards

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the approaching carve-up of Syrian territory) and the permission for American aircraft to use the Turkish military base at Incirlik. Meanwhile, the theatre of war has moved to the neighbourhood of Aleppo, between the militia of the so-called Jaish al Fatah group and the troops belonging to Assad's army, which stopped the group filtering into the province of Latakia. More clashes occurred at a government military base north of Aleppo (see *il Manifesto*, 2 August).

In the Kurds' "patriotic snapshot", how could there fail to appear the categorical diktat of the PDK (the Democratic Party of Kurdistan), "not to offer the Turks an excuse for bombing the country"? What lies behind this? The explanation is quite simple. The old link between Al-Abadi's central government in Iraq and Erbil's independent Kurdistan, which always rested on a network of regional alliances and on selling oil to Turkey, has started to crumble with the disintegration of the State of Iraq itself, no longer able to nurture the Sunni anti-Assad front. In reality, for the "Kurdish-Iraqi brothers" of Kurdistan, Ankara's attack on the PKK is most irritating, since it is an obstacle to the sale of oil to Erdogan with the blessing of

the UN. Whilst the NATO and the United States prepare to crush the Kurdish anti-Isis front that managed to halt the advance of the Caliphate, a packet of military aid to Baghdad (training, defence, security) thus endeavours to push what remains of the Iraqi army and officials (*a purely mercenary U.S. force in the political and military field*) towards a war that will complete the total destruction of Iraq's remains. And while Al-Abadi bangs his fist on the table, Barzani in the north takes care to safeguard his economic relations with Turkey, which are far closer than those between Turkey and Baghdad – relations that have nothing to do with the struggle of the Kurdish-Turkish and Kurdish-Syrian "brothers" and even less so with defending the living conditions of the Kurdish-German "brothers", who lost their identity years before, working in Germany's factories.

The process of separation that is being prepared between Kurdistan and Iraq moves the mirage of what might once have been a Kurdish nation even further into the distance and no longer practicable: *it makes it vanish once and for all*. The point of no return derives from the economic development that has taken place in the northern part of what was once a single country, Iraq: with it, the re-

gional identity called Kurdistan also disappears. Over the past years Barzani, taking advantage of the central government's political crisis, has occupied Kirkuk (the richest oil-producing zone) and there the exploitation of crude oil has found a privileged transit route (the Turkish oil-line) towards Turkey, which is now one of the largest partners of this independent Kurdistan. The integration has increased constantly: today Turkish capital finances infrastructures, airports, oilfields, shopping malls. There are numerous agreements on the direct sale of oil, private Turkish companies are to be seen in all sectors, from agriculture to building, banks to telecommunications. The very dimensions of these agreements are urging so-called Kurdistan towards a political-strategic alliance with Turkey in an anti-Iranian vein: the real clash with Baghdad is, then, a part of all this and oil will once again stand at the centre of the action. All we can do is wait. What cannot wait is the prospect of the rebirth of the communist party on a worldwide scale: both at the imperialist Euro-American and Asian centre and on the "outskirts" increasingly attracted into the eye of the storm of contradictions in the capitalist mode of production.

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**Socialists have always condemned wars between nations as barbarous and brutal. Our attitude towards war, however, is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace) and of the anarchists. We differ from the former in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within a country; we understand that wars cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and socialism created; we also differ in that we regard civil wars, i.e. wars waged by an oppressed class against the oppressor class, by slaves against slave-holders, by serfs against landowners, and by wage-workers against the bourgeoisie, as fully legitimate, progressive and necessary. We Marxists differ from both pacifists and anarchists in that we deem it necessary to study each war historically (from the standpoint of Marx's dialectical materialism) and separately.**

(from Lenin, *Socialism and War*, 1915)

## Total Warfare in the Middle East

At the end of 2014 we left the whole of the Middle East in the midst of political and military convulsions and the price of crude oil at the 50\$/b threshold, whilst in June we are right in the middle of a civil war, not only in Syria, where the clash between Assad's army, ISIS and the anti-Assad groups supported by the American coalition proceeds, but also in Yemen, with bombings carried out by a coalition of States commanded by Saudi Arabia against the Shi'ite rebels. At the same time, we find the Syrian and Iraqi area filled with Iraqi divisions incapable of fighting and put to flight by the ISIS, which has occupied, Kobane, Raqqa and Ramadi along the Euphrates and, along the river Tigris first Mosul, then Tigris just outside Baghdad and lastly Palmira, along the corridor leading to Damascus.

In the wake of the temporary rise in oil prices, the Italian economic daily *Il Sole-24 Ore* of 23th May ran these headlines: "Oil. The war in the Middle East does not halt drilling. Record exports from Saudi Arabia and Iraq." Everything OK, then, war has its uses: in just a few months the price had risen to above \$60 per barrel. Just speculation? Or are we still in a crisis of over-production with its peaks and dips?

Again at the end of 2014, we left chaos in Libya and the division of its territory between Tobruk and Tripoli, "governed" by political bodies totally incapable of prevailing one over the other and politically representing – one or the other – the State of Libya, joined in the meantime in the area of Bengasi, Derna and central Sirte by mercenary groups identical to the Jihadi forces of the ISIS – Islam militia from the Maghreb and from the Arabian Peninsula. Egypt's support makes it possible to support the government


in Tobruk, which fights the Islamists and the Muslim Brothers. In turn, the support of Turkey and Qatar makes it possible to support Tripoli, which, in order to demonstrate its political legitimacy and continuing to recognize the old Parliament and National Congress of Libya, receives aid from the Muslim Brothers. In the mountainous area on the border with Tunisia, supported by Algeria, are the Berbers of the Zintan brigades and finally, in the south and on the border between the Niger and Algeria, the tribes of the Taubous and Tuareg fight the jihadi.

The management, control and ownership of the oil-producing areas protected and open to traffic continue, in the meantime, to fuel the conflicts: there is no interruption of the legal sale and smuggling of oil, which produces huge profits. And obviously there is no end to the various channels of financing for the different bands at war and no halt in the arms trade (pick-ups, machine-guns, old tanks, artillery, rocket-launchers, armoured cars), or, generated by this generalized chaos, the immense flux of proletarians gathering in their masses on the African banks of the rivers to be sold to the European labour market. Charon's infernal ferries sink with their goods in the middle of the Mediterranean with the help of the "deserving" European navy which, not being committed to pick up the desperados, has allowed a thousand or so to sink. The freedom of Capital, on which bourgeois democracy, the mobility of goods, money and labour are based is sacred and inviolable. In democratic Europe there is debate over whether to attack the boats on departure or whether to send land troops to stop the Islamists: but there is also debate over the quotas to be assigned to individual States and the proposals have

been met with the answer that each country should take the wretches that the market – a great leveller, like death - assigns it.

The whole of the Middle East and Libya are in flames. What remains of the latter and of Iraq as state entities? As they decompose, their geopolitical maps shrivel under the strikes of the new barbarians. Parts of the territory in the area of the clashes are "conquered", others abandoned, and so are the infinitely long and arid transit routes that cross Iraq and lead to Syria. The frontiers in this widespread area no longer exist. The three passes leading to Syria are supposed to be occupied: two by the ISIS (Tanaf and Al-Bukamal) and the northernmost by the Kurdish forces (Al-Jarrubia). The so-called Caliphate skilfully penetrates the contradictions created by two terrible American Gulf wars whilst those carried on by the NATO, sets one faction against the other, Sunnites and Shi'ites, attacking one or the other, where the level of contrast is more keenly to be felt. It controls, so they say, an area as large as Great Britain, through which eight million people are scattered. It is supposed to have already occupied around an half of Syria and a third of Iraq. Extending in patches, it is unifying its territory – cry the media in shocked tones. Tens of thousands of militia, mercenaries, soldiers, lay and religious volunteers are supposed to be passing from one front to another, as the cities are partly bombed and starting to become uninhabited with people abandoning houses and farms or trying to survive, as they always have, and where they have always lived in the deepest desperation, making room for new arrivals.

An Islamic State: based on what? They say: with an army, repressive forces, an administration with

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schools, government offices, public services and hospitals, taxes to collect, great economic resources (ground to cultivate, mineral resources to exploit, refineries) and the Islamic law, what is missing? Nothing. If we reveal the famous three-card gamble, a fictitious State is to be found in the Mediterranean in any case. The anti-ISIS front, composed of Sunnite militia, Iranian Sci'ite militia, Peshmerga Kurds and other groups held together by who knows what contrasting interests, is becoming more and more similar in appearance to the Islamic front. We thus have confirmation of the fact that on the war fronts the methods, means, organizations and military action tend to become more and more uniform.

The clashes between the Sci'ite majority and the Sunnite minority in Iraq continue to grow fiercer. At the time of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi society was made up not only of groups from different ethnic, but also different religious backgrounds and even tribe membership. By favouring above all the Sunnite minority (around 25% of the Iraqi population), exploiting the discrimination between different groups and containing the divisions (including those of Iraqi Kurdistan), it managed to hold together the country's social and political structures. The majority of bureaucratic positions with some degree of responsibility (party chiefs, government officials, army officers, etc.) were given to Sunnites, possibly those with non-religious leanings, but the Kurds were guaranteed some autonomy and responsibility as well. In theory, by imposing on Iraq a lay, nationalist ideology under the guidance of the Baath party, Saddam Hussein's regime ensured a fairly high degree of unity in the country, able to stand up to internal divisions. The

opposition to Saddam was particularly strong amongst those who suffered discrimination, i.e. the Sci'ites (over 50% of the population) and the Kurds (around 20%). One thing is certain: oil drilling has returned to normal and is tending to increase; Saddam's country no longer exists – the ethnic divisions have become deeper. To try and maintain a minimum of unity on the anti-ISIS front (whose weaknesses and inexpert fighting have been criticized by the United States), a huge sum in dollars is now in circulation. However, the generals stress, dismantling the Iraqi army, the country's only symbol of unity, and dispersing the majority of the Sunnite officials after the second war with America, was a serious mistake: without them ISIS cannot be conquered. In the midst of discrimination and retaliation against civilians from the Sci'ite forces, the Sunnites tend to opt for Islam fundamentalism (especially after the recent ferocious Sci'ite retaliation at Tikrit), rather than a situation with no future prospects. Indeed, the masses of dollars are spent on convincing, arming and training Sunnite troops to fight ISIS, in exchange for a return to traditional privileges. This is a situation that can't last for much longer.

The devastation of the Al-Qadeh mosque, caused recently by a kamikaze in Saudi Arabia in the territorial area belonging to the Gulf, where 15% of the population is of Sci'ite orientation, has been attributed to ISIS. Inevitably, by raising the level of the clashes between communities, these impromptu events also raise that of the clash with Iran and will take the war further into the Gulf area. Once the area of Basra around Shatt-al Arab at the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates has caught fire, the blaze will spread to the navigation

and transport routes for crude oil: the point of no return.

By coming to agreements with the USA and Russia (on missiles and nuclear fuel) on lowering sanctions and normalizing relations in the area, Iran is already present unofficially in Iraq, ready to expand and reinforce its participation in the military clashes in support of Assad's Sci'ite forces and probably Hezbollah from the Lebanon and Hamas from Palestine, which promise, in turn, to defend Syria and the Lebanon from the threat of ISIS. In the enormous confusion of roles, in Vienna the USA and Iran are negotiating on nuclear weapons, whilst fighting in Syria and being allies in Iraq. If the USA intervened using ground troops, chaos would reign sovereign, because in order to attack ISIS in Syria, Assad and Iran would have to become its allies: but in Iraq supporting Iran's strategic orientation means having Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the Iraqi Sunnites as enemies. It is no coincidence that, by not fighting, the Sunnite-oriented troops are achieving a sort of political defeatism.

The threat of direct intervention by Turkey, which supports the Jihadi against Assad's regime, has not yet been heard: under the advance of ISIS, 400 km. of its territory now borders on the Caliphate. What is more, when Kobani was besieged by ISIS, Turkey found itself fighting the Kurdish forces, which had received military aid from several European States. In the meantime, having lost contact with the Muslim Brothers, dethroned in Egypt, and with the Libyan Salafis in Tripoli, Ankara no longer has territorial forces to rely on in North Africa, as in the past. The difficulties are becoming increasingly profound because of the war: since the beginning of the conflict, two

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million Syrian refugees have been gathering in Turkish territory and will be moving towards Greece. Kurdish intervention in the area of Iraq has also diminished and is limited for now to control of its immediate and future areas of interest between the Turkish-Syrian border and the towns of Mosul and Kirkuk (Iraqi Kurdistan). The Kurdish forces of the PKK, are, in turn, kept under strict surveillance by Turkey, so that the arsenal it possesses does not filter into Turkish territory. Be this as it may, the area where Iran, Iraq and Kurdistan come together is the area that fuels demand and offer in the military sector and that of oil supply: these are the routes along which the conflict gathers continuity. The recent victory of the pro-Kurdish party at the Turkish elections has increased internal contradictions (20% of the 77 million inhabitants are Kurds), contrasts which, over a period of thirty years, have caused 40 thousand deaths. Turkey is another of the regional powers, the NATO's southern front, of strategic importance for the pipelines from Russia, the Caucasus, Iran and Iraq and from which no power can detach itself.

In the meantime, the Egyptian dictatorship is gathering strength with severe repression towards the Muslim Brothers. Only three years have gone by since the resignation of President Mubarak in February 2011 to the election of Al-Sisi on

28th May 2014 (with a majority of 96.9%). The whole of the territory from Yemen to the Gulf, has been shaken by fighting, civil wars and military action. First of all, came clashes and popular uprisings in the wake of the "Arab Spring", in particular in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Sultanate of Oman; next, the intervention of Saudi Arabian armed forces and from the Emirates in Bahrain; finally, the Gulf monarchies' in Yemen, causing the Yemenite head of State to stand down and President Hadi to be put in his place. On 3rd July 2013 President Morsi, elected in 2012, was removed from power and then condemned to death. In summer 2014 began the bombing by drones and 'planes under the guidance of the U.S.A. to support the anti-Assad Islamists and at the same time ISIS. The coalition (with Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Sudan) guided by Saudi Arabia sparked off an air raid against the Houthi rebels in the Saana area, which cost 1 849 lives. With these clashes the long battlefield running from Iraqi Kurdistan, through Iraqi territory to reach the area of the Persian Gulf, becomes even longer. From Mosul to Baghdad to Basra and Kuwait, all of the crude oil routes have come into the eye of the storm.

The clash between Saudi Arabia and Iran, not yet manifest in military terms, is a consequence of the economic and geo-strategic conflict (oil

production and trade), masked by religious contrasts (Sunnites against Shi'ites) and ethnic ones (Persians against Arabs). The way out would make it necessary to create an alliance between the USA, Saudi Arabia and Iran against ISIS, to which Russia, China and Europe would have to be linked. So, they say, for the first time a common Middle-Eastern security system would be created, based on agreements and not exclusion. A great idea! A pity that the exclusions are material facts and not mental cogitation, religious fixations and warrior dreams! In this triangle, where would Israel, Egypt and Turkey fit in? The pawns, whether black or white, have the first move: let the butchery commence!

In the meantime, whilst the Arab armies fight amongst themselves (until the Iraqis come onto the scene), the Israeli army, perennially mobilized, threatens and prepares its rapid intervention forces, both resisting the American policy of renunciation and slowing down the legal recognition of the Palestinian State. The conditions for the start of a military clash between the great powers in the area – Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Egypt, Turkey – are approaching. In this bloodbath not a trace will remain of the small and medium-sized political entities scattered through the Middle-East. And the sole victim, once again, as always, will be the Middle-Eastern proletariat.

## Islamism the reactionary and imperialist response, following the closure of the miserable bourgeois cycle in the Middle East

Let us start by reminding that the positions of communism have nothing to do with bourgeois anti-clericalism, whatever form this may have taken or may assume: liberal, anarchist, masonic, “socialist”. Communism links the fight against religion to the actual practice of the class movement, which tends to remove the *social roots* of religion forever, *whatever they may be*. When the revolutionary French bourgeoisie clashed with the old feudal régime, it had to fight religious ideology because, in order to let the capitalist mode of production progress, it had to promote its own science and thus do away with the ideologies that opposed it; by replacing religious faith with the Goddess of Reason and raising the banner (equally metaphysical in a society divided into classes) of Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood, the French Revolution is still the classical model of bourgeois revolutions, *in this context too*. Germany also had to attack the privileges of Catholicism, seizing many of the Church’s possessions and imposing a lay society. From Japan to Turkey, Iran to Egypt, Spain to Mexico, many other bourgeois revolutions have attacked religion. As to the countries of the Middle East, the attack on the Islamic religion was made primarily on the mosques and the Koranic schools. A different age...

On the other hand, bourgeois revolutions do not all arise and develop in the same way. There is a great difference, for example, between *revolutions from above* (Germany, Japan) and *revolutions from below* (France), between revolutions at the

dawn of the bourgeois age and “revolutions” *in the parasitic and decadent phase of its existence* (the age of imperialism and anti-colonial struggles). The bourgeois anthems to Reason and Science (in the age of Enlightenment) have grown silent and the embrace with religious ideologies in all parts of the world has become closer and closer. The fact that from the dawn of the bourgeoisie at the end of the Middle Ages the struggle against the old society took place in a religious context (Protestantism against Catholicism, reformers against sectarians, heretics against fundamentalists of all kinds) is of no embarrassment to communism. It is clear to the latter that religious and idealist disguise is an essential component of the complex development human society goes through and on this ground, too, the communist method of investigation has had ample confirmation. At the bottom of the economic structure it is not religious disputes that take place but *real and very material class wars*. The constitution of the Calvinist church was democratic and republican in every way and thus bourgeois, writes Engels in his Introduction to *The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science* (formerly, a part of the longer text known as *Anti-Dühring*). The clergy itself reflected and still reflects the class division of the dawning bourgeois society: during the French Revolution, for example, its lowest ranks took sides against the nobility and the monarchy. In *On the Origins of Christianity*, Engels again writes: “both the French communist revolutionaries and, in particular, Weitling

and his followers, look towards primitive Christianity.” And it should not be forgotten that the Russian Revolution of 1905 (the “first revolution”) began with a mass petition to the Tsar led by pope Gapon.

Marx and Engels understand that the religious factor (*the religious superstructure*) is extraordinarily complex in a society divided into classes. From the study of its historical complexity derives an extraordinary vein of political realism, since this is a factor that will only disappear slowly, together with classes and the State, once communism has eliminated the roots of oppression in *all social relations between people*. It is no coincidence that in Book One of Marx’s *Capital*, when speaking of the value of commodities, he states that in order to find a corresponding analogy, we should look at the religious superstructure!

To return to today, we can see that in the regions of the Middle East the very idea of “nation” (bourgeois by definition) is impregnated with religious spiritualism, still anchored to a pre-modern vision: the concept of “Jewish nation” is as mystic as that of “Islamic nation”. Yet western-style bourgeoisies also reveal this attachment to the “religion of the fathers” (though the capitalist mode of production, its ideology, the revolution against the ‘ancien régime’, the Napoleonic wars, have all left their mark on the “form of the national bourgeoisie”), repaying the conservative forces of a religious nature in its social organizations with great favours. Images of popes,

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lay and religious presidents, monarchs and caliphs triumph in cities, not only in the Middle East, and crowds of people kneel down before them singing their praises. At the same time monetary and financial wealth, Church property embedded in the territory, the management of poverty, health and the education of young people by means of charity, favours and money granted by the State, make the powerful ecclesiastic hierarchies just as many *authentic organized monopolies*.

The old pre-capitalist relations of production, driven into the background a long time ago, have an extraordinary capacity for self-preservation and would be a hindrance to capitalist development if they were to operate in their most extensive form, free of constraints. However, capitalism, which is not only a mode of production but also an economic and social formation, has succeeded in absorbing, integrating and using the legacy of the past. The new relations of production, with the new figures that appear, whilst unable to get rid of the old superstructures completely, are nonetheless capable of perfecting them and adapting them to the dynamics of social control they are destined for. Mysticism, by giving a new form to the material and social premises behind modern capitalist nations, instils its essence into the social reality of class exploitation. And in the praises of the holy Italic (or Argentinian) nation coming from the Catholic pope, we hear the cry of "Gott mit uns!" ("God with us!") of the war to come.

Encouraging the European bourgeoisies to carry through their revolution, Marx and Engels certainly did not stop to quibble over the rationalist and atheist purity of the bourgeois revolution since they


were far more interested in overthrowing the old feudal conditions and taking advantage of the dynamics of history to push the proletariat towards power (*permanent revolution*) snatching it from the grasp of the bourgeoisie, which was then "revolutionary". Today, presumed European or Arab bourgeois revolutions, more or less disguised in lay habits, would certainly not gain their blessing just because the same habits were worn by the bourgeoisie in its infancy. *Having left the age of utopia behind it and become a science of class*, socialism does not leave the "red flag of the oppressed", belonging to the proletariat, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, however young or decrepit it may be.

As a State, for example, Israel is a European political formation of eminently bourgeois nature and origin: however, in terms of its superstructure, it shares the same reactionary ideology of the Islamic and Catholic States. Those who discover presumed progressive and revolutionary elements in Islam (there are so many new converts!) forget that there has never been a real bourgeois revolution in the Middle East, that the bourgeoisies that have arisen and been imported there have come to the end of the line and that today there is no longer any trace of the anti-colonialism and pan-Arabism of the end of the Nineteen Fifties, both of which have failed. And the national claims of the Palestinians at the beginning of the Nineteen Seventies (once a lever for a possible "revolutionary" process) came in that miserable Bantustan in which all the Palestinian political forces, both lay and religious, massacre one another and, first and foremost the proletariat, after having forced it into this blind alley. To see pan-Islamism with all its present-day variations, as the battering ram

that attempts to attack the imperial fortress (a Bin Laden or an Isis, for example) and then pushes the proletariat of the Middle East once again into an alliance with the miserable Arab bourgeoisie, fanatic or lay, violent or pacifist, is pure madness.

The spread of religious ideology can be explained by the expropriation of traditional agricultural and craftwork (the agricultural, village economy, sustained by old patriarchal-feudal figures) with no accompanying industrialization. The nationalist movements (Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Algeria, Tunisia) were fuelled by the proletarianization of the post-war period and the failure of the agrarian reforms attempted later in the Nineteen Seventies. What pushed them still further were the affirmation of a modern agriculture (freed from the burden of small-scale subsistence farming) and industrialization financed by oil, together with the re-launching of manufacturing managed by the lower and middle classes with the inevitable corollary of unemployed or under-employed workers and landless, uprooted and urbanized peasants. The bubble of work in commerce and bureaucracy and a service sector providing social assistance changed the face of the Middle East, flooding cities like Damascus, Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem with social uncertainty and poverty but also relatively overpopulating them with Palestinian refugees from the various camps, each time the boots tramped forward on Israel's triumphant march.

All attempts to industrialize the territory thanks to the spin-off from technology linked to the extraction, refining and transport of oil, were harnessed by the big oil companies (and not only: motorways, pipelines, tankers). Attempts to import oil-drilling, refining and transportation technology on a large scale and to

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create a country's own industry in that field came to nothing: dependence on the large oil companies has never ceased.

Whilst the Asian countries have entered the circle of hell of capitalist production stemming from the new technologies, the curse of land rent has weighed like a ton of bricks on the whole of the Middle East. At this point social assistance and religious structures (wealth, power, organizational and dissuasive power, support, possibility of establishing an educational path), detached from any link to the land and village communities, have caught the masses and proletariat of the Middle East in their web, submerged as they were by the fiercest proletarianization and urbanization, with no industrialization worthy of the name, directing them towards an attitude that looked more to the past than to the future. The alliance between the dawning bourgeoisies and Islamism with all its internal divisions formed a reactionary glue, useful against the proletariat but certainly not against imperialism.

At the same time, the delay in the formation of a "nation" in the modern sense and the lingering of tribal, family and religious links has driven the proletarian masses back to the past. The "national" bourgeoisie has not carried the proletariat with it in the direction of organizing production and trade unions, which are nonetheless spreading spontaneously, though only around the large centres of transport and the ports. More than anything, the absence of a class party, a communist programme, holds back the proletariat from taking advantage of the gap opening out onto the future.

Today the dominant bourgeoisie is

mainly that of the administrative and military apparatus and financial techno-bureaucracy linked to political and religious power. An overwhelming part of it consists of *middle classes* that have never risen to the level of a real, united, national bourgeoisie: *half classes* which, in the name of an old "united culture" attempt to hide their political and economic dependence on the West – *half classes* that boast a claim to "a human face" in the face of the relentless march of capital, thanks to the existence of a religious ideology.

The current division between moderate countries, closer to the West since they are great oil producers, and hostile countries, excluded from the levels of production and consumption, no longer corresponds to the dynamics of the dawning bourgeoisie that witnessed the attempt of the great States to pursue a path of "national" independence or claims to a common destiny (Pan-Arabism). From the recurring economic crises what increasingly emerges is the world-scale competition between these same States, which, for fear of being overthrown by the proletarian masses, upholds the status quo of the lay or religious bourgeoisie, which, despite everything, holds the power.

For a certain period the coups d'état, the "palace rebellions" of the first half of the last century under the pressure and colonial and imperial leadership of France, England and America, seemed to have vanished, whilst the Nineteen Seventies laid bare the nerves of the whole system and the so-called national struggle was concealed. Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution" in 1979 preceded by workers' uprisings, started to have a profound effect on the Middle East in cities, factories, oil wells and refineries. Mixing capitalist modernity and financial parasitism, religious

fundamentalism once more emerged into the light of day.

At one time it maintained this paradox: the more the economic crisis induced by the wars and the endless struggle in Palestine advanced, the more rapidly the inversion towards the past accelerated. Possible compensation for disappointments and the misery of the present was sought in it; the causes of disorder were looked for in "modernization" and not in the capitalist mode of production and its contradictions. The "negation of modernization" became a political factor *binding together* the poorest of the masses: yet these masses were the end result of proletarianization and capitalist modernization, *not of the lack of it*; this is why the *petit bourgeoisie* became reactionary: because on the one hand it feared that it might fall into the ranks of the proletariat and, on the other, it feared the outbreak of the class war which was looming large on the horizon. Contrary to this, the national bourgeoisie in Iran (like Israeli one) succeeded in managing a modern type of industrial development and avantgarde technology, paying homage to Islam (and Judaism) as a means for controlling the proletariat and challenging capitalist competition: *conferring an institutional guise upon religion*.

The petit-bourgeois resort to fundamentalism obviously led to taking up once again the religious principles on which Islam was founded. For example, it led to the condemnation of modern usury (interest rates) under which it suffered at the hands of a gigantic, parasitic apparatus that had been won over by the "productive religion" of the West; it led to new reflections on Koranic charity as a form of redistribution of wealth, in a perspective of equality and equity. In other words, the demand for modern

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forms of income redistribution came to light, a sort of new, Middle-Eastern *welfare* (an authentic social democracy of a religious nature). "Militant" Islam corresponded to the social need of "believers", who gathered in the mosques in a symbolic declaration of the "holy war" against "non believers" (who, to put it bluntly, were their western competitors!).

The middle classes drew political sustenance from these social mechanisms, in order to promote fundamentalism, to join the ranks of those who defended homes, local territory, tribal forms, religious details, ancient customs. The impoverished thus became "raw material" both for imperialist, bourgeois politics and for the home-grown variety. Western, so-called "humanitarian aid" made it possible for real needs to be drowned in the assistentialist marshes of the refugee camps, the masses of people camping on the outskirts of Arab cities under the control of extremist fringe-groups and UN troops. The initial modernization had pushed out the old monarchical-feudal, religious middle classes and replaced them with new middle classes educated along western lines and largely present today in all Arabic bureaucratic and judicial organizations. The "enemy" was the West: its culture, its modernity and thus its immorality. And the West, in turn, retorted by accusing the Muslim countries of barbaric deeds, lack of democracy and religious mysticism. If, then, western representative democracy was now in a state of coma and on the other hand the "consultation chambers" in the Middle East, made up of lawyers, tribal representatives, families and so on, a throwback to earlier times, were unable to deal with internal social chaos, the only thing all the "competitors" could do

amidst all this uncertainty was to place themselves in the hands of almighty God.

The economic crisis of the early Nineteen Nineties and the war against Iraq have caused all the old ideologies, *whose aim is the social control of the proletarian masses*, to be rediscovered both in the West and in the Middle East. If, in the West, racism and nationalism have emerged and there is more and more talk of starvation pensions, minimum wages, insufficient social buffers, lack of social assistance, and the causes of ill-being are sought for in immigration – briefly, if the whole democratic scaffolding is unable to cope with the impact of social, political and economic emergencies, and bourgeois sociologists are wondering what will become of the democracy of tomorrow, then it is clear that the need for more a more minute form of social control, using the new technologies of espionage, is becoming increasingly urgent. The nature of the middle-eastern States and the imperialist bourgeoisies thus incorporates increasingly reactionary ideologies. Rascal parliamentary democracies (theocratic, social-democratic, lobbyist) and more or less tribal representation are still in place and urgently require the intervention of some new "middle-eastern spring" or other, to follow through to the end, sweeping away the immense accumulation of old and new, lay or religious trash. In the hope that it will be possible to run with the very old hare and hunt with the very modern hounds.

If, at the end of this hellish scenario, the Arab and non-Arab bourgeoisies are not amply clad in religious habits (Sunnite, Shi'ite, Wahhabi, Salafite) all fighting one another, appearing to the masses in a new militant uniform; and if, at the end of a lengthy process, the Islamic

organizations of Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in the Lebanon, Baat in Syria, Wahhabi in Saudi Arabia, Jihad of al Qaeda or nowadays Isis in vast areas of the Middle East have taken root and found new vigour, all this shows that the fault lines in the Middle East are spreading visibly. It can easily be seen that there are no fewer massacres amongst the same religious factions as there are between opposing ones, that the wars between Arabs have not been and are no less violent than those between Arabs and the West. It is therefore not a case of religious wars or wars between civilizations, but of fights between the immense economic interests at play in this enormous area of the world. What is more, history confirms that as to "effusio sanguinis" (bloodshed), men of God are no amateurs: especially when their arsenals are full of weapons!

Proceeding along the path of the so-called "Iranian revolution" taking root in the workers' struggles in Teheran and Isfahan at the end of the Nineteen Seventies, and followed at the beginning of the Eighties in Europe by those in the shipyards of Poland, the metalworks of Italy and the mines of England, the scenario changes. If, in 1981, the assassination of Sadat, the heir of Nasser's national battle, by the Muslim Brotherhood becomes the paradigm of a fanatical fight against the peace agreements between Egypt and Israel; if in Algeria the FNLA (the Algerian National Liberation Front), which had thrown out the French and had become a miserable, bureaucratic, military structure, is attacked by armed fundamentalist movements such as the GIA (Armed Islamic Group of Algeria), who from 1991 to 1995 had demanded an Islamic Republic like Iran's, all this merely reveals the conclusion of a long bourgeois cycle heading for the

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abyss. From here onwards a new cycle begins that intersects with the world crisis of overproduction opening up after the long period of "American" over-accumulation at the end of the XXth century and the second Iraqi war of 2003.

Once again it is *the defensive economic struggles* that launch the signal: the struggles of the Egyptian textile workers and the demonstrations for bread (Mahalla, Suez, Cairo) and of the Tunisian workers stir the masses, urging them against the existing dictatorships (Mubarak in Egypt, Ben Ali in Tunisia) – struggles that are to be *cut down* by a new dictatorship in Egypt and widespread control in Tunisia, accompanied by the consensus of the petit bourgeoisie, summoned up "en masse". The so-called "Arab

springs", the "beautiful revolutions" the middle classes are so fond of, mark the conclusion, with the immediate defeat of the proletariat, of the militant movements that had set in motion such enormous masses of people, dispersed by the Egyptian army in the fields and in the factories. And so, between 2009 and 2011, the struggles, now lacking their working class roots, extend to Libya (against Ghedaffi) and to Syria (against Bassar al-Assad). The needs of the proletariat, when merging with the interests of the middle classes protesting against corruption, general poverty and the "scandalous" wealth of the régimes, lose their own strength and are dispersed.

As a whole, these events nonetheless demonstrate that the processes of class war, still kept strictly under

control, continue to brood in the guts of middle-eastern society. The real tragedy is that they do not find the *class party* on their path, the only one that can give a response to the many demands arising from the proletariat's living and working conditions and from the desperation of the same middle classes which, as they sink into the social abyss, look for an answer in fundamentalist positions. As no solution is to be found, the course of history overflows on the one hand into a social marshland and on the other ends up down the blind alley of a war that envelopes the whole of the Middle East and involves North Africa. Only new earthquakes, profound new economic crises, can create opportunities for revolution – the epicentre of which is not to be found in the Middle East itself but *deep in the heart of the imperialist world*.



## From the U.S.A. FERGUSON (MISSOURI), AGAIN

As the vile stream of cold-blooded murders of young black people by repressive U.S. (state and federal) bodies continues, to the extent that it's hard work keeping up with all the episodes<sup>1</sup>, a demonstration was held in Ferguson (Missouri) in memory of Michael Brown, killed on 9 August 2014. There were clashes with the police in their anti-riot gear, who used tear gas and other deterrents to break up the crowd, and there was shooting: a young man fired at the policemen and was then seriously wounded by them.

The social situation is tense throughout the United States, where news of economic recovery and a (relative) decrease in unemployment is certainly not enough to change the basic reality, which sees the more disadvantaged and exploited (and numerically greater) sectors of the U.S. proletariat – first and foremost blacks and Latinos (Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Central- and South-Americans), but also growing segments of poor whites – under constant attack, endless repression, both by the “legal” forces of repression and by “illegal” armed bands.

Indeed, at the Ferguson demo, squads of “Oath Keepers” appeared, right-wing elements who, with the excuse of upholding the Constitution they had sworn their *oaths* to, and accusing the federal powers of not doing so determinedly enough, take the field armed to the teeth with *ultra-sophisticated weapons*. The U.S. scenario is crawling with these

types of groups, which add to the more classic Klu-Klux-Klan or Black Legion, perhaps a little too picturesque for these paid and generously supported hit-men and killers – ex Marines, ex policemen, war veterans from wars near and far, the racist underworld that acts as a manoeuvrable mass for Capital in order to terrorize and repress, ready and able to venture forth where, for political reasons, the “forces of law and order” cannot go (and that is quite a challenge!).

The economic and social disorder of the last few years, added to that of the previous decades, particularly in areas far from the great, glittering cities, means that there are all the preconditions for a war of “the poor fighting the poor”. The anger and indignation of the masses of blacks are skilfully managed so that the “problem” remains one of “race”; at the same time, amongst the white workers who are no less exposed to exploitation, “racism” is artificially fuelled, creating a fracture within the proletariat – an old story dating back to the age of slavery and post-slavery, when black ex-slaves entered the huge reserves of exploited labour, occupying the positions on the lowest rungs of the ladder, blackmailed and blackmailable. *Divide et impera*.

The blind alley of a clash “between races” is always dangerously close, in the United States as in other countries with similar situations (consider just Great Britain or

France, for example) and can only be avoided by a return to the scene of the communist party organized at a worldwide level. In the United States the lack of a real revolutionary political tradition has left the US proletariat – already fragmented by the workings of Capital – quite alone. We should remember that Marxism reached the country late and mostly in a situation that was still extremely fluid from a social point of view, so that it had a hard time taking root; the two small and precarious communist parties that arose in the period immediately following the First World War did not have the strength or the time to put down roots before they were sucked up by the whirlwind of the Stalinist counter-revolution on the one hand and of Trotskyist opportunism or the lack of consistency of “council communism” in all its varieties, on the other – all themes it will be useful to return to.

The problem of the revolutionary party was posed but in an inconsistent, contradictory and weak fashion: in the 60s the Black Panthers, before being swept away by state repression (which used all possible means against them, from the bloodiest to the blandest: from mass murder to the use of drugs or police infiltration – ah, democracy!), whilst generously aware of the need for political organization, were incapable of equipping themselves with anything more than a “party” whose theory vacillated and was often ambiguous, in which Marx and Le-

### NOTES

[1] On 28 May 2013, on the basis of a detailed study made by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and entitled Operation Ghetto Storm, the website Alternet recalled that over the previous year at least 313 blacks had been killed, one every 28 hours: cfr. <http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/1-black-man-killed-every-28-hours-police-or-vigilantes-america-perpetually-war-its>. For its own part, the website Vice News calculated on 9 August 2015, that 1083 people (of all colours) had been killed by the police during the year following Michael Brown's murder: cfr. <https://news.vice.com/article/police-have-killed-at-least-1083-americans-since-michael-browns-death>.



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nin were placed alongside Mao and Guevara. Their reference point was always and exclusively "the ghetto cat", mostly belonging to a *Lumpenproletariat* on the margins of society, and the organization itself tried to make up for its theoretical-political frailty by having

ample recourse to formal "militarism" and a dangerous and self-destructive cult of leadership 2.

The issue of the revolutionary party is thus an extremely urgent one in the United States, as elsewhere. Only in this way, only thanks to its presence at the side of the US prole-

tariat, whatever colour it is, only through its long work of preparation, organization and direction, can the blind alley be avoided. Otherwise, the constant destruction of precious energy will go on, all to the advantage of the "triumphant beast" – capitalism.

#### NOTES

[5] On the Black Panthers, cfr. our article "Il movimento delle 'Pantere Nere'", *Il programma comunista*, n.5/1971. It will be useful to return to this movement, too, in the future.



## FROM THE REBEL GHETTO OF BALTIMORE, LET THE BATTLE CRY AGAIN BE: "WORKINGMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!"

Following the umpteenth murder of a young black man by "the forces of law and order" in Baltimore (Maryland), the Afro-American community is back on the streets again to express its anger, as has already happened so many times in the past months. There have been demonstrations, clashes, fires, injuries and arrests. The National Guard has been called in, a state of emergency proclaimed, a night curfew imposed for a week.

The media, observers and institutions speak of "race riots". But these rebellions sink their roots in a class condition. Together with the Latin American ones, black proletarians constitute the most exploited, oppressed and marginalized sector

of the US proletariat. They are our class brothers. With great difficulty and in total political isolation, they react as best they can to the attack led against them at all levels (on the job, in the city ghettos, on the borders at sea and on land) and by all available means (open daily police and military repression, the oppression of religious and non-religious ideologies, democratic-parliamentary fetishes, individual destruction and self-destruction, the cunningly fuelled "war of the poor against the poor") – an attack that has always been moved against them by Capital, in times of peace and of war, in times of prosperity and of crisis. They have our complete solidarity.

Wherever they come from and

whatever the colour of their skin, the keyword for proletarians all over the world is once again class unity against and beyond any barrier or division, a common battle to finally overthrow the capitalist mode of production, which starves, destroys and massacres. Most important of all, the urgent reinforcement of the revolutionary party and its rooting all over the world can no longer be delayed: without its guidance and organization, its programme and revolutionary perspective, even the most widespread and generous rebellions risk being transformed into yet one more proletarian bloodbath.

28 April 2015

#### Recent articles in our press:

**"USA: social (and not only financial) bubbles on the horizon",**

***The Internationalist*, n.2/2015; "USA: la guerra in casa", *il programma comunista*, n.2/2015.**

## Ukraine: war and nationalisms

The bloodless annexation of the Crimea and the so-called “war of liberation” of the Ukraine’s supporters of independence on Russia’s borders has for months occupied the East European stage. Once again the European continent is agitated by the spectacles of old and new nationalisms destined to multiply – nationalisms which will never cease to put on a show of muscle power until the terrain they grow out of, the national States, has been removed. Against them, the international and internationalist battle cry lives on: “*Proletarians of the world, unite!*”

All the ideological aims – “democracy”, “freedom”, “self determination of the people”, “humanitarian intervention” – advanced as justifications for solving the so-called “national crises” are merely paper screens that do not prevent military clashes but instead fuel them. The collapse of Russia and German unification in 1989-90 took the lid off the Pandora’s vase: widespread imperialist war, still lying in wait at the moment, will be the most “genuine” product of capital accumulation and its consequent nationalisms. Those former events, which have been celebrated for 25 years now, arose out of profound economic upheavals (the crises of the 1970s/1980s) that had their effect on the economic, social and political dynamics previously imposed by the victorious powers at the Yalta Conference in Crimea in 1945. The solid power front that came into being after the second world war is gradually disappearing: new signs of an approaching storm are to be sensed and the war on the south-eastern borders of the Ukraine is its latest manifestation.

First in the Balkans and now in the

territory of east Europe, the nailed boots are marching again, as in the past. The clash between the vast economic interests of France, Germany, the USA, Great Britain and Russia has started to make itself felt precisely where, from the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht onwards, that ghostlike construction known as the European Union has attempted, by means of the single currency, to glue together the numberless marginal economic entities that never cease to churn chaotically, moved by the alternating waves of overproduction and crisis. Nothing can resist the energy released by these waves, which follow one another in rapid succession. Capital, labour-force, productivity, degree of exploitation, production times, plus-value, profit rate, which are at the basis of a capitalist economy, seem to be facts lacking any real consistency in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. The enormous anomalies in productivity, differences in wages, the varying profit rates in capitalist countries, on which the gap between growing wealth and poverty are founded, seem like vague figures devoid of any value. Above all this, blinding the eyes and the mind, rises the Leviathan of financial capital.

The economic, social and political limits of small, national units, but also those of the great powers, are not indeterminate. They are firmly traced: all the more rigidly in proportion to the degree of freedom that they (the great powers) presume they possess. If it is true that the European Union is proving to be merely a Teddy Bear hanging from a hook on a stand in the Fun Fair, at the mercy of economic forces, it is undeniable that Germany cannot afford to clash with her Russian provider of energy, on which she is *vital*ly dependent (and vice versa)

and with which she has, for decades, been pursuing a very close policy of economic collaboration and historical tradition (*Ostpolitik*); yet, at the same time, she cannot afford now to abandon the political (Atlantic) position she occupies. To sink the Russian economy by means of sanctions would mean halting the process of integration and capitalist connection so necessary for Capital and which began precisely with the crises that preceded and followed the fall of the Berlin Wall – that same process of integration and connection that will inevitably provide the impulse towards the next war. Inflation, the virtual standstill in the growth of GNP, the plunge in the value of the rouble and oil prices, all point to the fact that it is impossible to disconnect economic systems without paying the price. The historical lesson learnt is that a long period of peace is proportional to the amount of destruction caused by the previous war and to the weight of the chains imposed on the class war.

The boogeyman clad in Stalinist-Soviet disguise has accompanied the great Russian-American lie of the post-war period about so-called “real socialism”. One thing was certain in the second world conflict: the real enemy of the bourgeoisie was (and remains) the international proletariat, whose German representatives are (and will be) the most advanced faction in the class conflict. Thus, the surgery performed by the great imperialist powers was carried out without doubts: the division of Germany and of Berlin was *necessary* and its only aim was to divide the German proletariat at the heart of Europe into two separate parts. This division tells of counter-revolution, the defeat of the proletariat before and after the conflict and the desertifi-

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cation known as peace that came after it.

France, another pawn in the game, no longer manages, as she once did, to keep a short lead on the German wolf entrusted to her, which can no longer be economically or politically tamed. The USA, the only real winners, have no intention of giving up their own hold on Europe and having established themselves in the east after the fall of the Wall, are seizing the opportunity to create difficulties for the continent's east-west links, playing on the tensions between the old Russian leader, ex-Soviet satellites and yesterday's defeated. London, standing outside the games of unified Europe, goes further, attributing to European weakness (that of France and Germany) one of the substantial causes of Russian arrogance and the far from remote possibility that the Baltic States may come under the attack of "Russian imperialist capitalism" – the self-interested remark of a former imperialist and colonial power that has since become the USA's court jester. With the same "satisfaction", those taking part in the war simulation games amuse themselves by throwing around the Italian standard to see which allied side it will land on, whilst they have no doubt that the British pound sterling will fall onto American ground. It is no coincidence that faced with the US demand for a clear condemnation of Russia's "invasion" of the Crimea, Germany immediately assumed an accommodating tone, aiming for a compromise that would save her good relations with the eastern giant, guaranteeing mutually favourable business deals and perhaps leaving open the prospect of something more for future international political relations.

The big imperialist powers know quite well that the great world contest will also, and mainly, be played out in the East Pacific, where the two new major powers, China and India, will come heavily into play with their immense proletarian masses destined for massacre, unless the proletarian revolution should stop it in time. With Hobsbawm's "Short Twentieth Century", Fukuyama's "The End of History", Gorbaciov's "Common European Home" and the protective wings of Boris Yeltsin's NATO-Russia set aside, where has the post-Wall message of peace and progress ended up? The message that should have united everybody in one big embrace? Looking over our shoulders, in these years of cemetery-like peace, we have been witnessing one endless devastation after the other: from Somalia to Afghanistan, from Iraq to so-called Palestine, from the Balkans to Libya, then Syria and now the Ukraine, the hefty American harrow (with labour provided by the States of Great Britain, France and Italy) has sown death and devastation. The seeds planted have sprouted bands of adventurers who run amok in the most diverse territories: Syrian, Iraqi, Libyan, free traders and smugglers of gas, oil and arms, those that improperly refer to themselves as the "Caliphate"...

The ghosts of the past? Still today mere shadows that move in a hazy landscape, where several theatres of war are still open, all of them fatal to the proletariat. Of significance are the increasingly strong rumours suggesting that a growing portion of Germany's ruling class (especially in the great economic-industrial groups) is looking towards reconquering their old "living space" (*Lebensraum*), a "re-conquest" that has already begun by establishing production facilities in countries directly adjacent to eastern borders,

opening up a natural overflow route through Poland and the Baltic skittles to the borders of St. Petersburg. This "space" extends along another line to the south through the Balkans, dismantled and taken apart so that the mark (and then the euro) could follow the old warpaths towards the Middle East. It is understandable that the USA tends to dramatize the Ukrainian crisis, using it against Russia, threatening to send heavy arms to the "poor nation" of the Ukraine, to dispatch "impartial" international observers to the front; and that London does all it can to keep the Baltic front united with Denmark and Poland. This is an open contest, in which the position assumed by Germany will play the key role, whilst Italy is once more condemned to dance between one partner and another, as in the satirical drawings produced in countries of the Central Powers at the beginning of the Great War, or to make her appearance by intervening as in the Lebanon (1982), Somalia (1992), Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011).

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Just as the Balkans, reduced to a jigsaw of marginal political and economic entities, has become the transit route for oil pipelines and bridges to the markets of Asia, for the Ukraine, too, there will be no escaping its *balkanization* under the pressure from capital. Kiev is not only the gate of entry for Moscow: it is also the point where a wide-reaching network of seven bordering states meets. Volhynia and Galicia (Lviv), so closely attached to Poland, will not hesitate to present their present "mother country" with their demand for a "just divorce", as the Czechs and the Slovaks did peacefully and as Slovenia, not so peacefully, did towards Yugoslavia.

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Numerous armies have crossed this "middle earth", called Ukraine (whose etymology, we should remember, is "land on the edge, on the border or periphery"!), in all directions, and this is why its destiny is clearly written. Its survival and political ideology are founded on a *state of permanent instability* towards its neighbours and this is also the reason why it will remain nailed to square one, whilst waiting for the leaders of the packs in Europe to make their moves. That Germany and France should come to Minsk 2 to uphold a truce with the Russian independence fighters, that the USA should agitate for Germany to intervene heavily and that Poland should exert more pressure than the USA in favour of this intervention – all this should come as no surprise. A great Poland pushes eastward because that was her "space" in the past, the space of Belarus and the Baltic regions, notoriously more fragile than the great German block to the west. Can the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, a naval base and arsenal of light and heavy weapons partly separating Poland from Lithuania, stop this? It is certainly not a *casus belli* that the latter should become uneasy enough to announce the return of obligatory military service to face the growing threat

from Russia, or that at the same time military training should be held on the borders of Estonia and Latvia, as well as joint Anglo-American parades in Estonia: these are just fairly indicative signals that there is a growing probability of fireworks starting to go off. It is widely known that the nationalism of the Baltic countries may explode again from one moment to the next: this means billions of euros of English and American military aid and *free* credit disguised as support for the economy. One thing is certain in this situation: today the *status quo* is once again Germany's strongest guiding principle.


The bourgeois States, functional to their own economies and their own military capacity, nonetheless have a far harsher role: *to place iron shackles on the wrists and feet of their proletariat*. All the rest, the ideals of "democracy, justice and freedom" and the ceaseless chatter about "European institutions" are just for the middle classes and the fools. Yet it is just as undeniable that countries unable to sustain the impact of the great historical forces of imperialism will be swept away by the dynamics of Capital, as its centralisation continues on an ever-widening scale. Thus, division and at the same time centralisation and

concentration, accumulation and consequent overproduction and thence increasingly devastating crises: to save ourselves from this destructive mechanism, the little tramp steamer of national reform is just a powerless utopia.

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Up to the present there have been almost 5500 deaths (soldiers and civilians), 13000 wounded and over a million and a half refugees from this middle earth (Luhans'k, Donec'k, Debaltsevo, Mariupol), towards Russia. In this borderland, war games are being played (and it will not be long before they extend to the far side of the Crimea, as far as Odessa and from here to Moldova and Transnistria). There is talk of thousands of prisoners, of factories destroyed, of gutted houses and abandoned towns: human masses that have failed (and fail) to understand that this pseudo-independence merely fuels the horrendous murder game by the very bourgeoisie that sets itself up as "the bringer of peace, well-being and development"<sup>1</sup>.

Dribbling democracy, the western journalist demands passionately, "To die or not to die for the Ukraine?". Poland and her Baltic siblings, who

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[5] *And this is a real war*, not the celebratory enactment of partisanship, barricades, skirmishes between bands. As in every war, there are tens upon tens of thousands of deserters, entire units refuse to fight or be used to quell people's uprisings in the Russian-speaking regions, other units surrender... And again: exchanges of prisoners, regiments that pass from one side of the battlefield to the other, supplies of arms, troops and equipment, night-vision equipment, artillery, armoured vehicles, tanks, aeroplanes and helicopters shot down, unofficial bands of nationalists: the modern, international Expo of the arms trade, where efficiency, power and firing range, automation and innovation are all to be seen. In addition: puppet soldiers sent to the battlefield with no training (only 10% of the 78 000 troops in the Ukrainian army has been judged fit for battle, only 15% of the material officially in use – aeroplanes and helicopters – in working condition); operations involving defence and population control; the inevitable "anti-terrorist" brigades; and, over and above all the rest, legions of volunteers, mercenaries, military advisors, combat teams, CIA and FBI staff... The economic spin-off for the arms trade in both nations (Russia and Ukraine) is worth billions: 15% of military production consists in elements of vital importance for equipping Russia's armed forces and the consequences are serious for Kiev, too, considering that 35% of Ukrainian industry consists of enterprises working in the military sector, for whom trade with Russia accounts for over 50% of their orders (over 400 firms work for the Army: military components and end products, Cargo vehicles, prototypes for the Airforce, companies producing engines and those producing various types of ballistic missiles and fighter-bombers)... For all this data and more, see issue 12/2014 of *Limes*, entitled "La Russia in guerra".

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have everything to gain from a disaggregation of the Ukraine, insist that heavy arms should be dispatched to Kiev. Not even Hungary holds her tongue. The defenders of "freedom", as against "imperial Russian barbarity", demand that the requests for help from the "Ukrainian patriots" be sustained and, in turn, the supporters of "the self-determination of peoples" demand that the Ukrainian Nazis and the American imperialists be driven back.

If the game ends with Ukrainian defeat, who will support the cost of reconstructing the economy in these territories? It is not just a matter of blocking supplies of gas, oil and coal: it will mean the disappearance of all the Russian orders for heavy goods, both civilian and military (between 5 and 10 billion dollars), which for years have been guaranteed by a tissue of relationships. In this situation the Ukraine's economy will precipitate: the exchange between her products for rail transport, means of production and arms (of which she is one of the ten leading exporters in the world), is bound to the prices of gas and oil coming from Russia. The gap in the Russian demand for arms and the

offer of raw materials, which has long been connected, will create an authentic vacuum in the economy and in production. Breaking off relationships due to the war will necessarily lead to a reindustrialization of the whole system: but who will provide the capital, given that today the Ukrainian economy is in a state of financial collapse (a 50% currency devaluation, inflation standing at 17.5%, monetary reserves reduced to the point where they are unable to cover six months of imports, the banking system almost ruined)?

How will infrastructures destroyed in the war be rebuilt? According to experts, it will cost 100 billion dollars just to rebuild the Donbass. Who will generously offer loans – the European Union or the IMF? Who will pay the heavy bill of 276 billion dollars for re-building the whole of society? The proletarians will find out to their cost how much their so-called "self determination" and the independence so dear to the hearts of the petit bourgeoisie is worth. What will the so-called "warriors" (patriots, right- and left-wing partisans), so attached to their oligarchies and their corruption, use to feed the masses, even poorer than they were beforehand? What is

certain is that very soon the proletariat will discover that, as well as suffering, it is wearing far heavier chains than it did before, so that it can pay the bill by means of forced labour: new salaried labour to produce new means of production and new arms.

With what salaries, what currency, how much work, how much productivity and intensity? In the end, things will be as they were at the start, admitting that there is no solution to the tragedy. Whether Russian, German or American, the victorious bourgeoisie will hound the proletariat until it (the bourgeoisie) is overthrown. The advancing *balkanization* thus accelerates the development of great, international capitalism, to which local capital is subordinated, riding roughshod over the corpses of ephemeral nations. *The proletariat must give all patriotic sirens a wide berth*, because the bourgeoisie will want to re-establish the "national factor" as the inescapable effect of the profound crisis. Under the disguise of the "freedom of the people", "democracy", "free trade", imperialist war also serves to stop the proletariat from recognizing *the real cause of it: Capital*.

**The communist party, internally, develops an intense work of study and political critique intimately linked to the exigencies of action and to historical experience, and it strives to organize this work on an international basis. Externally, in all circumstances and with the means at its disposal, it works to diffuse the lessons of its own critical experience and to refute enemy schools and parties. Above all, the party conducts its activity and propaganda among the proletarian masses and works to polarize them around it, particularly at those times when they are set in motion in reaction against the conditions capitalism imposes upon them and especially within the organizations formed by proletarians to defend their immediate interests.**

(from "Theses of the Abstentionist Communist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party", 1920, Part III, Section 4)

## Bourgeois legality and illegality in the historical experience of the proletariat

On 29 January 1849, only a few months after the June 1848 repression of the proletarian uprising in Paris (*over 3000 rebels massacred, 1500 deported without trial, 15 thousand arrested and then deported*), Odilon Barrot, the French Prime Minister, asked the National Assembly to approve a series of exceptional measures, “an authentic multi-purpose law against right- and left-wing extremists”, pronouncing the famous sentence, then quoted by Engels in a text of 6 March 1895, “la légalité nous tue,” (legality kills us). In his appeal to the Assembly, Barrot declared that in that chamber no internal political faction would *ever again* be able to put forward a state of truce, pacification, legality towards the proletariat, because the very principle by which the State exists is summed up in *control, security and repression*. He therefore proposed that the Assembly should stand down: the Assembly bowed its head, the government disbanded the *clubs* (political parties) and the *Garde Mobile* they had made use of in June and replaced 50 prefects in various Departments. Nothing new for the generations of proletarians that followed, right down to our own times.

We shall not deal here with the daily, routine action of the forces of law and order (police and army) and the magistrates and the way it affects the whole of society, in factories, streets, homes, prisons, battlefields, but with the work of control and fierce repression *at peak moments of the class war*. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in bourgeois society, “even in the most democratic of republics,” this action is exercised *without interruption*. The transition from the age when the “dictatorial

function” appears hazy (times of so-called “social peace”) and the eyes of the proletariat are clouded by the smoke of legalitarian, democratic, assistentialist and collaborationist ideologies, to an age where the dictatorship imposes itself transparently, in the light of day, depends on the sudden outbreak of rebellion by the oppressed class, forced into unbearable conditions. At that point, part of the bourgeoisie, alarmed by the prospect of an uncertain future, urges *its* State to take up the class war, yelling to one another, “the long age of legality has been suicide, we have to get back to facts.” Faced with the bourgeoisie’s declaration of open class war, as its battle is unchained – the inevitable result of the contradictions in the capitalist mode of production – the proletariat once more discovers new forms of organization, tactics and strategies for avoiding being wiped out (the great experiences of the Commune and Red October confirm this, as well as thousands of episodes of class struggle over a period of two centuries of bourgeois rule) – methods and forms that, in the presence of a revolutionary party rooted in the class, represent true declarations of war against the bourgeoisie and in which the objective of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” is put in first place. The various ages of legality and illegality, dead calm and fierce repression, collaboration and open counter-revolution, alternate along with the various phases and contradictions of capitalist economy.

In the 1891 preface to Marx’s *The Class Wars in France*, on the subject of the “fascination of the barricades”, from which we quoted significant passages in a recent article,

Engels describes the various modern, technical and tactical conditions in the class struggle between workers in the large towns and the police or army, projecting the revolutionary process either into the revolutionary war or into the modern slaughter. Some years previously (15 December 1887), anticipating the events of the first world war by a quarter of a century, Engels himself had already written, in an article entitled *On Arch-Patriots* (which Lenin made use of, in an article for “Pravda”, July 2, 1918): “No war is any longer possible for Prussia-Germany except a world war and a world war indeed of an extent and violence hitherto undreamt of. Eight to ten millions of soldiers will massacre one another and in doing so devour the whole of Europe until they have stripped it barer than any swarm of locusts has ever done. The devastations of the Thirty Years’ War compressed into three or four years, and spread over the whole Continent; famine, pestilence, general demoralisation both of the armies and of the mass of the people produced by acute distress; hopeless confusion of our artificial machinery in trade, industry and credit, ending in general bankruptcy; collapse of the old states and their traditional state wisdom to such an extent that crowns will roll by dozens on the pavement and there will be no body to pick them up; absolute impossibility of foreseeing how it will all end and who will come out of the struggle as victor; only one result is absolutely certain: general exhaustion and the establishment of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class. This is the prospect when the system of mutual outbidding in armaments, taken to the final extreme, at last bears its inevitable fruits.



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This, my lords, princes and statesmen, is where in your wisdom you have brought old Europe. And when nothing more remains to you but to open the last great war dance—that will suit us all right. The war may perhaps push us temporarily into the background, may wrench from us many a position already conquered. But when you have unfettered forces which you will then no longer be able again to control, things may go as they will: at the end of the tragedy you will be ruined and the victory of the proletariat will either be already achieved or at any rate inevitable."

As he wrote these words the social-pacifists, chauvinists, masters of socialdemocratic opportunism of the times were saying that the barricades of 1848 should be replaced, as a lesson learned forever, by "the democratic, legalitarian and non-violent conquest of power."

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There are three classical works on French history by Marx, tracing the phases in the development of the class war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The first, *Class Wars in France*, regards the period 1848-1850 and, for Engels, is *the first attempt to explain a period of history, with its corresponding economic conditions, according to his materialistic concept*. The second, which follows straight afterwards, is *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and analyses the period extending up to 2 December 1851, the famous date of the coup d'état by means of which the young Napoleon became emperor. The third is the *Address of the Communist International on the Commune of*

1871, written immediately after its bloody repression.

Two results sum up the completed analyses and can be referred to for the sake of clarity as home politics and foreign politics. *The former says that, however complex the arrangement of the sides taken by classes and parties in a society, when the proletariat makes its ultimate claim, all the other classes and parties hurl themselves against it. The latter says that, when, in a modern nation or capital city, the workers raise the fiery flag of the victorious class dictatorship, all national armies, even if they are mutual enemies, will form a confederation against it.*

In an article of 1952, entitled "La légalité nous tue"<sup>1</sup>, from which we have taken the quotations that follow, we wrote: "At the end of his study on the formation of a single, clear, brazen, total class power, Marx writes his famous passage on the revolutionary mole that has dug so skilfully. He justifies the workers of Paris for having remained indifferent to Napoleon III's coup d'état of 2 December and records the crushing of the democratic lie beneath the gun barrels as a useful result. [...] The main lesson is this: the working class will have political strength when it learns to prepare itself for the inevitable time to come when the liberal, democratic, constitutional, republican bourgeoisie will scream that legality is ruining it and move in a united, totalitarian front against the revolution. At this stage, if – instead of accepting the fight and shouting 'dictatorship of the proletariat against dictatorship of the bourgeoisie' – the proletariat shouts: 'constitutional democracy' and 'freedom, not totalitarianism', all will be lost, as in June 1848 or

March 1871."

On this counter-revolutionary path, democracy's main claim (universal suffrage) had completed its mission: "The majority of the people had received primary education, which is all universal suffrage is useful for in times of revolution. It had to be eliminated, either by a proletarian revolution or by the forces of reaction. [...] Engels' preface in no way differs from the line established by Marx. His reconstruction, referring to Germany's power relations in 1895, does not even contemplate excluding the final, armed clash, and deals only with the politics of bourgeois 'provocation' that Odilon Barrot uses so successfully. He states: 'we shan't be such fools as to attack when it's convenient for you, the German empire, minister Bismarck, the German bourgeoisie'. The spirit of the fight is that, when the moment comes, and it does not come 'at will' but can be recognized historically, *we must lead the provocations.*"

Together with these considerations, Engels leaves us a precious heritage in the letters he writes to Kautsky, director of *Vorwärts*, on 1 April 1895: "To my great surprise I find an extract from my *Introduction* today in *Vorwärts*, published without my knowledge and so twisted that I seem like a pacific supporter of legality at all costs"; and to Lafargue on 3 April 1895: "Bernstein has played a dirty trick on me. From my *Introduction* to Marx's articles on France between 1848-'50 he has extrapolated all he could use in defence of *tactics at all costs, peaceful and contrary to violence*, which is convenient for him to preach, especially now that they're preparing special laws in Berlin".

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[1] "La légalité nous tue", *Battaglia comunista*, n.12/1952.

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In our 1952 article, we therefore commented as follows: "What Engels taught us about the generous revolutionary impatience of 1848 was that it was not sufficient for France to be centrally controlled by Paris and Paris by its workers. It was even less possible to kid oneself that this was sufficient in Germany at the time. But when the election statistics confirmed what the figures tell us about industrial development after 1848, and even more so after the Prussians had drained France's rich finances in 1871, the moment approached when the *revolutionary minority will no longer represent itself alone, but an effective working-class majority*. In saying this, Engels does not see the class movement as depending on 'class consciousness' or even less so on 'democratic consultation' of the majority but merely on the physical existence of a numerous proletarian class and highly developed industrialism. Moreover, he places international factors in the limelight and recalls Marx's conclusion following the overthrow of 1848; *from the present moment onwards any revolutionary struggle by the French proletariat will coincide with a world war*. He is already using the words 'world war' and thus foreseeing the Commune of twenty years later, sparked off by the European war of 1871. In 1895 Engels realizes that this is the period in between the European war and what he had prophesied to Bismarck on several occasions: the great war against the united Slav and Latin races."

For the moment, therefore, says Engels, although our comrades do not give up the right to revolution, which is, indeed, the only historical right on which all modern States rest, we German socialists are not experiencing the dawn of an armed


struggle: *"If we do not commit the great folly of allowing ourselves to be dragged into fighting on the streets for the pleasure of the parties of law and order, then [...] their last resort will be to break this legality, which is fatal to them, with their own hands."* Apart from Germany's peculiar situation in 1895, Engels knew that one day bourgeois legality *would blow up*; he confirmed that universal suffrage leads to its end under one of two dictatorships: *that of the proletariat or the even more fatal one of the bourgeoisie*.

Today (1952, when our article was written – or 2015?), "the bourgeois States reinforce themselves with powerful police forces, trained and equipped, financed by the dollar when necessary, or readily topped up by the troops at ports and airports. On their national holidays, when the workers are stupidly led to celebrate a recent liberation, formations whose efficiency causes any memory of the SS, not to speak of the idiotic black shirts, to pale can be seen parading in clear view. [...] Meanwhile, the representatives of the proletariat officially positioned in trade unions or parties, merely devote all their time to encouraging the right of these States to exist, defend themselves and protect their constitution. This constitution is democratic and from this we can immediately deduce that the State has the right to suppress 'any attempt at dictatorship'. This is how the proletariat is taught that it finds protection in a system that will continue indefinitely within the legal limits of the institutions, and that it is thus as well for the workers' delegates to support laws and measures for repressing any movement that threatens to attack legal power by using force." They tell us that "democracy offers possibilities that should be exploited 'to the end'. We must therefore avoid the bourgeois

State suppressing it, reducing the guarantees, the possibilities of having unions, newspapers, press, meetings etc. (and of course above all elections!). So we have to avoid power being taken over by those groups who would do away with these guarantees (the right wings, fascists etc.) and instead let the State repress these groups legally, by disbanding their parties, immediately banning their newspapers, meetings, election candidatures or similar manifestations. The State, the government, the majority party currently in power all reply: wonderful! And so let us pass a law stating that freedom of opinion, association or agitation is limited by this norm: it is not permissible to state that power can be gained any other way than legally. [...] But of course the law will 'be the same for everyone', i.e. whoever theorizes an act of force, from the right or from the left wing, loses any right to take part in political work and is punished by repressive measures."

At this point the mass of legalitarians, pacifists, nationalists, democrats of all types emerges, proclaiming: "Nothing wrong with this! The special repressive law does not regard us. We shall remove the armed seizing of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat from our programmes, certain that for at least 30-40 years the proletariat has no further demands to make, other than those that are fully compatible with the present Constitutions."

What throws the working class off track is when it is made to believe that democracy serves to keep the bourgeois State in a condition of weakness until the day when the class will suddenly take to the streets, the day on which the "state of war against the bourgeoisie" will be declared. In fact, when right-wing forces, fascists, start to be successful in a democratic context, the battle

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cry will be that of the "defence of democracy", not of overthrowing the bourgeoisie. Again, taken from our article: "fascism returns, we have to defend ourselves, we must rebuild the action groups, relaunch the united partisan forces and the anti-fascist front!" On the current political panorama, the right-wing and "left"-wing parties, extra-parliamentary and parliamentary, have become the spiritual guides and involuntary heads of police of de-

mocracy, the defenders and monitors of law and order. They are the Capitoline geese that start squawking every couple of days or so to announce danger on the horizon.

"But the most serious aspect of this lurid comedy," we insisted in our conclusion, "is the admission by the immense majority of workers (some progress in class consciousness!) of the existence of two or more groups in the ruling class's parties which by nature, out of principle or embracing

some philosophy or other, confess either that they always use persuasion or that they use force. Thus all the teaching remaining from Marx's reading of history is destroyed, i.e. that when the moment of suffrage is put aside, and class force is taken up, all bourgeois and middle-class groups (which were the first to join the ranks of fascism even in 1922) take the side of repression both in practice and in principle."

**Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm more swiftly from success to success, their dramatic effects outdo each other, men and things seem set in sparkling diamonds, ecstasy is the order of the day – but they are short-lived, soon they have reached their zenith, and a long Katzenjammer [hangover] takes hold of society before it learns to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period soberly. On the other hand, proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, constantly criticize themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished, in order to begin anew; they deride with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their opponents only so the latter may draw new strength from the earth and rise before them again more gigantic than ever, recoil constantly from the indefinite colossalness of their own goals – until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out: Hic Rhodus, hic salta!**

(from Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852)

## There is No Other Way

Faced with the bloody attacks in Brussels and the ruinous, more or less local wars that have been dragging on for years now with hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of refugees (Libya, Syria, Iraq...); faced with the unspeakable suffering of enormous masses of proletarians or those undergoing proletarianization, driven here and there like beasts to the slaughter, to the highest bidder, very little can be added to what we have already argued, said, written and published over the decades.

All we can do is repeat that, *either* a revolutionary force will make its return onto the international scene, backed by solid theory and organization, the heritage of a long tradition of open struggle against reformism, opportunism and revisionism of every sort, rooted in the proletarian class and thus capable of leading it out of *all the various, disastrous blind allies of all varieties of nationalism*, lay or religious, right- or left-wing – in a word, either we work at *reinforcing the international communist party* as we always have done, a minority sailing against the wind - *or else* the decay in this society based on profit and capitalism, everlasting competition, increasingly profound and more frequent economic crises, the “war of all against all”, will merely bring us even bloodier conflicts, waged with the most sophisticated and merciless weapons of mass destruction, right up to the terrible, supreme obscenity of a third world war between imperialist marauders. We can’t delude ourselves for much longer: *there is no other way*. And nothing more to add.

24 March 2016

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