

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE



CAPITALISM: HAS THE END BEGUN?

Occupy: Results and Prospects

Democracy: Theirs and Ours

England Burning! Comments and Debate

Virtual Trillions: When Fantasy-Capital Hits Reality

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The Historical Perspective: A Face Unveiled - The deepening of capitalism's crisis and the growing resistance it provokes, are making the historical stakes increasingly visible. Page 1

Workers of all Countries, Become Outraged! - The indignados, the rioters in England, the Occupy movement: how to understand these different expressions of class struggle and their relations with struggles in the workplaces? What role do young people play in social revolt today? Which new realities are those who fought in the 'Arab Spring' confronting today? Do these movements as a whole show a maturation of class consciousness, a loss of illusions together with the discovery of new social practices? These are some of the questions discussed in this article. Page 5

IP Leaflet -They Don't Get It.... - IP participates in the Occupy movement. We reprint one of the leaflets we distributed at some of the demonstrations. It aims to show that the implicit aims of the movement involve the end of capitalism and warns against co-optation. Page 8

Correspondence - Does Capital Own Democracy? - Our claim in this leaflet that communist revolution creates "real democracy instead of the sham that exists today" was criticized by some for whom 'real democracy' already exists and is part and parcel of capitalism. We replied that it's a mistake to concede democracy to capital. In opposition to its phoney democracy, we advocate the real democracy of the collective worker, manifested in its struggle. Page 10

Occupy: Results and Prospects - This text analyzes the Occupy movement in the context of capitalism's crisis and the fragmentation of the working class. Characteristics such as the speed of electronic communication, the daily general assemblies and the 'human mic' are looked at for the invention, the social imagination they reveal. The text places the Occupy movement within the trajectory towards a generalized insurrectional movement. Page 14

Two Battles at Longview And the Occupy Movement - Over the past months the Occupy Movement has sought to intervene at the point of production in support of workers struggles at the ports on the American West Coast, focused on the struggle at the new facility at Longview, which culminated in February with the signing of a labor contract which many in the Occupy Movement heralded as a "victory." This article focuses on the existence of two battles at Longview: one a jurisdictional battle by the union to continue to "represent" the workers, a battle that was, indeed won. The other a battle by workers against the juggernaut of austerity imposed by capital, in which the unions themselves play a central role as managers of the labor force in the interests of capital. Page 21

England Burning! August 2011 – Some Comments - Last summer's riots in the UK were the focus of much discussion, both varied and passionate: Did they represent a form of class struggle or just blind rage and intra-class violence? IP published several articles on its blog on the subject. In these two articles, two IP comrades return to consider the nature of the riots. They agree on a lot but come to some different conclusions. Page 23

Farewell to Will Barnes – An appreciation of a comrade whose passing is a loss to the pro-revolutionary milieu. Page 29

Virtual Trillions – From Fiction to Fantasy - This article aims to open up discussion on the developments within capitalism over the past 50 years concerning offshore financial structures and their role in channelling the economically toxic effects of the recent unbridled development of credit derivatives. It points to the significance for capitalism of the creation of global structures that are outside the control of any state. It also argues that capital creation has gone onto realms of fantasy and that this has strong effects on the evolution of the crisis and on the exploitation of the proletariat. Page 30

Editorial -

The Historical Perspective: A Face Unveiled



The year of 2011 ended with, as a backdrop, a brutal accentuation of the structural crisis of the capitalist mode of production, its “domino” effect provoked by globalization and the interdependence of the different national economies, as well as the multiple reactions of protest some of which are new, like those of the “Arab Spring,” “Los Indignados,” and the Occupy Movements.

There is no automatic connection between the effects of the economic crisis and the development of struggles and of class consciousness. Nevertheless, the situation of the global economy raises questions in a much more fundamental way about the general historical stakes: the future of capitalism, the perspectives for the survival of the

planet and of humanity, the global economic and political perspectives in this world dominated more and more overtly by violence of all kinds.

“The same process that the bourgeoisie experiences as a permanent crisis and gradual dissolution appears to the proletariat, likewise in crisis form, as the gathering of strength and the springboard to victory. Ideologically this means that the same growth of insight into the nature of society, which reflects the protracted death struggle of the bourgeoisie, entails the steady growth in the strength of the proletariat.” (Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 68)

This quotation from Lukács indeed summarizes the

current situation and the historical stakes. On the one hand, a ruling class trapped by the need to manage increasingly profound contradictions within its economic system, confronted with the loss of power of its ideologies (the loss of any meaning to left ideologies), compelled to more and more show the true face of capitalism: relentless in its violence, its destructiveness and its absence of perspectives. On the other hand, a proletariat which, in spite of its mistakes, its illusions, its defeats, its corporatism, etc., reacts by breaking with established and traditional forms across the whole planet, reactions which more and more clearly begin to put in question the global functioning of society.

The ruling class globally is confronted by an unprecedented debt crisis, and by the tensions that have arisen with respect to the strategies with which to confront it with the least risk. It is the countries of the Euro-zone that find themselves under the greatest pressure now: international financial organs are demanding drastic austerity measures on the part of European states to limit the cycle of growing debt. It is the very existence of the Euro-zone that is now in question! But governments are now confronted by the devastating effects of austerity – the impact on consumption and therefore on the prospects for any economic recovery, as well as by the social consequences of a direct and brutal attack on living standards. Even so, right-wing factions, technocrats, are now in the governments in Italy and in Greece, and in Spain the left has been defeated at the polls, and in all three extremely harsh austerity measures are being implemented.

What constitutes the backdrop to the current social situation, then, is a growing tension and an unveiling of the historical stakes of “fundamental change or barbarism,” as well as a growing link between different movements of revolt. There is, then, a connection between the deepening of the economic contradictions and class reactions, between the movements in the Maghreb and that of the “Indignados,” and the Occupy Movements, between the austerity measures of the governments and the questioning especially within the ranks of young people.... Even if these movements are not organized in a coordinated way, they interact - by their content, and by the very oppositional dynamic that they create - with one another. They refer to each other. And the potential that this creates,

associated with the questioning of society, is fundamental for the understanding of the system as a totality.



Occupy protester with a warning for capital

Recently, numerous strikes and protests have unfolded in the European countries in reaction to the drastic austerity plans that the states are now constrained to adopt to try to respond to the debt crisis and to the risk of sovereign debt defaults. Here too, what is new, is the perspective: whereas it was not so long ago that one still spoke about the “welfare state” and that social conflicts opposed the workers to bosses, the conflicts that are unfolding now oppose workers to their state, and even to an overall European policy. And even if these movements still contain the illusion that with “another administration,” or perhaps an exit from the euro zone, things would be better, they are all inscribed in a much more generalized, and therefore potentially more unifying, dynamic. There is also a potential loss of illusions in the capitalist system itself: the “pearls” of the global economy, the richest countries in the world, are running out of “gas” and are confronted with the same kind of problems as governments in the “emerging” economies. The economies of the first world are basket cases, the European states can no longer re-finance their debts and are on the verge of bankruptcy: it’s quite an image with which capitalism now provides us!

It is within this framework of austerity plans that the youth “revolt” exploded on the scene. Young proletarians, young students, young Greeks, French or English, those once scorned for their purported individual selfishness and living in the day, are today fighting with the weapons of their parents, in a

collective way, engaging in self-organization; fighting against measures which attack them in their daily life, but also attack, in a general way, their very future in this society. It is clear that in a very important way this is integrally linked to the global questioning of the perspectives that the current system offers and thus represents a potential for the development of political consciousness. Moreover, we have long insisted on the notion of the experience of struggle and the traces that these latter have left. We have often emphasized the historical break that exists between the traditions of struggle of “the old working class” and that of the recomposed proletariat of today. The movements of revolt of the generation of the future thus represents a possible link between forms of “traditional” organization (General Assemblies, the rediscovery of older political writings) and the “new forms of struggle” with their use of modern technologies and the new forms of organization of work to which they are linked.



The task ahead

We will not here focus on all the strikes and the demonstrations that are shaking the planet. IP has discussed them at length in each of its last issues.

But there are two movements that are important for us to focus on: the “Arab Spring” and movement of “Los Indignados:” the latter arising, in a certain manner, from the former. (The Occupy Movements in the US are the subject of a separate article in this issue.)

The “Arab Spring” constituted a formidable experience of collective struggle; it made it possible for its participants to feel the power of mass action in

such a confrontation. These movements also mixed proletarian opposition (against the high cost of living and unemployment, etc.) with reformist demands (democracy, elections, etc.). But the dynamic concretized in these movements, born in Tunisia, spread like a wild fire through the Maghreb countries, into Yemen, then into Syria, Libya and as far as China. They contain, in spite of their inter-class character and their reformist illusions, a potential for a more fundamental questioning of the core structures of society. And this questioning is certainly not over, since after the euphoria of “victory” comes the bitterness of disillusion: the revenge exacted in the sentences meted out to corrupt leaders, the hopes in “democratic” governments “acting for the people,” begin to give way to a progressive clarification of the real stakes, the class stakes. The Egyptian army is no longer the ally of the people, but indeed the coercive force guaranteeing the security of the ruling class and the continuation of the old way of social functioning; the economic situation is just as hard and the daily life of the majority of the population has not changed. Our hope is that this progressive loss of illusions will leave its trace on the collective movements and that they will then be able to re-ignite in a dynamic of a more fundamental break. We spoke about young people, of the bridge they represent between traditional forms of organization of struggles and the new practices resulting from the use of modern technologies. The movements which started in Tunisia and which then spread were marked by this same characteristic and one can bet that the extremely rapid circulation of information and the call to mobilize which mobile phones and the Internet permit will be a given in future movements.

Now to the movement born of “Los Indignados.” The dynamic was born in Spain. “Citizens” protested against the degradation of living conditions and, in particular, against the evictions of working class tenants from their housing. Little by little, this spontaneous opposition was transformed into an organized solidarity and a questioning of the ruling class as a whole. General Assemblies were created in many Spanish cities. Places where one could speak freely, where collective expression of the rejection of the functioning of economic and political life was possible, where the will to re-appropriate the very field of political organization appeared, and all sprang into life.

What is remarkable is the development of this current “of indignation”. From Spain, it passed to France, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Greece then, crossed the Atlantic to establish itself in New York, Oakland, Seattle, Toronto, and throughout North America. Clearly, this current of opposition to the economic system is the very image of the economic system itself: it’s global. It constitutes a real potential for the development of the political consciousness and understanding of the capitalist mode of production as a totality, connecting, on a planetary level, economic, political, social, and environmental components

The ruling class clearly grasped the danger of this current and it deployed the whole of its coercive and ideological arsenal to counter it. On the one hand, the police violently dislodged “Los Indignados”, as soon as the situation allowed. In addition, the trade unions proposed their good and loyal services to try to occupy and isolate a space of authentic popular

opposition.

Nevertheless, the three principal elements which can be extrapolated from the current social situation are: the continuation of oppositional currents as a break with normal functioning on an international scale; the deepening of the questioning about the perspectives for capitalism, and its expression in social and political movements; the support of specific movements by others with the dynamic of connection which it implies.

These three elements indicate, in spite of contradictory tendencies (reformist illusions, the recrudescence of identity politics or religious ideologies), the development of a class consciousness on an international scale.

Internationalist Perspective

Internationalist Perspective on-line

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- To visit our web site, go to <http://internationalist-perspective.org>
- To visit our blog go to <http://internationalist-perspective.org/blog>

We do not see either of these sites as solely “our” property, but instead as places where discussions and exchanges of ideas can be held. We encourage readers to read, write and get involved.

Workers of all Countries, Become Outraged!

The present period is characterized by an intensification of the confrontation between the economic and political functioning imposed by the capitalist mode of production and the protests and opposition to that functioning.

Since 2008, the economic crisis has deepened very profoundly sharply, revealing more and more the destructive mechanisms and global perspectives of world capitalism. The contradictions within the system continue to grow and now a number of states are near financial collapse. This situation is unprecedented. This is the end of any illusions about a “welfare state;” it’s the reign of brutal attack and generalized austerity plans.

For Internationalist Perspective, there is no automatic link between the effects of the economic crisis and development of struggle, or between the development of struggle and the development of class consciousness. Nevertheless, the accentuation of the global crisis has indeed generated increased protest movements. This confirms what we have emphasized in several recent issues of *IP*: that this situation of increasing tension has led to a more fundamental questioning about the general, historical, stakes: the future of capitalism, the prospects for the survival of the planet and of humanity, the global economic and political perspectives in a world dominated more and more openly by violence of all kinds.

The opposition to the manifestations of the crisis, the questioning about the functioning of the system has been expressed through strikes and demonstrations, but also in new forms and here we can refer to the movements that have animated the “Arab Spring”, the movement of the “indignados” (the outraged) across Europe, and now to the “Occupy Movement.”

Given this diversity of expressions, we have to ask ourselves two questions: that of the class nature of these reactions: are they proletarian reactions, and the potential contained in these various expressions of discontent. And the two questions are not

necessarily linked, reflecting the complexity of the current situation. Thus, the transformations that we must consider in assessing the oppositional movements include the re-composition of the proletariat and the existence of definitively excluded masses, the “dis-employed,” from the system. We have already noted that the proletariat of today has seen its composition transformed by the evolution of the capitalist mode of production. On the one hand, elements formerly belonging to what used to be considered the “middle classes” have been proletarianized, and on the other hand, those excluded from the labor force are no longer simply a reserve army of the unemployed who will be reintegrated into the labor process, but now exist as a marginalized mass, often living in a kind of parallel economy. Given this diversity and complexity of the composition of the proletariat and, therefore, of expressions of opposition and protest, we must pose the question of class nature in a different way than in the past. Previously class movements were those of “blue collar” workers and we tended to use specific criteria to define the class nature of a movement: was the movement characterized by self-organization, outside of the unions, etc. Today, the multiplicity of forms of work organization, the heterogeneous composition of the proletariat, pose the question of class nature more in terms of the dynamic of oppositional movements.

These questions about the re-composition of the proletariat, the “new forms of struggle”, the dynamic as a criterion for understanding the class nature of a struggle, should all find a prominent place in discussions within the pro-revolutionary milieu because they seem to me to be fundamental ones. These questions regularly arise: through the youth movements in the European suburbs, food riots in Africa, looting in the UK this past summer. There are real issues here that the pro-revolutionary milieu needs to understand. Because with the issue of how to understand a movement comes the question: does one support it or critique it?

The first expression of resistance to the effects of the

crisis consists of the development of waves of proletarian strikes and demonstrations at the point of production. These are movements affecting all continents, reactions against low wages, job losses, a rising cost of living, lack of shelter, etc., in short, movements as a direct reaction to capitalist exploitation. As an example, we should note the wave of strike movements taking place in China. On the one hand, these movements are almost constant, often violent, massive in scale, and have put in question crucial aspects of capitalist exploitation. Thus, the Chinese ruling class has been forced to raise overall wages and to minimally reduce some of the enormous pressures hitherto exerted on workers. This is extremely important not only for the workers themselves, but for the capitalists too. We know that the frantic growth of the Chinese economy has depended mainly on low wages and extremely long hours of work. The incessant movements of class revolt and the reductions in the direct pressure exerted on the proletariat thus have a negative impact on corporate profits in China, and, therefore, on this country that has been such an engine for the global economy. Another aspect to point to is the growth in the confidence in its collective strength that even these small gains confer on the Chinese proletariat.



Revolt in Wukan, China December 2011

On the other hand, numerous strikes and protests have unfolded in European countries in reaction to the drastic austerity plans that governments have had

to take to try to stem the debt crisis and the risk of sovereign debt bankruptcies. Here, what is new is the perspective: while not that long ago, people still talked about the “welfare state” and that social conflict pitted the workers against “bosses,” the conflicts taking place today now oppose workers to their state or even to an overall European policy crafted at the state level. And even if these movements are bearers of the illusion that another kind of management of the economy or an exit from the Euro- zone would be better, they still are inscribed in a much more widespread dynamic and therefore one that is potentially more unifying. There is also a potential loss of illusions related to the capitalist system itself: the “pearls” of the global economy, the jewels of the “rich” economic world are now threatened with collapse and face the same troubles as those states in the “emerging” countries.

It is within this context of austerity plans that we have seen appear on the stage of protest, “youth.” Young proletarians, young students, young Greeks, French or English, those that we said were raised on individual selfishness and immediacy are now struggling with the arms of their parents, as a group, sometimes with a concern for self-organization, against specific actions that attack their individual lives, but also, in general, their collective future in this society. Clearly this is part of a very significant overall questioning about the perspectives offered by the current system, and therefore represents a potential for the development of political consciousness. In addition, we need to also emphasize that importance of the experience of struggle experience and the traces left by these experiences. We have often emphasized the historical break between the tradition of struggle of the “old working class” and the recomposed proletariat of today. The movements of revolt of the generation of the future therefore represents a possible link between “classic” organizational forms (general assemblies, the rediscovery of classic political writings) and “new forms of struggle,” with the use of modern technologies and new forms of work organization.

Riots and looting are becoming omnipresent. This form of social breakdown deserves for more attention in the pro-revolutionary milieu than it has so far received. On the one hand, it will develop in the future with the increasing impoverishment of the

masses and the existence of permanent exclusion from the system of production. On the other hand, it raises the question of an understanding of its content in each instance (one kind of “looting” is not the same as another!) and its possible links to class movements. Again, it seems that the internal dynamic of the movement is fundamental in assessing it. Thus, movements that attack other parts of the proletariat are not proletarian expressions. The looting that took place in the UK this past summer included some examples of this type of violent action directed within the class. And here I want to cite Merleau-Ponty (*Adventures of the Dialectic*, p. 76, first in a citation from Trotsky’s *Their Morals and Ours*, and then his own conclusion):

“When we say that the end justifies the means, then for us the conclusion follows that the great revolutionary end spurns those base means and ways which set one part of the working class against other parts” and “Every revolutionary act is efficacious not only through what it does but through what it gives people to think about.”

We cannot talk about social unrest without turning briefly to the movements of the “Arab Spring”. Not to go back over its history but to see what has become of them. It is clear that these movements have been a great experience of collective struggle, that they have allowed their participants to experience a real *rapprochement de force* between social actors and the power of mass action in such a confrontation. These movements mixed proletarian opposition (against high prices, unemployment) and reformist demands (democracy, “free” elections).

Today, after the euphoria of “victory” comes the bitterness of disillusion. The Egyptian army is no longer the ally of the people but the coercive force safeguarding the ruling class and the perpetuation of capitalist social functioning; the economic situation is still as hard as ever, and the everyday life of most people has not changed.

We have already pointed out that, as such, these movements could not lead to a conscious opposition to the capitalist mode of production. In the absence of a direct link with working class movements of large size, the mixture of class demands (against high prices, etc.) and reformist ones were likely to

imprison the momentum of these protest movements within the logic of the capitalist system. This is what we are witnessing today: those who have little faith in reforms have sought a way out in emigration; those who still believe in reforms went to the polls en masse. We can hypothesize that the choice of Islamist parties reflected the hopes placed in them because of their image as being less “corrupt” and “close to the people.” We know the work of social support traditionally performed by Islamist organizations; they have created social networks that the state has not.



Protesters in Cairo February 10, 2012

But it would be unwise to draw any definitive conclusions about the movements of the “Arab Spring”. The experience of struggle they have provided, the hopes of change they generated, the complexity of their dynamic created may well provide a link to possible future class movements. We can surely expect that the economic situation will continue its ravages, and that proletarian demands in response to the effects of this crisis and of exploitation will again emerge.

Among the most unexpected movements of protest, we find the movements of the “indignados” and the “Occupy Movement”.

What seems important is to link the “indignados” to the movements of the “Arab Spring”. It should be noted in passing that this movement of “outrage” was born in a country, Spain, which has already had the experience of democracy after that of

dictatorship, being thus a step further on than the countries of the “Arab Spring”. We have seen coexisting in these movements of “the outraged” illusions about “true” democracy, but also a dynamic of rejection of the economic and social relations, a questioning about how to reclaim the terrain of social and political life, how to change things, all within a framework of incessant collective discussion. And I think those are the positive elements that we have to point to. Not with naive enthusiasm, but because these movements are part of the backdrop of a much deeper global trend. Thus, seeing only the illusions in a democracy “more just, more participatory,” seeing only the expression of a frustrated petty bourgeoisie, would miss out on this potential for a fundamental questioning about the perspectives offered by capitalism.

The “Indignados” have taken a dynamic of protests already contained in germ in the “Arab Spring” and have further developed an opposition to the system and opened a society-wide questioning. It is clear that there is no organized generalization of this protest. On the contrary, things have happened in a sort of contagion between countries. The “outraged” movement sailed from Spain and has traveled to several countries in Europe and even to Israel.

Similarly, the “Occupy Movement” carried the same dynamic of protest and self-organization. Setting out from New York, it has spread to dozens of other American cities, and to Canada, Australia, and the UK.

What is significant in all these new expression of revolt is the questioning that they encompass. It is therefore not a question of flattering these movements, or of denying the illusions they contain. But rather that of recognizing that this questioning constitutes a fundamental process of awakening of the proletariat. Look and reflect about the world, the place that our class occupies, at the destructive perspectives that the capitalist system, as a global complex of social relations, offers to humankind. It is this dynamic that we have to understand, to support and to put into historical perspective. And here I want to cite Lukács (*History and Class Consciousness*, p. 68):

“The same process that the bourgeoisie experiences as a permanent crisis and

gradual dissolution appears to the proletariat, likewise in crisis-form, as the gathering of strength and the springboard to victory. Ideologically this means that the same strength of insight into the nature of society, which reflects the protracted death struggle of the bourgeoisie, entails a steady growth in the strength of the proletariat.”

The fact that this questioning is accompanied by illusions, reformist responses, seems to me to reflect the fact that the development of political consciousness is a process: that is to say, a global, heterogeneous, uneven process. We know that clarity can only emerge from this confusion, through the experience of confrontation with the ruling class and the snares of its ideology. And, specifically, the reaction of the ruling class to these various movements is deployed on three levels: leadership, willingness to confront these expressions with police operations, the recuperation of oppositional aspirations like the G 1000 in Belgium, “popular” assemblies convoked by the *government* to meet for one day to “democratically” discuss issues of social concern.

And this work of various factions of the ruling class makes it even more necessary for our own work as pro-revolutionaries to support the dynamic of questioning and disruption that is being expressed today.

This question is fundamental for the development of understanding of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production as a global social relationship, for the understanding of its class antagonisms. The movements of the Arab spring, the “indignados” and the “Occupy Movement” have no perspective in and of themselves. On the contrary, the potential of questioning that they incarnate must be taken up by class movements. Too often, reactions that occur at points of production are limited to specific claims (wages, jobs). Political consciousness is a living phenomenon, heterogeneous, which nourishes itself from multiple experiences. So we can only say that the general questioning of the of capitalism begins in connection with strikes and demonstrations at the point of production, thereby placing demands in a much more comprehensive and general perspective

Rose

They Don't Get It....

When the media talk about Occupy Wall Street, they often do so with disdain: a movement that has no leaders, no set of demands, can't be taken seriously. In a typical article, the *New York Times* quoted an 'expert' saying, "if the movement is to have lasting impact, it will have to develop leaders and clear demands", and another one which stated that the passions have to be "channeled into institutions". (NYT, 10/4) Their message is clear: 'Go back to 'politics as usual', follow leaders, work within institutions, become foot-soldiers for the Democratic party and the unions in elections and other campaigns that change nothing at all, that don't question the power structures that prop up this insane money-system.

They don't get it that the absence of leaders in this movement is not a weakness but a strength, testifying to our collective determination, to our refusal to remain followers. They don't get it that the absence of a narrow set of demands that can be recuperated by this or that institution, results from our understanding that the problem lies much deeper. That there are no quick fixes for a system that produces growing inequality, mass unemployment and misery, wars and ecological disasters.

If these problems could be solved by electing wiser politicians, adopting better laws etc, 'politics as usual' might be the way to go. But politicians everywhere are bound by higher laws, the laws of capital. That's why governments everywhere, regardless of their political color, are imposing austerity, forcing the working population to sacrifice so that more can be paid to the owners of capital. In fact the harshest cuts in wages, pensions and jobs are implemented by a 'socialist' government (in Greece). Politicians on the left may clamor for massive public spending but that would only mean that we would be made poorer in a different way, through inflation.

There are no quick fixes because the system itself is obsolete. Pain and suffering are sometimes unavoidable but capitalism creates ever more pain that is easily avoidable, that only exists because in this society, profit trumps human needs. Almost two billion people on this planet are unemployed because capitalism has no need for them. Hundreds of millions live in slums, because building decent houses for them is not profitable. Many die of hunger each day because it's not profitable to feed them. Everyone knows our planet is in danger and yet capitalism is continuing to destroy it in its desperate hunt for profit. Productivity never was higher, yet poverty increases. The know-how and resources are there for every inhabitant of this planet to live a decent life but that would not be profitable. Abundance has become possible but capitalism can't handle abundance. It needs scarcity. Abundance in capitalism means overproduction, crisis, misery. This is insane. It must stop.

We Have to Think Outside the Box

Capitalism is not "the end of history" but just a transient phase. It has changed the world but now no longer fits into it. We have to accept the fact that capitalism offers no perspective, no future. We have to prepare for a post-capitalist world, in which human relations are no longer commercial transactions, in which goods no longer represent a quantity of money but a concrete means to satisfy real needs: A world in which competing corporations and warring nations are replaced by a human community that uses the resources of all for the benefit of all. We call that communism but it has nothing in common with the state-capitalist regimes that exist or existed in Russia, China and Cuba. Nothing is changed fundamentally if capitalists are replaced with bureaucrats with supposedly better intentions. Those regimes were not only undemocratic; they also perpetuate wage-labor, exploitation and oppression of the vast majority of the population. The change must go deeper and

emancipate the oppressed, make them part of a real democracy instead of the sham that exists today.

In 2011, ten years after the attacks on New York that launched a decade of fear and demoralization, a breach has been opened. From Tunis to Cairo to Athens to Madrid to Santiago to New York, a fever is spreading. After taking it on the chin for so long, the working class, employed or unemployed, is beginning to rise up. We're not gonna take it anymore! Something has changed. True, the Occupy Wall Street movement will not last forever. At some point, it will end, without a clear victory. But it's just the beginning. This dynamic will continue and gather strength. Be a part of it!

There's More...

Occupy Wall Street's message resonates throughout the country, even throughout the world. Everywhere people are raising their voice in protest against a system that produces increasing misery for the many and absurd wealth for the few. No wonder that the unions, progressive Democrats, even the President and governors like Cuomo who is imposing draconian austerity on workers in NY, are attaching their wagons to this train, in order to get control over the locomotive. Don't be fooled: These political tendencies are themselves the representatives of the 1%, of the banks and capitalism, not of the 99%. Let's not allow our movement to be co-opted by the very powers in opposition to which it has arisen. Their "support" is a Trojan horse within our movement. Oakland Mayor Jean Quan marched in support of "Occupy Oakland" and then ordered the cops to violently assault the encampment. In scores of other cities, progressive mayors have organized near military operations to evict the protesters. They are, just as much as their conservative or 'independent' colleagues, determined to limit the threat to capitalist normality that "Occupy Wall Street" represents, and to use the law and force against it.

They cynically claim that they want 'economic justice', too; that they seek a more just distribution of the wealth, through taxation of the rich, etc. (that's their rhetoric, their practice is something else, see Cuomo's move to kill the 'billionaires tax'). But the unjust distribution of wealth is built into the system and can't be taken out of it. It will only increase more as capitalism sinks deeper into its crisis, for which it knows no way out (to throw more money in the economy or to save: they're damned if they do and damned if they don't). 'Redistribution of wealth' is an incomplete demand that can get nowhere if it's not pushed further. As a slogan of May '68 claimed: 'Be realistic, demand the impossible'. The impossible within capitalism, that is. Although there are quite a few capitalists who profit from the crisis, overall, capitalism suffers from it too, so that there is less wealth to redistribute (and the competition between nations for capital assures that the 1% suffers least and the 99% most). No utopian plan for redistribution can address this shrinkage of wealth.

But what is wealth? In this society, goods and services equal money, abstract value that can be endlessly amassed, possessed ad infinitum, or, when no buyer is found, they equal pure waste. So money, abstract value, decides what is produced and what not. That is the box we've got to get out of. We have to abandon the idea that wealth is money, that work is wage-labor and start to see production of goods and services as things we can create for each other. We must realize that when we come together we can use the creative powers that humankind has to make technology, housing, food, transportation, art and so much more for everybody because the need is there, instead of for profit. Let's get rid not just of Wall Street, but the whole 'exploitation for money' system. This perspective may seem utopian to many today, but it will become increasingly realistic as the crisis of capitalism deepens.

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

Correspondence -

Does Capital Own Democracy?



We received various comments on our leaflet on the Occupy movement, most of them supportive. It was good to see that some pro-revolutionaries whom we don't know personally, took the initiative to reproduce and distribute it in cities where we don't have a presence. Some gave us constructive criticism. There was in particular disagreement concerning our use of the term democracy in the leaflet. For instance, comrades of the Peruvian CIP (Collectivo Insurreccion Proletaria) wrote us:

“What we didn't agree with was with the line: ‘The change must go deeper and must emancipate the oppressed, make them part of a real democracy instead of the sham that exists today.’ Democracy has existed since there has been a society of classes. To ask for *real democracy* would be in vain. By democracy we understand that it is: the freedom of the ruling class to fulfill their interests through laws, political structure, etc., to exploit the way they want to. The very nature of democracy implies that there are classes. The objective of proletarian struggle is not democracy (not even the most real democracy); the objective is the

elimination of class society and exploitative relations. We don't understand why you use that term (..).”

In their own leaflet, CIP wrote: “Now there are those who want to sell us the illusion of real democracy; the struggle for democracy is both redundant and absurd. It's redundant because we are already living in it, it is the right of the ruling class to play with us freely, and for us to chose who exploits us more or less, who pollutes there as opposed to here. Real democracy will not end the exploitation that exists globally, on the contrary, it lives within it. Why struggle for something that already exists, for a ‘real’ democracy, for a ‘real’ exploitation? Why struggle for an exploitation more legal than what exists already?”

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(Our translation from Spanish)

To this, we replied:

You see the concept of democracy as exclusively owned by the bourgeoisie and equate it with the state and parliamentarism. Yet the Webster dictionary defines “democracy” simply as “rule of the majority.” So when you write about “real democracy” that “we are already living in it”, you are saying that the majority already rules today. That’s absurd. We, on the other hand, speak of “the sham democracy that exists today” because it is not the rule of the majority but of a tiny minority (albeit bigger than 1%). It’s important to make that critique. Surely, the revolution will fail if it does not lead to a real “rule of the majority” (the collective worker). If we don’t want to call that “real democracy,” what do we call it? We see no reason why the word is more tainted by capitalist “democracy” than the word “communism” is by capitalist “communism.” Many left communists have a dogmatic position on this. The growing understanding that capitalist democracy is a sham, and that a real majority rule is needed, is an important source of the protests today. The right answer to the understandable tendency in the movement to fetishize democratic forms, is not to reject democracy but to contextualize it, to show how forms and content are tied together, how real democracy is impossible in a context of exploitation; how impotent any democratic reform today would be against the demands of capital, the logic of the law of value, a point our leaflet made.

We don’t use the word communism in a leaflet without explaining it, because it is so tainted. We contrast our understanding of it with that of capitalist “communism.” In the same way, we contrast communist democracy with the sham that is capitalist democracy. The leaflet did that, placing “real democracy” in the context of “a world in which competing corporations and warring nations are replaced by a human community that uses the resources of all for the benefit of all,” without exploitation. In an article this point would have to be elaborated more but in a leaflet, you have to keep up the pace and stay within 2 pages.

We think this is an important debate and we would like to pursue it with you. A comrade has summarized our position on this issue in the following statement. Please comment.

Democracy – Theirs and Ours

The criticism of IP’s leaflet because of its use of the term and concept “democracy,” is one that we reject. IP’s leaflet was clear that our concept of democracy has nothing whatsoever to do with bourgeois democracy, with its constitutions, parliaments, elections, all of which are situated within the framework of the capitalist state, and the operation of the law of value; all of which are constitutive elements of capitalist rule and the real subsumption of labor to capital. The democracy to which the leaflet referred in opposition to the “democracy” of capitalist society, was the democracy of the collective worker, the forms of which have existed in embryonic form in all worker’s struggles, in strike committees constituted in wildcat strikes, and in more developed forms when the class struggle has assumed a generalized and political form directed against the capitalist state, in worker’s councils or soviets, the bases first of dual power and then of the overthrow of capitalist rule. What was the Paris Commune, or the Soviets in Russia in 1905 and then again in 1917, but the manifestation of the democracy of the working class and its organs of power?

Are we to substitute for that democracy, the “organic centralism” of Bordiga and much of the tradition of the Italian communist left (and its ideological residue in some of its theoretical heirs)? For all of the theoretical contributions that the Italian left has bequeathed to the pro-revolutionaries of the twenty-first century, that particular legacy, with its rejection of any concept of democracy, and the claim that democracy is for the exclusive use of the bourgeoisie, is one that must be unequivocally rejected. The tradition based on the concept of organic centralism, in opposition to democracy, both within the political organizations of the working class and in its class organs, leads straight to Leninism and then to Stalinism; it cannot constitute a basis for the political intervention of pro-revolutionaries in the emerging class struggles. Rather than recount the sad history of the rejection of democracy for the working class, one written in blood over the course of the twentieth century, from Kronstadt to Barcelona, from Berlin to Paris, a history that is all too well known, let us point to the theoretical bases for a proletarian concept of democracy.

The collective worker is not simply subjugated by capital and the operation of its law of value. The collective worker also possesses the capacity, through its praxis to smash capital and its social relations (the very relations in which it has historically been imprisoned). That capacity, the product of its own history and struggles, includes the power to create a world beyond capitalism, to engender new and revolutionary social relations beyond the value form, to produce themselves and a world beyond class oppression and exploitation.

Democracy is the political form or mode of the collective existence of the proletariat, now in its historical form as a global collective worker. It can both make possible the revolutionary struggle against capital and the political organization of a human community beyond capitalism. It is a theoretical task of pro-revolutionaries to elaborate a theory of democracy adequate to those tasks.

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Internationalist Perspective is published in English and French. Subscriptions are for four issues:

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Occupy: Results and Prospects



The global flare of mass protests, cumulating in the *Occupy Wall Street* movement, has naturally been accompanied by a flurry of activity and analysis on the part of the left. While it is surely impossible to give a precise formula that can explain the “leap” in consciousness that is the essential ground for a spontaneous movement as such, there is little doubt that the protests of the *Arab Spring*, the *Indignados* and the *Occupations* taken together mark an astonishing historical moment. Indeed, in terms of the spontaneous character, the breath of its global extension, and its temporal velocity, it is the first of its kind. It would appear that the neo-liberal purgatory of the last thirty years may be coming to an end as the predominate ideology of capitalism shows signs of collapse. While responding to an

ever deepening and devastating crisis, the protests have revealed the broad contours of emerging police states everywhere as well as their own astonishing potential for resistance that one could only dream of a short time ago. A definitive analysis is of course impossible while the movement is continually unfolding, not only because of the appearance of new forms of struggle but also because of the heterogeneous and decentralized character of the protests. However, it is essential to attempt an analysis, not in order to instrumentalize the movement as is the *modus operandi* of the vanguardist-left, but rather to help give shape to a new social imaginary as participants in the struggles, to push towards a revolutionary reconfiguration of

human relationships and to disrupt the inevitable dialectic of recuperation on the part of capital.

Infinitely Fast and Ponderously Slow

It is the critical convergence of two temporalities that help define what is unique in the current movement: the light speed of micro-communication---first revealing its importance in the *Arab Spring* as a mode of spreading and coordinating the protests---coupled with the slow corporality of communication and decision-making through the *General Assemblies*. These protests have been without a doubt the most well documented protest movement in human history, calling into question Gil Scott Heron's 1971 assertion that the "revolution will not be televised." Nearly every meeting, every march, every expression of protest as well as every police reaction is documented by the plethora of cell phones and micro-video cameras. Not only documented but transmitted, quite often in real time, not by the corporate media conduits but by the anarchic spontaneous networks of the protesters themselves. The ability to transmit first-hand accounts of every detail of the movement at light speed around the globe means that everyone is a potential John Reed or Victor Serge. These first-hand accounts are crucial in circumventing the ideological filters of media capital. This is not merely a modern means of "revolutionary propaganda." The *commodification* and *production of meaning* has been a vital part of the total subsumption of labor to capital for decades now. By stepping outside of this circuit and producing meaning autonomously with the tools that capital itself has provided, the Occupation Movement is prefiguring the seizure of the means of production, which, in the case of digital tools and the internet, capital seems helpless to prevent. The Internet and digital communication generally, are today the essential medium of all financial transactions. Any attempt to restrict it or close it down to prevent the spread of the protests---as was the case in Egypt---also disrupts the unrestricted flow of capital.

But the light-speed of digital communication is curiously juxtaposed against the corporality of decision making that one finds in the Occupations' mode of organization and in particular the *General Assemblies*. The taking of a public square--Tahrir,

Syntagma, Puerta del Sol, Zucotti and hundreds of others--alone is not a challenge to power. The challenge is what is symbolized in the action. The holding of a space, the physical occupation itself, is in fact the opening salvo in the battle for the social imagination not a military standoff. A public space open to all, yet ostensibly outside of the control of financial capital, engenders a dynamic and vital social fluidity. In addition, there is something extraordinary in the holding of a space. While a public space is not a point of production, and an occupation does not stop the flow of capitalist activity, an action of this nature not only demands a coordinated strategy and tactics to hold the space but particular modality of cooperation for living in (occupying) the space together. It is in this sense that the Occupations resemble a modern *Polis* as a self-governing urban locus. To have a voice in the Occupation, one must be physically present, one must *be* an occupier. That is to say, one must first position oneself against the concentration of financial power in solidarity with those standing near. It is in fact among the most exciting features of the Occupations, the appearance of voices that have long been silent, everyday voices that may lack a sophisticated political jargon but nevertheless find ways to express themselves, eloquently at times, with voices that often astonish by what many would describe as an awakening. At its best, we might suggest that the physical occupations momentarily break the domination of the abstract social relationships imposed by capital, replacing it with real, corporal and human relationships that can only emerge autonomously in a moment of conflict. Capitalism itself is largely defined by its control of time; by stepping out of the abstract rhythms of capitalist time, the Occupations seem to instinctively anticipate the pre-articulated feelings for human emancipation.

This movement is auto-formative. The anarchists, the councilists and the autonomists of every sort can only find confirmation for their insight into the depths of creative energy that tends towards and emerges from self-organization. Indeed, the movement has found its voice, not in an abstract political program, but in the very form of self-organization itself. The *people's-mic*, for instance, so well documented by now, may well have originated out of necessity during an early demonstration on the Brooklyn Bridge (the police

ban on the use of megaphones forced a form of choral communication to reach the entire demonstration) but it has come to symbolize the unitary voice of a community in formation. It is curious to see the *people's-mic* used even when it is not necessary to communicate. Obviously, its function serves to create a sense of solidarity and not simply to transmit words. The voice, when used in chorus, appears as a primordial sound of the human unity. Furthermore, this mechanism slows communication, removes it from the frenetic attack of the media-sphere and enables the organism to absorb, ingest, analyze and feel the act of communication as a creative unfolding rather than as a victim of the continual information bombardment that permeates everyday life. The power of moments like this should not be underestimated; it is a mechanism that makes even the smallest voice vital. This has nothing to do with cheers and jeers and endless chanting of political rallies that function only to manipulate crowd psychology. The insistence by the occupiers on the horizontal mode of organization is a critically important element that keeps the *Polis* open and dynamic, making a virtue out of its heterodox nature. It is one of the principle characteristics of the Occupations that they remain radically undetermined as a uniquely generative movement rather than one that seeks to manifest a future that is pre-figured theoretically. This dynamic gives the movement an explosive character that can respond immediately to a continually shifting political-consciousness.

Ideology and Class Composition

Any analysis of the Occupations insofar as they express new modes of opposition to capital must be placed in a more general context of shifting ideologies as well as the physical re-composition of labor since the 1970s. This context is specifically the waning of the *Fordist* concentration of industrial labor and the global hegemony of neo-liberal ideology. Since the 70s a re-composition of labor has occurred: through the decentralization of the industrial factory across vast networks of out-sourced and fractalized production, relying more and more on part-time precarious work; in the formation of the significant presence of cognitive workers who work through digital information flows; in the proletarianization of the consumer as a

functional part of the production process¹. In a word, we have witnessed the proletarianization of planetary life. The most insidious feature of these developments is the infinite race of capitalism towards a form of hyper-production, speeding well beyond any physical capacity to consume such products, while simultaneously expelling labor from the process itself through its irreversible technification. Today there is no rational solution to this crisis within the framework of capital other than capitalist self-destruction. As the crisis deepens, capital will be forced to destroy its productive capacity to the point that it can reestablish the equilibrium necessary for a future round of expansion. Such destruction comes at the price of mass poverty and war. Therefore, to understand the social composition of the Occupations one must consider the way in which the proletariat has everywhere been recomposed through causalization, extended into the technical sector and redefined as productive-consumers. No longer can we speak of the unemployed for instance, as a standing reserve army of labor serving market fluctuations or simply instrumentalized to depress wages. Increasingly the unemployed are the proletarianized mass of humanity who will never be employed.

The ideology that has accompanied this decentralized fractal form of labor is of course neo-liberalism with its mantras of deregulation, of freeing the markets, of turning each worker into an entrepreneur, of dismantling the welfare-regulatory state, the financialization of all aspects of culture and its justification of wealth concentration through the “trickle-down” effect. Ideologically, the occupation movement is a direct response to the failure of neo-liberalism, defining its own counter-solutions by the precise contours of the neo-liberal agenda: reinstating regulations, de-financialization of culture, job security, the expanded role of the state in education, medical care, welfare, work-programs etc.; more generally the redistribution of wealth

¹ The best example of a productive/consumer would be the social networks—Facebook, Youtube etc. When one uses Youtube as a consumer one is simultaneously creating the content for the necessary expansion of production. The social networks would not function if the consumer were not at the same moment a producer. Such functional relationships are extending well beyond the social networks.

through state interventions. This is the principle ideological division that the Occupations have posited, yet it would miss the point entirely if it were not understood that the Occupations have in fact opened an infinitely richer field of discourse not trapped in the neo-liberal/social democratic divide.

It is quite difficult to generalize about the social or ideological composition of the occupations for the simple reason that they are highly localized and heterogeneous. The initial call for the Wall Street Occupation was characterized by a left-populist anger against financial corruption and the concentration of wealth, with the initial participants spanning reformist and radical politics, anti-corporatist and anti-capitalist positions. The social compositions in various locations, New York, Oakland, Portland and Toronto, etc., all have local specificities. One finds a various mix of libertarian-anarchists, New Agers, social democrats, proponents of monetary reform schemes and even Tea Party participation. During Occupy Phoenix for example, a right-wing militia group appeared armed and in full uniform ready to “protect” the rights of the protesters against state repression in defense of the First and Second Amendments.

We can understand this peculiar mix of protesters as an expression of the changing composition of labor, from what were once clear identities of the industrial working class, to the generalized proletarianization of life. While this opens a vast field of resistance, it is perhaps more difficult initially to locate the source of the crisis within the *capitalist mode of production* itself rather than the more visible problem of *wealth distribution* upon which the Occupations are presently focused. The broad and heterogeneous nature of the Occupations is perhaps both the weakness and the strength at this point in time. On the one hand it opens a significant possibility of positing the crisis as generally systemic, yet also opens pathways to potentially dangerous neo-populist solutions to the crisis. We should not forget that the National Socialist in Weimar Germany also demanded an end to “debt-slavery” while asserting the dignity of the worker against the financial capitalists. A 1926 Nazi election poster reads in part:

Our call goes out to you who earn your bread through honest work. If you don't

want your children and your children's children to be damned for all eternity as slaves of world capitalism, if you don't want to be made into the protectors of the stock exchange bandits and other bloodsuckers then join

The strangely contemporary sound of these words should be a warning of just how important it is to expose any and all *statist* solutions to the crisis. In the end this may prove to the question of life and death.



Occupy Oakland Rally

The Dialectics of Recuperation

There is a curious inversion that has appeared by way of the Occupations, an inversion of the anticipated linearity that characterizes most classical workers' struggles. More typically the development of struggle is from the concrete specificity of the workplace to the abstract generality of the social critique, from the factory to the public meeting, from the strike committee to the workers' councils etc. In the case of the Occupations the movement has been reversed, from the general to the specific, from the social critique in the public space to the specific effect of the capitalist's crisis, from Zucotti Park to the occupation of foreclosed homes in Brooklyn, from Occupy Oakland to walking pickets with

striking workers at American Licorice Co. in Union City. It is perhaps this dynamic that is the strongest defense against channeling the movement into reformist, *statist* and populist pathways. It is an organizational dynamic that should be defended at all costs. A dynamic whereby the individual struggles--the strike for instance, the occupation of a foreclosed home—are then brought back to the public occupation to clarify the relational context through the open confrontation of ideas. Preserving the Occupations of the public space as a *forum of resistance* and an experiment in self-organization is the essence of what makes this movement dangerous to capital.

There are three principle modes by which the movement can lose its revolutionary potential, three modes that are always working together in ever changing configurations, sometime as well-planned strategies by the managers and technicians of power and others that emerge through the unconscious internal habits of a lifetime dominated by capital: *police repression, organizational domination and ideological saturation*. The dialectical interplay between these three modes has no other function than to direct the movement into the safe polarity as defined by the neo-liberal/social democratic framework and to ensure safe organizational obstacles against autonomy.

The Internet is now filled with thousands of images of the police brutality that has accompanied the Occupations. The savagery of the response has been instructive, indicating how the repressive arm of capital perceives the Occupations. Moreover it has become clear that in the U.S. the state was well prepared to confront the occupations in a centrally coordinated manner through the Department of Homeland Security. With the use of high-tech surveillance, crowd control, intelligence, tear gas, percussion grenades, electric prods, pepper spray, the police have shown an enthusiastic willingness to use all levels of force and violence both legal and illegal. The ever present threat of police violence functions not only to intimidate the protesters directly but moreover to create a perception of an inescapable aura of violence as a “mood” of intimidation to foster a sense of futility for any real challenge to state power. Police violence serves, in any case, to channel the movement towards traditional and containable pathways as defined by

the established system of choreographed oppositions.

But police violence alone could not possibly halt a movement once it has taken hold of the social imagination--as demonstrators in Egypt have recently shown--more powerful tools are called into play, tools that work precisely on the consciousness and habits of the protesters and on the proletarianized masses more generally, that is in the tools that are formed by the organizational and ideological structures of capital itself. The horizontal organizational form of the *General Assemblies*--jealously defended by many of the Occupations--is an autonomous structure that has an essentially generative quality, one that is a perfect form for the *Assembly* as a *Polis*: to develop ideas, to analyze, assess, propose and indeed to imagine ever new pathways for tomorrow. But the horizontal form, cumbersome and slow as it is, will be forced to confront organizational structures that are highly bureaucratized and rigidly hierarchical (vertical), whether trade unions or political parties. We are seeing precisely this development between the Occupy Oakland and the ILWU in Longview. The pressure to submit to the hierarchical form will not come only from the clash of organizations but will more likely come from any list of fixed demands made by the *General Assemblies*. Such demands, if focused on the legal structures of consumer protection and wealth distribution—election reform, Glass-Steagall, etc. --- would invariably shift the organizational focus onto a purely reformist terrain that would move towards the instrumentalization of the movement. The Occupations would cease being autonomous, generative and open to become narrow conduits positing goals that would require strategies of organizational command.

Resisting police violence and organizational subordination is a dynamic that always operates within an ideological field that is continually shifting, but in the end, it is the ideology that determines the outcome. It is crucial to identify the principle ideological formations that specifically limit the autonomy of the movement and channel it into pathways that are easily isolated or into any number of reformist or more generally *statist* solutions to the crisis. Broadly speaking the ideological field is defined by the neo-liberal and social democratic polarity, between the unregulated

free-market and the state interventionist regulated markets. One defines the other. How these forms function in practice is quite different from their ideological function. One posits strong state intervention while the other weak intervention. In practice however, both require an ever-stronger state to maintain the rule of capital, especially in times of deepening crisis. The deregulatory policies of the neo-liberals do not mean a world with less rules but rather the unmediated and absolute rule of money. While the social democratic solutions seek the preservation of capital in the mediation of social life directly through state forms, both ideologies posit the state as a neutral locus of power, exogenous to the economy.

However, the modern state, in all its forms—neo-liberal, social democratic, or the state “socialists” of a bygone era—is a structure that grows directly out of capitalist social relations. Foundationally, the modern state functions: to guarantee the sanctity of the contract between autonomous subjects, to mobilize or to subjugate the masses to support existing property relations (whether private or socialized), to guarantee the credit-worthiness of the currency and to monopolize violence as an extra-economic mode of expansion and protection against external and internal threats, including camping in a public park! To put it another way, the existence of the state *is* the rule of capital. Its mission is to rationalize and protect the unimpeded extraction of value from living -labor and all this entails. The essence of every reformist scheme is the belief that the state can impose its will over and above the economy to regulate its way out of the crisis. It is one of the vital functions of the pro-revolutionary left to expose the “genetic” structure of capitalism in order to demonstrate the inevitable appearance of ever more devastating crises. The state, in its very form, is the locomotive of this development and its self-destruction. The powerful reformist tendencies that seek to direct the Occupations towards “achievable goals” through legal reforms, serve to elevate the aura of the state with the de-facto aim of rationalizing exploitation.

But the *statist* ideologies, including numerous minor varieties of populist and state “socialist,” are not the only presence in the Occupations, most especially there is a significant presence of anarchist, at least within the OWS in New York and Occupy Oakland.

The anarchists have played a significant role in protecting the open horizontal form of organization has created a forum for the self-clarification of the movement and a framework for the material manifestation of such clarification. However, a significant number of the participants, perhaps most, are not protesting as the outcome of a crystallized oppositional ideology. Most, it seems, participate because of a sense of anger, rage, disgust, or a more generalized feeling that enough is enough; it is time to collectively stop the “dictatorship of money.” The ideologies of these protesters more typically take the form of *habits of thought* that are tied to the material-organization of social life by capital. The willingness to place one's body before a line of faceless riot police is an indication of the extent that these *habits of thought* are no longer adequate to explain the lived reality of daily life. It is in the direct experience of participating in collective opposition that one discovers alternative visions and possibilities that lay beyond these habits and outside of *statist* solutions to the crisis.

What is to be Done?

The Occupations have posited once again the ever-present paradox for pro-revolutionaries. How do we participate in a movement that has not yet posited revolution as its self-conscious goal? In what way do we affirm the daily struggles and singular fights while asserting that only a revolutionary transformation of all human relationships can reverse the planetary self-destruction that capitalism proposes? Let us be clear. We do not believe that there exists a way out of the crisis within the framework of the capitalist domination of society. The universe proposed by capital is a total universe with the power to absorb, ingest and metamorphose everything that is fed into it. It reduces everything to a single negotiable currency. All existence is conceived as a set of exchanges making no distinction amidst the wealth of difference. Every existence is commensurable with every other in the capitalist field of vision. That which cannot be reduced as such is at best rendered impotent and irrelevant, at worst violently repressed. It is a world where everyman has his price and time is money. Within this universe there is no room for life.

The Occupations, in their own unique ways, with a thousand different voices, have stood up and

demanded life. Through their voices and by their actions, they are positing another world from between the cracks that have appeared in the unfolding of the current crisis. It is a human world that steps out of the cash nexus, where if one “assumes Man to be Man and relationships to the world to be human ones: then you can exchange love only for love, trust only for trust, etc. ... Everyone of your relationships to Man and to nature must be a specific expression corresponding to the object of your will of your real individual life.” (Marx 1844) This is the rejection of the calculating abstractions that reduce each individual to a mass of raw material for economic expansion. It is also a rejection the subordination of each singular being to the abstract theoretical architecture and algorithms of an administered life. There is an instinctive understanding that is manifest in the Occupations, an understanding that the integrity of the individual can only really be protected collectively in the struggle against all that debases him.

Pro-revolutionaries who envision a world of communist human relations should understand the Occupations as a critical moment of self-realization. It should be among the first tasks to defend the autonomous generative character of the *General Assemblies* as an essential crucible to explore and develop new visions of human relationships, as a *forum of resistance*. It should be the relentless task of communists to critique the evolution of

capitalism, demonstrating its inescapable trajectory towards crisis, a trajectory that is coded into the very structure of capital. It should make every effort to encourage all tendencies to link the general Occupations to specific struggles at the points of production and distribution in order to challenge capital at its functional core. Pro-revolutionaries must make clear the impossibility of all *statist* or reformist solutions to the crisis whose demands will succeed only in strengthening the rule of capital by reinforcing the illusion of the neutral state. But, equally, pro-revolutionaries must support all those immediate demands that emerge in the struggles that do not depend on the better regulation of capital, that do not ask state intervention, but are demanding, in so many ways, that capital relinquish its power to those who are demanding life. Capitalism yields nothing without a fight!

A movement of this nature must grow and develop or fade. It cannot remain stationary. At some level we can say that the provisional victory of the Occupations, against all odds, is the battle for the social imagination. The political discourse is shifting, and if the Occupations were to finish tomorrow the reverberations of what has been accomplished, like thunder, will not soon be forgotten.

B. York



Two Battles at Longview And the Occupy Movement



If the Occupy Movement, with all its energy and its avowed opposition to the powers that be, is to avoid recuperation by the very forces that it arose to combat -- what it designates as the power of the 1% -- and cooptation by those very powers, it needs to directly confront the power of *capitalism*, and to forge real political links with the collective worker and its struggles against the juggernaut of austerity. On the West Coast, in the ports, faced with the assault against the working class represented by the new Export Grain Terminal (EGT) (dominated by Bunge, one of the world's biggest agribusinesses) at its new facility at Longview, from which grain would flow from the US to Asia, the Occupy Movement from LA to Oakland, from Portland to Seattle, mobilized over the past several months in support of the workers. Bunge's avowed plan was to replace the dockworkers *union*, the ILWU with a "company union" that it could easily control, as part of its plan to "rationalize" work at the new port as the lynchpin of its central position in the world-wide grain trade. It was in support of the dockers, and the

rest of the working class engaged in the ports and in the grain trade, casualized workers in ancillary trades, port truckers, the merchant marine, etc., that the Occupy movement sought to organize flying pickets and mass demonstrations that shut down the port of Oakland on November 2, and ports along the West Coast on Dec. 12, to culminate in the shutdown of the Longview facility itself as events moved towards its opening, and the first ship arrived in February.

Yet as that first ship approached Longview EGT and the ILWU signed a five-year agreement recognizing the right of the ILWU to represent the dockers, an agreement that in the words of EGT "... provides us the dedicated workforce and the flexibility to run this 21st century facility efficiently and safely." The President of the ILWU hailed the settlement as one in a long line of agreements that "... have made many companies profitable while also providing family wage jobs for communities like Longview." A "dedicated workforce" guarantees labor peace for

five years; “flexibility” portends a continuation in the decades long reduction in the labor force. As to the other workers in the vast network constituted by the movement of grain across a continent and then the Pacific Ocean, the contract provides nothing: casualized workers, the port truckers, no less vital than the dockers themselves, were left to the mercy of the bosses, of capital. Notwithstanding those grim facts, many in the Occupy Movement echoed the euphoria of EGT and the union: Organizers from the Occupy Movement claimed the agreement “as a victory for the workers, for social movements and for the 99%.”

A victory it surely was, but a victory for whom? Certainly not for the truckers, mostly immigrants from East Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe, who walked off the job in the face of unsafe working conditions and the lack of any pay for hours of waiting time in their vehicles. Certainly not even for the dockers for whom “flexibility” will mean speed-up and increasing reductions in their numbers. A victory – a very stunning victory – for the *union* whose role in the management and control of the labor force has once again been recognized by capital, whose role as a loyal partner in the exploitation of the collective worker has once again been acknowledged by the bosses.

What many, too many, in the Occupy Movement failed to grasp is that there were *two* very different battles at Longview. And that the intervention of the Occupy Movement failed to recognize that one of those battles was an *intra*-capitalist battle, while the other was a battle *against* capital; that the first battle was a skirmish *within* the 1% (if we are to use that language made popular by Occupy Wall Street), while only that second battle was a class struggle that contained the seeds of a class-wide response to the global crisis of capitalism and to capital’s war against the working class.

That first battle, the one waged so energetically by the union, by the ILWU, and now won, was a *jurisdictional* battle, a battle to preserve the right of the ILWU to manage and control the labor force, a role that it has played for decades, guaranteeing its power, political, legal, and financial, even as the number of workers it manages has shrunk and the

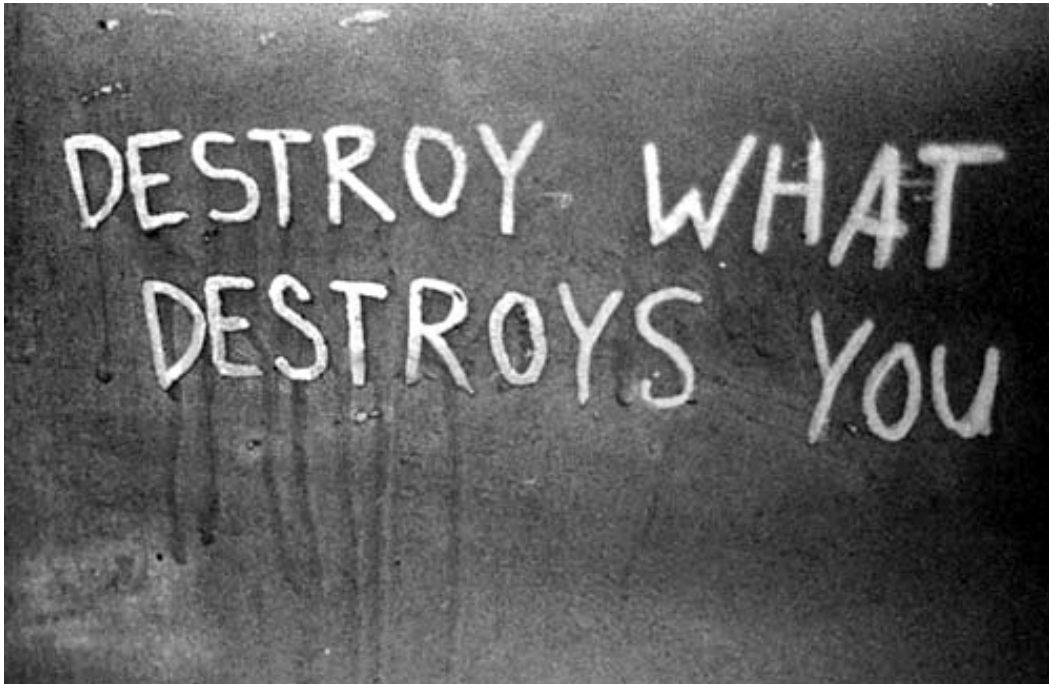
ports have been rationalized in the interests of capital. EGT challenged that power, and as numerous union bureaucrats have now stated: “The mobilizations of the Occupy Movement across the country, particularly in Oakland, Portland, Seattle, and Longview were a critical element in bringing EGT to the bargaining table and forcing a settlement with ILWU local 21.” (Jack Mulcahy an officer with Local 8) The union’s recognition of the role that the Occupy Movement played in its retention of its powerful position on the West Coast docks, in bringing labor peace to Longview, is a frank acknowledgement of the nature of the battle that the Occupy Movement chose to join, and of the inability of the Occupy Movement to grasp that a second battle was taking place, and that it was that second battle that pro-revolutionaries in the Occupy Movement had to engage in.

That second battle was a fight *against* austerity and rationalization, a fight that could only be waged by the self-organization of workers, outside of and against the unions. Not a fight to reform the union or change its leadership (the very legal and institutional structure of capitalism today guarantees that the union is an integral part of capital and its state), but a fight that can only be waged with elected and revocable strike committees that sign no contracts, through wildcat strikes that challenge the control of the unions, that seek to extend and generalize the breadth of the struggle *beyond* jurisdictional and corporatist boundaries – that in the case of the ports would extend to all workers, dockers, casualized workers, truckers, and those in ancillary trades. That kind of struggle is what pro-revolutionaries in the Occupy Movement need to be involved in and support. That kind of struggle has the promise of uniting the collective worker and mounting a real challenge to capitalist austerity. And, of course, that kind battle will face the determined opposition not just of the bosses and the state but also of the unions as *organizations*, with their legally binding contracts, and the vast network of links that bond unions today to corporations and to the state. That battle will face the opposition of the unions with all the resources at their disposal.

Mac Intosh

England Burning!

August 2011 – Some Comments



2011 saw great upsurge of resistance to bourgeois austerity measures and exploitation across the world: major struggles at the point of production in China and Bangladesh, the indignados in the Eurozone, the social upheavals in the Maghreb, and the Occupy movements in nearly 1000 cities around the world. Within this context, how do we evaluate the explosive outburst of rioting in England in August?

Starting in Tottenham, a deprived area of London, it spread around England within days, to become the widest outbreak of civic unrest in nearly 30 years. After a few days of intense confrontation on the streets between youth and police, extensive looting of high and low profile shops, and trashing and torching of working class neighbourhoods, the eruption subsided. The police and legal system set up a judicial conveyor belt to show the displeasure of the bourgeoisie and its desire for exemplary sentencing.

These events, however, except in the most general way showing resistance to bourgeois authority did not show the range of characteristics seen in current arenas of struggles elsewhere. So, what did the outbreak in England express? What issues did it throw up? What is the legacy for the working class struggle in general?

It Didn't Come out of Nowhere

The conditions under which those involved in the events live did not arise from current Conservative and Liberal government policies but from decades of successive governments restructuring economic activity and stripping out of social life whatever they could to drive down the social wage. As elsewhere in the world, these policies have ejected millions from the production process in the UK. So many of our young people see no future in their situation; and they're right. Vast swathes of the country (particularly in Midlands and Northern areas of

England) that were at one time based on heavy industries have been economically devastated and have little prospect for re-building or for future employment opportunities.

The extent of the outbreak – spreading through most major cities – showed that many social conditions and feelings are widespread throughout the country. While all sectors of the working class are affected to a greater or lesser degree, the marginalisation of so many young people provides the source of much of the rage and nihilism that became so apparent last August. Many of the participants in the events are estranged from productive work and face long-term unemployment, and have little or no prospects in this society. In the current phase of capitalism's development we might also call them the 'disemployed'. Young people and racial minorities in particular also face in their daily lives an increasingly brutal police force and it is little wonder that they exploded against the police in the way they did.

At the same time, they see the most egregious displays of wealth, the worship of greed by the bankers, the scams by Members of Parliament syphoning outrageous expenses into their pockets, and most recently the exposure of the hugely profitable relationships between journalists, police, lawyers and politicians; everyone knew they were all corrupt, it's just that the evidence is all pouring out. It's little wonder that looters talked about 'taking, just as the rich did'.

The eruption

In Tottenham, the current events were triggered in the aftermath of what appeared to be and has since been shown to have been yet another summary state execution in an undercover police operation. The victim's family went to the police station to ask why their relative had been shot and were turned away with no explanation. The callousness of the police to the family of the victim was evident – and not that unusual – and certainly riled local people. Later, there was a small demonstration which seemed to dissipate without violence. However, in the nearby streets and then across the whole of London conflict broke out between young people and the police. The following day, conflicts began to spread to the major cities of England.

From its beginnings as a conflict between youth and the police over a police killing, the eruption went on to develop other characterisations. Attacks were made on shops and on cars with many trashed and set alight. The much-publicised looting then began in earnest. Big iconic designer brand names were attacked, and so too were small neighbourhood corner-shops. The looting became, across the country, more and more extensive. Individual violence also grew and muggings became commonplace. The arson became dramatic and many stores were set alight and so too were houses – working class homes.

The police on some occasions were heavy-handed against rioters (which had escalated the eruption in the first place); on other occasions they laid back. This ambivalence in their response was related to their on-going arguments with the government over proposed cuts in the police budgets.

After a few days of substantially increased police deployment, the eruption subsided and the ruling class turned its attention to who or what to blame, how to punish. We'll turn to that before going on to considering what critique to make from a proletarian perspective.

Bourgeois revenge

The judicial conveyor belt was turned up to full speed: somewhere around 2000 were sentenced as the courts stayed open day and night. Exemplary sentences were handed out to rioters and looters not only *pour décourager les autres* but also as a 'respectable' vent for the bourgeoisie's own anger.

Looters were dealt with as one might expect; rioters more severely. But the heaviest punishments were meted out to inciters. Two men were charged with inciting disorder in Cheshire – they had used Facebook in an attempt to start a riot; no one turned up so they took the Facebook page down after some hours. They were still sent to prison for four years; a legal challenge was referred to the Appeal Court which upheld the sentences.

Justice Minister Ken Clarke has focussed on the rioters as 'a feral underclass' (a theme zealously taken up by the tabloid press) or members of the

‘criminal classes’. Clarke underpinned his claim with statistics: “the hardcore of the rioters were, in fact, known criminals. Close to three-quarters of those aged 18 or over charged with riot offences already had a prior conviction.” And just how were those charged selected, apart from those arrested in the act? One method involved the police examining photographs taken during the riots and comparing them with faces with those they knew and mug shots on record; probably face recognition software was also used. Ergo, these could be designated ‘hardcore’ and then by association the entire social outburst could be written off as being merely criminal. On the other hand the Home Secretary, Theresa May, has since had to concede that the riots were not caused by the activity of gangs. But these two views can sit happily together in the bourgeoisie’s propaganda.

Decoded, the argument in the ruling class is about how much use to make of modified social policies and how much of state repression. To date, they seem to be searching for some background set of conditions that can be superficially addressed with legislative measures and - in the foreground – a gang culture that can be explicitly targeted by the police. So Cameron, the Prime Minister, proposed to supplement state repression by dreaming up measures to fix his ‘broken society’ such as by stopping benefits payments to parents if their children truant from school. Tony Blair then entered the discussion with proposals, unsurprisingly, for the hard targeting of gangs by police.

Some threads

While rejecting the bourgeois perspectives on the August events, pro-revolutionaries are confronted by a need to make a coherent and thorough critique of the events. Consider the following questions.

Who was involved? While there was some gang activity, it was such a small proportion of the totality it cannot be regarded as characteristic of the social eruption that took place in which young people, even young children, unemployed and employed workers were involved. Leaving aside a very small minority, the participants in the rioting and looting were *overwhelmingly* strata of the working class. This was not the expression of a *feral underclass* as

Clarke and some of his bourgeois brethren assert, nor of the *lumpenproletariat* that Marx described in very different historical circumstances. However, if the eruption was constituted by members of the working class must we therefore say that this was *class struggle*? In my view, it is insufficient to leave the question at the level of social composition; there is much more to be considered before categorising a movement as a class action. In view of the highly negative aspects of much of the activity, it is all the more necessary to face the realities, good and ill, warts and all. That’s why an honest critique must not turn a blind eye to weaknesses and certainly not minimise the significance of activities that are profoundly contrary to the interests of the proletarian struggle – particularly the intra-class violence.

What did they do? There were riots, looting, arson, muggings and even killings in the mayhem. (The reason for the killings is to date unclear and so I’ll leave that aside in this article.) The rioting and fighting with the police was a direct consequence of the economic and social treatment handed out by the state and was, sooner or later, inevitable. Defending themselves against the police was the one positive factor in the events. The looting is another matter and on this matter I would refer anyone reading this to refer to the debate with Blaumachen in *Internationalist Perspective* 55 – specifically the last few paragraphs in the response by Sander and MacIntosh. Looting can be part of a proletarian struggle, as Sander and MacIntosh point out: “Looting to distribute use-values is one thing; looting as an expression of mere rage is another.” The smash and grab activity in England was not for social redistribution of unobtainable necessities; it was a physical re-enactment of what the bourgeoisie does to society.

Worse, crowds turned on the society about them. Not capitalism, but other strata of the working class about them. And not just in a wave of individual muggings. Working class neighbourhoods were trashed, workers’ homes were torched – not just as ‘collateral damage’ associated with attacks on shop, but as individually identifiable homes attacked deliberately; people had to jump for their lives. There are still many families homeless in Tottenham as a result of these attacks. This violence within the class has to be criticised strongly, and the criticism has to be made from *within* the class.

Were there signs of development of political consciousness? The riots were inchoate. The much-vaunted use of social networking was mainly used for warning of police movements; with no forums for reflection or discussion there was no development of a conscious class dimension to the events.

The looting was directed towards expensive personal consumer items and did not show any challenge to capitalist values. On the contrary, they showed a distorted perpetuation of many of those values. To my mind, the attempt (implicit in some critiques) to explain away this behaviour as an *unconscious* rejection of commodity relations is a non-starter.

Weren't there any critiques made on the streets? Yes, there were. A few brave souls within the mayhem called for a redirection in the face of looting crowds². Others asked 'why were we looting shops? – in Egypt they went for the government'. There were also insightful social critiques accompanied by a sense that this was not the way forward; these, of course, were a minority voice on television interviews which focussed on 'mindlessness' and 'criminality' and drowned discussion into moralistic pap. Some can still be found on Youtube.

It was impressive how many people on the streets had sound reflections on the events. Even some who had been victims of specific actions were able to say that they could see where the young people were coming from and why the riots had taken place.

Class or Crowd?

There is a world of difference between the nature and actions of crowds and of a class movement which must express itself in collective action. The latter may well start in the former, but when action is collective it surely means there is some discussion about what is going on and what to do, in other words, some organisational expression of struggle. There could be little realistic expectation in August of full-blown assemblies or councils but, however embryonic, these struggles need some forum where

members of our class can discuss the issues they face. True, the conflicts with the police generated a battlefield solidarity and a cohesion to some degree, but collective action isn't just that. Some also talk of collective action against stores? This makes a travesty of what it means to be collective.

I don't see how we can talk about *class* activity in these circumstances but some would disagree. Out of the many commentaries on the August events I want to draw attention to some of the pernicious views propagated on the web from within the pro-revolutionary movement. As illustrations, consider some of the comments on the thread on the London Riots on the Libcom website³.

For *piter*, (in comment # 410, 30 August 2011) "...the revolt expressed in rioting is in itself class consciousness." This definition of class consciousness merely discards analysis and capitulates to the clamour of events.

Against someone who posted a comment against the intra-class violence taking place said he wanted it to stop, *Samotnaf* (in comment #68, 8 August) launched the following tirade: "... To want it to stop, as someone shitting his pants said, is to want it to not go further, to want it not to become more consistently against this society and those who defend it; but to want it to stop is to want young people not to go through their baptism of fire, to discover who are their true friends and true enemies; criticise, sure, distinguish between the stupid stuff that comes after 20 years of repressive counter-revolution in a society which has increasingly destroyed all sense of connection and solidarity at an unprecedented rate - but to want it to stop is to support the State."

³ The Libcom thread can be found at: <http://libcom.org/forums/news/riot-tottenham-london-response-police-killings-06082011> and many subsequent pages.

² See, for example, the following video clip on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G18EmYGGpYI>

Samotnaf wanted ‘it’ to “go further. This ‘it’ is young peoples’ “baptism of fire.” He and the other flat-screen cheerleaders were so entranced by the drama of the eruption that they ignored sections of the working class turning on their class brothers and sisters, ignored the other workers whose ‘baptism of fire’ was not figurative but literal, and went on to encourage behaviour that amplified the destruction of – as he says himself – “all sense of connection and solidarity at an unprecedented rate.”

And his coup de grace, *Samotnaf*’s argument, “to want it to stop is to support the State”, just drives discussion between pro-revolutionaries into the sand.

A last example from the Libcom thread. On 9 August in comment #73, *Serge Forward* argued: “That said, in spite of the negative elements, I’d still say these riots are largely positive because nothing makes the ruling class shit themselves more than when working class people start to smash shit up and go full fuckin mental.” He’s grasping at straws. Whatever anger there was in the bourgeoisie about unruly behaviour by workers, the sight of workers turning against workers gives them no sleepless nights.

These adverse comments to the point of view I present here merely emphasise what was lacking in the August events: collective action, solidarity, a recognition of shared class interest, discussion about what to do, a sense of purpose and so on. These are not pious aspirations for struggle. They are intrinsic to the *nature* of the proletarian class struggle – however confused it is at a given moment.

And that’s why the August events did not constitute the movement of a *class*, but a crowd – irrespective of its sociological origins.

The Legacy

What have the events left us? Certainly, for the reasons I have discussed, they provide no model for future collective class action. Indeed, it would be dreadful if a similar breakout were confronted by other sections of the working class having to organise to defend themselves; you can just imagine the glee in state propaganda which would describe the police as guardians of the non-rioters, of ‘ordinary people’, as they usually put it. It can only be hoped that in homes and other meeting places, lessons are being drawn by participants, victims and families about what happened.

Considering the legacy in a wider context, there is a salutary lesson here. Last August, in one of the

strongest economies, in the oldest capitalist country, we witnessed a massive social outburst that expressed atomisation, social alienation, nihilistic rage and a social class turning in on itself – even as it stood up to state repression. In our changing world, with its renewed possibilities for struggle against an overtly crisis-ridden capitalist system, *class* struggle cannot be taken for granted as an outcome only of immiseration and sociological origins. It also needs a source of class cohesion. The absence of struggle at the centres of production – where the proletariat has its greatest collective strength – thus weighed heavily on the August events.

Marlowe

Afterword

My article already contains answers to several of the points Sander makes in his criticism and there’s little point in repeating them. We appear to have different perspectives on what is *class* action and how it relates to the development of *class* consciousness. Time will tell.



Tottenham, August 3, 2011

A Comment on Marlowe's Text

I agree with most but not all of Marlowe's view of the riots of past summer in England. He's right that there was no victory for the working class. As happens so often when poor neighborhoods revolt, their own environment suffered the most. And the revolt was successfully used by the state to divide the working class, the opposite of what is needed. Of course it was to be expected that the media (which are part of the state in a broad sense, the structure of capital's control over society) would use the occasion for anti-struggle propaganda and to portray the rebels as wild beasts that broke out of their cages. But this propaganda was so effective because it was based on real facts: the intra-class violence that occurred during the riots and that Marlowe rightly denounces.

Evidently, robbing a pop-and-mom-store, mugging a passer-by, burning people's homes and other acts of senseless violence, are not class struggle. But I doubt whether they were as widespread as Marlowe thinks. Our view of the events was inevitably colored by the media through which we saw them. They showed us what they wanted to show us, which was the

intra-class violence again and again. There were a few alternative news-sources, but despite their efforts, they too gave us only a fragmented picture. As Marlowe noted, the police at times was heavy-handed, and at other times just stood by. Marlowe thinks this was a negotiating tactic to warn the government not to lower the police-budget. Maybe. Or maybe they allowed the violence that was useful for propaganda to occur and repressed brutally what didn't serve that purpose.

The media want us to believe that this senseless violence, aimed against other working class people, was all that happened. Marlowe almost concurs. For him, no class struggle occurred. It's true that, even if there was less intra-class violence than the media makes it seem, it was still too much. None of it should have been tolerated. It would have been a sign of maturation of class consciousness if the rioters had prevented such things or stopped them. From what I heard, this may have happened at some places, but manifestly not at many others. That is indeed a sign of immaturity but not of absence of class struggle.

The riots were in their essence anti-police. This was predictable and it will happen again and again. On the one hand, the numbers of unemployed and disemployed will continue to swell. On the other, the efforts at pacifying them through other means than repression will continue to be reduced by austerity-measures. So the role of the police in keeping these masses of superfluous proletarians in their place becomes increasingly important. In the poor parts of our metropolises, they have unleashed a reign of terror with 'stop and frisk' actions aimed at installing fear for the power of the state. They are there to defend capitalism. When young proletarians decide not to take it anymore, overcome their fear in collective action and strike back, that's class struggle.

The riots in England were part of something broader happening in the collective consciousness of the class in 2011. It was a year of losing fear through collective action, in all parts of the world. It was not yet a year in which clarity emerged on who or what the enemy is. The revolt in England was in that regard no exception. But it was part of that same loss of fear, the same will to resist, even if most people do not know what it is they are resisting.

On the looting that was going on, I disagree with Marlowe's view that "the smash and grab activity was not for social redistribution". It was in itself a social redistribution. I do not glorify these acts like some on Libcom did but neither do I condemn them because looters showed a preference for expensive

items. It seems only logical that one, when looting, goes for the best. Granted, it's not the same as looting to distribute goods to the poor, but neither was it, in most cases, "a physical re-enactment of what the bourgeoisie does to society".

Marlowe thinks that there was no class struggle in the riots because there was no organisational expression of the struggle (beyond using the social media for collective action), no discussion on what to do (that is, as far as we know), no clarity on who the enemy is or on what to do next. It's true that all these things were sorely lacking. We have to point that out but not while denying that these outbursts are part of a great class struggle unfolding.

Marlowe concludes by noting that "the absence of struggle at the centres of production – where the proletariat has its greatest collective strength – thus weighed heavily on the August events." He's right. The same can be said about the Indignados and the Occupy movement. It may take some time before the crisis of capitalism convinces the majority of the working part of the proletariat that it has 'nothing to lose but its chains'. In the meantime, resistance to it not based in the workplaces will continue to develop. This presents many challenges to pro-revolutionaries. Their voice must be heard in these movements, from within and not from without, denouncing them as not part of the class struggle.

Sander

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Farewell to Will Barnes

WILL BARNES died February 20, 2012 with his wife Vickie by his side. His death is a great loss to the pro-revolutionary milieu, a milieu that he energetically interacted with both theoretically and practically. Will was dedicated to proletarian revolution. On his website he stated:

“We do not seek a better deal for labor within capitalism; we are not reformists. Rather, we aim at the abolition of the order of capital in its entirety; we are revolutionaries, communists, and councilists of sorts... We seek a mass appropriation of revolutionary ideas.”

Although I never met Will, I felt like I had a sense of him, of his ideas and concerns. I first read him on the Meltdown list where he put forth a text on the critique of science, “Lest our Hopes and Dreams Become an Endless Nightmare: Capitalist Technology, the Modern Science of Nature and the Movement of Capital”. Later, through email exchanges, Will emphasized his profound concerns about the environment and the increasingly destructive tendencies of capitalism in crisis:

“My Marxism is not Promethean: I think there are forces in nature that humanity cannot master, a perspective that I think I rationally and rather persuasively explain and defend in the essay I just mentioned. I think, further, that climate change is one of those forces. Once we reach a tipping point, those forces are unleashed, a logic in nature will fully assert itself, and the human achievements that make a general emancipation possible will begin to dissolve... A proletarian revolution can come too late...”

Will linked this ‘tipping point’ to the endless development of the productive forces; to the logic of capitalism. He considered one of his preliminary tasks to be to demonstrate that capitalist science and technology related to nature solely as so much disposable matter. Basically seeing ...”earthly nature as a holding arena consisting solely of unprocessed resources, for which all of reality has the meaning of a raw materials basin for capitalist commodity production...”

His concern that a proletarian revolution may come too late, however, did not stop him from practical revolutionary activity... his interventions spanned his entire adult life. In a January 20, 2012 email, one month prior to his death, he wrote:

“Going back forty plus years, I have coordinated with a handful of others large-scale antiwar (Vietnam) demonstrations, marches and rallies; spoken before factory proletarians on the issues of the day; been actively involved in solidarity work for a native people under enormous pressure from value-form penetration, experiencing incipient class stratification and occupied by the national guard (I argued for our organizational involvement with an emerging proletarian axis in the native community); have actively participated in intra-class strike support in a major strike situation; as casualized, have been fired for refusing to cross a picket line, and have been fired for openly and fully defending co-workers; have put myself personally at risk for defending black workers against Klansmen (I lived in the mid-South for 17 years); and I have become increasingly isolated for the last several years for arguing in the drivers union for strike action which is effectively outside the union (in a union that has never struck).

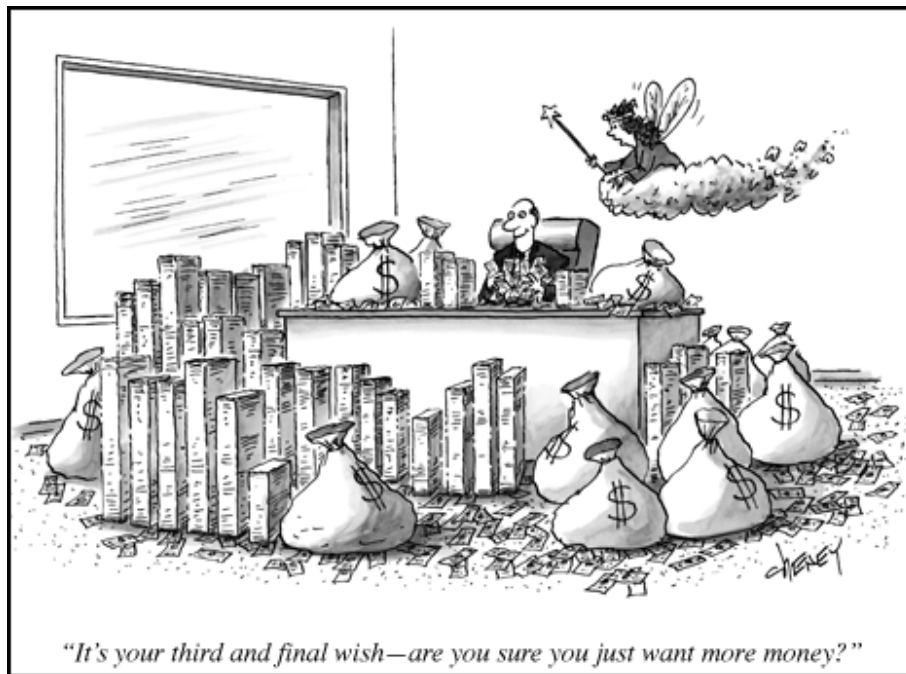
This is not a display; rather, it is an effort to state that I have some experience and familiarity with various proletarian milieus.”

Will Barnes’ death is a huge loss to all: to those in his personal life whom he left behind and, for us, the tiny revolutionary movement to which he richly contributed.

Carol for IP

A large number of Will’s writings can be found at the website “Institute for the Critical Study of Societies of Capital” <http://intcssc.wordpress.com>

Virtual Trillions – From Fiction to Fantasy



Capitalism is a mental illness

It is blindingly obvious that in its more than two-century history capitalism's international economic structures have undergone substantial modification. I want here to draw attention to recent developments in global financial structures that I argue have profound ramifications for capitalism's trajectory; and consequently, in different ways, for the bourgeoisie and for the proletariat.

*In this article I first outline the Post World War II issues that were to lead to the development of **Offshore**, the global financial conduits that enable the movements of trillions of dollars outside the purview of any one state. These networks, sometimes termed tax havens or secrecy jurisdictions, have contributed substantially to the recent acceleration of the virtualisation of money and capital, and have had major implications for the global economy and the shape of its crisis. I go on to summarise some aspects of credit derivatives – with a reminder of the development of the sub-prime mortgage market – and show how they contributed to the creation of a mass of capital whose nature has gone so far beyond fiction that I choose to describe it as fantasy capital. The text cannot do more than indicate the possible magnitude of the capital flows, the very secrecy of these conduits precluding accurate assessments. I would encourage more work to be done on these structures.*

*For the main sources of the raw material used here, much used here on offshore networks, the workings of the City of London and the Bank of England was gleaned from Nicholas Shaxson's *Treasure Islands*; I found some of his claims so astonishing I checked many of his original sources, and I encourage readers to do the same. He has a website for challenges to his arguments. Material on how the credit derivatives work can be found in Gillian Lett's *Fool's Gold*, and on how the bankers bet against their*

own products and the link to the sub-prime mortgage scam, see Michael Lewis's The Big Short. All the authors warn of dire consequences of a failure of the banking and financial trading systems to reform themselves. I hope that it is clear in this article that, on this point, I think they are quite mistaken.

Creating a post-war economic architecture

The experience of the 1929 Crash and the 1930's Depression strongly affected the thinking of many of the people involved during World War II in putting together proposals for the post-war economic and financial structures, especially the main architects John Maynard Keynes of the UK and Harry Dexter White of the US. The Bretton Woods Agreement of July 1944 was to be the basis for building a stable world economy, a stimulus for the development of world trade, and contained mechanisms to facilitate governmental economic regulatory measures such as to maintain tight control over capital flows and stability in exchange rates. Keynes and White had both recognised the damage to the real economy that could be caused by flight capital and wanted to choke it off; this objective required constraints to be imposed on countries' capital inflows as well as outflows. Through a basket of measures they effectively put restraints on the activities of the finance and banking industries – in particular, they wanted low interest rates to benefit the rebuilding of industrial capital after the destruction of the war. Such measures were seen by the finance sector to be to its significant disadvantage.

Bretton Woods set the framework for the post-War period of reconstruction (although several of the original ideas were later watered down by opposition from groups of financiers). With the help of Marshall Aid, industry in Europe began to recover; as it did in the US.

While Keynes's and White's views held sway, and the institutions proposed at Bretton Woods – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – were set up, they were not universally accepted; other interests with very different views were to organise around an oppositional agenda. A group that was to become the Mont Pèlerin Society, funded initially by three Swiss banks, met in April 1947. The funding of the Swiss banks was an expression of their readjustment to the world being reconstructed

after a very profitable war in which they had played both sides. Significantly, Sir Alfred Suensen-Taylor was present; he provided strong links to the City of London¹ as well as funds from the Bank of England for subsequent delegations to the Society's meetings. Also present was Milton Friedman. From groups such as these would the later neo-liberal challenge to Keynesianism come. Not only was there a tension between economic ideologies, but it also dovetailed into the ongoing one between manufacture and finance.

The Development of Offshore

Switzerland has a centuries-old tradition of financial secrecy while playing banker to the surrounding warring factions of monarchies, aristocrats and churches through mediaeval and early modern times. The bankers' fortunes escalated through the major European conflagrations – the Thirty Years War (1618-48), the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), World Wars I and II. As income tax became a fashion across Europe in the early 20th Century the very rich found Swiss banks to be a more and more attractive repository for their wealth. In the Depression, Luxemburg and Monaco took up ancillary roles. This was the historical backdrop to the Mont Pèlerin Society's anti Keynesian views. The profitability of such intermediary financial roles

¹ The City of London, 'the City', is a square mile section of the capital city. It has always been home to the headquarters of many financial institutions. While the term, The City, is often used loosely to describe financial institutions in a general way it also has a 'state' structure of its own. The Capital city has its Mayor; the City of London has its Lord Mayor. The Corporation of the City of London boasts that the House of Lords was based on its Court of Alderman, and that the House of Commons on its Court of Common Council. (Interestingly, the latter institution is the only municipal authority in the UK where businesses have a vote in elections; furthermore their vote exceeds that of resident voters.) If, for the bourgeoisie, the British House of Commons is the 'Mother of Parliaments', for the City of London the Court of Common Council is the 'Grandmother of Parliaments'.

– outside of domestic arrangements -- was an open secret.

Gradually, the post-war reconstruction of industrial capital took off, especially in the US and on continental Europe where dollars were pumped into Europe under the Marshall Plan, although this was not confined to Europe. These dollars presented new financial opportunities as some institutions found advantages in keeping dollar deposits outside the United States and using them for other purposes: this was the start of the so-called Eurodollar market. However, in the UK, industry and manufacturing were still languishing. Anxieties over the strength of Sterling (still an important international reserve currency) increased during the '40s and '50s, and further encouraged the use of the dollar to finance international trade.

All manner of crooked games were played to get around foreign exchange regulations. To begin with, the Eurodollars were only used to finance trade, but then a UK bank (the Midland, later absorbed into what has become the HSBC) started to take non-transactional dollar deposits and offer rates of interest higher than those permitted by the US. The Bank of England² spotted this but given the parlous state of the UK foreign exchange reserves, decided not to stop this lucrative new line of business. The Bank of England then started up a dollar market in London and business increased rapidly. It even got a fillip from the Cold War: the Soviet Union did not want to hold their dollars in the US where they might be impounded by their major enemy – so, via Cyprus, Russian money found its way to what some Russians still call “Londongrad.”

The Bank was able to couple this new-found business with its representations inside many small island states that became British Overseas Territories during the break-up of the British

² The Bank of England is not just a national central bank. In 1991, the then Governor of the Bank gave a speech explaining what the bank was for. As one might expect of a central bank, it aimed to protect the currency and keep the financial system stable. However, its third aim was to “ensure the effectiveness of the United Kingdom’s financial services” and advance a financial system “which enhances the international competitive position of the City of London and other UK financial centres.”

Empire, some close to home (like the Channel Islands) and others far away (such as Hong Kong and the Cayman Islands). These territories were then used to form a global network of *offshore* secrecy jurisdictions all tied back to Bank of England oversight; their most important attraction was that they were politically stable. These jurisdictions could then develop banking and other financial services rules – with UK steering – so as to offer taxation avoidance, a means of moving money between institutions without onshore traceability, and a means of re-introducing money back into the onshore systems without having to obey customary regulations concerning the maintenance of capital reserves, etc. Legal entities could be established offshore that could be repositories for all kinds of financial instruments – as with the so-called special purpose vehicles (SPVs) later used extensively as part of the credit derivatives industry structures. New horizons for finance capital opened up.

When the American bankers saw what was happening, they opened up shop in London to share in the action and thereby get round their domestic regulations such as the Glass-Steagall Act which they saw as being a restraint on profitable ventures. This move brought massive new flows of capital into the offshore systems.

Then the Americans came into the game on their home turf. In the late 1970s, with a judgement from the Supreme Court, Nebraska bankers were able to “export” higher lending rates to Minnesota residents; by March 1980 South Dakota eliminated rate caps and by incorporating in South Dakota US banks could generate credit card operations with very high rates of interest: usury had again been legalized. Delaware then went further and passed the Financial Center Development Act in 1981 and effectively set up an *offshore* jurisdiction *onshore*. This opened the floodgates for US banking to get involved in offshore activity on their own territories. With its own small islands round the world, US institutions now have a global offshore network of their own, and it is now the largest.

Globally, there are presently around 60 such jurisdictions. The scale of the financial flows through these networks is instructive. For benchmark figures, look at key GDP figures: global GDP is now running at about \$75 trillions; US GDP

is approximately \$14 trillions; China about \$4.5 trillions; the UK is just under \$3 trillions. Sources are not systematic and information is compiled somewhat haphazardly, and by their very nature estimates of financial flows through the offshore networks cannot be accurate, but it is likely that such estimates as are made are under -- rather than over -- estimates. Shaxman cites the following:

- 2005, wealthy individuals held \$11.5 trillions offshore
- 2007, Crown dependencies had approximately \$1 trillion of tax-evading assets
- 2008, 'Netherlands Offshore' had flows of \$18 trillions – about 20 x GDP.
- 2009, in June the UK network held 55% of global offshore bank deposits - \$3.2 trillions; in second quarter \$332.5 billions were fed from Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man and into the UK economy's accounts.

Estimates of the money-laundering through the networks are also very approximate. Shaxman gives the following estimates for illicit flows in 2005:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Criminal money | \$330 - \$550 billions |
| • Corrupt money | \$ 30 - \$ 50 billions |
| • Cross-border re-invoicing | \$660 - \$1200 billions |

Giving a total of somewhere in the range \$1 - \$1.8 trillions.

All capital flows now converge into the same pipeline – corporate money (from industry, manufacture or whatever), 'legitimate' money, drug money, mafia money, intelligence services' money, racketeers' money, blood diamond money, flight capital – later to diverge into a spectrum of legal financial instruments. Moreover, the states whose banks run these networks are well aware of the origin of much of the money. So, for example, it is legal for US banks to handle criminal money as long as the crime is not committed on US soil.

Yet, the OECD tax haven blacklist has been empty since May 2009. To be removed from the list a

jurisdiction needed only say that it would cooperate with any future investigations into any suspect activity. This is farcical, of course; many of the jurisdictions forbid disclosure of information, proceedings drag on for years and, in any case, funds can be moved overnight.

The impact of these financial operations on the daily life of the world's population is enormous. For the so-called developing world it is brutal. Estimates for 2006 indicate that global aid amounted to \$100 billions, and the capital outflows were around \$1 trillions. And in the developed world, large corporate entities – with government approval – move their money offshore to avoid tax payments, leaving the state machine to force the rest of the population to bridge the resulting tax gap. Each year this gets better for capitalists and worse for the rest of us.

The offshore industry distorts whole national economies. For example, in the UK, manufacturing and heavy industry contributed over 40% of GDP in 1950. When Labour came to power in 1997 manufacturing accounted for around 20%; today it is around 12% of GDP.



Credit Derivatives Meet Mortgages Meet Offshore

Now I want to look at one set of the toxic reagents that have gone into the offshore networks – from the credit derivatives industry.

Commodities derivatives have been around for a long time: they were rudimentary in Mesopotamia nearly 4000 years ago; English mediaeval monasteries used them in the 12th and 13th Centuries for wool forward contracts; they were used by the Dutch tulip industry in the 17th Century; and in more

modern times they grew substantially with the formation of the Chicago Board of Trade in 1849 to deal with agricultural commodities. The idea of insuring against crop failures was later transferred to the currency exchange and interest rate fields. The breakdown of the Bretton Woods-based exchange controls substantially encouraged their development.

Derivatives activity can have a strictly technical use for normal capitalist business – for production, distribution and exchange of goods. However, there is no hard boundary between that functional use and their use for speculation; and speculative bubbles and bursts have been an integral part of financial history – look at the scam by which John Law, the French Controller General of Finance in France in the early 18th Century issued paper banknotes to fuel the Mississippi Bubble. (Its bursting was to contribute to the economic crisis that was to become part of the process leading to the French Revolution.) In the translation from supporting business transaction to providing a means to speculation, their effect changes from one *attenuating* adverse risks to a capitalist entity to one *amplifying* those risks.

The development of such instruments in recent decades has taken them onto another level: the creation of credit derivatives. This is not the place to go into the highly technical structure of these instruments – they have become fiendishly complex and difficult to understand (in part, deliberately, to mask their real content). (The industry for their creation has taken many mathematicians and physicists from scientific work; snake oil salesmen come from all parts of society.)

At the heart of their logic, however, is the identification of the risk of default by one party to another in a credit trade, and then the second party laying that risk off (as an explicit or implicit insurance policy) through further trades to other parties. The basic attraction of this activity to financial institutions is that it allows the consequences of any failure to be spread out among many more parties, each party suffering only a small proportion (theoretically) of the financial pain in any default. When this idea is applied to asset-backed securities, they can be traded, sliced and diced into another basket of financial instruments, all of which can be traded again. Significantly, each time this is

done the more opaque is their content; it doesn't take long to reach the state where *no-one* knows what's in them. But the global financial system as a whole is "closed" and eventually all parties are betting against each other.

Enter the mortgage bonds based on the US housing market. The scams that the mortgage lenders got up to are well known. The relevant point here is that the flow of repayment funds was packaged into bonds that could be traded; these mortgage backed securities were then repackaged into the derivatives mill. As is well known, the payment defaults in the sub-prime mortgages turned the bonds, and therefore the derivatives, toxic – a fissile situation. One of the key mechanisms involved in the creation of many credit derivatives were the special purpose vehicles: shell companies set up for tax avoidance in the secrecy jurisdictions, the tax havens, offshore. The funds flows that accompanied derivatives trading could thus go global at light speed – and so did the toxicity.



From Fiction to Fantasy

Economic competition between capitals covers everything: between companies, between industries, between nation states. Economic competition between the state apparatuses of different countries is sometimes clear and at other times difficult to see: in currency exchange, in interest rates, in tax regime competition. The states are often playing with fire but usually they can see what they are doing; however, in their competition using secrecy jurisdictions/tax havens they are dousing the fire with gasoline. The very secrecy they peddle precludes any one state government seeing what is going on, even in its own offshore territory. The "safety rules" imposed onshore (such as capital reserve requirements) are thrown away. And, to date,

nothing has yet been done to attenuate even those risks identified in the 2008 banking crisis.

Since 1945 the relative economic and political power of bourgeois factions inside capitalism has changed. Each state has its own history but in the US and the UK, the relative political weakening of industry and manufacture compared with the financial sector has been marked. The relative strengthening of this latter faction of the bourgeoisie inside the state has also been noteworthy; witness the bank bailout process in late 2008. Furthermore, even the OECD openly acknowledges this trend in reports under the rubric of “regulatory capture.” (You can also see this behaviour by other factions, such as by weapons manufacturers and oil companies.)

Given the power of finance capital it looks at present as if it is nigh-on impossible to rein in the activities of the offshore structures – they are too integrated into the economic structure of global capitalism. And if one jurisdiction were to be curtailed the capital could always fly somewhere else. We shall see. The industrial and manufacturing sectors of capitalism need a banking system; but the bankers in some countries have paid scant regard to them. In the decade leading up to the 2008 crisis, only 3% of UK banks’ lending went to manufacturing; 75% went to private and commercial real estate mortgaging. Moreover, those capitalists in the real economy are unlikely to want to be taken down by the excesses of the financial sector. They’ve seen the damage; the question is what are they going to do?

In daily life, \$1 is \$1. You don’t know whether it expresses the value of an item of production in the real economy, or the fiction of a financier’s promise. More and more the fictional component increases, yet these massive fictions are treated as *real* by these people. And when the system that manages both the real and fictitious moneys breaks down – perhaps because the population at large, economically strapped, can’t pay to house itself – it hits the real economic system that employs (or un-employs) that population. Stability in these financial markets is based on common confidence in the fiction – lasting until reality breaks through. But the financiers haven’t just continued with the same old fictions; they have gone on to create a full-blown fantasy world. Money used to be backed by some standard

such as gold, later by, say, special drawing rights at the IMF underpinned by the real economies of several states. Today, with a vast amount of gearing (leverage) capitalism now depends more and more on a bunch of IOUs created through the collusion of armies of accountants, lawyers, ratings agencies, insurance companies – and even the English libel laws. So, where does the value reside that these instruments are supposed to represent? It resides in the polarisation of the domains of ferromagnetic grains glued onto disks spinning at 7200rpm; and in the promises on pieces of paper. No wonder some economists now argue for a return to the gold standard. Ah, the power of nostalgia.

When Fantasy Hits Reality

Finance capital today has gone into fantasy because the historical contradictions of capitalism as a whole have extended it further and further beyond material production and its reproduction. As a consequence, the creation of fictitious capital – a fundamental activity in banking – has gone viral. Perhaps the only word that covers the scale of this fiction, this enormous virtualisation of capital, is fantasy capital.

The fact that so much of all this capital is fantasy doesn’t soften the blow when the working population is made to suffer the austerity that is imposed to help balance the books. When the debts hit the state’s balance sheet, it all becomes very real – socially. All factions of capital have an interest in extracting as much value as they can from the population as a whole. We can see round the world today the consequences of the bourgeoisie imposing enormous austerity and cuts in living standards. With the financiers behaving much as before it is only a matter of time before the bourgeoisie has to impose further rounds of austerity. Give the reactions already seen around the world we can expect more widespread explosions of resistance.

As already said, offshore networks allow these capital flows to escape the oversight of individual capitalist states. This is consistent with the view that factions of capital compete inside the state apparatus, seeking influence over state policies – and it is clear that in many countries the financiers have benefitted at the expense of other sectors. Give the way these processes have panned out, we should not

expect the current set of relationships to remain static: there will be reactions from other sectors as well as from the state apparatus itself. Especially when the next shock comes. What is apparent is that the forces moving the capitalist economic system are beyond the political powers of the bourgeoisie to stabilise.

While the construction of these offshore financial conduits has contributed considerably to the acceleration of the expansion of the productive forces for some decades and enabled the capitalist

class to enjoy heightened levels of exploitation, the recent financial crisis shows the destructive power that can be unleashed. The bourgeoisie has created a monster outside its control. There is also another side to the story yet to be realised. For the working class, the funnelling of all these capital flows offers the possibility – when the time comes – to pull the plug on all the server farms that run these systems and to deal a deadly blow to the capacity of capital to move its funds and lubricate its system of power.

Marlowe



Internationalist Perspective

Internationalist Perspective is a publication defending Marxism as a living theory, one that can go back to its sources, criticize them, and develop hand in hand with the historical social trajectory. As such, if *Internationalist Perspective* bases itself on the theoretical accomplishments of the Communist Left, *IP* believes that its principal task is to go beyond the weaknesses and the insufficiencies of the Communist Left through an effort of incessant theoretical development. *IP* does not believe that that is its task alone, but rather that it can only be accomplished through debate and discussion with all revolutionaries. That vision conditions the clarity of its contribution to the struggle and to the development of the class consciousness of the proletariat. *IP* does not aim to bring to the class a finished political program, but rather to participate in the general process of clarification that unfolds within the working class.

Capitalism is a transient product of history, not its end. It came into being in response to conditions that no longer exist: inevitable scarcity, labor power being the only source of social wealth. Capitalism turned labor power into a commodity to appropriate the difference between its value and the value it creates. For centuries, this hunt for surplus value allowed for a relative harmony between the development of society and capitalist accumulation. Then it gave birth to a new production process, the real domination of capital, in which no longer labor power but the machine stands at the center of production. Science and technology, set in motion and regulated by the collective worker, became the primary source of the creation of social wealth. The giant productivity this unleashed, allowed capitalism to grow both inwards and outwards. It spread over the entire planet and absorbed all spheres of society – including the trade unions and mass parties that arose from the struggle of the working class.

Scarcity was now no longer inevitable, but instead of freeing humanity from want, it condemned capitalism to overproduction. Wealth-creation was no longer dependent on the exploitation of labor power but this plunged capitalism, imprisoned by the law of value, into a crisis of profit. These obstacles to accumulation force capitalism to increase the exploitation of labor and to create room for new expansion through self-destruction, through massive devalorization in depression and war. Capitalism entered its decadent phase when such cannibalistic destruction became part of its accumulation cycle. It is decadent, not because it doesn't grow – it has developed tremendously and profoundly modified the composition of social classes and the conditions in which they struggle in the process - - but because this growth, in its rapacious hunt for profit, became itself destructive. It is decadent, because it is forced to hurl billions into unemployment and poverty because it cannot squeeze profit from them; by the very productivity that could meet all needs. It is decadent, because its need for devalorization impels it to war and unceasing violence. Capitalism cannot be reformed; it cannot be humanized. Fighting within the system is illusory: capitalism must be destroyed.

Capitalism is also decadent because it has generated the conditions for its own replacement by a new society. Science and technology, yoked to the operation of the law of value, and its quantification of the whole of life, are not liberating in themselves. But the working class, who sets it in motion, is by its very condition within capitalism impelled to free itself from the alienation that capitalism, as a social relation, subjects it to, and is, therefore, the bearer of the project of a society freed from the law of value, money, and the division of society into classes.

Such a project has never before existed in history. If the Russian revolution was a proletarian one, it did not result in the emergence of a communist society. The so-called “communism” of the former Eastern bloc, like that of China or Cuba, was nothing other than a manifestation of state capitalism. Indeed, the emergence on an historical scale of a new society can only be realized by the total negation of capitalism, and by the abolition of the laws that regulate the movement of capital. Such a new society entails a profound transformation in the relation of humans to themselves and to each other, of the individual to production, to consumption, and to nature; it entails a *human community* at the service of the expansion and satisfaction of all human needs.