

The Way Forward in North Africa and the Middle East

Theses towards a revolutionary programme

by **Balazs Nagy**, Workers International To Rebuild the Fourth International, 20 February 2011

Biased, fragmentary and very incomplete as the media reports are, some things are clear:

1. These movements are desperately short of revolutionary leadership. The long years of ruthless dictatorship have strangled even the more or less petty-bourgeois parties. There is no sign even of any bourgeois leadership independent of the ruling authorities, apart from groups and individuals tied to the dictators whom the workers have thrown out.

2. We offer the following considerations to Tunisian, Egyptian Libyan and other groups in Europe and by any means available to people in the countries affected. Workers in those countries are in a real state of confusion, not knowing what to do or how to do it. In general what they want is real democracy.

3. Indeed, that is not a bad place to start. But before thinking about what to do and how to do it, first a few words about the general situation. There is no doubt that this is a revolution, or rather several revolutions. Now, a revolution is a whole process, more or less long, and we are just at the start. That is the first thing we must explain to these workers who clearly believe those who tell them that it is already over. They have got rid of the dictators, but these were merely the personification of a whole economic and social system – imperialism – as it exists in these countries. To maintain its domination almost unchanged (in a different form from the old colonial regime the workers long since rejected) imperialism has succeeded, with the help of reformists and the Stalinist bureaucracy, in turning these young independent states into military dictatorships and medieval monarchies by

delegating its direct power of oppression to native political regimes. In its first phase the revolution has thrown out the dictators in two countries and started the same battle in many others (Yemen, Libya, Algeria, etc.). But in these first two countries, the revolution is now marking time. The politico-economic regime remains more or less intact and is preparing, at this moment, to demobilise, push back and repress the workers. It dare not go too far in the direction of bloody repression because it is weakened and does not yet feel strong enough. Soldiers would probably refuse to fire on the people. The army's apparent neutrality, as the fruit of this uncertainty, forces the generals in power to negotiate with the workers over their demands. The situation is a little different in Tunisia but remains essentially the same.

4. In this situation workers should push forward with their desire to achieve democracy. In continuing the revolution in that way and by concretising their demands, they can transform into facts their obvious vigilance and their distrust of the new people on power – both expressed loud and clear not least by their determination to stay put where they mobilised their movements. But all that is very fragile. If they are demobilised, it would certainly mean the first step towards a defeat and the re-installation of a new dictatorship, possibly veiled for a time.

5. We should propose to them that they continue their movement towards real democracy – a battle that is not even half won yet. Progress in this the only guarantee against a turn backwards in the situation: if you do not go forward you are condemned to retreat. The general slogan should be the conquest and strengthening of real democracy based on winning and securing democratic rights, as well as on the organisation of the movement.

6. We can only sketch several essential points of a democratic programme which workers in those countries themselves, their political and trade union organisations, would need to work out in detail.

- a. Immediately lift the state of emergency which has been in force for many years in all these countries (in Egypt, the new – military – authorities have only promised to lift it in 6 months time!)
- b. Besides that it is important to demand and secure freedom of speech and of the press; freedom of assembly, freedom for workers to organise together democratically and, finally, freedom to demonstrate. At the moment the masses have spontaneously exercised these rights, but it is necessary to guarantee and codify them.
- c. Complete and total separation of the church and the state (of all churches)
- d. Immediate freedom for all political prisoners (already started in Egypt)

These are the immediate measures that directly flow from the current situation.

Beyond that, it is important to make progress towards complete democratic freedom for the working masses in the towns and the countryside. For this, political democracy must go hand-in-hand with economic democracy.

1. It is vitally important for the life of the country to nationalise the factories, mines and banks, particularly those owned by foreign capital.
2. One fundamental democratic measure is a radical agrarian reform, with the re-distribution of land to the poor farmers and their co-operatives without compensation to the present owners. This is the very bedrock of democracy in the countryside and at the same time it breaks the power of the big landed proprietors who are pillars of support for the dictatorship, as well as of those leaders currently in power. All the generals in Egypt, like Mubarak and his family, are big landed proprietors, and the same is true elsewhere.
3. Democratic rights for workers at their workplace, codified in progressive social legislation (collective bargaining, defined working times, the right to strike, unemployment

benefits, etc.)

4. Freedom to form trade unions and trade union rights. At the same time democratisation of existing trade unions, holding fresh elections to renew them..

5. Progressive social legislation for all workers (sickness insurance, laws protecting workers' housing, etc.)

6. Confiscation of all the material goods of the cronies of dictators already fallen and yet to fall: land, factories, buildings, businesses, wealth stolen from the people and monopolised during the decades of dictatorship.

But the most urgent task of the day, and therefore the main slogan, is – organise working people

1. So that they can make progress towards real democracy, guarantee the freedom which has been won and achieve all their demands, the most determined and conscious and therefore the most active elements must set up their political party, a workers' party, a sort of Labour Party. The job of this party from the very moment it is set up would be to work out and promote in practice the whole democratic programme, raising it in all workers' movements.

2. All of these movements in the country should unite in a political process aimed at setting up a new regime in line with the wishes and desires of workers. It would be a terrible mistake to put faith in the promise of elections. The whole country (all the countries), the whole of the working people, have rejected the dictators' bogus constitution. They need a new one, a constitution of the working people. They need to fix and codify the new order, i.e. the most highly democratic measures, rules and laws, which alone conform to the will of the people and its dynamism. They need also to prevent the possessing class, the pillars of the dictatorship, from cheating the people through a fraudulent electoral facrce. Therefore workers need to prepare and hold a Constituent Assembly of the country. It is for the creation of that type of assembly that elections should be held, to select delegates

drawn from candidates of the truly democratic parties, first and foremost of the workers' party.

3. Both to run the the elections – and to make sure they are run properly – and to prepare the Assembly to bring about their demands and under popular supervision, workers urgently need to form local committees of action and supervision in the workplace and in the local areas. In the countryside, one vitally important task for such committees would be to push forward agrarian reform and land re-distribution energetically. Poor farmers and agricultural labourers would form the majority of these committees in the countryside. Everywhere these committees, with the participation of housewives, should keep an eye on prices at markets and in the shops. This is all the more necessary since the international bourgeoisie could strangle and starve the infant workers' democracy through present and future speculation in cereals and other agricultural products.

4. One extremely important political task for workers and their organisations is a radical and immediate break with national isolation. A main condition for the success of their movement is to bring about an effective and living alliance

a. with the other peoples engaged in similar movements in North Africa and and the Middle East. The people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Algeria, can already form permanent contacts and synchronise their demands and activities through their movements and political parties (once the latter have been established).

b. also with the workers in the countries of Europe and their organisations, demanding their solidarity and collaboration to establish a broad united front against the forces of restoration in their countries and internationally.

5. Separately, I would like to make a particular point about the enormous importance of the following problem: Fraternisation with the army soldiers, especially in Egypt, has already born fruit fruit in the apparent neutrality of the army. But this is very fragile. It is necessary to continue and extend this fraternisation (which is a very important task

in the other countries too), with the aim of forming stable contacts so that ultimately, at a stage which cannot be determined from here, soldiers' committees can be set up, especially since the soldiers are workers in uniform, or very often farmers willing to discuss a programme for the redistribution of the land.

Here in broad terms and hastily sketched, are a few points, hints rather, to serve as the basis of an programme for these movements. The determination and the dynamism are there. But about the aims of their struggle and the means available to them almost total confusion reigns. That is where we should at least try to help.

Stop the destruction of social gains! March separately, strike together!

In defence of the workers and people of Greece – first victims of capital's offensive

European march on Brussels!Response to the "Common Appeal for the Rescue of the People of Europe" launched by Mikis Theodorakis and Manolis Glezos,

by Balazs Nagy, Workers' International (20 February 2012)

From a stricken Greece, long-familiar voices are calling on the peoples of Europe to defend themselves and come to the aid of Greece and its working people. Above all for the working people of Greece, living standards and indeed the whole setting within which they live, and their public services and properties, are once more under vicious attack and their very

existence threatened by the intensified, concentrated onslaught of aggressive and arrogant world capital. Greece was the cradle of our civilisation and is now in the cross-hairs as the initial site for the destruction of gains the modern age has contributed to that old civilisation: a series of rights, to fair wages, to work and decent housing, to the equality of citizens and individual and collective liberty as a whole. Greece is a symbol for all of this, since the suppression of these rights and advantages so lately won by civilisation, their deliberate destruction undertaken by capital, raises the spectre of their imminent annihilation along with the ancient civilisation born in Greece which is the foundation and natural framework for all that has been achieved. Theodorakis and Glezos are a thousand times right to invoke the dark shadow of fascism on a Europe rendered numb and vulnerable by capital.

Greece and her working people are particularly undermined – and also denigrated and slandered – as they have been picked on as the first to undergo the creeping barrage of capital's heavy artillery. But don't fool yourselves! Working people in the other countries have already felt the first salvos and the strategists of capital have them in their sights too. Portuguese, Spanish, Italians and all the rest ... they will not be spared by the shattering fire of this class war.

Our analysis of the crisis and its effects is not the same as that of the Greek authors of the appeal. We believe that the first and most important target are the workers and other working people of Greece. They are attacked, not because they are Greek, Italian or whatever, but because they are workers; that the attack on them is organised and waged by the world bourgeoisie, and not just by the American banks, which are only one pernicious head of the immense thousand-headed hydra. Ministers – whether unelected like Papademos and Monti, or elected, like Merkel and Sarkozy – are infinitely closer to Goldman Sachs than to the workers of Athens, Rome or Berlin,

who in turn are class brothers of Greek, Portuguese or British workers. The current European crisis – to speak only of Europe – and the proposed “solutions” constitute a new and particularly important episode in a class struggle that has lasted over a century. In this struggle, Europe, as constituted in her institutions, is neither a neutral nor a well-intentioned entity, but an instrument of war on the the social, political and cultural gains working people have made. How true this is is proved by its presence in the hated “Trioka” with its pitiless dictatorship over Greece. Whatever differences there may be in analysis, the response of the working people of Europe to the appeal from Greece cannot but be massively positive.

To resist capital’s attacks, it is high time that working people throughout Europe take up the only weapon at their disposal: the organisation of their ranks. All they have to defend themselves with is their ability to mobilise. It must start immediately, as things are urgent. It must be concentrated and it must be strong. Hesitation and dispersal of our forces weaken us and strengthen our attackers.

The immediate goal of the mobilisation is to defend the working people and the whole people of Greece.

- Down with the dictatorship of the Troika with its shameful exactions!
- Throw this three-headed hydra out of Greece!
- The people of Greece are the only sovereign power with the right to determine what to do about the debt!

As a way to carry the struggle forward, we should without delay prepare and organise the march of the working people of Europe on the HQ of the bourgeois attacks in Brussels. From every country, the chosen columns of working people can converge on Brussels to express their determined opposition to the predators and the desire to colonise their initial prey – Greece, and to there present the determination and united

strength of the working people of Europe in a huge demonstration as a culmination of the first stage of the action and a prelude to a broader struggle.

Alongside our forthcoming defence of Greek working people and in order to remove definitively the permanent threat facing all working people and all peoples, we should open the way for the main demand: for a Working People's Europe!

The very recent general strike against the same enemies by working people in Belgium as well as the decision of the European Trade Union Confederation to hold a big joint action at the end of February show that favourable opportunities exist for such an action.

Let us eagerly seize these opportunities to introduce our action in order to give redoubled strength to the defence and resistance of the working people throughout Europe.

Stop the destruction of social gains!

March separately, strike together!

By Balazs Nagy, member, Workers International

ALL over Europe, the various capitalist governments are inflicting drastic and very similar austerity measures and plans on working people. Obviously people in other continents are not exempt from the effects of the deep crisis of capitalism either, but it is here in Europe that they take on their most significant and vicious dimensions. This is the cradle of capitalism and therefore of the workers' movement.

In the past, with the support of all working people, this movement succeeded in winning significant rights and advantages during over a century of bitter and stubborn struggle. The crisis is far from over, however those in government spin it. The determined frontal attacks on the gains and rights workers have won will grow in number and ferocity, so it is very important to know what they really

represent and where they come from.

Thirty (not so) glorious years

These attacks by the capitalist class did not just start with the current crisis. In fact the material, social, political and cultural rights working people enjoy are incompatible with capitalism-imperialism (the overall period since the beginning of the twentieth century, when finance capital merged with industrial capital), particularly in its current state of senile decrepitude. They were never freely given, but all of them were won from the system by force in heroic struggles by working people over many years, during and after World War II, but also well before then. At that point the balance of forces, internationally and within almost every country, swung clearly in favour of the working class. Terrified by the underlying support for the powerful revolutionary wave in Europe – and bankrupt – the capitalists were only able to defuse the revolution with ready help from the leaders of parties which called themselves socialist and communist. But this came with a price tag attached, and so there started the series of measures and reforms which culminated in what became known as “welfare states” or “social market economy” (in Germany) and the so-called “thirty glorious years”. But even then the rot had already set in.

Even if they had wanted to, the capitalist class and their governments could not have granted these reforms and advantages to working people on a permanent basis. And they certainly did not want to let working people keep that fraction of an accumulating mass of profits, which was squeezed out of them in the first place anyway. In the end they could not allow it to go on, especially since, as time went by, although the total sum grew, the rate of return was shrinking by the minute. To put it in capitalist economic language, the return on investments or the profits on capital were no longer enough. Marx and his followers describe this as the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. At its root was

above all the progressive shrinkage of the world market for expensive western capitalist goods.

From this flowed two major consequences which were to shape the course of capitalist-imperialism and the behaviour of its major players. It was not totally transformed, but it would be correct to say that its features were altered in a significant and historical way. The first change was that it became a system that not only could not carry any more genuine reforms, but actually had to do away with and destroy the reforms and advantages which it had been forced to concede under pressure in the past. The second was to do with its structure. The emergence of the imperialist phase at the beginning of the twentieth century had already meant:

“... the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this ‘finance capital’ of a financial oligarchy”.

This now went a lot further. In fact, in attempting to overcome market saturation and the declining substance of profit, this marriage of convenience between industrial capital and finance capital gave birth to a legitimate but monstrously deformed offspring – the uncontested hegemony of finance capital. Inevitably this artificial, overblown, distorted and ill-proportioned substitute for real profits mutated into an insatiable parasite sucking the life-blood of the whole of society.

But please note carefully: well before it could infect every pore of society, the capitalist class – both mother and father of this formation – did everything it could to take back and revoke the reforms and concessions it had been forced to make earlier. At first it did not dare attempt a full, general, global offensive against all these concessions, because it felt too weak. The working class and working people in general justifiably continued to think that the right to sickness insurance, to a decent pension, to full employment and proper

care, to free education – in short, the whole system and network of rights, assistance and protection – were an essential part of their wages, and that capital had taken a big enough cut out of them already. They correctly took these things as a legitimate “social wage”, theirs by right.

This was far more than the increasingly insatiable capitalist class were prepared to tolerate. But, however desperately they wanted to launch an open frontal attack on these rights and concessions, congenital cowardice in the face of the organised strength of working people cooled their ardour and a cunning instinct to side-step such confrontations moderated it.

Consequently, in the first phase of its war on the rights and concessions working people had gained, in the 1960s and 1970s, the capitalist class mainly concentrated on undermining real wages and working conditions. They made constant and repeated attempts to claw back the inroads that the “social wage” made into their profits, doing what they could to increase the productivity and intensity of labour and nibble away at wages. But powerful strike actions, drawing in their wake not only wider categories of working people but even top union leaders, blocked these attempts and a succession of partial struggles restored the real value of wages by force. In the course of those “thirty (not so) glorious years”, for example, working people in Britain twice brought down governments through the sheer scale of their struggles – once the Labourite Wilson and once the Tory Heath. In France, at the same time, working people engaged in a series of struggles, including a remarkable national miners’ strike. They then united in 1968 in a long general strike and inflicted a resounding setback on De Gaulle, who had been tasked precisely with smashing their resistance and taking back their “social wage”.

Nor should we forget the German working class and working people as a whole. Already bled white by Hitler’s counter-revolutionary dictatorship and the years of total war, they

were were both divided and tied down in the late 1940s in the four zones of military occupation. Thus the previously powerful German working class, with its pivotal role at the heart of Europe, was isolated and kept off the scene. And just to make sure, working people in Germany were also stigmatised with the vile insinuation that they were collectively responsible for Hitler. The reactionary and extended occupation regime was followed by the long drawn-out trauma of the country's surgical separation into two with the assistance and complicity of Stalin. This veritable act of vivisection was only compensated for, and above all partially masked, by the efforts of international capital as a whole during the cold war to use the western part of Germany as a shop-window for their prosperity.

For many a long year, capital was forced to put up with paying this whole "social wage". Alongside repeated unsuccessful attempts to make up for this in other areas (real wages, productivity, etc.), it never stopped trying in every possible way to weaken working people and to prepare the conditions for a general assault on their rights and gains. Step by step, exploiting every opportunity and helped by the complacent and often complicit leaders of the workers' movement, the capitalist class nibbled away unceasingly at the scope and extent of the advantages working people had gained. But above all they acted to reduce the latter's strength and ability to resist by corrupting and suborning the general staffs of their organisations. It continued the already long process of domesticating the trade unions, and also of breaking up their unity using rival and competing leaders. Working people's right to defend themselves was, little by little, patiently reduced and increasingly strictly regulated, so that strikes and demonstrations – not to mention other forms of direct action – were confined and fettered in a rigid and repressive legal straightjacket.

For all this, the European capitalist class were not able to

claw back all the concessions they had been forced to give. But, more and more threatened by shrinking profit margins and the international situation, they were forced to take drastic steps to take back the reforms and improvements they had previously conceded. At the same time they tilted the structure of their system towards something that looked more lucrative: the supremacy, not to say dictatorship, of finance and its bastard child, speculation.

Capital's frontal attack – and the fall of the USSR

The global offensive was unleashed by Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the US. Thatcher soon faced a formidable miners' strike, and even though they were left in the lurch by the bureaucracies of the other unions, the miners stood up to the government's offensive as long as they could. Their defeat was the signal for a general offensive right across Europe. It was the beginning of a great general frontal attack on working people's gains, an attack whose origins, however, lay much earlier. Never forget that the capitalist class had spent years carefully honing their weapons for this great offensive.

It is also important to emphasize that the continent-wide scope of this offensive was supported by strong, allegedly socialist, parties led by François Mitterrand in France, Gerhard Schröder in Germany and Tony Blair in the UK, ably assisted by bureaucrats at the helm of so-called Communist Parties.

The bourgeoisie's "European" project fitted in with the trend towards the concentration of capital and offered the means and the tools to consolidate and boost this offensive. So the general attack on the rights and gains of working people known as "neo-liberalism" was centred on the "European" institutions in Brussels, Strasbourg and Frankfurt. Each section of the European bourgeoisie gained at least three advantages from this. The first was unquestionably that it allowed them to shelter their own anti-working class offensive behind the attractive screen of building a united Europe. The second

advantage resulted from the fact that it appeared as if policies and measures directed against the interests of working people emanated from a centre in Brussels and each individual country was merely carrying them out; this appearance implied that nobody in any particular country was to blame, so that nobody in a given country could be held to account. The third and last advantage rested on the fact that this centre, detached from any real political and social life, is so profoundly anti-democratic and the majority of its members so anonymous, that any struggle against it is impractical, not to say impossible, within the normal framework of democratic politics; its chiefs and their staff are parachuted in anonymously, unelected and without apparent qualifications. It is a monstrously distended bureaucracy which abuses the whole idea and conception of Europe, while in reality it is nothing but a scurrilous parasite unable to achieve anything, let alone a European entity. On the contrary, this overblown, very expensive and useless organism is an agent of the capitalist class' main and most pressing objective and acts solely to organise, regulate and supervise its overall offensive and to destroy systematically the rights and gains working people have won.

Shortly after the concerted attack on working people's rights intensified in this way, a historical event of considerable importance gave a new and extra boost to the capitalist class and their offensive. At the same time, it both directly and indirectly weakened working people's resistance. There is no doubt that the collapse of the Soviet Union stiffened the capitalists, consolidated their position and increased their confidence. Quite apart from what anyone thought about the fall of the USSR, and despite the disastrous role of the bureaucracy which was both its manager and its grave-digger, the whole world working class and working people everywhere lost an advanced post and a precious base for their goals of emancipation. For how long we do not know, the relationship of forces has tilted clearly to the advantage of the capitalist

class and to the detriment of working people.

Capital and all its devoted supporters, in a rush of blissful satisfaction and smug arrogance, crowed their overweening self-satisfaction and arrogance to all and sundry, culminating when one of their intoxicated “thinkers” even proclaimed the end of history. In any case, the sequel was clearly more and stronger cynical and shameless attacks by capital and its supporters and a confused and chaotic retreat by workers forced onto the defensive. Over the last twenty years or so workers have continued to retreat more and more markedly. Some of their big organisations, following leaders already integrated into the system, have identified themselves with the temporary victors, while others have melted like butter in the sun or simply vanished. Unions, too, which used to be official defenders of working people, have, under the leadership of inveterate bureaucrats, publicly become “social partners” of vengeful capital. Even the sinister warning creaks of a system in temporary – but nevertheless alarming – crisis did nothing to disturb these good folks’ deep content.

Shock therapy disguised as “reforms”

In this state of artificially induced euphoria, bumptious capital nevertheless went on reducing, cutting and one by one taking back the advantages working people had won, limiting, circumscribing and slimming down their reforms. All these good people were brutally awoken from their pleasant reverie by the alarm bells of the latest great crisis. We are right in it now, but there is no point going into detail about that here. Everybody knows perfectly well that to reduce the negative impact on themselves and to get out of the crisis, the capitalist class and their system – as is their nature – are doing everything they possibly can to put the whole burden of dealing with and “solving” the crisis onto the backs of working people. However, what is less clear to a lot of people ? because it is hidden ? is the fact that the crisis is being used as a pretext to ratchet up out of all proportion

the scale and force of capital's murderous offensive, which is bearing down on the people of Europe like a tornado.

Governments of every type are shamelessly presenting the destructive attacks they inflict as "reforms". This viciously abuses the traditional attachment working people have to genuine past reforms which actually tangibly improved their lives. Sadly, the unanimous din from the opinion-formers means this pernicious deception has contaminated the whole of society. More seriously, the general staffs of the left parties and of the unions use the same dishonest terminology, whose purpose is precisely to camouflage the dismantling and destruction of the very same genuine reforms in the near and distant past. That is how the "troika" – which has assumed right of attorney over Greece's financial affairs – commands and supervises the stripping and deprivation of the working people of their gains and rights while all the time presenting this destruction as "one-off structural reform" for the "benefit" of the Greek people. As we all know, language and choice of words are never innocent.

Here "disaster capitalism" is applying the "shock doctrine" used more or less all over the world as described by the journalist Naomi Klein. Her book has never been refuted or disproved. (While we are on this subject, there is no doubt at all that her accusations are true and supported by a mass of proven facts. What you can hold against her is that she presents this whole scandalous and revolting situation as an excrescence, a deviation within a healthy capitalist system, whereas it is its essence in its present phase of decline, naturally woven into the very fabric of its existence.) What is happening in Greece – and this is just the prelude – gives us a foretaste of the determination of the capitalist class and its acolytes to squeeze the very last halfpenny out of a people who they have (most democratically) quarantined so that they can be offered up to the tender mercies of "the markets", i.e. to capitalists usurious to the marrow of their bones.

For Europe's working class and millions of working people, the most important thing to understand is that what is happening is no accident or passing whim, not some passing attitude on the part of capitalism arising just from this particular crisis. Get your heads round this: you should expect absolutely nothing from the capitalist system and its servants. They themselves are all telling us that their society is ill-suited to meeting the needs of working people, that it cannot do it. They keep repeating the mantra that working people are to blame for "living beyond their means", but this merely recognises and confirms that their system really is not able to guarantee the advantages and rights people rely on. That is something that really is "beyond their means". Indeed, thinly-veiling an implied threat of punishment, they have decided to dismantle and end all the previous social gains for once and for all in order to bend working people into the narrow straitjacket of their moribund system's stunted "means".

An historic turning point

We are at an historic moment. In the past, the capitalist class launched successive attacks aimed at reducing the gains working people had made, culminating in a general offensive by Thatcher and co. which exploited the weaknesses of the workers' movement. Now the capitalist system is using the crisis to develop a final all-out assault on working people. It is not just another skirmish or even a partial or isolated confrontation, such as we have often seen in the past, nor even their subsequent extension and development into a general offensive. It is a new stage over and above that, where the ferocity, extent and depth of the blows struck and our capitalist opponents' resolute firmness of purpose absolutely all reveal their determination to go all the way. One further proof of this implacable determination is their peculiar insistence on ravaging gains even beyond the point where the attacks deliberately reduce, indeed annihilate, any resources that offer a potential way out of the crisis. Now it is the

turn of Italian working people to sit in the hot seat: others are not far behind ...

In such a threatening situation, you can only welcome the fact that people get angry in the face of so much deceit and malice and express that anger publicly. There are more and more of them all over the world, an obvious sign – following the spectacular and uncompleted risings by a series of peoples in North Africa and the Middle East – of a reawakening of working people that it still groping for a way forward. All of these expressions of anger and protest in place of resignation and fatalism are in themselves precious as the first signs of incipient consciousness of the threatening reality. But bearing in mind the enormity of what is at stake, the global extent of the conflict and the enemy's unyielding determination, passive indignation and verbal protest are helpless. Those in power, by the way, simply see them as public disorders, at worst annoying, or maybe as street entertainment. Annoyed or amused, they are not going to change by one iota their destructive plans. You really need to do a lot more. In this respect you have to salute the Portuguese working people whose powerful general strike has shown us how to fight. There is no doubt that Greek working people, who have been savagely attacked by capital, will find a path to the kind of vigorous struggle they have always waged over the years. There is also no doubt that other European countries will follow the same path.

The response must be international

Anyone who will not put up with cuts and measures that destroy their rights and advantages, or with present and future austerity plans, and wants to oppose them, needs to get their heads round the idea that this struggle goes far beyond national boundaries. Capital's frontal attack is international, even if it is carried out on national soil and tailored to fit each specific national set of circumstances. The enemy is everywhere the same. Consequently, struggles

confined within the framework of one or another nation, fragmented and isolated from the others, lack the necessary strength to repel attacks that are international in nature and to force into retreat an adversary who is also completely international. Solidarity and links between the various movements in different countries are important but inadequate on their own. We absolutely must field against these degrading plans and actions a movement that is both organically international and also struggles on an international scale. Obviously none of that precludes movements and struggles in each individual country, which provide the base and the framework necessary for any international action.

There is no doubt that what makes a movement of struggle and its action international in character, and what forges its fighting potential, is that it really is international. That is the only way it can measure up to the international character of the plans, actions and offensive of an adversary who is attacking the social position and conditions of life of working people all over the globe, even if what he does varies considerably country by country and continent by continent. Despite the distances that separate them and the great divergence between their respective positions and conditions, that is what solidly unites, for example, working peoples engaged in their own local battles who have recently revolted in the Middle East and North Africa. And that is why there are signs that the working people of Europe are stretching out a fraternal hand to their natural allies, the revolutionary working people of Egypt and Syria engaged in their own bloody struggles.

“Anti-globalisation” a blind alley

Nevertheless, it is necessary to reject calls for an “anti-globalisation” struggle. To characterise the current world economic and political system as “globalisation” is simply wrong. The bourgeoisie and its ideologists have invented and introduced this mystifying term to hide behind its eminently

geographical character the present phase of their **economic** and **social** system, which is that well known capitalism-imperialism that is now in a state of advanced senility. As for capitalism, in its distant and still vigorous youth Marx and Engels described "globalisation" in the Communist Manifesto:

"Modern industry has established the world market ..." "The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country..." "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations."

These notions and concepts of capitalism and its globalisation have long since formed part of the elementary knowledge of the whole of humanity. We are still dealing with the same old system. The changes are only quantitative and moreover are connected with an enormous worsening of its defects.

So it is no surprise that those who have risen to the poisoned bourgeois bait and support "anti-globalisation" are inextricably trapped in confusion. It is very hard for them to shake off the accusation of a bad dose of protectionism, since that is actually the reactionary nationalist and historically outmoded antidote to the world market, with its largely interconnected and interdependent parts. All the noise about "de-globalisation" takes us straight into a dead end alongside the confused and backward-looking prophets of anti productivity, when there are officially a billion people in the world suffering from starvation, not to mention other millions condemned to vegetate in poverty. We should reject capitalist "productivity" spurred on by greed for profit, but we should also fight to expand production to meet the immense unsatisfied needs of humanity.

It is understandable that the first steps of those who want to struggle against the actions of capital should lead them to embrace "anti globalisation" or "anti productivity", but these

first steps lead into a blind alley scarcely different from that of the "indignant ones". These are a one-way street to confusion and disillusionment.

The capitalist class cannot unify Europe

The situation in Europe pits us above all directly against a section of the European capitalist class more or less gathered together into a deeply contradictory, unstable and muddled conglomerate called "Europe" or more precisely the European Union. And it is through this body with its monstrously swollen head that it hopes to impose its outrageous plans to wipe out the social advances working people have won. That objective is its central pre-occupation and determines what it does. From this point of view and for that aim, the governments of the European countries, varied as they are, act as its arms and executive agents, even the ones which appear to keep their distance.

That is why the movement against the attacks and attempts to dismantle and destroy working people's rights needs to be organically international, very concretely Europe-wide, and not simply an occasional adding together of those arising in each country. While reinforcing these, the European movement as a whole needs to concentrate its fire on the capitalists class's self-proclaimed centres (Brussels, Strasbourg, Frankfurt) and on its planned dirty deeds and manoeuvres.

But it is highly important to understand that a continent-wide movement to defend working people cannot be anti-European. On the contrary, it is the capitalist class that struts around in stolen "European" clothes to hide their concerted attack behind fine phrases about Europe. To tell the truth, this exploitative and oppressive class with its train of servile politicians is absolutely incapable of unifying Europe. The birth of this class was all mixed up with the birth of the nations with which its entire life is bound up. Two catastrophic world wars testify to this, obviously from the negative side. And since it was only the appearance of this

class way back in time that gave birth to nations, so only its disappearance will signal that they too will also die away. The several decades of the European venture provide adequate proof that the capitalist class is quite incapable of unifying Europe but at the same time stolidly determined and able to attack and demolish the gains and rights working people have won.

The colossal level of indebtedness, or rather specifically the way the debts are configured in Europe, is one of the main aspects of the current world crisis which has clearly put into relief these two "European" faces of the capitalist class. Instead of bringing them together on the road to a greater European integration, it has laid bare the divisions between countries, even their extreme separation. At the same time as successive capitalist governments have let domestic inequalities build up and grow to a monstrous level, their "European" agents have reproduced and reinforced these many and varied inequalities in their stunted "Europe".

They have already divided Europe into several more or less concentric circles. There is the outer circle of poor, untouchable pariahs waiting for their masters – usually their former imperialist rulers – to save them by letting them into a second circle of the chosen elect. They are tossed around according to the whim of the lords of Europe, the banks and their packs of patronising politicians. Within the circle of the chosen elect, there are two more circles: that of the countries which are doubly elect because they possess the single currency and the others, looked down on pityingly, who have not yet tasted that bitter fruit. Even though they have caught the same disease of debt, small and large, from Poland to the UK, they are not fettered directly to the calamitous consequences of an artificial currency. (Of course, their working people undergo the same frontal attack by capital on their gains. On this there is no country that is different, inside or outside Europe.)

And then, behind the deceptive veil of the European "Union", within an already pretty restricted inner circle, the policy of destroying social rights and gains in order to save the capitalists has increased and enlarged the inequalities between countries. That artificial pseudo-currency the euro has powerfully contributed to extending and increasing these inequalities. The monetary aspect of the crisis has revealed and at the same time deepened not just a "simple" growth in inequality but a veritable fissure between these supposedly "united" countries. The leaders of the "more equal" ones and their entourage speak slightingly about certain "less equal" countries like Greece, Portugal, Italy, etc. which these arrogant leaders disdainfully describe as the "periphery" of Europe, echoing the contemptuous and fearful French mantra about the "dangerous *banlieue*".

Today even this – only yesterday broad and compact – camp of close-knit European insiders has fairly well broken apart. Confronted with a veritable rout in which the concentric circles of a pseudo-Europe are gradually shrinking and tending openly and cynically to be reduced to the so-called "German-French axis", "pro-European" politicians and journalists speak and write openly about the possibility of the euro collapsing while their "Europe" falls apart. It is worth repeating that their artificial money, conceived in the feverish imagination of monetarist dogma and first seeing daylight under the magic wand of voluntarism, is before our very eyes colliding with the realities of a fragmented Europe on which it will inevitably break apart. Glimpsing this abyss, some economists, more lucid than the mass of politicians and other "experts", foresee a much narrower grouping of countries as the only way to furnish a more or less realistic and adequate base for a euro which is being tossed about in the air like a shuttlecock. But one can also see clearly the obvious fear leaders have of taking this route, one more proof that the capitalist class are by their very nature incapable of unifying Europe. The euro is an artificial currency condemned

to disappear, and its collapse will lead to that of the capitalists' counterfeit Europe.

Of course this capitalist class and its leaders will never acknowledge that their European (misad)venture is a fiasco. After all, for better or for worse, it is in line with the move towards greater concentration of capital and guarantees it a wider unrestricted market. But most of all, rickety and deformed as this scaffolding is, it provides a framework, a way and a cover (and now also as a pretext) for organising, pursuing and carrying out its frontal attack on the rights and gains workers have achieved, which is ultimately essential if they are to keep their crumbling system going. On Europe, the sharper the contradiction becomes between reality and the capitalist class's obstinacy, the heavier the burden they will put on the backs of working people.

Dream of a "social" Europe or fight for a working peoples' Europe

So what is needed to fight this general and frontal attack by the bourgeoisie is a broad movement of working people. While they camouflage that attack behind the pretence of dealing with the crisis, that is actually the concrete form in which the attack is taking place. You can see that clearly in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and a succession of other countries. Italy is next on the execution block. Given the nature and extent of these attacks, the movement against them cannot but be international and, more concretely, Europe-wide.

Every single one of the great organisations traditionally supposed to defend and promote the interests of working people stops at the borders of its own country, despite the well-known fact that they have sister organisations in every country in Europe. They do have some sort of European or even international centres, but what stands out is these zombie bodies' total and absolute lack of any European-wide platform or programme. What most of them do is mimic the capitalist class's attitude on Europe, including its general offensive

disguised behind a fig-leaf of "reforms". At most, they embroider lovely little designs to set themselves apart, but always on a canvas provided by the capitalists. What they absolutely will not ever do is work out and put forward a coherent programme for Europe, different from, and opposed to, the one currently in force. Not to mention the essential precondition for such a programme, i.e. a critical global analysis of the capitalist class's programme.

At most, the leaders of these organisations will from time to time humbly petition the "competent authorities" to give Europe a social dimension by introducing a series of social norms among the other conditions and criteria of their "European project". In this connection it is brutally revealing that these norms and social rights have been deliberately set aside and have simply disappeared from all plans for "Europe". These ridiculous Don Quixotes never say a word about that and make fools of themselves when they occasionally flaunt themselves as champions of social rights. It never occurs to them to put forward social demands of their own.

Obviously it is extremely important to defend the gains workers have made in each country, because the general offensive to dismantle them often takes a particular form depending on specific national conditions. But if it stays at this national level, the movement to defend them will be delayed and ultimately defeated. We must both strengthen them and unify them into a Europe-wide movement right from the outset. But such a continent-wide movement cannot be limited to just defending social gains, which at the end of the day is a *negative* objective. The only way it can attain the stature it needs is if it has a *positive* goal to aim for. To put it another way, it is not enough to be *against* something, you have to be fighting *for* something. The banner of this movement must therefore say what it stands for, i.e the construction of a "working people's Europe". Only a struggle with a clear and

open orientation on that scale will be in a position to parry and defeat the capitalist class's frontal attack on working people's rights, an attack embodied in their their pseudo-Europe with all its destructive plans.

It would be pretentious and premature to try to work out in advance a detailed and complete programme for the movement towards a working people's Europe, but we should state some aims and demands which flow from the concrete current situation, as well as some of the principles and methods which ought to guide its activity and help it bear fruit.

Main central demand

First of all there is the crisis of this bankers' Europe which currently centres on the colossal levels of debt faced by all the countries in the euro zone (and the rest), causing intractable quibbling and haggling in search of a "solution" which looks more and more like squaring the circle. (Unless, of course, they can impose massive impoverishment on working people under conditions of totalitarian oppression.) The Greek leader Papandreou made a feeble attempt to escape this implacable vice by suggesting that the Greek people should be consulted over what to do about the debts in a referendum. The moment he said this, all the leaders of Europe and their entourages rose in protest as one man, violently and angrily, as if stung by a scorpion. What impertinence! How dare he ask the people what they thought, when those in charge have already decided to squeeze them and their rights even harder! This vain effort tore away the mask and showed the true face of their runt "Europe".

On the one hand this was one more confirmation that they will never be able to pay back the gigantic debts (which at the same time sheds light on the cynical, off-hand, way these leaders trample democracy underfoot). On the other, it exposed how profound the crisis – or rather death agony – of the euro actually is. How significant that not a single one of all the "socialists" who are are up to their necks in this "Europe"

and its euro stood up for their “comrade” Papandreou.

What is more, the plan to salvage creditor capital (and definitely not the Greek people), born amid so many protracted and painful labours, also required a good dollop of help from – that same capital. Whether the banks are willing to repeat the experience is more than doubtful. Attempts to consolidate the much-touted European fund to help states meet their debts are certainly not welcomed with open arms in every quarter and are in fact in a bit of a sorry state. The queue of potential victims – Italy, Spain and then France – is coming into sharper focus. The billions that have to be paid back are joined each day by further billions as the usurious interest rate keeps going up, set and raised arbitrarily at the insatiable whim of finance capital, or – to use the oracular, antiseptic language of the spin doctors – “the needs of the markets”. They make old Shylock look a mere beginner.

The sorcerer’s apprentices of modern “Europe” are at least partly responsible for setting up this reality, but they cannot contain the infernal mechanism which is at one and the same time their servant and their master. Desperately trying to get a grip on a situation which slips through their fingers and threatens to carry them away in their turn like Papandreou or Berlusconi, they have opened fire on the ratings agencies. These are unquestionably parasites on the system which have the juicy job of informing finance capital how profitable their investments are, using a continuous grading system. Their ratings are scanned as anxiously as the class dunces read their end of term reports. Because the agencies have recently handed downgrades even to their star European pupils in view of their poor economic performance, these former teachers’ pets have turned on them furiously and used some rather choice language over the loss of their cherished triple-A ratings. Just like the ancient Romans who put to death the messenger who brought bad news.

The steady and yet disproportionate growth in the already

monumental weight of debt actually reflects the real economic situation. That, and the quite bleak prospects for the future mean that it will never be possible to pay the debts back. The few more clear-sighted economists and journalists point out that the main reason for the debts is that economic growth is slowing down considerably, if not just marking time. Consequently they point out that the way forward is a series of measures to improve and increase this growth. And they are right – on paper. Growth is not an isolated, separate economic phenomenon which you can stimulate and increase at will. In capitalism, it depends exclusively on the ability of domestic and export markets to absorb the goods produced. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that these markets are more or less saturated, resulting in chronic over-production. In any case, for a long time now markets have been inaccessible to European (and American) goods which are too expensive and (with the exception of Germany) of inferior quality. That is the actual fact hiding behind the insistent calls by a handful of economists and even fewer politicians for production in Europe to be made more competitive. To put it in simple everyday language, they must produce goods at a better price and of a better quality, etc., if they are to sell them against ever tougher competition from the massive quantities of goods at unbeatable prices appearing from the so-called “emerging” countries, made possible by the shameless super-exploitation of their workers.

Of course capital and its economic and political managers, as ever, see a way out of their serious situation, but it is *their* “way out” in line with their system, starting with a savage determination that their debts will be paid in full, come what may. Next, they seek to improve their economic competitiveness, i.e. cut their production costs. This is exactly what they are doing with their continuous attacks – not to say a veritable grand offensive – on the rights and advantages working people have gained, achievements which are now definitively incompatible with this reduction in

production costs, and therefore with their system as a whole. But they do not stop there. In the next wave they will take direct aim at real wages, and this has already started in places. Do not forget that the German capitalists consolidated their industrial competitiveness by drastically squeezing incomes across the board through a wage freeze "agreed" by compliant trade unions, and this has been going on for years!

Don't pay the debts!

All this means that for a prolonged period the crisis is going to get worse and consequently we must expect a redoubled and sharper offensive against working people on all fronts. There can only be one serious response: we must propose a *general refusal* to pay back these debts, which are growing all the time as the interest goes up. This should be the first demand of the Europe-wide workers' movement in connection with their call for "a working people's Europe". At the same time it builds a barrier against further destruction of workers' rights. The series of harsh austerity plans inevitably threatens human civilisation as a whole, a terrible sacrifice on the hideous altar of capitalism in decline.

Historical regression of this sort would not be confined to economic and social conditions; gloom would also spread across political life, and to an extent it already has. No-one should forget that in a similarly tortured situation fascism conquered power in Germany, having already triumphed in Italy. It is no accident that it is already making giant strides in several European countries on the same basis of capitalist convulsions and taking advantage of the same dereliction of their most elementary duties by workers' official leaders. If workers and their representatives remain inactive and turn their backs on this struggle to defend themselves boldly and unite their forces at a European level, there is no doubt that new Hitlers and new Mussolinis will take their place. The worrying progress they are already making in a growing number of countries goes hand in hand with no less disturbing

retreats by the workers' movement. The only effective way to fight these shades of barbarism was and is an energetic united struggle to defend the rights workers have gained and to transform a Europe shrouded in shadows into a free "working people's Europe".

While it would be silly and pointless to try to work out a complete scheme of detailed demands for such a Europe-wide workers movement in advance, it does seem necessary to put forward a few important points and principles to guide its activity.

Against a stunted "Europe" and its banks

The central target is European policy, summed up and concentrated in the offensive described above, and Europe's anti-democratic central institutions. The Europe-wide workers' movement is directed against this policy which is profoundly anti-democratic in every way. The movement will be aimed directly against these so-called European institutions whose establishment, character and methods, in line with their policy, are not merely anti-democratic but brutally opposed to democracy. These tyrannical organs are veiled in an anonymity from behind which they issue and impose binding decrees without appeal, squandering vast sums of money in the process. Swarms of idle parasites gravitate around the innumerable pressure groups, wooing and winning support for this or that group of capitalists. In the name of elementary democracy, the Europe-wide workers' movement will fight these anti-democratic monsters, spectres of a long-vanished feudal rule. The Europe-wide workers' movement should loudly insist that the whole lot of these autocratic, parasitic and enormously expensive bodies should be abolished. And while we are about it, it will fight to establish democratic bodies based on the mass participation of workers and all working people.

Everything about the problems under discussion shows very clearly that this Europe-wide movement will have to have a working-class character. It also means that that this has to

be laid down clearly and unequivocally. This stands out when it comes sketching even in outline the aims, programme and method of such a movement. As the partial mobilisations have so far have emphasised, the Europe-wide workers' movement must beyond doubt be directed against the main threat, i.e. finance capital and its institutions, which are already exploiting the crisis to unleash a large-scale offensive. It is therefore clear that, from the start, the movement must aim to undermine the very basis for this evil offensive. The conviction arises naturally that in doing so it is impossible to disentangle social and economic troubles in general, and the refusal to repay the debts in particular, from the circumstances and position of the banks. Consequently one of the very first demands will be to end banking secrecy which, by the way, will remain a pious wish unless it is accompanied by nationalisation of the leading banks under workers' control.

That is the natural, logical and concrete way to strike a real blow at the source of their power, as opposed to the endless chatter and demagogic fantasies, devoid of both content and consequences, around "regulation" of finance capital and its movement. It is also the only serious way to strike a definite blow against the pressure towards impoverishment. Only a radical step like this, under the watchful supervision of workers, would provide at the same time an indispensable basis for and a means to manage credit vigorously and healthily and get an effective grip on the arbitrary up and down movement of interest rates. Such steps are also important in defending the many thousand small, often family, firms which are being mugged by capital. They are the natural allies of working people and their movement in this struggle. What is downright culpable is the almost total silence on these basic questions emanating from the big "Left" organisations. In this they have absolutely turned their backs on their own – not too distant – past.

Renew the trade unions

To even get off the ground, never mind flourish, a Europe-wide workers' movement absolutely must be allied to the trade unions. Actually there is much more at stake here. The current situation is marked by the general merciless offensive of capital on the one hand and the successive retreats and political and organisational disarmament of the working class and all working people on the other, so the trade unions are a particularly important force and tool in the workers' hands. After all, the sole and original reason for unions is to rally working people together, represent them and defend their interests. They are probably the only levers that actually exist in every country and internationally which can give a decisive boost to their movement, unifying and strengthening them. That is precisely why, ever since they first came into being, capital has always done whatever it could either to destroy and outlaw them, or co-opt them and turn them its own servants.

They have long since succeeded in shepherding unions, through their leaderships, into a sort of "peaceful co-existence" or even class collaboration, sometimes masked or hidden, but suspended and interrupted outright in times of heightened class-struggle. From this point of view, the characteristic trait of recent decades, while capital has been preparing and launching a general offensive, has been the way these trade union leaderships have turned openly and publicly into auxiliary detachments of capital, or, as they themselves put it bluntly, "social partners".

One disastrous consequence of this attack on the innermost core, the most fundamental being of trade unionism, and the kind of behaviour it gives rise to, has been a considerable fall in membership. Massive desertions by workers and working people in general express a lack of trust in trade unions and have reached alarming proportions in every country. One of the most urgent tasks facing the European workers' movement is to put this into reverse and take back the unions – from top

to bottom.

The mass of workers who did stay on in their unions did not follow the same path as the trade union bureaucracies, of class collaboration codified and underlined by their conversion into "social partners". This stopped the rot from spreading too far and prevented the unions from becoming fully integrated into the state. Despite losses, they have actually maintained their independence and thus their ability to get back into the fight.

On this basis, workers and all working people can and should get back into their unions. In any case, the unions belong to them and not any particular individual, least of all the trade union bureaucrats who put at risk the the very existence of unions, whose main justification after all is that they stand up to capital. The decisive argument in this re-conquest of the unions by workers is this: without these organisations and their mobilising capacity, it would be very difficult, not to say practically impossible, to develop a powerful Europe-wide movement of workers.

However, it goes without saying that this campaign to take back the unions means that they must at the same time be turned back into organisations of struggle against capital's offensive. To do this, a platform of union-organised workers must urgently express in words the need to break with class collaboration ("social partnership") in order to achieve independence from bosses and government.

Combative actions, not carnivals

Merely deciding to go for that sort of independence, or just talking or writing ringing declarations about it, will not bring it. It will only take concrete shape through involvement in real, resolute struggle against capital's offensive and all its manifestations. Such a struggle is fundamentally different from all the pretend and pseudo-actions used as a pretext by the leaderships of the "social partner" unions, first and

foremost because it completely denounces capital's offensive and condemns it from every angle. That means clearly-defined and precise workers' demands rather than the kind of puerile gestures requesting "realistic negotiations" which trade union bureaucrats often indulge in. It also requires serious actions and combative, determined demonstrations instead of the happy-go-lucky clownish carnival-like processions used to lull working people into a false sense of security.

A particularly important criterion in this involvement is its international – above all Europe-wide – scope and character. Trade unions have significant links and even an apparatus at an international and European level. The acutely painful situation we are in means that these entirely bureaucratised links and offices must be turned boldly into (or replaced by) pillars of continent-wide struggle against capital's offensive and the machinery of it concentrated in Brussels, Frankfurt and Strasbourg. A series of actions in these centres and across Europe should replace the very occasional European rallies disguised as tame village fêtes.

This shows why there is no way the great mass of working people will be able to re-conquer the trade unions without re-establishing complete workers' democracy within them. Besides freedom of discussion, the main test (success criteria) for such democracy is freedom for tendencies and factions to express their views including the right to organise an opposition. This internal democracy is vitally necessary and the only way to work out the best orientation, achieve the necessary flexibility and make sure that the most appropriate slogans are selected. It is the best guarantee against the deadly snares of capitulation through unprincipled opportunism or marginalisation in sectarian sterility. Of course it is also the only way to give the unions back to working people and make the changes to them that are needed.

A Europe-wide workers' movement can only exist and develop through the involvement of a multitude of political, trade

union, cultural, etc. organisations and movements in the various countries. In the nature of things, these organisations functions on the basis of a very broad spectrum of different conceptions and programmes and a variety of attachments and affiliations. What will unite them and assemble them into a single movement – besides their working-class character – will be their determination to fight back against capital's attacks on the rights working people have won and the gains they have made. In a situation like this, there is only one way to achieve and guarantee on the one hand the unity and integrity of the movement and on the other the freedom and independence of each of its components. That is the historically-proven method of the international workers' movement, the united workers' front. Almost 100 years ago Lenin, one of the great leaders of this movement, summed it up succinctly in the words: "March separately – Strike together!".

This is the only effective way for our broad and diverse movement to achieve its common goal.

December 2011

Solidarity between workers of Serbia and Croatia

A simple solidarity motion will make big waves. More than 20 years after the Vukovar war, where in 1991 the Milosevic regime razed to its very foundations a peaceful working class Slavonian town where Serbs and Croats lived together, Serbian and Croatian workers are stretching a hand out to each other as workers across the frontier. In a Serbia still hostage to its own nationalism and where privatisation is a mafia-

infested as it is in Croatia, the working class has so far had no political or trade union channel through which to express itself. So it has provided itself with a sort of duly-registered citizens' associations in several Voïvodine towns, through which workers have fought through the courts to have mafioso privatisations declared invalid. Here and there they have won. These are not political bodies. Nevertheless, they are the only living and real form of organisation workers have in many towns, and they tend to join together in federations. The existing political parties are too rotten and the trade unions too divided and discredited, and so workers have been forced to find something else on an ad hoc basis. In this struggle they are supported by two students from Belgrade, working on their own account, who have set up a "Movement for Freedom". This also supports attempts to organise by small farmers who have also been completely plundered. As soon as the appeal for solidarity with the Jadrankamen workers in Brac in Croatia was launched, two organisations, "Equality" in Zrenjanin and "Solidarity" in Subotica, where Serb and Hungarian workers are closely mixed together, announced their support. Below is the latter's statement, published in the Croatian Trotskyist journal "Radnicka Borba".

Radoslav Pavlovic

Workers International

Workers' protest in Subotica

"To the workers of Jadrenkamen:

Dear comrades,

We have received your news and your appeal for solidarity to which we cannot remain indifferent. Our citizens' association was born in a struggle on the part of existing and former workers at the "Sever" plant in Subotica to assert our rights. At present we are involved in a struggle to keep this plant going. It used to employ 6000 workers, but now there are only

450. Privatisation has meant that its assets have been pillaged and it has been systematically destroyed, and we want it to be declared invalid. They have smashed the plant up under the watchful gaze of local and national politicians who have collaborated with the owners to make impressive financial gains. Using the same recipe they have destroyed 30 perfectly viable firms in Subotica and the whole of industry in Serbia. That is why one of our objectives is the re-industrialisation of the economy. As your placards say, we too want to work and have control over that work. Your struggle and ours are not isolated cases.

As you can see, workers all over Serbia and Croatia are rising against mafioso privatisation to defend the right to work, to an education, to social security and insurance in old age. The working class of Europe and Latin America is already on its feet. We witness the heroic struggle of the Spanish miners. Over the last few days the workers at the "Viomihaniki Metalleutiki" factory in northern Greece have occupied the plant and manage it themselves.

The maintenance and functioning of society depend uniquely on the working class. It is high time that workers once again became conscious of the power they represent. We should not suffer in silence, but struggle determinedly and unite our struggles. Don't let them use national borders to divide us. Whether at home or abroad the capitalist is the common enemy of those of us who live by our own labour. Only by struggling together can we overcome existing obstacles and save ourselves from capitalist barbarism.

Dear comrades in struggle , we send you greetings from Subotica in the hope that we can work together and confident that together we will win.

OCCUPY – DEFEND – PRODUCE! (*)

"Solidarnost" Citizens' Association, Subotica, 14 July 2012.

President: Vanja DRAGOJLOVIC

(*) This slogan was picked up from Croatian workers. It is

tending to become a recognition sign of workers' struggles

The 'future' the bourgeoisie wants: Back to Mass Poverty

by *Balazs Nagy*

Another day, another worrying news item. One minute a sudden squall blows away the Dutch government's oddly cherished triple-A credit rating; the next, the UK officially announces it is mired in – “double dip” – recession. That most distinguished of French dailies, *Le Monde*, carries a pre-May Day editorial headed “Spanish crisis rocks Europe”. Then the Greek people resoundingly toss out Papademos, the banker “democratically” inflicted on them as chief puppet in a government of marionettes. The first round of the Greek elections was certainly a powerful rejection of the austerity imposed by the bourgeoisie's puny, misbegotten Europe.

Actually the bourgeoisie is in pretty poor shape, both as a whole and in each of its various national formations. The world crisis is far from over, in fact, it looks like getting worse. The bourgeoisie exploits it but suffers from it too, so they are trying even harder to get out of it safely – at the expense of working people, of course, since that is how they do things. So they impose wartime-style policies, on Greece at the moment, but soon on Portugal, Spain and the rest.

Each one in a shock sequence of devastating austerity plans has come with a cynical guarantee that it will finally solve the problem. But in all these countries – especially for working people – things are getting worse by the day. The awful debts are spiralling upwards, the exact opposite of what

was promised. Bloodthirsty capital inflicts these “rescues” from behind a shroud of anonymity that also hides its servants and faceless, unelected and incompetent hangers-on lurking in the shadows of that self-perpetuating authority they loftily but misleadingly call “European Union”.

The Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund), helped and supported by world capital, simply impose colonial satraps on entire countries and dictate their policy. These local henchmen include at least two wily old hands from Goldman Sachs, the US bank notorious for greed and guile. Papademos in Greece and Monti in Italy were both parachuted in – neither of them by way of an election – to run puppet governments in the glorious name of democracy, the creed all these gentlemen lyingly profess to support. They didn’t need to use force, all they had to do was pass on the names, since the existing governments welcomed these bankers as saviours, the majority “socialist” PASOK in Greece no less than the unfrocked “Eurocommunist” bureaucrats in Italy. But as we know, the Greek people resoundingly rejected this arrangement and sent them packing.

Europe’s two-faced architects toil away, producing sinister results

In November-December 2011, I wrote that the way European countries’ debts were spiralling and uncontrollably feeding off themselves as interest rates increased:

“...means that it will never be possible to pay the debts back” (*Stop the Destruction of Social Gains*, Socialist Studies Pamphlet, p.17) and that “for a prolonged period the crisis is only going to get worse” (*ibid.* p.18).

Indeed, the bourgeoisie’s public affairs people (pretty well all their lower-ranking agents) were doing their fevered best to push these nations over “the brink of the precipice”, to borrow a phrase, not from an opponent of the system, but Patrick Artus, an economist whose devotion to it is beyond

question.

How deep is this precipice? Their Europe has clearly split in two, even the most frankly favoured eurozone bit. You don't need to be clairvoyant to see the tension constantly growing between the two sides, driving them apart by their own momentum like galaxies. The language various countries use about each other is already ripe and it will get worse as the gap grows. Frightened by the outcome of the May elections in Greece, *Le Monde* starts by describing it as "chaos", then, even more amiably informs the Greek people they have "voted the wrong way" and must re-run the election. The certified democrats in Brussels, as ever, blithely ignore reality and assume that they are the true guardians of European unity. You can count on it: the wider the gaps grow between the different parts, the more grimly they will cling to "unity".

Take a closer look at Greece. Not long ago, I and others said how urgent it was for the working people of Europe to respond quickly, in a knee-jerk reaction, as it were, to the call for help from the Greek activists Glezos and Theodorakis. Well, apart from some public voices raised and fraternal action by trade unionists and political activists in the UK, nothing happened. We have to say that for all the many official announcements, one European initiative announced by the general staffs of the trade union amounted to little more than a few very limited local actions. The action as a whole was a washout because the trade union leaders (especially the ETUC, the European Trades Union Confederation) obviously lacked the will. The trade union leaderships couldn't even manage to organise a big action in Brussels to defend Greece's working people against the capitalists plundering them, and their Greek and European agents and touts. There is still time, though, and we must do something.

Thanks to the various "rescue" attempts by its kindly European "saviours", the Greek state is literally falling apart. That unforgettable educator of the proletariat, Antonio Gramsci,

examined and laid bare the "integral state" of capitalism in its dotage. It was actually never particularly robust in Greece anyway, and now it is melting away before our very eyes, exposing at its heart the violence of the repressive apparatus. The parties of corrupt worthies, suspended in mid-air and ordered about by the arrogant, tax-levying financiers who back them, offer barely a threadbare fig-leaf, behind which we can glimpse the menacing profiles of generals. Never forget that throughout the whole history of Greek working people, these mercenaries of capital have drowned them in blood every time they have dared raise their heads. Many people still bear physical and psychological scars from ill-treatment suffered in their gaols not so long ago. No doubt the same torturers are again standing by to force a proud and defiant people to do as capital commands, just as soon as they can get away with it. Their political advance guard, the resolute fascist group, has already appeared on the scene. Fortunately, for the time being they are held in check by the formidable resistance and mobilisation of working people. Also, by throwing out the bourgeois accomplices and agents of austerity, the elections too increased the specific weight of working people. In fact for several years now they have, day in and day out, proudly and indomitably resisted the implacable dictates of the masters of European and international capital, relayed by local stewards cowering behind police lines.

We all know that the general strike is a powerful, redoubtable but highly dangerous weapon which the working class turns to when it has to defy and contest the power of the bourgeoisie, and also as a final warning when its very existence as a class is threatened. Since the attacks started, aimed at reducing this cradle of democracy to a mere colony, and its inhabitants to impoverished natives, the Greek working class has on five occasions risen in an all-out general strike against all those alleged democrats tormenting them in their own country. But they cannot just go on using up their strength in endless

general strikes, any more than their Portuguese and Spanish comrades who are boldly repeating similar tactics. (To grasp the full gravity of the situation, read the interview with Greek philosophy lecturer at London University, Stathis Kouvelakis, with its very precise and striking depiction of the sufferings and the struggles of the Greek people, published in the *Revue des Livres*, Paris, March-April 2012). The more working people fritter away their strength in heroic – but exhausting – actions, the more deaf and unfeeling their persecutors become. Indeed these persecutors grow bolder, as if trying deliberately to provoke a situation where they can inflict a death blow.

Trade unions must mobilise

Out of the blood and toil of the resistance put up by significant sectors of the European working class, one irrefutable fact emerges: to halt the bourgeoisie's general offensive, we need to mount a united struggle on a comparable – Europe-wide – scale. When it comes to blocking these attacks on the rights and gains working people have achieved, and driving the offensive back on itself, struggles confined to individual countries one after the other in isolation are doomed to fail. And a partial success on a national level, as in Greece, at least partially strengthens one section of the enemy too, and exasperates others. This is true even though the attacks are fine-tuned to reflect the particular features of each country. It would be a fatal mistake to fall into a nationally-blinkered outlook, when Greece, Portugal and Spain make it painfully clear that struggles which are national in scope will not do, because they can be isolated.

However, the unions do have the experience needed to avoid this and similar snares. Even leaders who up to now have been lured by the siren voices of a false, lying “partnership” with states and employers against workers are now caught up in a struggle against capital's offensive and its plans to reduce Southern Europe to slavery. Indeed, faced with the distress

people there are in and the threat of demoralisation, these leaders have shown some desire to sharpen their act and prepare a more consistent struggle. The unions have thrown themselves into the fight in Greece, Portugal and Spain, and they are getting ready to do the same in Italy and elsewhere. Even in France the unions have started to stir.

The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) is the most significant centre of working class activity in the country. During the recent election campaign, its Executive Committee roundly condemned the policy of outgoing President Sarkozy. Everybody knows that the deposed President was the bourgeoisie's second-in-command next to Merkel. He was the Godfather of *Blitzkrieg* against the working class, which he toughened, honed and nurtured. Without him, the European Fiscal Treaty of evil memory would hardly have got off the ground. In response, on 13 March, the CGT Executive Committee warned that if he was re-elected, this "... would almost certainly open a new round of severe social regression ... and French society ... would sink deeper and deeper into crisis". Barely a month later its leader, Bernard Thibault, underlined this point in an interview with *Le Monde* newspaper where he stated that: "all European trade unions are opposed to the European Treaty (initiated by Sarkozy) which generalises social austerity and insecurity".

Although we should not foster illusions, this is a definite step towards undoing the repellent and paralysing straitjacket of "social partnership" which holds back and stifles working people's struggles. Limited as such statements are, they mean a lot because they break the unions' silence over the "political neutrality" which is one of the main planks of "partnership". (Sarkozy understood this perfectly. He immediately re-vamped his "simply" anti-social rhetoric into downright fascist eruptions, particularly venomous about benefits "scroungers" and "busybody mediators" (particularly trade unions), not to mention other favourite fascist targets

such as immigrants ... most of whom are workers. He thus revealed his spontaneous tendency towards fascism. This led the other big trade union centre, the originally Christian – and much more conciliationist towards employers and their state – Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail [CFDT], to protest as well).

These French trade union leaders are perfectly well aware – particularly the CGT – that the Greek and other working people in Southern Europe cannot win on their own and isolated each in their own country because they are up against a stronger enemy. They cannot win any tangible results that way, never mind score an actual success. The only at all realistic and practical way to fight successfully is internationally, specifically on a Europe-wide level. The CGT is particularly well placed to launch and organise such a fight to bring real aid to the working people of Europe: Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, not to mention the French and all the rest.

They have taken a first step, and now we all hope they will see it through. You can only say: “well done and get on with it”, hoping they will link up with sister bodies across Europe at present thrust into still scattered and unequal struggles. That is also the only way they can escape the humiliating, degrading, wounding and paralysing chains of a “partnership” where they are the servants of the master. The CGT has the depth of resources needed to initiate and deploy such a struggle along with its sisters in Europe and to mount an immediate and directly *international* line of defence, full of ambitious actions aimed at the focus and source of the attacks in Brussels.

Nobody can tell in advance how the French unions, especially the CGT, will react to capital’s offensive, which without a shadow of a doubt will grow stronger. It would be terrible if the internal conflict over the succession caused by Thibault’s approaching retirement from presidency of the confederation

were to provide the leadership with an excuse for not coming up with the favourable response people expect.

Economists and experts at a loss, ill at ease and at odds

Unsurprisingly, with a few rare and muted exceptions, the vast majority of economists and the countless self-appointed experts were at first completely stunned and overwhelmed by the scope and violence of the crisis. Think about it.

Trained in years of the all-embracing hegemony of (so-called "neo") liberalism (although that was knocked back for a while by the general crisis of 1929-1937), not one of them anticipated the general upheaval and they have still not got over the shock. They imbibed the "self-regulating markets" dogma of "neo" liberalism with their mothers' milk, so to speak, and it has permeated and contaminated every pore of society. They were totally dazzled and poisoned by it. The main, monetarist, segment of this fetishistic catechism (M. Friedman and his many imitators) unanimously announced that crises belong among the imperfections of a distant past. Consequently his followers and disciples have classified the frequent present-day partial and unconsummated – and therefore incomplete – manifestations of crisis under one or another purely linguistic category in order to efface, obliterate and/or corrupt their meaning, thus falsifying reality. So today's vulgar economists dub these manifestations "dysfunctions". Their utter and sincere stupefaction in the face of a social tempest therefore speaks volumes.

Their economic credo refused to acknowledge crises and expressed and promoted a veritable infatuation with trivialities, so of course they had to wage a crusade against Marxism. It was (and is) the other side of the (forged) coin of their paeans to neo-liberalism. To justify their crusading zeal, these economists did not hesitate to use as ammunition the repulsive practice and anti-Marxist ideology of Stalinism, although they are perfectly well aware that he and his supporters entirely liquidated the party of the revolution,

physically exterminating its members in their tens of thousands, and locking them up in their millions. Unable to refute Marx's theories, they relentlessly condemn the Stalinist epigones who falsified him and whom they actually applauded not so long ago. As for Marx, Engels and Marxist theory, they at most poke inane fun at it, on the assumption that the mere mention of the vile Stalin and his regime releases them from any obligation to deal with it properly. One can only welcome any who, although not themselves Marxists, did not howl with these wolves.

How instructive it is, we must add here, that the leaderships of socialist or social democratic workers' parties have long since publicly and officially repudiated Marxism, starting with the German SPD at its Bad Godesberg Congress in 1959. This made it easier for them to spread their policy of class collaboration in often violent opposition to the theory and practice of class struggle. As for the Stalinist parties, fed with the dogmas of a falsified, distorted, deformed and formal, Marxism, their leaderships finally slyly abandoned even those stale, insipid leftovers. They too did so in the attempt – admittedly more difficult in their case – to line up with other collaborators with the bourgeoisie in denying and recanting the class struggle. Some of them went so far as to throw the very name “Communist” overboard.

So it is quite understandable that the intellectuals' great turn to the right on the heels of a succession of defeats for the workers' movement and a series of gyrations on the part of their failed leaders, was also marked by a recantation and massive rejection of Marxism. This is not the place to examine it in detail, just to note that besides historians, philosophers, literati, etc, it also involved a turn by economists, not merely away from Marxism but also from Keynesianism, that mongrel refuge to which the bourgeoisie resorted when forced to make concessions to a menacing working class.

Neo-liberalism is particularly clueless in the rather significant matter of Europe, or specifically, how to unify it. This was the goal that its initiators set themselves, although they were also clueless about how to achieve this happy consummation. Now in practical reality, the process has barely started and, contrary to expectations, vows and promises, not to mention specific statements, it has already produced striking inequality which is actually growing ever faster: inequality between the classes in each country and inequality between individual countries. It has become a common topic of general and somewhat anguished discussion. Even economists normally anxious to sell the ideology of Europe have a great deal to say about how it presents itself and takes shape; the ones who notice it anyway, unlike its stubborn devotees – and there are still lots of them – who ignore the evidence or don't consider this inequality worth bothering about.

But those who do actually worry about such an about-turn from supposed progress towards unity into its exact opposite present a spectacle of various stages of disenchantment. First the stupefaction provoked by the this cruel blow undermining what had been reassuring certainty; then growing incredulity, doubt or downright scepticism; finally, bypassing any actual explanation of the phenomenon, they lose themselves, divided and perplexed, in conjectures and misty and evasive speculation. And so they launch into fantastic wanderings, each one as extravagant as the other is absurd.

(I am not talking here about the backward-looking dreams of “de-globalisation” or a “non-productivist” economy, nor their equally reactionary and illusory twins, protectionism and the call to consume only products of the national soil. Such views undoubtedly flourish as distorted side-effects of the mass rejection of the situation provoked by the Europe of capital. They particularly flourished in the overheated atmosphere of the French election campaign, for example, during which the

more prudent and thoughtful politicians, alongside a shrinking remnant of the liberal bourgeoisie and fundamentally disorientated petit bourgeois, clashed with official defenders of the hated capitalist offensive. At the same time there were, limited still but significant, attempts to beat a path for working people, and don't forget for an instant, on the opposite side, the reactionary but dangerous disquisitions of the fascists.)

So it is absolutely normal that in the intellectual desert created as a sort of bonus under the omnipresent protection of capital, practically all specialists and experts in "economic matters" (leaving aside a few rare dissident voices) are sincerely stupefied by how this glaring inequality has arisen in a Europe unexpectedly torn apart. This is really too much, especially given that they had been blind to the approaching crisis in the first place. The surprise and astonishment is all the greater since for decades, lined up behind the capitalists and those responsible for their European mission, they endlessly sang the praises of a supposed convergence of nations, first the Common Market and then the European Union. They were gripped by unshakeable faith in fraternal cooperation and solidarity between countries – which to tell the truth was closer to St Augustine's "I believe it because it is absurd" than to any objective analysis. It was a rude awakening, so painful that they still keep step with the gurus of capital and their European representatives, mechanically repeating all the twaddle they come out with.

However, the obvious failure of all these "rescues" and the growing sufferings of the people thus "rescued", not to mention their growing resistance, raise painfully embarrassing questions. Doubts emerge, new ways out are sought, and this accentuates and multiplies differences between them over a possible solution. To go by some spokespersons, the disarray among them is practically total, and that is confirmed from outside by how often they change their minds and the obvious

contradictions in the positions they put forward.

The real meaning of inequality in Europe

The unhealthy imbalance developing between the eurozone countries (but not sparing the others) as the crisis unfolds has its impact on how people think, including economists. First of all it is important to grasp that this inequality is not just a fixed difference between these countries placed neutrally side by side, arising from their different development. Of course there are such differences between countries, marked by their different geographical locations and their varied natural attributes, but above all shaped by and steeped in their own specific histories. I am not talking here about the inequality that arises from their history and heritage, although that continues to influence the one I do mean.

The growing inequality between countries in question here is not exactly the same as the one between classes, although there is an organic link between the two. It is a living, dynamic relationship, in a sustained movement, which measures, compares and describes the relationship between countries and their economic development. What is this relationship all about? And where does this inequality come from?

To reply to these questions, the first essential thing to grasp, which should never be forgotten, is that this inequality develops between different countries with an identical *capitalist* system. The accent is on the *capitalist* character of their mode of production and their society, which implies that the inequality between these countries develops inevitably, as if dictated by fate, in line with their respective powers and capacities. Now, one of the principal characteristics of this system of exploitation is *competition*, which governs economic life and regulates social relations, even reaching right inside social classes.

Private ownership of the means of production and trade and

hence of the finance system drives and compels their owners, the capitalists, into a savage struggle for a bigger share of the markets. This competition is so significant and powerful that it goes beyond the economic field to invade all sectors of social, political and cultural life. It was no accident that Marx exposed and analysed it in all its manifestations and from every angle all the way through *Capital* and all his joint work with Engels, where they presented and examined its enormous power which drove the capitalists not simply to renew production by repetition, but to improve it constantly and without respite, the logical consequence of the fact that they are placed in ferocious, implacable and merciless competition.

This bitter competition has inevitably and constantly led to the concentration and centralisation of the means of production, trade and finance embodied in powerful monopolies that eliminate their victims either by absorbing or by destroying them. This struggle, determined and to a large extent conditioned by history and heritage, has gone on and still goes on between these monopolies. The ever fiercer competition between these giants of capitalist concentration has led them to become intertwined with states. The state constitutes a natural crucible and forcing-houses for monopolies in a dense entanglement in which it serves as their protector and also as their normal and legitimate representative. As a consequence, the relationship of forces and the competition between these monopolies are embodied and at the same time manifested in those between nation states and their mutual relations, not necessarily of course always in their crude, i.e. immediate and brutal, forms, but mediated by many factors, above all political ones.

This unbridled race for profit which sets the capitalists against each other in a continual antagonistic struggle is "regularised" and administrated by the nation-state. But obviously, it crosses borders and is expressed, decisively, within the framework of the so-called European Union which has

neither borders nor customs barriers. This binary or hybrid, but in any case mongrel (both national and at the same time European) character of capitalism on this continent is one element in the flagrant and explosive contradiction of so-called "European unification". It is so visible and striking that many economists and even politicians, denounce it, without, of course, explaining it, and particularly not by any reference to its real substance, and in any case without any of those responsible for such a calamity, or indeed their critics, being in the slightest degree put out by it all.

Such a struggle to the death by capitalist competition – and an extensive international literature testifies to how savagely brutal it is – has nothing to do with the daily diet of soothing music about fraternal solidarity and European cooperation. The propagandists of capital draw on the biblical image of an encounter between the lion and the lamb, but they would do better to study the fables of La Fontaine. That would teach them something about the reality of the manic struggle to survive, transposed into capitalist economy and society as intransigent and omnipresent competition. If they cannot study Marx, whom they reject and slander, this at least would give them some food for thought. As for Lenin – on monopoly, for example – lyingly considered to be a precursor of Stalin, they don't even mention him.

Since all they have to go on are the defective resources of vulgar economics, it is perfectly logical that they fail to see the essence of the matter: that behind the ringing phrases about unification and cooperation, tempered by "gentlemanly" good-manners and above all hidden by the virtuous veil of Europe, what governs relations between nation-states is unbridled, merciless competition between capitals. These commentators also close their eyes to the fact that, the better to conceal their starring roles, the real animators and representatives of capital hide behind stage extras like Barroso, Van Rompuy, Lady Ashton, Juncker and co, whose

considerable prominence as wreckers of social advances is inversely proportional to any real personal significance.

It would be both tedious and unnecessary to recapitulate here the whole history of this Europe in all its consecutive stages. However, particular episodes like the establishment of the Common Market and the introduction of the single currency certainly do underline one fundamental point: in the many confrontations over economic competition, these measures and arrangements unfailingly gave considerable additional advantages to the biggest and strongest, the best prepared and the best equipped.

Dismantling customs barriers and allowing the free movement of capital, *uniform* measures applied to countries whose economies were clearly *different* in their structures and levels of development (not to mention any other differences) acted (and still act) as powerful and violent levers in favour of the strongest at the expense of the weakest. The brutal and iniquitous introduction of the euro – a fraught act, but one that was absolutely necessary to complete and consolidate these measures, stimulate them and breathe life into them – forced all these countries to abandon currencies that were issued in line with their actual economic strength and level of development. From then on they had to adapt to a single currency which actually expressed those participants with the most developed economies. And so the euro acted as a tonic for the biggest and deadly poison for the rest.

The consequences and natural effects of these measures very soon showed themselves and acted more and more destructively. Obviously they did not reflect the outpourings of exalted balderdash about the supposed unification of Europe. Contrary to these fairy stories, they followed and expressed (as they still do) the logic of the economic laws discovered by Marx, in this case those of capitalist competition between unequal countries and its inevitable products: concentration and enrichment of the capitals of the one side and weakening,

impoverishment and pauperisation of the other.

The bitter, sustained competition between capitals and their monopolies within this European “unity” divided by nation states has thus take on the form of a certain (albeit managed) rivalry between them. But in the way of such things, it is considerably tamed, domesticated and more or less brought under control, and therefore concealed, by their European “unity”. Nevertheless, it was this competition that structured and then reinforced a hierarchy between the strongest and the others beneath the appearance. Then “natural selection” produced one nation-state, “the first among equals”, at the expense of the rest. In this case, the rivalry produced a situation where bourgeois Germany gradually emerged in a dominant position. She has been assisted (until very recently), but from a long way back, by France, whose bourgeoisie’s strength is withered, and which is vassal-like, complaisant and deferential towards that first-in-line of the capitalist class. The losers line up in a long chain whose links are twisting and writhing, with the weakest one at the end – Greece – in the process of breaking.

German capital in command, served and feared by attentive – but refractory – satellites

Needless to say, Europe’s media rarely even mention how the economic structures of member countries are evolving in terms of their respective performance, i.e. inter-European trade, never mind paying any natural and regular attention to or analysing this. Nonetheless, although finding them involves a childish but instructive game of hide and seek, these propaganda machines do drop occasional morsels of the information for which we hunger. These meagre hints do allow us to form a disjointed but nevertheless correct and faithful picture.

The major share of each European country’s foreign trade – and this includes the eurozone – is with other member states. Capitalist competition does take place between them, and even

though it is codified and therefore alleviated somewhat, it produces victors and victims in the European setting. The big ones in front brutally eliminate the weaker ones who come second, or swallow them greedily. Big fish eat little fish. In the present crisis they gobble them up faster and in greater numbers.

Today, Germany conducts between 40% and 50% of her foreign trade within the eurozone. In consequence, by 2011 almost half her *positive* trade balance amounting to 157 billion euros came from the eurozone. To make up for that, Spain for example lost 47.2 billion euros in the same inter-European trade, Italy 24.6 billion euros, Greece 20.8 billion and Portugal 14.3 billion. This imbalance (to put it mildly), or rather genuine act of pillage on the part of German monopolies, does not mechanically cover the whole inequality, but it explains its basic texture, since the volume of overseas trade, particularly with China and the US, which also places the weakest at a disadvantaged, is oddly and clearly lower than that between European countries themselves.

To stay with Europe, it would be interesting to round out the figures given above. That same year, 2011, brought a mind-boggling negative trade balance of 84.5 billion euros for the French bourgeoisie, for all their notoriously enthusiastic attachment to German capital. And just to show that the whole of Europe is drawn in, even beyond the eurozone, this colossal loss in France's foreign trade is eclipsed by that of the UK. That same year of 2011 the latter showed a loss of 117.4 billion euros, even though the country was in a slightly different economic setting, but still carried out 40% of her foreign trade with continental Europe.

Other figures reveal a situation that both arises from the development of an unequal relationship between countries and at the same time creates conditions for it to get very much worse. This is the role of industry as the spinal column of the economic body, and also the role of its offspring, the

industrial working class, as the bearer and harbinger of human progress. I shall concentrate on France, and occasionally the UK, leaving aside the far worse-affected countries of the south. France's trade deficit in *industrial* products, which by the year 2000 already amounted to 15bn euros, reached a dizzying 92bn euros in 2011. This was the path of galloping de-industrialisation, itself aggravated by the crisis, simultaneously the cause and the consequence of capitalist competition.

In 2010, *industrial* jobs represented a mere 12% of all employment in France, compared with 16% in 2000. In Germany, on the other hand, the comparable figure was still 19% in 2010, also down from 21% in 2000, but the fall was thought "normal" since it reflects "usual" retrenchment and rationalisation within the continual concentration of capitals and quest for higher productivity. Although it stands outside the eurozone, the proportion is even worse in the UK, where 14% for industrial jobs in 2000 shrank to 9% in 2010.

As a consequence, in 2010, French industry, for example provided 13% of what is termed "value added", down from 18% in 2000, whereas in German this same "value added" by industry was still 25%. As for the UK, the respective figures are 20% in 2000 and 15% in 2010.

(I shall refrain for the moment from criticising and frankly rejecting this misleading and mongrel concept of "value added", because that would take us too far afield. May I just state that it was dreamed up and spread and is still used by bourgeois vulgar economics to mix up the real new value provided by productive labour with the contribution of capital – unavoidable in this society but which remains *passive* – in an almost inextricable magma).

Be that as it may, despite the persistent shortage of data and deceptive concepts like "value added", these figures suggest a real general tendency which must be clearly more marked and

devastating in and for the countries of Southern Europe. It clearly expresses a relationship of German domination with varying degrees of dependency on the part of all the other countries in Europe. That is the precise content of this famous and well-known unequal relationship, although as one can now see, it is a rather vague expression because it blurs the precision of its essence.

At this point it is extremely important to be specific about the overall character of the struggle unfolding in Europe. I have already mentioned, but should re-emphasise, that within the framework of nation-states and behind the façade of and often mixed up with the inequality and opposition between them, this struggle is between capitalists on the one hand and the working class, alongside all working people, on the other. Its class content is masked because it is split and segmented by the nation states and it is all the more likely to appear to be a difference and a struggle carried out between these nation states because there is genuine rivalry between them, animated by real differences between capitalist groupings.

However the mask drops each time the fundamental interest of capital's offensive unleashes yet another attack on working people in one austerity plan after another. Local bourgeoisies tend to fissure, most of them immediately lining up as "compradors" (colonial natives who act as the agents of the colonising power – Trs.) of the dominant European capital. Then the situation becomes clear, as it did recently in Greece; that is, the antagonistic confrontation of the fundamental classes tears away the national veil, while wavering sectors of the national bourgeoisie, in the minority for the moment, seek a way out of the vice in the arms of fascism.

Consequently, it is nothing to do with a struggle *against Greece*, for example, as the Greek scholar Kouvelakis (quoted above) – who describes it rather effectively – seems to understand the torpedoing of Greece, an impression shared by a

good number of Greek political activists. Of course it is undeniably true that European, particularly German, capital, has a voracious hunger to get its hands on Greece's richer pickings by destroying the resistance of her working people. However, the main attack is on the working people of Europe as a whole, concentrated for the moment on their most vulnerable, Greek, section.

To make the same point from the opposite angle, it would be absurd to think that Germany's predominance in Europe is to do with just that country as such on her own. Germany is also divided into the same opposing classes as every other country. German capital thrust itself above other "national" capitals by subjugating and enchaining "its" own working class through a whole system of brutal and refined restrictions of their rights and the suppression of a series of other gains they had made previously. In other words, German working people have already undergone "their" austerity plan without "their" state even being deep in debt, a plan which was a *prerequisite* for the supremacy of Germany's monopolies. Decisions imposed by Gerhard Schröder, the leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in the early 2000s firmly ejected the "social" from the famous description of Germany as a "social market economy", all done with the traditional servile compliance of the whole trade union bureaucracy.

It is no accident that, in response to the combative mobilisation of working people in several European countries, the German working class has also raised its head. Recently, it has forced the leaders of the IG Metall (engineering) and Verdi (public service) unions to call a series of strikes and demonstrations to impose a massive wage increase and other improved conditions on the bourgeoisie. European working people as a whole should be their natural allies, just as German working people should be the European proletariat's indispensable partners in struggle. The basis and prerequisites for this fighting alliance are ready and just

waiting to be put into actual practice.

Once more we should note, coming back to inter-European trade, that its precise content and disappointing results are carefully concealed behind a seductive but misleading screen of "cooperation". At most, the numerous professional confusionists and brainwashers are forced to acknowledge this growing inequality, since the evidence is palpable. However, disconcerted in the face of this troublesome reality, they merely mention it without venturing any explanation. At the very most, and very rarely, they mention as an isolated fact the power of the giant German monopolies. From time to time one sees the odd reference to groups such as the steelmakers and engineers Thyssen-Krupp, the electrical and electronics giants Siemens and Bosch, or the world's largest chemical group, BASF, not to mention the pharmaceutical firm Bayer, etc. But they never mention a single word about the role these monopolies play or their place in European and international industry. We know a little bit more about the car industry, but even there nothing about what matters, i.e. inner conflicts. But it is no secret at all that while the European car industry has been wiped out except for FIAT in Italy and Renault and PSA (Peugeot-Citroën) in France who have been pretty well turned upside down and are, like the Swedish car-makers, struggling, the German monopolies rule at an international level. It is a well-known fact that Volkswagen, having seen off Opel and already swallowed Daimler-Benz, dominates the world car industry and long since gobbled up Czech "Skoda" and Spanish "SEAT", to mention just two.

A few things that need saying

The great majority of economists and journalists are bourgeois propagandists who embroider the official line, instead of seriously and objectively examining the economic, social and political processes at work in Europe. They point the finger at China, who is mainly blamed for Europe's economic ruin and desolation, and accuse her of being the gravedigger of

European industry by “unfair” trading and dumping based on shameless exploitation of Chinese workers. That last comment is entirely correct, even if it sounds particularly hypocritical coming from people who have never said a word about capital’s slave-drivers in European factories and their increasingly refined, inhuman and “scientifically” motivated methods of driving up productivity at all costs.

Without going into too much detail here, I should just make two points to put China’s role in its proper perspective, starting with the fact, already mentioned, that each European country’s trade with China is considerably less than their trade amongst themselves. The first point is the unarguable fact that the *majority* of China’s exports are made up of goods manufactured by foreign businesses which have set up in China, among them a large number of European ones.

The second is that in Sino-European trade, the European side is heavily penalised less by the mass of cheap Chinese goods than by a European currency exchange rate which is particularly unfavourable to European trade. The euro is outrageously over-valued in relation to the great world currencies! What that means is that European economy is at a singular disadvantage in purchasing cheap non-European goods denominated in currencies clearly under-valued or at least maintained well below the euro. On the other hand, the eurozone exports commodities denominated in much more expensive euros, i.e. at a considerable disadvantage in international trade.

One single example will suffice, drawn precisely from Germany, whose economy corresponds more or less to the elevated level of the euro, or rather, is in harmony with the single currency, give or take a little. That is one of the reasons why the German bourgeoisie and its government, who inspire the monetary policy of the European Central Bank (ECB), defend it against comers. They cling obstinately to an over-valued euro as a precious weapon to weaken and subjugate their European

competitors economically.

Opinion-makers in the service of the possessing class, including the mass of economists, can manage to cloud even quite lucid minds when rambling on about "unfair" Chinese trade (is there any other kind?). However, the great majority of them are absolutely silent on the role of the over-valued euro. From time to time they accuse the yuan of being undervalued, which is true, but since they do not take the matter any further, this itself is just an attempt to divert attention from the main question. Indeed, in their silence over the euro it is not just the German bourgeoisie they are defending.

The overvalued euro with its unfavourable exchange rates stands as a unique beacon in the international monetary system, attracting manufactured goods at the lowest cost. The euro peaks well above the US dollar, with one euro, despite minor oscillations, usually worth \$1.30. Thus it is largely an open door for American goods, whose competitive edge is already copiously stimulated by generous domestic subsidies and all sorts of favours and privileges. When economists and politicians lecture us about "unfair" Chinese trade, they should be told to have a look at US capitalism-imperialism too.

(I cannot delve any deeper into a detailed and critical examination of the international monetary system within the confines of this article. Such an analysis will form part of volume 3 of my work on the world crisis, of which only the first part has so far been completed, the rest being still on the stocks. However, in order to understand the matters in hand better, it does seem necessary to define certain aspects of this system.

First of all, the general detachment of currencies from their pedestal of gold, starting with the dollar in 1971, very much facilitated, indeed greatly assisted, the flourishing, spread

and complete domination not only of speculation, but also of monetarist economic conceptions, such as those of Milton Friedman and co. for example. The outstanding characteristic of this conception is that it considers money as a thing in itself, or to be more precise, not as an *organic* part of trading economy, above all of capitalism, but as an economic entity not just autonomous but practically independent, possessing only a good or bad link to economic reality as a whole. Consequently, according to this monetarist fiction, it is possible to use money, manipulate and adapt it supremely at will.

However, even though it has thus been robbed of its virginity, or if you will of its manhood, in the sense that it has been dispossessed of its real substance in gold and therefore lost its value, each currency has nevertheless retained an effective correspondence with its home economy. This real correspondence between currencies and economy appears in the relationships between different national economies, among other things in the respective currency exchange rates and the interest rates of productive capital invested in these economies. Now, like medieval monarchs who debased their coinage by diluting the proportion of gold it contained, today's monetarists are also caught out by the harsh realities of economics. They are then obliged to respond – with fresh monetary manipulations [devaluations, re-valuations, quantitative easing] – or, as they so elegantly put it, simply printing more money...)

Now it is a fact that today a goodly number of monetarists, particularly (and not coincidentally) Americans, describe the euro, the single European currency, as an artificial, unfit and inadequate creation, i.e. as a mistake. Such austere criticism shows that, even while they attribute independence to currencies, they recognise and advocate that they should retain a clear actual link with the economy of their home country. Consequently they criticise the euro because it tries

to span countries at very different economic levels without political regulatory unity and possessing only a limited and imperfect central bank.

A comrade and friend, Nick Bailey, has drawn my attention to an article written by David O. Beim, professor at Columbia Business School in October 2011. I mention him here as a worthy representative of such monetarist views. As such, he exposes quite well the vain futility of the euro's pretensions to be the sole representative of countries that are so different, as well as the unsuitability of the conditions under which it functions, summarised briefly above. However, these 9 pages of good and perspicacious analysis, complete with graphs, suffer a generic conceptual deficit common to monetarism. It studies and observes the euro as a sort of original sin, a mistake from the very outset, without placing it in step, in a sustained relationship, with the countries' respective economies and their evolution. He notes the growing tensions among countries over the euro, without establishing *any* relationship between that and the contradictory economic development the euro is struggling to cover. He is thus a long way away from showing how these tensions arise from the diverging economic development of these countries, as I have tried to, merely making a few vague references to the obvious differences between their balances of payment. He does not look any closer at that!

The "solution" he proposes is consistent with his reasoning: all that needs to be done is to recognise the mistake and take the appropriate decision, i.e. unify Europe politically, or give up on the euro. America's fervent monetarists (and quite a few of their European colleagues) clearly cannot understand why the "stupid" Europeans cling to the euro.

The bourgeois unity of Europe is tearing itself apart, its vaunted union in tatters

I must repeat: the emergence of inequality between nation states and its mutation into actual opposition is not just an

appearance, a secondary manifestation. It contains and covers other oppositions, more serious in different ways, which grow between the social classes. It is merely the distorted and impoverished reflection of those which the (dominant) bourgeoisie as a whole arouses in the (dominated) mass of workers by its offensive against their living conditions, in the first place against the rights and gains they have established.

Everywhere, the way "national" bourgeoisies have slavishly transmitted this offensive and zealously applied it has aroused workers' resistance and utter rejection of the additional burdens it imposes. The class struggle thus whipped-up by the bourgeoisie has not only alienated and distanced working people who were formerly passively hostile to this bourgeois power and its servants, it has rapidly exacerbated their opposition to the point of openly challenging this power. Their resistance has grown more and more, but, alas, has been organised only slightly or very partially, whereas in the course of the last few months that resistance has, here and there, and sometimes indirectly, led them to put the bourgeoisie's power in question. So much so that a growing part of that class are alarmed by the risks involved and feel the need to try to ease the pressure and alter and lighten the intolerable burdens caused by European austerity plans.

But there is good reason to preface an examination of this political aspect of the crisis, an inseparable companion to the economic crisis, with some mention of what preceded it. Certain economists, seeking to define and describe the much debated relationship between countries, let slip useful observations about the character of some of these phenomena and the associated dangers. That is how, while the mass of economists have almost given up in sheer distress at the sight of whole countries shattered by capital's stormy offensive, some among them, casting about in search of a way out of this

morass, stumble over a few scraps of enlightenment.

Take Heiner Flassbeck, the German Director of the Division on Globalisation and Development Strategies at the UN Conference on Trade and Development, who said recently in a lecture that:

“Berlin is making the same mistake with the eurozone countries as the victors in World War I made with Germany.” (As quoted in *Le Monde*, 21 April 2012).

There are indeed similarities, but it is not the same thing at all, and above all it was never a “mistake”, then or now. Back then, this “mistake” arose from (was part of) the relentless struggle between monopolies based on private ownership for supremacy in the market, monopolies embodied, privileged, represented and defended by their respective nation states. Between the wars, this “mistake” – which is actually an inescapable law of capitalism – went up to and included the military occupation of the Ruhr industrial region in Germany by the French army (supported by Belgium and Italy). This lasted from the spring of 1921 until the middle of 1925 – an instructive episode in the capitalist conflict between the two sides which provided such abundantly fertile soil for Hitler’s fascist movement.

Today the same struggle is taking place in a different and more “peaceful” form which allows them – for the time being – to avoid armed interventions. Nevertheless, Flassbeck is groping in the right direction, since the relationship is again between victors and vanquished, just not in a clash of arms (which is competition taken to its extreme) but muffled and muddled up in competition whose aggression, sharpness and duration in no way yield to real war except that they have not taken up actual arms. Not yet, that is.

This capitalist competition nails the pious vows and inane protestations of those who – surrounded by a state of competition reminiscent of jungle warfare – beg for “fair”

trade and, if not actually friendly, at least polite "reciprocity".

One might imagine that such fond hopes arise from dreams of a better society, or fantasies about capitalism "with a human face". In any case these good people do not realise that captivated as they are by the "charms" of capitalism (to say nothing about its more earthly attractions) they are closer to medieval minstrelsy and chivalrous romance than they are to any reality. Sadly, they have little understanding or knowledge of those reckless business pileups whose victims fill the graveyards of depreciated capitals, or of the daily sufferings and difficulties faced by the growing masses of people ejected from production, or indeed, any real economic activity at all.

They simply refuse to acknowledge the struggle for a larger share of an already shrinking market, or for simple survival; a struggle between capitalists which at the moment, it is true, is largely mediated, transcended and thus whitewashed by the European "Union". Moreover, the latter does all it can to camouflage or deny this struggle for survival, tending to hide it behind the deceptive screen of unification. This denial is accompanied by the other, enormous, lie which denies the reality of class struggle, a piece of mendacity whose scandalous enormity is matched only by its unparalleled success among the great and the good. Once that has been blindly swallowed, simply ignoring the struggle between monopolies and the conditions under which it takes place is a comparatively minor offence.

But behind the fair mask of unification, the brawl carries on unabated, although obviously using appropriate means and methods. The Maastricht treaty and its single currency were brought in as one of the most important routes to European unification. And that continues to be celebrated with delirious delight by just about the whole bourgeoisie and its legions of propagandists, as well as anyone else they could

con or simply lead astray. The few discordant voices were brusquely called to order – what could be more democratic than that? – or vulgarly taunted by the media pack as “Euro-sceptics”. And this cretinous insult, which degrades the accusers themselves, is even now applied to all those critical voices whose numbers are swelling by the minute. There is nothing furtive about this shameless conjuring trick with its procession of the blind or the bewitched. Even now its incorrigible disciples deploy their attacks above and beyond the call of duty.

In fact the process of capitalist concentration is fed and stimulated by competition artificially sharpened in favour of the strongest. Far from culminating in a kind of super-power, its internal contradictions have been exacerbated. The tendencies of dissolution and decomposition arising from the profound crisis have spurred these contradictions on, amplified them and speeded them up. Every day brings fresh proof of how right Lenin was to criticise Kautsky’s fantasies about “super-imperialism”. And so, instead of a hierarchical unification, the sharper and growing inequality divides nation states and lines them up in dependency upon the strongest, Germany. At the same time that eminently centrifugal force which is competition in all of its dimensions not only separates these countries from each other, but also leads to divisions between them and increasingly opposes them to one another.

And that is why, under the capitalist system, the unification of Europe remains as impossible as squaring the circle. That explains why all the decisions taken and actions carried out to achieve unification can only be imposed violently and by force, which simply makes the contradictions worse, especially as the cancerous growths which unfailingly appear and spread unchecked on the sickly body of outdated and decadent capitalism-imperialism, such as financial speculation, scandalously exploit these flaws, and in doing so contribute

powerfully to the process of its destruction. Those who set the euro up and supported it thought it would be the main tool for achieving unification, but it has acted more and more as the substantial instrument for disrupting it. The euro will inevitably blow apart under the pressure of contradictory forces, and that will sound the death knell on this "united" Europe as it falls apart. That is unless something else breaks up the unity before the single currency departs the scene – since the exact route this process of dismemberment will take is not yet clear. In any case speculation is more and more contributing to it.

For example, this April "Eurex" (European Exchange – "Europe's Global Financial Market Place"):

"...launched a new interest rate futures based on the notional long-term bonds issued by the French Republic". (www.eurexchange.com/about/press/press_787_en.html).

(Such paper contracts used to exist as a means of speculation, but disappeared with the introduction of the euro, the symbol of monetary union.) The vigorous rebirth of these contracts is an infallible sign of the growing gap between German and French interest rates (the famous "spread"), a gap which expresses and measures the separation between these two economic "entities" and at the same time offers a fruitful opportunity for speculation. The re-appearance of a consolidated and expanded "Eurex" after a recent trial run based on Italian interest rates is yet another indication that a growing disjunction and distance between the "unified" economies is anticipated. Need I add that "Eurex" is a subsidiary of the German stock exchange?

The political expression accompanying this whole rapacious and disjointed economic process presents a fairly chaotic picture. There is not yet a strong and conscious European workers' movement with its own far-sighted and militant political and trade union organisations. These bodies have been rendered

lifeless by the immense losses they have suffered and decades of class collaboration on the part of their leaders. Therefore the reaction of Europe's proletariat has been scattered, sporadic and very much reduced to disunited local actions often hampered by routinism. The great mass of it remains outside these organisations and, at best, dissipates its energies in spontaneous and isolated surges based on immediate and elemental reactions which are often not followed through. That is how it responds to blows arising from the crisis and made doubly worse by capitalists who are as calculating as they are panicked. Worse still, quite significant sections, thrown off course by their leaders' treachery, look for a way out outside of the workers' movement and fall victim to fascist or semi-fascist predators.

Indeed, one thing that really translates the emerging economic divisions in Europe into the language of politics is a fairly obvious *step-change* by a large part of the European bourgeoisie. Visible cracks are appearing in their ranks. One major part of its national cohorts openly places itself at the service of the dominant capital in Europe. Another, far from negligible, sector of the possessing classes and their hired help fears a recrudescence of working people's militancy, is sceptical about the strength and ability of the liberal bourgeoisie and is excited by a warmed-over, exacerbated nationalism. It is clearly heading for one or another variety of revived fascism.

The political formations which have sustained fascist ideology and which have more or less lurked in the shadows for several years past are today swelling and growing in strength in almost every country in Europe. They are occupying an ever-broader terrain, taking advantage of the weakness or even absence of a vigorous workers' movement. What they express and develop is the growing separation and opposition, indicated above, between groupings within local capitalist classes. They define, fix and codify that opposition in their policies of

separation and national isolation. They focus in the first place on violent, hate-filled attacks on immigrant workers, the most vulnerable segment of the proletariat who make up a significant part of it in Europe. That fact alone completely exposes the real, undisguised content of their politics as the most violent response of the bourgeoisie in danger. Fascism and fascist parties are the warhorse of the awakening bourgeois opposition and its main agent for breaking up the European Union. It would be a mistake to forget that this warhorse is a Trojan horse which makes no attempt to hide the fact that it carries within its flanks anti-working class and anti-trade union shock troops.

These fascist parties and their disguised front organisations appropriate the anti-capitalist vocabulary of the workers' movement in their conflict and disagreement with the pro-unity bourgeoisie. This has been made all the easier since these slogans have been abandoned and even repudiated by the official leaderships of the workers' movement. On the other hand, the fascists use them to attract and trap a part at least of the disorientated workers and rebellious petty-bourgeoisie, like a hunter who conceals his murderous intentions behind a lure. The economist Heiner Flassbeck came within a whisker of evoking the conditions which gave rise to Hitler in the analogy he drew between Germany's treatment after World War I and the current situation in the countries she dominates. It would be a tragic, unpardonable error to forget that in the 1920s not only Hitler but also Mussolini used language strongly tinged with anti-capitalism, which – long after it had led them astray – turned out to be a deadly trap for workers. Never forget that Hitler's party fraudulently styled itself "socialist", adding the adjective "national".

How the bourgeoisie shifts its ground

Its fascist alternative has undoubtedly gained ground, but for the time being a clear majority of the bourgeoisie and forces

in its decisive organisations shun such a bracing cure for its problems, believing it can be avoided and in any case is both costly and pretty unreliable. So the majority of the bourgeoisie is convinced it can go forward and secure the success of its policies, including its offensive against working people, using what might be called classical methods.

However, the working people in question are putting up vigorous resistance. As it develops and spreads across Europe, this has raised some doubts in the minds of the anti-fascist majority of the bourgeoisie about how appropriate and effective the paths they are following and the methods they are using actually are. Do they not – they must be asking themselves – run the risk of provoking a qualitative intensification of working people's resistance into a more powerful and more political movement? The range of responses has shown cracks in that solid bloc of property owners, and those who for the moment are shunning recourse to fascism have in their turn raised proposals for a change of methods. In particular, the idea has been put forward of supplementing the destructive policy of one-sided austerity with one of economic growth.

This bourgeois class is worn out, exhausted and in decline and it is in practice increasingly resorting to a more and more utterly basic narrow-minded pragmatism. It would take far too long to follow step by step the laborious path by which it came to an understanding of the need for a shift in objectives and methods. Instead of describing the whole painful quest, let me just note some of the important milestones along the way. What made it even harder for them to make this change is that a policy of growth is very close to if not identical with Keynesianism, a doctrine of class conciliation which evokes unhappy memories of concessions they were forced to make, kicking and screaming, under the insistent pressure of the proletariat when it was at full strength (1945 – 1975). Be that as it may, the losses and pains associated with the

crisis have stimulated their thinking sufficiently to at least partially revive this economic policy. This has been easier because a – visibly reduced – number of its followers hang on, like an endangered species, around shrunken bourgeois parties that are inspired by a superannuated “liberalism” as well as on the fringes of traditional workers’ parties.

In fact it was François Hollande of the French Socialist Party who publicly launched the challenge of a policy for growth in the election campaign in opposition to Sarkozy, who personified the austerity offensive and its murderous plans. It is worth emphasising that for months Hollande and his project were isolated because they did not seem to fit in with a general atmosphere reeking of the foul breath of the austerity offensive. At first the whole bourgeoisie arrogantly scoffed at the idea as preposterous, ironically commenting how much a policy for growth would cost when everyone was convinced they had to pay off the debts as soon as possible. Its representatives had no qualms about getting Angela Merkel involved in the election campaign, showing her on television patronisingly sounding off alongside Sarkozy, as they tried to overtake this maverick troublemaker.

And he did not give way. But the favourable responses to his project (I am not talking here about working people, but a growing number of economists) came from outside, in particular at a seminar held from 12-14 April this year in Berlin by financier George Soros’s Institute “For New Economic Thinking”. The Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) himself, Angel Gurría, clearly stated that:

“most governments and international bodies are agreed on one point: we will not bring back confidence and growth simply by imposing austerity”.

Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz warned:

“For whatever reason, countries in surplus are imposing costs on others, and the persistence of these surpluses has unsustainable consequences”. (Both quoted in *Le Monde*, 21 April 2012).

Even though he is a notorious speculator, Soros, in Paris on his way back from this seminar, rammed the message home, firmly supporting a policy of growth as the only way to free up the means to pay the debt. Another Nobel Prize winning economist, Paul Krugman, wrote in the *New York Times* of 15 April about the:

“apparent determination of European leaders to commit economic suicide for the Continent as a whole”.

The US bourgeoisie and its thinkers have good reason to campaign strongly and across a very broad front for growth in Europe. Faced with competition from all directions, they have a strong interest in making sure that there is a receptive European market for US goods. Nor would they be displeased to curb the appetite of German capital and weaken the damaging competition it offers to US monopolies.

But the idea of amending the policy of one-sided austerity has also been making headway among more and more European economists and politicians of a bourgeois persuasion. In April, the respected French economist Patrick Artus, supported by many others, took up a position squarely and unambiguously against the policy of austerity, showing how inadequate and dangerous it is. He proposed a policy of monetary expansion and changing the role of the European Central Bank to support and guarantee it. Moreover, he clearly predicted (what was already in the air) that:

“Mr. Hollande is completely correct and he will be supported by Mariano Rajoy and Mario Monti” (the heads of the Spanish and Italian governments).

The tide was starting to turn. The people who run Europe put

up some initial resistance, but then a whole series of economists and leaders spoke out in favour, not of a real change, but for the most part of a sort of confused amalgam in which a muddled, ill-defined growth occupied a fairly prominent place.

Then the elections in Greece and France assumed a particular significance, much greater than is usually the case. They laid down a public and official marker of massive and total rejection of the bourgeoisie's offensive against social gains and its austerity plans. In the same breath, the two elections saw the emergence of the first independent political regroupments of the European proletarian resisting capital and was their first baptism of fire. (Do not, of course, overlook the noisy appearance of fascist parties.)

Finally even the German leaders, Angela Merkel and her finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble, announced that they, too, agreed with a policy of economic growth. Everybody, along with Mario Draghi, was now talking about a policy which obviously (!) would need to be applied in full compliance with tight budgetary plans. In unison they emphasised that austerity and privatisations should retain their priority status, even ahead of growth. All in all, they had to take account of their gradually growing isolation but, firmly acting as they do on behalf of the dominant monopolies, they resolutely held the course they had set.

But then another significant event shook the leaders of the austerity offensive with their unwavering dogmas. The several weeks of strikes and demonstrations by 3.6 million German engineering workers undoubtedly provided them with food for thought.

On 19 April, after lengthy negotiations, the IG Metall union won a wage rise of 4.3%, well above the estimated 2012 inflation rate of 2.3%. It is entirely legitimate to consider this a step forward after 20 years of wage cuts and

“moderations” (the last time they got an actual increase was ...1992!). It came immediately after a wage rise of 6.3% for public service workers, also following a broad movement. However, that 4.3% rise was a compromise between the 6.3% demanded and the original offer of 3% from the employers.

One can only very much and with deep satisfaction welcome these results, which have made a considerable breach in the concrete ramparts of austerity, even if it is hard to describe them as a victory in view of the considerable concessions the bureaucrats of IG Metall made over an important point in their own demands. The employers refused to regularise the employment of casual workers hired on short-term contracts. The union chiefs bowed to this refusal, although there are already almost a million casual workers in the sector. In the same way the bureaucrats accepted the employers’ refusal to provide automatic full-time employment of apprentices at the end of their two years of training. Despite overall progress, we cannot talk of a complete victory because of these retreats, which break up unity in workers’ ranks. The final outcome of these negotiations, therefore, brought some consolation for political leaders even if it did not entirely reassure them.

What was won was enough to shake the compact wall of the authorities and their government, especially if you add the results of a regional election (following those in Greece and France) in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany’s most heavily populated region and a centre of the working class. Merkel’s Christian Democrats (CDU) suffered a notable defeat at the hands of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) there, even though Die Linke – a party you could compare with Syriza in Greece and Front de Gauche in France – lost a lot of votes. Although we didn’t get the hat-trick, it clearly put supporters of the anti-working class offensive under growing pressure.

With that, all Europe’s leaders, even the Germans, started to talk about the vital need for growth. But they all also

obediently tipped their hats to the sacrosanct European Budget Treaty, which is actually a handbook of measures to wage the bourgeois offensive. Partisans of growth, like Hollande, talk about it as a supplement to the Budget Treaty, while Merkel and Co. very clearly emphasise the imperatives of the Treaty as an essential condition for any measures to encourage growth. At this stage it looks as if everybody is being very careful not to say exactly what they mean by “policies for growth”.

Forced to switch tactics, the bourgeoisie maintains its strategic offensive

A lot could be said about the different ways to achieve economic growth in the capitalist system, but under prevailing conditions there are only two main historically-validated methods.

The first could be described as a policy inspired by a version of Keynes' doctrines. To put it briefly, it rests on the state massively injecting financial credits for production and investment, and on broad market demand sustained by high wages. The second could be described as the exact opposite, removing the state from that role on the basis that the market supposedly regulates itself, and hoping to drive growth by supplying goods more cheaply.

Obviously there is a considerable difference between the two. In the first instance, wage rises are an indispensable economic condition for growth and for increased and sustained demand, guaranteed by the state standing outside the vagaries of the market. In the second, however, the low level of wages, by reducing production costs, is supposed to provide a lower and therefore more competitive price. As for financing the economy (investment, credit), that is left entirely to the fluctuations of the market.

Very often, the two paths to growth are distinguished crudely

and vulgarly as demand management in the first instance and supply-side policy in the second.

The bourgeoisie only turned to the Keynesian path (the first instance) very unwillingly and in a difficult situation in which it faced a vigorous workers' movement. But it is also true that this policy almost immediately inevitably engenders colossal inflation. That is precisely one of the bourgeoisie's arguments, if not the most important one, against Keynesian policy. They always object that it is impracticable because the generally relatively high level of wages and their consistent growth cause great inflation.

However, this statement is a cynical lie often used and repeated as a myth or an axiom as if it required neither to be proven nor examined more closely. In fact the fable that rising wages cause inflation both deliberately conceals a very significant and different reality and at the same time slanders and abuses workers. The reality concealed behind this barefaced lie is quite simply the contradictory and unequal relationship between workers and capitalists.

When the general level of wages rises beyond a certain point acceptable for the mechanism of the economic system, the share of the profits which falls to the capitalists as their individual revenue ought to diminish by at least as much in order to balance out the "excess". But capitalists will never accept a reduction in the share of the profits which falls to them as revenue while wages rise. On the contrary, the general tendency is to increase this revenue excessively, not to mention the other share of the profit which is wasted on financing immense parasitical phenomena and activities which weigh heavily on the currency. In fact what is expressed in inflation is the tension arising from the specific contradiction between this large useless expenditure and the contribution made by production in relation to *these expenses*. This is one more irrefutable proof that this elevated – i.e. decent – level of wages is incompatible with capitalism over

any length of time. That therefore relegates all the slogans about a "fair redistribution" of profits to the already over-filled ranks of utter fantasies. (Which does not exclude the adoption of such slogans under particular circumstances, where their only value is educative, to demonstrate in practise how untenable and awful capitalism is).

After this short but necessary detour, we must get back to the controversy which sets the various groupings in the European bourgeoisie and their representatives at each others' throats: on the one side the solid defenders of German monopolies, and on the other those who speak for the bourgeoisies they dominate. A struggle has started over which of the two models of economic growth to adopt.

There is a real risk that the offensive against the rights and social advances workers have made will mutate into or get mixed up with a struggle to create better conditions for economic growth. This is a serious and weighty danger. It would mean taking the path of wage cuts, speed-up and deteriorating working conditions, the extension of casual working, the destruction of rights; everything that would help reduce costs and restore and increase that famous competitiveness that is now so glorified, with a heavy nationalistic flavour.

With a touch of the wand, the current offensive against the working class would magically become a method and a means to get economic growth. Soon it will no doubt be presented as a noble contribution to growth rather than a direct attack aimed at wiping out the debt. That debt is not going to disappear, but the general offensive against the working class could well re-appear, lightly disguised and in the form of a change in this tactic of frontal attack on the working class and the gains it has made into a more beguiling tactic of fighting for economic growth.

It is not excluded that the outcome of the controversy now

starting will include some sort of mixture of the two variants of growth, a sort of rotten fruit of a compromise which will – there is no doubt on this score – retain the decisive elements of the anti-working class offensive.

From now on working people have every reason to concentrate their efforts on defending their gains and rights, in particular those which are particularly threatened and picked on a drag and a hindrance to classical capitalist economic growth. They are for the most part condensed and contained in the arrangements in the various country's labour laws (which have all had a battering anyway) and the positive regulations which protect workers from the growing spread of casualisation. It goes without saying that a close eye must be kept on how wages develop in order to stimulate a constant struggle to increase them, especially since the capitalists, who might even grant a wage increase in "the interests of growth", have already announced that they are prepared to allow a certain level of inflation. You can be sure – also in advance – that this level will settle at the precise point where inflation wipes out any benefits from a wage increase.

One thing is certain: the almost simultaneous appearance in Greece and in France of radical political organisations clearly to the left of the Socialist Parties is no accident. They express the first sizeable independent political regroupments of the European proletariat, clearly based on its class interests in opposition to the bourgeoisie and its servants.

After so many decades of retreats and defeats, the birth of these organisations is an encouraging sign that could be followed in other countries, such as with their German precursor, "Die Linke". So it is hardly surprising, after so many often bitter experiences, mistakes and disappointments both tragic and regrettable, that these new formations see the light of day as coalitions of forces and organisations that have joined together. And that is why, besides the fact that

they are the first-born, these coalitions of groups cannot come into the world fully armed like Pallas Athene of mythology from the head of Zeus. They do not possess the inner consistency nor have they had the time needed to work out and test a complete framework for the historical struggle of the proletariat. Considerable as it is, their role in this most important and now irresistible awakening of the working class and its path towards re-conquering a complete theoretical, political and organisational framework will no doubt be transitory.

Certainly their halfway-house position gives rise to notable weaknesses in all these organisations but, in the furnace of experience and struggle, they will have the opportunity to evolve rapidly – in either a good or a bad direction.

The first inconsistency is that these organisations, while expressing a correct independent policy in the face of and against the bourgeoisie's general offensive, still remain dependent on the trajectory that same bourgeoisie follows. Syriza in Greece and Front de Gauche in France define themselves in relation to the policy of the bourgeoisie; they do not have an independent working-class policy. That is why they have sought a place on the bourgeoisie's chess-board and will eventually try to stand alongside the "progressive" wing that has recently appeared in the form of the growth policy I described as neo-Keynesianism.

The second weakness is also bound up with the partial nature of their break with the bourgeoisie. It is their containment within national boundaries, as that class is, which prevents them from appearing on an (at least) European stage in order for example to bring about the unity of their slogans and actions on an international level. This national horizon also blocks them from organising their movements at a European level, particularly in Italy and Spain. Instead of being open to Europe, they confine themselves to occasional contacts and meetings, like any old-style bourgeois or social democratic

party.

But despite these weaknesses and gaps, it is obvious that all working people and every single one of their organisations should help and support them. In France, the three Trotskyist organisations (two of which can lay ever-diminishing claim to the name) have made a big mistake in refusing to join Front de Gauche in an electoral alliance. It is high time to put that right. No formation which claims reference to class struggle should waste its efforts; they should all support these promising experiences, Front de Gauche in France and Syriza in Greece, first of all by helping them to turn decisively towards the trade unions and organise with them a broad and militant European front with massive actions.

The struggle for the nationalisation of the banks under workers' control has a special place here as the only effective way to struggle against the crisis and its effects. In this framework, the demand to refuse to repay the debt incurred by a prodigal and careless bourgeoisie will also have value as a test of how determined people are to break with that class.

Finally, it is high time to open a broader horizon and a consistent struggle against a Europe of poverty and break-up, to prepare and achieve a Working People's Europe.

While working people and their organisations as a whole recognise the value of these new formations, support and aid should also be extended to those in other workers' parties who seriously oppose concepts of economic growth that are thought up and put into practice against the interests of the working class. There is no reason to criticise and condemn support for a political action that is correct, even if it is social-democratic; the mistake would be to buy into it completely and accept and identify with it.

Balazs Nagy, Member, Workers International,
May 2012

Black Thursday at Marikana

By Radoslav Pavlovic,

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

While a heat-wave and panic in the northern hemisphere have set off rocketing corn prices, in the southern half it's supposed to be winter. But the seasonal silence has been shattered by the gunshots of the South African police on Thursday 16 August 2012. 34 miners at the Marikana platinum mine were killed, some 80 wounded and more than 250 arrested. It was a bloodbath of a kind unknown since the days of Apartheid, but with the difference that the killers and their victims are both black, while the mine owners and those giving the orders are still white.

The miners were killed because they were on strike demanding an increase in their poverty wages and rejected the management's instruction to go down the mine. So capitalism, which long since entirely entered its second stage of rotten decay, is now passing over to its third stage where free collective bargaining of wages reverts to slavery. There is just one nuance in this new class relationship: power is still in the hands of white capital, but they work through black sub-contractors in the African National Congress (ANC) and the majority union, NUM, whose leader is on the platinum mining company's board of directors. Remember how the lords of German capital bought the services of the socialists Ebert and Noske when they needed to behead the proletarian revolution? Well the same thing is happening today in South Africa.

I have a brother living in those far-off lands in the south, but I feel closer to my black brothers who are the Marikana miners, because ties of class are stronger than ties of blood. I know that on the football terraces of Zagreb, Belgrade,

Warsaw and Moscow hordes of fascist football fans hurl racist abuse at black players and call them monkeys, because they are deluded into believing that they themselves belong to a blue blooded and blond-haired white master race. They go on from abuse to physical attacks on black immigrants on the underground, like the Golden Dawn do in Greece ("Black Death" would be a better name). If there are no migrants where you live, you can always pick on your own local Roma. Then you graduate to organising militias, like the Serb tigers, eagles and wolves in the war in Bosnia and elsewhere, before ending up with regular military units for "special operations", "anti-riot" squads or "national security", in the small Balkan countries as much as in South Africa. If capitalism really is guided by a "hidden hand", it is the white hand of capital operating behind the scenes. If workers get disobedient, there are plenty of the unemployed, thirsting for violence, to turn into uniformed killers.

President Zuma, Commissions of Enquiry, reporters asking "who shot first" are just so much hot air to divert public opinion. What they did is, on the orders of white capital, they shot black miners down like sparrows.

May the memory of our black miner brothers of Marikana live for ever!

Two articles on the national question

Replies to Questions from Erik Hane by *Erica Beukes*

And

"One Namibia One Nation" by *Hewat Beukes*

Replies to Questions from Erik Hane by *Erica Beukes*

Dear Erik

I am sorry for not responding to your request/questions earlier. Our visit in Germany and Scotland was good ...

Your questions:

1. Are the German Colonial period and the genocide still present in your mind and in the mind of the Nama people?

– Yes, my grandmother used to tell us as children that her mother or grandmother perished in the Kalahari desert, when they fled from Aroab.

2. Do all the people know about it, especially the younger ones amongst you?

Not all the people know the full extent, some regard it only as part of history. Those who lived with their grandparents had a better chance to know.

3. How do you think about the genocide?

It had a great impact on the composition of our country's population. We are now a minority.

4. How do you deal with it?

We feel deprived of our ancestors who would have had a greater impact on what is happening now, especially culturally.

5. Do the German colonial period and the genocide still affect today's life of the Nama?

Yes, tragically so. They are disowned, deprived of human dignity disorganised and unable to cope with the challenges of modern society, i.e. poverty, alcoholism etc.

6. Do you still see consequences for you?

I feel powerless at times, a much greater force/organisation needs to step in to have an impact that is a structural intervention. The working people will need to organise themselves politically to intervene.

7. How is your relationship with Germany in general and at the moment?

The German State is maintaining the same policies as it had a hundred years ago in that it assists this corrupt and decadent state to maintain its all pervasive corruption and oppressive administration. Its agencies are assisting the decadent judiciary for example to maintain the colonial legal system

and to suppress the bill of fundamental rights. In this way the continuing and worsening effects of the German State's dispossession and atrocities are intensified multi-fold.

8. How do you think Germany should or have to deal with the shared past?

The present German State cannot solve the problem, it is the problem together with its bilateral relations with the Namibian government (and for that matter an illegitimate state that has been rigging elections since its inception). The German People must align with the Namibian People to support the latter's political struggle.

9. Is there need for reconciliation?

We need contact and co-operation with the German people to ensure that the atrocities perpetrated by the German state never happen again. No reconciliation is needed between the Namibian People and the German People. As for German imperialism, it is irreconcilable with the Namibian people.

10. Are there possibilities for reconciliation between Germany and the Nama?

There should be contact, exchange, interaction between the German people and the Nama people. The German working people did not do harm to the Namibian People. We will not contribute to the imperialist and opportunist crime to hold the German People and for that matter the German working people at ransom for the crimes of a class state. They were victims of the German State too. The graves of German soldiers from Rehoboth throughout the south show that the German State used children of 17,18,19,20 and early twenties to fight their wars of greed and dominance, to increase their ability to oppress and exploit their 'own' people.). The German and Namibian peoples must establish co-operation to shackle the ability of their respective states to commit crimes against humanity under secrecy, which they continue to do in Namibia.

11. Do you and your people have any demands and claims against Germany?

Yes, claims against the German's state. The main claim is that we need our land back and to stop its interventionist politics

in Namibia.

12. Are there different opinions amongst the Nama clans?

Not fundamental.

13. How is your relationship with the Namibian Government regarding the genocide?

This Government is decadent and has still to answer on the whereabouts of our people tortured, jailed and killed in exile. Many are unaccounted for. It rules without mandate and with the assistance of amongst others the German State. The estimated N\$7 billion which the German State granted purportedly for development and "special initiative" to the "affected" peoples have not even reached the 'unaffected' peoples, but went straight into the pockets of the presidents and a small clique around them. The German State is well aware of this, but takes the money that it gives as bribery. (The 7 billion in itself is patronage and a measly amount for the untold wealth it has expropriated. Nevertheless, it could have gone a long way to uplift the community and their self-respect.)

14. Do the Nama communities have access to the debate and do they feel represented?

No. It is only gaining momentum now. A working class community of 400 families has seized their own land for homes in Keetmanshoop and is the first well-organised leadership to conduct the struggle to repossess themselves. They are debating the full programme of the Nama restitution struggle.

15. How do you see the future of the Nama people regarding these issues?

They should through organisation lay claim to repatriations demands from German's state and actively seek cooperation with the German people. This struggle is necessary to re-establish a proper leadership to eventually repossess their property here in Namibia, both corporeal and cultural (their aesthetics).

Greetings

Erica Beukes

"One Namibia One Nation"

By HEWAT BEUKES

Over the past year or so we have had what its participants call a debate on socialism, tribalism, coloureds, culture, the national question, reparations and so on in "The Namibian".

This group of proclaimed socialists seems to be seeking to become the mouthpiece for the populist slogans of the SWAPO, in particular "One Namibia. One Nation". This slogan is frozen, a given tenet to which the people shall subscribe just as they were forced to subscribe to Stalinist precepts such as, "The Party is everything, the individual nothing", and "the People is SWAPO and SWAPO is the People" during the liberation struggle. Tie to it "the Sole and Authentic Representative of the Namibian People" and you have the full set of Commandments to which the people shall subscribe if they do not wish to be labelled as tribalists, or reactionaries, although the latter lost its meaning long before independence due to irony. The former never had any meaning until now when the "socialists" are trying to elevate it as an indictment against the struggles of individual groups.

I have thought long on whether I should respond or not. Given the present struggles of a number of groups on many issues which I consider crucial I believe it is necessary.

Leaving aside the serious misrepresentations on, amongst others, what Lenin had said on the national question, I will simply reserve my comments for now on their insistence that "One Namibia, One Nation" was and is the correct slogan for Namibia.

Let me begin by saying that I believe a socialism which has no consonance with the actual history of peoples cannot be a proper socialist theory.

The slogan "One Namibia One Nation" linked with "The People is SWAPO and SWAPO is the People" (note the singular tense) was brandished shortly after SWAPO was declared "Sole and

Authentic Representative of the Namibian People" by the United Nations, the "Five Western Powers" and the "Communist" countries in the beginning of 1971.

On 13 November 1970 the various groups including SWANU, SWAPO, NUDO, The Herero, Nama, Baster and Damara nations had formed the National Convention in Rehoboth as a united front to fight for independence. The said declaration was clearly to disrupt the Namibian peoples' attempt at a united front. It was a clear declaration against the right to self-determination of the Namibian People.

After the General Strike in 1971/72 against the terrible Contract Labour System, and public floggings resulting thereafter, four thousand youth fled the country and swelled the ranks of external SWAPO.

In 1974, the paramount chief of the Hereros, Chief Clemens Kapuuo travelled abroad to meet with the United Nations, and member states. He was rebuffed as being unrepresentative. In 1975, Chief Kapuuo broke from the National Convention, which then formed the Namibia National Convention (NNC). The UN immediately reiterated SWAPO's 'Sole Authenticity'.

During this period the SWAPO Youth League and Peoples Liberation Army (PLAN) was in an intense fight against the SWAPO leadership in which they had formed an "Anti-Corruption Committee" to investigate why weapons, food, medicines and clothes donated by groups and governments for the 'armed struggle' were diverted by the leadership for business and UNITA. Fighters were dying of hunger while warehouses were stacked to the roofs with donated provisions.

This group's leadership expressed themselves clearly against the "Sole Authenticity" of SWAPO on the basis that it was not representative of a Namibian nation.

By 1976, on the reported insistence of Henry Kissinger and the intervention of Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania, thousands of youths and fighters were liquidated politically and physically. In 1978, a day before the Cassinga massacre the so-called dissidents kept at camps in Zambia were brought to Cassinga dressed in soldiers' uniforms, but without

weapons. They were massacred by South African forces the next day. Thus a whole generation of political fighters was defeated.

A system of terror was then instituted by the SWAPO leadership from 1978 to 1989, when Namibia was declared independent. People were arrested on charges of being spies, kept in holes in the ground where many died from hunger and malnutrition; regularly culled by firing squad and thrown off a mountain cliff in southern Angola to make space for new prisoners, while parading under the farce of "scientific socialism".

From 1984 to 1990, parents and relatives of the victims exposed the atrocious farce and caricature of freedom and revolution. On 1 April 1989, the SWAPO leadership sent more than 500 PLAN fighters to be massacred by South African forces misinforming them these had withdrawn and that the United Nations Peace Keepers were in control of the North of Namibia. This was a stupid and psychopathic miscalculation to draw sympathy for SWAPO whose credibility had collapsed due to the action of the relatives. The relatives had in fact paid put to the credibility of the international churches, the symbiotic relation between Imperialism and Stalinism in particular, and also the latter's subservience to imperialism. It affirmed in bloody script the correctness of Trotsky's theses on the relation of Stalinist counter revolution and Imperialism, from his analyses of the failures of the German communists against Hitler to the Spanish Civil War. It paid put to the Post World War II theories revising Marxism as a pure science of history. It affirmed Trotsky's analyses that the productive forces was not only stagnating but had become rotten.

Thus, "One Namibia, One Nation" was manufactured in a crucible filled with the blood of Namibian young people, an entire generation. Instead of imperialism breaking up pre-capitalist social relations it tied itself to the most decadent, moribund sections of society, the tribal hierarchy, just as it had tied itself to religious fundamentalists worldwide. I believe this is the clearest indicator that the productive forces are rotting.

Namibia is a microcosm of the fact that since the advent of imperialism it has not broken up property and social relations in favour of indigenous peoples in South America, Asia and Africa. It has instead used those relations in the most perverted forms to put primordial political species in charge in favour of imperialist property relations.

Namibia is important in the sense that here peoples' organisation against imperialism's pre-emption of the right of nations to self determination took its clearest form.

Despite this national tragedy, a group of what I consider petit bourgeois theorists (if one can call them that) try to create an ideology for a group of caretakers in this Namibian state. These caretakers stop all but short from addressing their corporate bosses as "Ja Baas" or "Bwana".

But these "yes bossers" have brought this country to the brink of tribal war.

The so-called legislature is dysfunctional, the so-called Executive is dysfunctional, the Judiciary is a cesspool of corruption, the hub of corporate rule of this country.

Our puritan "socialists" call this process "One Namibia, One nation".

Nay, they insist that Namibians rise to the call of "One Namibia, One Nation" while each have paid in blood for its institution.

Namibians will unite as a nation – in particular as a working people – in the process of coming to understand their history of catastrophes including the present one in the context of imperialism. (The same goes for the world's working classes) Socialists endeavouring to lead this working class theoretically may not cowardly navigate their theories (moral preachings) around the crimes committed against this nation, and for that matter a nation which has always stared its fate squarely in the eye, and met its tormentors blow for blow.

The 'debates' in "The Namibian" on issues of socialism are pathetic distortions of Marxist thought in my opinion. They ignore the fact that a group of petty criminals have been foisted on the Namibian nation and that the scale of

extraction from this country is obscene. They instead blame victims of tribalism for tribalism. That's how absurd the 'debates' have become.

The declared socialists ignore the glaring fact that the imperialists and capitalists have turned this country into no-man's land and its people are dangling over the precipice.

This is typical petit bourgeois. They have disrupted the Marxist movement worldwide since 1990 in the most unaccountable and treacherous manner. They now seek to hand the working class in the colonies bound hand-and-foot to colonial ruling classes.

Jerry Hicks. Wrong Era – Wrong Politics

By Jim Kelly

Chair London & Eastern Region Unite the Union (personal capacity)

I am putting this note forward to challenge the claim of Hicks and his confederates that somehow he is the candidate of the left and McCluskey just another bureaucrat. It is time to go beyond the hallmark of Hicks and his cohort 's infantile attempt to see all those in official positions as the same, and to see McCluskey as someone whose occupation is selling out the R&F. The starting point for unravelling all of this is to consider Hicks' claim to be the candidate of the R&F. We need first to consider who the R&F are.

So who are the R&F? The main plank of Hicks' campaign is that he presents himself as the champion of the R&F, indeed their self anointed leader in waiting. There have been no meetings of this "R&F group" to democratically decide on a candidate;

Jerry didn't even attend the last Grassrootsleft national AGM in November in Birmingham. He just elbowed any potential alternatives out of the race in late December, by anointing himself. Even the Catholic Church has to go through the ritual of an election by a conclave of Cardinals, but apparently not our "R&F"

Now, while any trade unionist worth their salt will identify with the R&F, who does Jerry Hicks speak for, and what does he mean by the R&F?

One thing I share in common with Jerry Hicks is that I joined a union in 1976. I joined the old UPW, I went on to join the SWP in 1976. I became a rep in one of the largest and most militant sorting office in the country, and went on to help found the Rank & File Post Office Worker Group with other SWP activists.

Our R&F group was one of a number at the time, R&F Docker, Teacher, Building Worker to name a few. While they were called R&F groups in fact all they were, was the SWP and its periphery, with no independent political life of their own. Once the SWP decided to close them down they struggled to survive.

The point is that all of these R&F groupings, like the SWP of the late '70s and Jerry Hick's Grassrootsleft are constituted by either one or more political organisation, or groups of and populated by the organisation's membership and contacts. The fact that the GRL is comprised of people in different and no political organisations does not invalidate its political nature. Read their organisational structure clearly; it is a political formation with its own discipline and committee structure. Its political character is, I think shown rather neatly by the following piece of idiocy

For the right of the rank and file to veto all management decisions and workers control over all aspects of production,

including hiring and firing, for workers' control over and nationalisation without compensation of all firms sacking workers in the interests of profit.

Call me old fashioned if you will but to me this demand is a call for dual power and rather than a union, they are demands for workers' council (soviets) linked to the formation of a workers' government. Now is it that the unite bureaucracy is stopping the members making this demand realisable (the bastards) or maybe is it a bit of an aspiration? ... and by the way this will not be a right – as if in a state of dual power these rights would be given to workers, rather it is something we will struggle for and take.

So do they represent the authentic voice of the R&F? Well only in a post modernist sense where by asserting something makes it real. What Hicks and the political organisations supporting him have in common is rather than being part of the R&F they appropriate the term R&F as a label for their political project.

So when Hicks (SWP /GRL) speaks about the R&F he is inevitably talking about the political programme he wishes union members to adopt. This is not unique; all organisations attempt to influence the union in one way or another, to their own end.

Of course there have been many rank and file movements in the past which have been just that; movements. The common denominator which binds together all such R&F movements is they came into existence when a leadership pursues a policy opposed to members' interests –close down democracy, block a militant industrial action etc. Herein is the second problem for Hicks' use of the term R&F there is no movement because there is no *need for such a movement*. Consider the following:

- Are there any ban and proscriptions on organising in Unite? No, contrast this with the attacks on the left in UNISON.

- Is there any attempt to close down industrial action? No, this has been fully supported.
- Is there an attempt to promote industrial action? Yes, the Union has sponsored industrial action. For example enhanced strike pay.
- Is there a democratic lay member structure? Yes this was fought for and won against the old amicus leadership.
- Has Unite attempted to build the union through militant activity? Yes the organising unit is testimony to this.
- Is there lay member control over officers? Yes seen in the role of the Executive Council and in the NISC / RISC's.

These are the reasons there is no R&F movement. Does everything work in Unite? Clearly not, much seems to me dysfunctional. I could write out a list of errors, mistakes etc. However when I criticise the national leadership I do so in the context of the leadership building a democratic, open class struggle union.

Given McCluskey's record is one of strengthening the union, encouraging lay participation and providing a national political voice for members why do we have the spectacle of left groups campaigning against a strong effective fighting back left general secretary? Because Hicks (the SWP & GRL) have set up their watertight division between the R&F and the leadership, to admit anything other than the leadership are selling out the membership would break down that division and with it the political dogma on which they rest.

Looking at the facts. The real question for the R&F is this, has McCluskey strengthened or weakened our movement? What is his track record in the disputes where we have membership density? In the 3 biggest private sector disputes of the last 5 years, BA/Willie Walsh, construction/ BESNA and the London

bus workers Olympic 500 campaign, Len was instrumental in achieving historic victories by building on the energy of lay activists with the resources of the full time administration and uniting the union in difficult struggles. Let's look at Besna and the Bus actions

The Besna dispute is viewed as being run and won by the R&F. Indeed the dispute was going nowhere until Len called for the Organising and Leverage Department to work out a strategy for victory. At one of the final "R&F mass pickets" at Kings Cross station the construction workers present were vastly outnumbered by Left paper sellers. An excellent set of Unite leaflets in many languages were produced by the region and the organising unit, but the paper sellers steadfastly refused to give these to building workers going into work, choosing instead to distribute obscure tracts amongst themselves. The dispute in London was rudderless and ineffective by this time. Any building worker present could be forgiven for thinking the circus had come to town rather than an effective trade union protest. -here we see how the term R&F can be used to mean anything you like. In this instance the R&F equalled the left rather than R&F building workers.

Then there was the Bus workers' dispute. In a major feat of organising the London & Eastern Region brought together workers from 20 or so bus companies and won what was described by the press as a union's first offensive victory in many years while Johnson bemoaned '...we stuffed their mouths with gold for nothing'. This presented a model relationship between officers, the lay officials and members. Also, as with Besna McCluskey supported the strike 100% providing the Region with the resources needed to win.

Of course with hindsight it is possible to criticise aspects of the tactics of these strikes however this would be to miss the point; the leadership enabled maximum support in which officers and lay members acted. There are a number of points Hicks and his friends should take note of:

- Rather than sell out these strikes the leadership supported them and led them in conjunction with the lay members. It would be good to know why anyone would think they would do anything else.
- Many strikes today (including the ones cited) can only be won by the R&F and leadership working in tandem. If unions are going to develop industrial muscle then there has to be a new relationship between the R&F and the leadership.

As one looks closely at Hicks' claims we can see he does not represent the R&F but has appropriated the term for his political project, the conditions to move the R&F agenda forward from being an amalgam of left wing groupings to a movement do not exist because of the openness of the leadership and their commitment to militant industrial action. Indeed the entire rationale of the R&F candidate against the bureaucrat falls apart. It is however impossible for the R&F to admit that the union leadership could give full support to industrial action let alone sponsoring it. Unable to explain this, they either ignore it or they put forward rationalisations such as the trite, R&F pressure.

What does Hicks stand for? Once removed from his R&F wrapping what is Hicks' radical programme. This is what his web-site tells us:

Some of what I stand for:

- Branch restructuring is chaotic but can be remedied: No member will be re-allocated to a Branch without their prior agreement.
- The election of all officials, elected by members, not appointed by an individual or a panel.
- Lead a fight to repeal the anti union laws UK & EU and when necessary to confront them.
- For a General Secretary to live the life of the members they represent, on an average member's wage not a six

figure salary.

- A Public Works programme, with the first jobs offered to blacklisted construction workers.
- The creation of one million 'Green' jobs. One million potential members

Lead the fight? It may come as a shock but Unite is in the forefront of fighting to repeal the anti union laws. Under McCluskey we have not repudiated any strike. So what's the point in this statement? I think it must be the rev, rev revolutionary bit at the end; '...and when necessary to confront them'. We are left wondering what that means, is it always right to confront them, should it be a tactical question when to confront them, who should decide, should you take into account the wider consequences for the union. The statement is meaningless except as a polemical device of upping the ante.

A Public Works programme, & The creation of one million ...' For sure we need an alternative economic programme, now one can either put forward a revolutionary or a Keynesian programme but a couple of random slogans are not serious. There is also the not unimportant question of who will implement this call, how will you make this happen?

I guess these points are just there to make up a list, a botched attempt at transitional type demands

The meat of Jerry's programme is the following.

Election of officers.

This was debated at Unite's first Rules Conference in 2011. It was overwhelmingly defeated by democratically elected Lay delegates to the conference. So having gone through the Unite lay structures this key demand of Hicks has been rejected. Of course he has every right to raise it, but it is not something the GS can implement. Why make it such a big deal of this except as a political gesture.

I spoke against the motion for election of officers at that 2011 conference. Then as today there are several reasons why this would be a crazy idea for Unite:

1. How would officers be elected – by everyone (including retired members) in a region or by sectors?
2. Who would officers be accountable to – the members who elected them, or as now the Riscs regional committees and regional secretaries?
3. What member would leave his or her job to sign up for a limited time period of employment which in some cases could necessitate a wage cut?
4. Officers working in full time election mode, gravitating towards workplaces or factions in their allocations which deliver a decisive vote. This would detract from any objective strategic recruitment, organising or retention strategy. It would further plunge our structures and working live into a permanent state of confusion. It would give officers a political mandate, which should be the prerogative of the lay members.
5. Most importantly it would mean permanent factionalism in the union as left and right mobilised to get there person in office. Pity the rank and file!

Many of our members who see election of officers as a panacea for all our troubles are not informed that our present system of appointment by a Lay panel of the Executive Council, where no EC member can sit on an appointment panel for their own region, is far better.

The problems for the left in the union will not be solved by election of officers.

The answer to issues surrounding officer control is to make our lay committees and branches function more effectively,

ensuring a proper lay scrutiny of officer performance and making sure the committees have the politics and confidence to tackle the issue of non performing, ineffective officers.

Maybe Jerry Hicks only listens to the R&F when they agree with him, or maybe he is so out of touch with our new union's democracy that he is oblivious of this important decision of our Rules Conference.

A General Secretary on a worker's wage

A further key pledge is to only accept an average worker's wage. Jerry says he is prepared to accept £26000 a year. When a leading Hicks supporter put this to a training course of reps and branch secretaries he was met with a mixture of incredulity and laughter. As a long serving Branch Secretary put it- "that is less than I earn driving a bus in London-you must be joking!"

Unite is a general workers' union, where many of our members earn anything from around £25000 to £60000 plus for senior grades in some sectors. It has many hundreds of employees, manages many properties around Britain & Ireland and most importantly fights back on behalf of well over a million members. Ask the majority of our members if the highest position in our union, with such enormous responsibilities should be paid a wage that would mean you couldn't afford to live in many parts of London or Birmingham; you would not be taken seriously.

The issue of wages should be focused on negotiating more money and better terms and conditions for our members and increasing the amount of British and Irish workers covered by collective agreements, especially in the private sector. This is exactly what Lens strategy is aiming to do.

This is an infantile plank of Jerry's platform. It shows an opportunist "showman" attitude which runs through much of his manifesto.

Branch Reorganisation-a view from Unite's largest region Jerry started his campaign by stating that all individual members objecting to moving branch would not have to, that composite branches would stay, in effect, intact. He now has changed his position to agreeing with the principle but states Branch reorganisation is chaotic and accuses Unite of being dictatorial.

This issue really exposes Jerry Hicks as out of touch. In my region the process was carried through by our Lay committees reporting back to branches. The committee which oversaw the process consisted of myself, a Lay Regional Chair and a Lay Executive Council member overseeing, alongside the Deputy Regional Secretary.

Every Chair and Secretary of our 23 industrial lay committees was tasked with bringing forward proposals. These were scrutinised and amended where necessary. The Lay Regional Industrial Sector Committees (RISCs) then debated all proposals and amendments, finalised their proposals and resubmitted them. Where there was an issue the Lay Chairs were again consulted and agreement was reached. Updates were reported to the Regional Committee, we even held a special Regional Committee to discuss proposals and progress. Composite Branch Secretaries were informed of the strategy. Branches affected were allowed to raise objections. Finalised proposals and objections were dealt with by the Lay Executive Council.

Why branch reorganisation? Unite was a merger of 2 unions. AMICUS itself was a merger of 5 unions. All with different traditions and culture, all suffering the scars of 20 years of employer attacks on our organisation and our fighters and activists.

One of the consequence of this was our composite branches with no industrial logic were allowed by our legacy unions to fill the vacuum. These composite were clearly bloated and

dysfunctional in many regions and sectors. Yet within most, were many thousands of members who would be better organised in workplace, sector, or sub sector branches. In our Region we recognised this would be a better platform to rebuild our bargaining strength in the workplace and, alongside the 100% campaigns and Organising Units help to halt a strategy of managing decline. No only was it the right thing to do, it was done democratically bottom up. It also allows for new members to be better placed participating in branches which are organised around an industrial logic.

It is not difficult to see why many composite branch officials want to stop change. However it is beyond me why Hicks his SWP and GRL are supporting this conservative block to developing a militant trade unionism. The only answer is simple opportunism; let's all abandon our R&F principles and garner a few votes by supporting the conservatives.

A policy which is now even more absurd when he demands 'No member will be re-allocated to a Branch without their prior agreement'. What is this nonsense? Let's not forget we have been through a collective decision making process, How are we to inform the members? What happens if, say, one decides they don't want to move do we keep the branch open? This is simply not serious it not only stinks of opportunism it should tell all, that Hicks has not a clue about how to lead a trade union.

The Hicks programme and the union structure. While Hicks as a lot to say about the R&F and industrial action the issue he fails to address the existing Unite structures and his view of them. We can guess by the fact he has held no lay office in Unite, as far as I am aware, he has never been a Unite delegate to a Policy or Rules conference. He has never sat on a regional committee or any of our Unite Regional or national Industrial Sector Committees. Despite his high profile attendance at many construction picket lines, he has had no experience of working within our lay structures; he has not

been involved in the discussions within our union around our lay structures. This is one reason why the R&F approach is disconnected from, and unconcerned with our union committee structures, the sinews which bind the union together.

Fighting the battle of several unions ago. When you strip down what Hicks is saying, remove all the political verbiage, what makes sense comes from how craft unions organised and the radical tradition of militant shop stewards. Here stewards negotiated over pay and job control and along with the members of the shop had a large amount of autonomy from the Region and National organisation.

Many craft workers in Unite see this as the natural form of union organisation (as do many on the left, who would not know a capstan lathe if it hit them on the head. They have been told this form of union organisation is the road to militancy.) So Hicks can and does call on the past in his campaign and there will be many who like him wish to roll back the clock but it cannot happen.

Even if Hicks was to win (God help us) he could not run Unite on such lines. It may have passed him by but Unite is not a bigger version of the AEU. Even in workplaces where this model is still appropriate there is often an ineffective membership density, for example one of our SWP members (always banging on about the need to be more militant) had less than 5% density in his British Aerospace workplace, despite having a recognition agreement locally and national agreements. This is replicated to a greater or lesser extent across workplace organisation in semi skilled and skilled sectors. However if this was our only problem we would be in a far better place than we are. We are also faced with:

- A lack of stewards; Unite has far fewer stewards than the T&G had in the early '80s, and maybe even fewer than the T&G did in the 1950s when there was neither legal recognition nor any formal role within the union.

- Huge numbers are in workplaces where there are less than 50 members.
- Collective bargaining has declined from around 70% to 30%, large numbers of members do not have any bargaining rights.

Without collective bargaining and stewards to undertake it, craft unionism is not possible. So while a small minority within Unite are still able to function in this way the vast majority cannot. For the majority Unite is a general union.

If Hicks and his friends only kept their eyes open instead of putting negatives wherever McCluskey puts a positive, they would see a new pattern of industrial struggles emerging which link together the 'real R&F (the members) and the full time officials but hay why bother about taking the class struggle forward when you can call black white much more fun.

Jerry's campaign is not a progressive campaign. He is standing against the most outstanding Left leader of the British and Irish trade union movement, a leader who has not repudiated one strike as General Secretary, who has given his support to all the major Unite industrial disputes over the last few years, British Airways, Besna, London bus workers. Len McCluskey is a General Secretary who has a clear vision and strategy; to rebuild union strength in the workplace and in working class communities.

Jerry Hicks' campaign is a bringing together of large sections of the sectarian left, who like Hicks live off dogma rather than address the nature of today's class struggle.

Jerry Hicks, is also, in my view going to receive a big vote from right wingers manoeuvring to undermine Len McCluskey's strategy for building a fit for purpose, fighting back union. The Right, not the Left will gain from Jerry's decision to continue even though he received only around 135 branch and workplace nominations to Len's nearly 1100. Jerry's campaign

is more about the divisions and manoeuvrings in the sectarian left than anything else. More than that Jerry Hicks is clearly a member lacking the vision or politics to take our great new union, Unite, forward.

Jim Kelly

Chair London & Eastern Region Unite the Union (personal capacity)

Italian election tsunami by Balazs Nagy May 2013

There is no point simply repeating the results of the latest Italian elections. Everybody knows them. We also know the astonishment, apprehension and barely-disguised fear they caused among the bourgeoisie and its European satraps and propagandists. Even most of those who are genuinely against these were completely gobsmacked. So pretty much nobody understands what is going on. To penetrate the mystery of it all, you obviously need to go a bit further, to look behind the contestants' political badges and the voting figures. Those colours and facades are only the superficial, immediate and direct reflections of a deeper-going relationship of forces between social classes. Of course this means looking at the political actors and the votes they get. But it also means, unlike all the – sincere or partisan, merely superficial or frankly cosmetic – commentators, looking a little more closely behind the candidates' branding and costumes, especially if you hope to derive useful lessons of general interest beyond the borders of Italy.

To do that, we need first of all to clarify the historical and political conditions which have left their indelible mark on

these elections.

The break-up of bourgeois democracy

Important political developments are usually explained, discussed and analysed using the generally prevailing method, i.e. in themselves, separated from their social and historical context. This short-sighted approach is characteristic of various sets of bourgeois analysts. Sadly, it also influences a number of political currents which in other respects oppose capital. But in imposing this narrow view on the Italian elections, the great mass of reports, once they had expressed their dismayed – or indeed satisfied – stupefaction, have been content merely to describe the results. They did not look for any deeper cause of this veritable upheaval beyond pointing out that the Italian people had massively rejected the destructive bourgeois offensive, before wandering off into conjecture and subjective and even fantastic speculation. But the internal motive forces behind this readjustment of political lines remained beyond their reach.

One of the most fundamental things to bear in mind about our epoch, what makes it different from the 19th century, is that from World War I onwards capitalism visibly entered into the phase of its decline and death-agony. To avoid overloading this article, I shall spare the reader the very complete analysis Lenin provides of this imperialist stage of capital compared to the preceding phase, nor shall I polemicise against the dogmatic perception of this decline which mechanically imposes it on reality as if it were a constant uniform downward motion. On the contrary, it must be emphasised that this decadence is not a static given, an immutable element suspended like some external threat over a constant and unchanging society. Far from it, since it is bound up with this economy's and this society's organism, it is part and parcel of it, just as ageing and physical decrepitude are a result of the declining phase of a human body. And just as a human being declines, so too imperialism is declining to the point of exhaustion. Since Lenin's essential analysis of imperialism's anatomy (including the

damnation of its soul) in 1916, the system has continued to trace a generally downward curve. Of course it has not been an uninterrupted linear fall, but nevertheless a flagrant, notorious and necessary descent, despite occasionally stopping or even starting to rise again, as Trotsky describes it like the brief periods of lucidity in a being in its death agony, interludes which bring neither respite nor cure.

Keeping a constant eye on this decline and refreshing our analysis of it (as indeed of other manifestations of imperialism) has been and remains an important task for the workers' movement. Understanding it is an indispensable tool for all those who struggle for working people's emancipation. After Lenin's death, his companion in arms, Trotsky took on the responsibility for constantly improving this valuable and necessary compass, a task made all the more difficult and arduous by the way in which the Stalinist bureaucracy perverted and rendered gangrenous the USSR and the Communist Parties, altering and falsifying the teachings of Marx and Lenin and persecuting Trotsky and his comrades even to the point of assassination.

Concretely and constantly examining this decadence, in particular the incessant deterioration in the democratic system of the bourgeoisie's political regime as an intimately-linked product of it, was one of Trotsky's most important preoccupations. All his analyses of the processes involved in the decay of petty-bourgeois democracy deserve our attention, since this degradation has not only not stopped, but country by country and period by period it has got worse and assumed a variety of forms depending on the mutual positioning of the classes and the intensity of the struggle between them, and also on specific national circumstances.

One undeniable symptom of imperialist decadence is the noticeable shift in the physiognomy of economic crises. Once again it suffices, without going into details, to mention their much greater frequency and the appearance of great general crises of a new type. These are world-wide in scope, spreading from one economic sector to another (finance,

production, distribution), becoming infinite in duration and, inevitably, leading to a re-modelling of political life. These crises of a new type drastically reveal the total bankruptcy of capitalism-imperialism and call imperatively for its overthrow. Thus they openly pose the question of power.

The first such crisis lasted from 1929 to 1945, since World War II was an integral part of it, both as its ineluctable outcome and as its "solution". We are currently living through the second, whose depth and duration are also starting to disturb a good number of even bourgeois economists. In France, only Hollande and his people retain, for public consumption, as it were, any illusions over the approaching end of a "cyclical" crisis. So this "normal" president hopes for a "normal" crisis.

But at the height of the crisis of the 1930s Trotsky provided a galaxy of magisterial analyses of political upheavals that were the worm-eaten and toxic fruit of imperialist decline. The most important, he showed, arose from classical democracy's inability to contain the violence of class contradictions produced by imperialism. Hence the bourgeoisie's orientation towards more authoritarian political systems. This is why democracy degrades and rots and is abolished.

How Trotsky examined fascism, what he called for and proposed and what he warned against, are more or less well-known. But these have become separated from the theoretical basis of his investigation and reflections i.e. imperialist decadence and the sharpening of class contradictions, which are pushed into the background or frankly ignored. So, as Trotsky himself had occasion to comment, an examination of concrete reality has been replaced by the abstract categories of "democracy" and "fascism".

This is how Trotsky presented this problem (just after Hitler's tragic seizure of power).

"The Stalinist theory of fascism ... represents one of the most tragic examples of the injurious ... consequences that can follow from the substitution of the dialectical analysis of

reality ... by abstract categories formulated upon the basis of a partial and insufficient historical experience ... The Stalinists adopted the idea that in the contemporary period, finance capital cannot accommodate itself to parliamentary democracy and is obliged to resort to fascism. From this idea, absolutely correct within certain limits, they draw in a purely deductive, formally logical manner the same conclusions for all the countries and for all stages of development.” (“Bonapartism and Fascism” in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934-35), New York, 1974, p. 51)

Among the Stalinists’ generalisations, Trotsky then notes, they worryingly “forgot” that “between parliamentary democracy and the fascist regime a series of transitional forms, one after another, inevitably interposes itself, now ‘peaceably,’ now by civil war”. With many comrades today in danger of sliding into the schematic method of the Stalinists, this advice is irreplaceable. How important it is, is emphasised by the fact that over that decade of the 1930s, Trotsky never stopped stripping down and analysing bonapartism as one of the intermediate forms between parliamentary democracy condemned to disappear and its replacement by fascism – or the proletarian revolution.

From this rich literature, which is particularly relevant to an understanding of our present problems, we should also quote his article “Whither France?” written three months later. His words in this study resonate today even louder and with particular acuteness:

“Capitalism not only cannot give the toilers new social reforms, nor even petty alms. It is forced to take back what it once gave. All of Europe has entered an era of economic and political counter-reforms. The policy of despoiling and suffocating the masses stems not from the caprices of the reaction but from the decomposition of the capitalist system. That is the fundamental fact which must be assimilated by every worker if he is not to be duped by hollow phrases. That is precisely why the democratic reformist parties are disintegrating and losing their forces one after another

throughout

Europe".

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/whitherfrance/ch00.htm>)

Just like now, as if he had just written these words today, although it was actually almost 80 years ago! And of course it raises the question: Where are we now?

The bourgeoisie's European con-trick

Trotsky's teachings and advice help us to grasp today's situation. Using this Marxist method we can get an understanding of the recent elections in Italy and bring out the main political lessons they offer. But it would be quite wrong to see the current crisis as a mere copy of the previous one, even though they share the same formal basis – i.e. the decline of imperialism – and the current crisis does resemble its forebear in the 1930s.

The great crisis is not a simple repetition of its ancestor in the last century. In the intervening period the prolonged death-agony of capitalism-imperialism has weakened the system to the point where most, if not all, its traditional reserves are exhausted. The shift of its centre of gravity to Asia is a significant symptom of this exhaustion which in turn has made the retrogression faster and worse. Faced with continual depletion of its normal internal resources and threatened with complete exhaustion, anaemic world capitalism relies entirely on the artificial intravenous drip-feed of finance and the illusory nutrients it brings. At the same time, its most enfeebled European branch has decided to risk all on a death-defying "European" feat of acrobatics which flies in the very face of the continent's eminently national character. And paradoxically, it has found a lifeline by developing and generalising this survival therapy.

Conveniently screened behind the claim to be "building Europe", it has brought together and concentrated the last measures (before fascism!) for regenerating capitalism and has imposed them on every country. These stewards of European capital have gained some space to impose the bitter doses by presenting them as necessary steps towards European

integration. There is no way national parliaments would have simply swallowed them without provoking severe crises and the inevitable risk of mobilising working people into tumultuous resistance. In any case, they do not have much room for moving towards the kind of bonapartist regime that Trotsky described in the 1930s as one of the intermediate regimes between parliamentary democracy and fascism. The sort of (even pretend) wheeling and dealing between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat which is a typical feature of bonapartism would be very difficult given the anaemic state the bourgeoisie is in. It is unable to offer even the shadow of a reform and is in urgent need of resurrection, which has turned out to be impossible without tackling head-on all the gains the working class has made; there is hardly any room left for any kind of balancing act between the classes, even an illusory one. Nevertheless, bonapartism is very tempting, especially in France, where Sarkozy recently tried to put it into practice – although that too rested on the “European” fiction. That remains the basis and framework of all efforts to turn towards bonapartism, elements of which, especially the authoritarian side, are present in every country.

Nevertheless, this Europe remains indispensable for the bourgeoisie, first of all because it allows them to be sparing in the use of fascism, which is not only a costly adventure but also very risky and dangerous for them because European workers have not forgotten its horrors. However, it would be seriously wrong to dismiss it completely because it is still the bourgeoisie’s final resort. So as their declines leads to more and more problems accumulate, fascist parties are gaining strength across Europe and biding their time. This can be seen everywhere, from Greece to the Netherlands. For the time being, however, the bourgeoisie is more inclined to rely on the supposed European unification which they have shaped to their own requirements, i.e. to a considerable extent perverted.

First of all, the mongrel edifice which they and their supporters call Europe is admirably adapted to fill the space

between democracy and fascism that used to be occupied by national bonapartism. It has the immense advantage of neutralising and shrugging aside democracy and its useless, "dangerous" institutions while maintaining their empty husks or rather, to be precise, degrading them into transmission belts for their own purposes. The crying lack of democracy that is a distinctive mark of the whole of this European edifice, and the obviously authoritarian and profoundly anti-democratic way it functions, are not mistakes arising from miscalculation, chance or caprice. They reveal its essence, express its nature and indicate its vocation to compel, impose and assert the will of the bourgeoisie while side-lining democratic procedures with which it is incompatible.

The sole and invariable aim of all their "recommendations" is to set up projects to save and shore up capital which is on the ropes and a bourgeoisie which is adrift without a rudder. They are handed down like decrees to docile national "parliaments". (Strangely not a single one of these measures aims to improve the lives of working people!) This being the case, those who, however sincerely, ask this Europe to apply the most elementary democratic principles, or even its own social regulations, have got the wrong address and simply make themselves look stupid. Instead of begging for these things you have to win them in struggle. The mission of this Europe is precisely to dictate what capital requires, side-lining democracy that gets in the way. The present great crisis powerfully exposes this and testifies to it in the most striking way.

The current crisis and the role of debt

This great crisis did not explode simply as a consequence of contradictions of the capitalist-imperialist system already familiar from the 1929-1945 crisis. It was fed and bloated on top of that by all the extra costs arising from the long-drawn-out decadence and deterioration of imperialism and efforts to contain it.

Public debt requires particular attention in this regard because it plays a special role and is important,

concentrating within itself the whole extra weight of capitalist retrogression and the vain efforts to overcome it. I cannot deal with it fully here, but it would be wrong to leave it out entirely, since it has a central place in the world – and particularly European – bourgeoisie's arrangements.

Briefly, then: this high level of public indebtedness has its origins in the more and more marked deficiency in capitalist accumulation which from more or less the middle of the twentieth century was decreasingly able to play the role of stimulating constantly expanding extended reproduction. This inadequacy, which is the main basis and organic reason for the capitalist-imperialist system running out of steam and falling into marked decline over a long period, inexorably drove it under the domination of its financial component. The poor returns on production – profit – was no longer enough to secure it vigorous renewal. As indicated above, it needed an artificial and total intravenous drip of finance. To put it another way, finance went from being a partner to a hegemonic position. One consequence was a serious drop in state income, already reduced by the cuts politicians like to make to the taxation of the bourgeoisie. This happened just as state expenditure was rising. This process as a whole necessarily culminated in all bourgeois states being massively in debt, especially in the economically most advanced countries.

A feature of a general crisis is that it exposes weaknesses and problems of the system for all to see, and so it was with this catastrophe. The real weight and extent of current debt far surpasses the normal and necessary role of money-capital loans in the production-cycle of capital and the classic debt-levels which go with them. Still lacking the space to deal with it properly, here, I can mention only what seems absolutely essential to understanding the situation.

As we saw above, finance capital has gained the upper hand and become a monster whose tentacles tightly embrace the whole of social life. Of course it is not the mythical monster that bourgeois politicians and journalists try to portray it as,

lurking inaccessibly behind the enigmatic domination of "market forces". It is certainly flesh and blood, sheltering in the banks and similar institutions and personified in the cohorts of shareholders, small-time speculators and other parasites.

What really is strangely new about this situation and at the same time represents a deepening of the "decay" Lenin spoke about, is the fact that this finance capital has managed to turn all the countries of Europe (not to mention others) into permanent debtors bound to yield up their regular feudal dues like medieval serfs. The most fundamental role of this thing they call Europe and its institutions is to tie these modern serfs to their financial masters and make sure they pay the many and various exactions upon them. The previously independent national leaders and their parliaments unquestioningly carry out orders and instructions prescribing how they are to fulfil their role of collecting the cash. Their main activity is to raise, amass and guarantee the considerable sums owed to the sacrosanct "markets" as they suppress and destroy all social gains previously achieved. It is a fully-worked-out system where astronomic debt levels make any hope of final payment vain and utopian, especially since, while countries and workers bled white in this way find they are completely unable to reproduce the necessary wealth, their governments still keep turning up regularly at the banks to borrow further billions. So the debts grow and this whole edifice of abject exploitation is set to go on and on for ever.

This problem as a whole is the concrete expression of Lenin's overall characterisation of imperialism as an epoch of "wars and revolutions" or "as capitalism in transition, or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism" disintegrating under the weight of its contradictions. By 1934 Trotsky was talking about the "capitalist system decomposing". Now, the essential meaning of the current situation which the above analysis reveals is a growing inability on the part of the bourgeoisie to preserve and guarantee its domination using the old means

to which it has become accustomed and its chaotic search for a way out. Lenin clearly described this as one of the necessary conditions for revolution. Despite all fairy stories, there is no doubt that we are in a period in which revolution is maturing, and in which the main job of all those who take seriously the emancipation of working people is preparing for it. The facts clearly pose the choices: workers' revolution or a descent into barbarism (of which war is one of the components).

Displacement of class forces – key to the election results

The Italian election results were unexpected and astonished everybody. They express the fact that, on the rotten basis of capitalism-imperialism, there has been a veritable general political re-alignment in Italy, a social re-positioning that has brutally redrawn the political map. In reality we are at the end of a series of enormous whirlwinds, of dislocations and regroupings involving political parties in Italy since the 1990s. These have been years of real cataclysm which have shaken political life from top to bottom, radically changing the traditional spectrum of parties. These twenty short years have wiped the two main opposing parties off the map: the one, Stalinist and the other, bourgeois Christian Democracy.

Their collapse reflected their inability to hold back and channel workers' and peasants' struggles using their old, outdated methods and means, an impotence which was accentuated by the way these struggles intensified on the basis of the worsening decadence of capitalism and attempts to deal with it on a "European" level. Their political re-composition in a new configuration was obviously motivated by their abiding desire to shore up the rickety bourgeoisie and thus bar the way to the masses of working people. They only differed – sometimes acutely – over how to do it. The recent elections provide us with the first materials assessing the outcome of this metamorphosis, which no doubt will exert a strong influence on national – and European – political life.

The potential impact across the continent will be very deep because what was directly at stake in the political contest in

Italy itself was the way the European project expressed itself in that country. It was in relation to this central axis that the political actors and their organisations defined their programmes. Their national views and topics were merely derived from these commitments. Moreover, this same transformation or mutation of purely national programmes into European stances had already marked previous elections, in Greece or France, for example.

The main issue in the Italian elections is the outstanding fact that, following their Greek brothers, the Italian proletariat inflicted a stinging defeat on the bourgeoisie's concentrated offensive. They swept aside its nefarious objectives and measures and its anti-democratic methods, thus crushing the political line of their Italian personification and direct proxy of Brussels and Frankfurt, Mario Monti, along with the shattered remnants of bourgeois parties who clung to him. This proletarian drive was expressed directly in the votes, but also in the pressure exerted upon all other classes and their parties.

First of all, the elections exposed and set the seal on a fault line in the Italian bourgeoisie, breaking apart under the heavy burden of re-structuring its forms of rule. One significant wing realised the difficulties involved in applying in Italy the European offensive aimed at taming and subjecting the proletariat and rejected this path. It chose a different route to weakening and dominating working people, the route of adventurist demagogy and runaway nationalism. The fact that this coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi did very well at the polls underlines how important this orientation on the part of the bourgeoisie is. The two parts making it up arose not so long since out of the decomposition of the traditional political parties of the bourgeoisie. They testify to a significant political re-composition on the part of one section of it. Side by side with the adventurist party of the bourgeois wheeler-dealer Berlusconi, the Northern League expresses a clear orientation towards an authoritarian nationalist regime, thus straddling the tendency towards a

rupture in national unity. The League openly espouses the desire to drive ahead with the super-exploitation of the south of the country, the famous Mezzogiorno, and even to cut all state aid to this traditional "internal colony" of the Italian bourgeoisie. Even now the average income per head of the population in the Mezzogiorno is 40 per cent less than in the north of the country. Between 2007 and 2010, gross domestic product (GDP) in the south fell by 6.1 per cent, while in the centre-north the reduction was "only" 4.1 per cent, and since 2008, 70 per cent of job losses have been in the Mezzogiorno (Le Monde, 22 February 2013).

This coalition kept afloat by Berlusconi's demagogic adventurism and the Northern League's threadbare local patriotism clearly forms the antechamber to a second edition of fascism. Rather than unifying the country, bourgeois Europe's aggressive policy of ravaging it and imposing authoritarian centralisation have heightened the contradictions and inequalities between provinces, dividing them and pushing them towards separation. A considerable part of the "national" bourgeoisie straddle this drive – this is very clear and far-reaching in Italy – and, dragging along a good proportion of the petty bourgeoisie, adopt a no less retrograde and reactionary nationalist orientation, going so far as to repudiate the unity of the country.

(It should be noted in passing that this phenomenon is not confined to Italy. Besides the visibly nationalist parties in many countries, one can also see several movements for national dismemberment. That is concretely on the agenda not only in Italy, but also in Belgium and Spain for example. Of course such a turn on the part of a section of the bourgeoisie in this or that country cannot at all be a path to national emancipation, even in cases as legitimate as the Catalan and Basque nations in Spain. For working class activists to take this nationalist path would mean them being swallowed up in the process by which the façade of bourgeois national unity breaks apart, which would weaken the desirable unity of the country's proletariat. The nationalist turn, even under

apparently positive slogans, is precisely the other variant of bourgeois politics, through which it seeks to maintain its leadership and hegemony by trying to channel the revolt against bourgeois Europe into a nationalist dead-end pointing straight at fascism. The bourgeois "independence" adventure would only add to the already immense burdens Catalan [or Basque] working people have to bear and certainly not bring any "national" advantages. Real independence for Catalonia will only be obtained in the course and within the framework of a struggle for socialism throughout the whole of Spain. Now the indispensable condition for such a struggle, and especially for a successful outcome, is the fighting unity of all Spanish working people. The Asturian miners realised that recently when they marched to Madrid to unite their struggles with other working people against bourgeois Europe's anti-working class measures.)

The other significant section of the bourgeoisie lines up behind the so-called "left" coalition of Pier-Luigi Bersani. The dominant segment of this coalition is the Democrat Party which also, but only partly, came out of the break-up of the old political apparatus (party) of the bourgeoisie and its re-composition during the 1990s. But unlike the parties of the opposing coalition of Berlusconi, the birth of this Democrat Party follows a different fracture line and also a sticking-together of ill-matched pieces. The new bourgeois parties, particularly Berlusconi's "People of Liberty" and the Northern League, are bourgeois formations of a distinctly DIY character, but their class origins are homogenous. The Democrat Party, on the other hand, has its roots in the dissolution of the once-powerful Stalinist party of Togliatti. Since this party dissolved itself in 1990, its majority have undergone a period of decomposition punctuated by various break-aways and re-compositions. This opportunist mutation, accompanied by alliances and ruptures, culminated in the current Democrat Party founded in 2007. But it also contains the fusion of this Stalinist rump with the "left" vestiges of Christian Democracy.

It should be noted straight away that the sudden degeneration of the CP and its amalgamation with a piece of the bourgeois Christian Democrat party, although written into the DNA of Stalinism – as one saw in the USSR – was treated with obstinate silence by the European and world press, which modestly abstained from stirring the stink of this rottenness in its reports on the elections. This Democrat Party draws its strength from its implantation in the various workings of the state and municipal machinery and among the trade union bureaucracy. President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano, formerly Togliatti's crafty opportunist henchman, was one of the bosses of this party which simply installed the government of the bankers' agent Mario Monti in power – without elections – in 2011 because their European Union told them to.

Besides this Democrat Party, Bersani's coalition also involves two small and obscure parties which eke out an existence in the shade of this "big party" as independent "socialist" and ecological survivals of the great political upheaval.

All in all, these two coalitions are separated not only by their programmes but also by their antecedents and class backgrounds. They express the two divergent projects through which the bourgeoisie is trying to discipline and dominate the working class and get a grip on its crisis: one of them by getting together with Europe, the other by retreating into nationalism. This fracture has laid bare the perplexity this perdition-bound class is in over how to secure its domination. And that is how this conflict between the two variants in Italy led temporarily to a no-score draw.

One unusual feature of these elections and this conflict is the appearance of Giuseppe (Beppe) Grillo's formation, which played a significant role. Their high share of the vote (25.5 per cent in the elections to the lower chamber, 23.7 per cent for the Senate) reveals how far the bourgeoisie's decomposition and its contradictions have gone. This "Five Star Movement" is not even an actual structured organisation but, is described by its chief ideologue Gianroberto Casaleggio as a vague community whose members are linked by

internet (according to Le Monde, 14 March 2013). But working class activists need to characterise this unstable and little-known nebula according its social composition and political content and orientations. (Information on this is taken from the well-documented article by Marc Wells and Peter Schwarz on World Socialist Website, 13 March 2013).

The spokesperson for this Movement, Beppe Grillo, is one of the richest men in Italy, with an annual income of up to 4.3 million euros in 2005. But the real head of his political network is Casaleggio, the prosperous founder of Milan ITC firm, "Casaleggio Associates". One of his close supporters, Enrico Sassou, is currently taking a back seat to disarm possible criticism, since he is the director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Italy and editor of "Harvard Business Review Italia". But "Casaleggio Associates" itself is linked by partnerships to several powerful American and British firms.

This on its own provided a serious indication of the class nature and direction of this movement. So it was quite understandable that the millionaire Leonardo Del Vecchio, owner of a firm called "Luxottice", and the steelmaker Francesco Biasion of Vicenza supported Grillo. Explaining his support, Biasion said he wanted to encourage the Movement because "nowadays business is in the grip of the bureaucracy and the unions".

However, the Movement is far from being directly an association of well-to-do bourgeois. The great majority of its supporters, especially those who front it up and form the vast majority of its 163 new members of parliament, are young graduates and students, IT workers, accountants, teachers, surveyors and others, the same déclassé intellectuals pauperised by the crisis in a "casualised generation" that exists in every country. This impoverished and completely disorientated stratum shares many point in common with those who Mussolini's movement recruited, or Hitler's Nazis. Their aimless wanderings express the sad lack of a genuine revolutionary movement. What we have here really is a petty-

bourgeois setup which has drawn in a great number of working-class voters because of its virulent opposition to bourgeois austerity and those who serve it.

According to the Demos Institute (quoted in Le Monde, 16 March 2013), the Grillo Movement received 49 per cent of working-class votes, while Bersani's Democrat Party only won 21 per cent of workers! Among the unemployed and jobless, these figures were 42 per cent for Grillo against 20 per cent for the Democrat Party. The "Five Star Movement" also garnered 40 per cent of the vote among artisans, peasants and small business-people, more than Berlusconi's party at 32.5 per cent.

So while they threw out their immediate enemy, the Monti government, working class votes were dispersed between two political blind alleys. The fact that they were politically derailed to this extent is distressing and requires fuller explanation. Further on, we will examine in a little more detail the absence of a real workers' movement and its politics, which is the main reason for this temporary loss of direction. Let us just note for the moment that the relatively low proportion of working-class votes cast for Bersani's coalition is also explained, above and beyond their distrust of this formation's politics, by its announcement that it was going to maintain Monti's anti-working class measures. Working-class revulsion over this policy, however, was not enough to eliminate all illusions in this "left". Nevertheless, it was strong enough to channel a mass of working class votes towards Grillo's petty-bourgeois Movement. But this formation's ideology and political line are not just completely foreign to the working class, they are even diametrically opposed to workers' reality-based conception of the world and, above all, their political aims. Casaleggio, considered to be the spiritual guide of this setup, is one of the illuminati, his visions motivated by virtual online information which he confuses with reality. In his video clips he predicts the imminent disappearance of social classes, ideologies, political parties and – of course – trade unions,

leaving behind a "community" with "generalised participation" through the internet. This is a fantasy world which smells strongly of fascism, with its characteristic elimination of any democratic organisations acting as intermediate connections in society, replacing them with direct links between the individual and the boss. But it is the comedian Grillo who translates these crypto-fascist hallucinations into a political language laced with demands that are very often as shrill as they are demagogic.

This political position categorically denies the existence of social classes, replacing them with "two social blocs". In bloc A, Grillo places "millions of young people who have no future" vegetating in "casual jobs", very often unemployed and "the excluded" who "themselves want to become institutions ... and create a new Italy out of the ruins". Here, too, he puts "small and medium businesspeople who ... are forced to shut up shop or kill themselves out of despair". How easily one can discern in these summary and simplistic descriptions the contours of an alliance between the upper layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and various elements of the Lumpenproletariat, essential components of the fascist shock battalions.

In bloc B, on the other hand, he places "those who are surviving the crisis" who, he says, "often have a decent current account and a good pension, or the security of a public sector job". He indulges in a demagogic amalgam by putting workers and working people in state and municipal employment alongside the parasitic bourgeoisie in one bag in his bloc B. By doing this, Grillo is trying to divide the working class and working people by setting up young and impoverished layers against older workers and those who work in the public sector.

He keeps insisting that the struggle between these two blocs has replaced the class struggle, which he hold up to public ridicule. In this way he hides what is really at stake in the struggle, carefully protecting the bourgeoisie while driving a wedge between working people, so that the sharp edge of his demagogy tends to be directed against these working people.

For example, it is not so easy to see through it when he claims that we face “a generational conflict in what is at stake is age and not class”, whereas things are a lot clearer when he writes that “every month the state has to spend 19 million on pensions and 4 million on civil service salaries. This burden is no longer sustainable”.

It is hardly surprising that certain bourgeois commentators are drawn towards Grillo’s programme even if in general they condemn his demagogy. In any case, the vast majority of them do not say a word about the fascist overtones in what he says, or simply treat it as vague, indefinable political adventurism. Fortunately this movement remains very instable and its disparate elements could easily break up along class lines.

But where is the party of the working class?

These elections were marked by a noteworthy – and at first sight surprising – apparent contradiction between on the one hand the immense pressure the proletariat exerted on the majority of political actors to reject the bourgeoisie’s European offense and on the other the obvious absence of any genuinely working class organisation and policy. In this sense they differ considerable from the elections in Greece and France, where coalitions like Syriza and Front de Gauche were able to embody the first and certainly limited but already effective steps towards rebuilding the working class’s political weapon, its party, without falling into sterile sectarianism.

Now nothing of the sort has emerged in Italy, despite the powerful workers’ movement, rich in long-standing and once-flourishing revolutionary traditions. It is also the country of Antonio Gramsci, the great Marxist organiser and educator of Italy’s communist movement in the 20th century. So it is absolutely essential to understand this tragic discrepancy between the working class’s history and basic instincts and the flagrant and deplorable lack of its own party. To grasp the content of this and the main reason for it, we need to broaden the scope of our analysis.

Gramsci's original theoretical heritage was already falsified and perverted by Togliatti's Stalinist party so they could use it as a theoretical cover for its opportunist move to so-called "Euro-communism", the antechamber to its own liquidation and suicide. From another side, faced with this shameless deceit, young intellectuals undertook the necessary work to theoretically cleanse this heritage. However, one fraction of these intellectuals, Antonio Negri and his ilk, chose to act on the ultra-left opposite pole to the Stalinists' right deviation (but just as alien to Gramsci's thought), falling into the black hole and blind alley of terrorism, while another group of these intellectuals turned their backs on political action, converting this heritage into academic canons of a "political philosophy".

As for the political development of Italian communism, that too followed a twisting path. During the bourgeois transformation of the Italian Communist Party into the Democratic Party of the Left in 1989-1990 (later they even dropped the word "Left"!), a minority rejected this road, shortly afterwards setting up the "Rifondazione Comunista" (Communist Re-foundation). Now you might have thought it was going to return to its revolutionary roots, but this rebel party, which remained faithful only to the worst opportunist moments of its Stalinist hey-day, degenerated along the same class-collaborationist itinerary, while formally insisting on the name "communist" more or less in the same way that François Hollande's party clings to the word "socialist". We cannot go into the whole trajectory of this "Rifondazione" here.

Nevertheless it should be said that in 2006 it, too, entered Romano Prodi's bourgeois government (2006-2008) and with 41 MPs furnished a substantial part of its parliamentary base (having already supported the first Prodi government from 1996 onwards). It supported not only that government's attack on pensioners (also labelled a "reform") and its deep budget cuts, but also sent troops to occupy Lebanon and later Afghanistan. No surprise, then, that in the 2008 elections it

lost all its MPs and the Prodi government had to give way to Berlusconi! "Rifondazione" stayed outside Bersani's coalition in the latest elections, but it linked up with a sort of alliance of various groups, including the bourgeois anti-mafia judges, which in the end got 2 per cent of the vote, which was not enough to have even a single MP!

This sombre itinerary is highly instructive, especially just now, when it is so highly important for the working class to achieve the kind of political re-grouping that is bearing the first promising fruits with Syriza in Greece and Front de Gauche in France (having already seen the appearance of Die Linke in Germany). The collapse of "Rifondazione Comunista" in Italy forcefully reminds us that nothing is guaranteed, that even the most promising fruits can easily go bad and rot. The repellent example of "Rifondazione" is all the more edifying in that it embodies the final degradation of the Italian section of the so-called Fourth International formerly led by Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel and Pierre Frank.

Indeed, "Rifondazione" accepted various political groups into its ranks as organised factions, including "Sinistra Critica" ("Critical Left"), the Italian section of this Pabloite pseudo-international led by Livio Maitan (who remained a wise and devoted supporter of this International right up until his death in 2004). Of course, an entry of this sort is entirely justified as long, and only as long, as you use it to help advance the independent position of the working class in preparation for its revolution. But from the outset there were serious grounds for doubting that this would happen, since Pablo and his companions have long since been severely criticised for bartering revolutionary proletarian politics against illusory hopes of a revolutionary development on the part of the Stalinist bureaucracy. So they adapted to this bureaucracy and as a consequence revised the teachings of Marxism. Maitan and his Italian friends were faithful and active supporters of this orientation.

The inevitable happened. Instead of putting forward a revolutionary opening against the politics of "Rifondazione

Comunista", the "Sinistra Critica" group, motivated by its Pabloite origins and training, simply adapted to the "Rifondazione" mould to the extent of becoming its strike force in a typically popular front policy (joining up with the "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie).

The source of this profoundly wrong and mistaken policy lay in their emollient appreciation of the situation and moderate view of the tasks that flowed from it. In those elections, as they have long since, the vestiges of the Stalinist bureaucracy swear by all that is holy that these tasks consist purely and simply in improving and correcting aspects of the capitalist system, and that that is all that it needs. In this they join hands with the old Social Democratic reformists and they are indeed renewing co-operation with them. On the way they jointly influence a whole range of new petty bourgeois movements. Moreover, they also contaminate several of those who claim some allegiance to the working class.

But the crisis brutally exposed the fact that, confronted with complete bankruptcy when it comes to carrying out the most basic functions of its decomposing and anachronistic system, the bourgeoisie turned naturally to destroying the great advances made by humanity represented by the working class and its achievements. It is happening to everything, from the many and varied conditions for a materially and culturally decent life to democratic rights and the framework in which they operate. The bourgeois social class was once an active participant in this historic progress, if not its actual promoter, but it has become its ruthless gravedigger. The crisis reveals, brings out and accentuates these profound tendencies in the capitalist-imperialist system in its death-agony, acting as such since its formation described by Lenin. Past and recent history prove there is no magic remedy or miracle cure which can soothe the pain caused by this bedridden system or patch up its open sores. Capitalism-imperialism has to be eliminated and its power overthrown. That not only does not exclude participation in elections – it often makes it absolutely necessary.

But "Rifondazione", including its "Critica Sociale" component, did not stand in elections in order to express this essential demand on the special terrain offered by elections, nor to open a clear path to this revolutionary solution. Far from it, they confined themselves to offering their own recipe for improving that same system of exploitation. Their insignificant results prove that, in the role of improvers of the system, they could only be a minor assistant, as it were a poor relation of proper, established bourgeois families. On the other hand, we have seen, as was only to be expected, a large number of working-class voters were misled by Grillo's vociferous demagoguery which – in the absence of any revolutionary opening – they took to offer such a hope.

But this role of minor assistant rescuing the system which "Rifondazione" and its ilk fulfil in Italy is not new, nor specifically Italian. They have even more important fellows, not just in Europe, who urge workers to repair broken pots instead of showing them how to get rid of the noxious bosses and their malign stewards. They are the main obstacle to a revolutionary development, so it is essential to reject their false, deceptive conceptions.

Therefore a theoretical clarification is just as badly needed as the elaboration of a political line. They will both develop in an implacable struggle not only against the ideological poisons of the bourgeoisie but also against wrong ideas which divert the class struggle and park it in other sets of opposites. The restricted framework offered by this article makes a detailed examination of them impossible, but it is nevertheless important to cast a glance at the some immediate effects of the Italian elections and sketch a way out of the present blind alley.

The immediate impact: Bourgeois Europe drifting rudderless

Voting patterns in the Italian election results provoked general anxiety and consternation throughout bourgeois Europe, noisily expressed by its politicians and journalists. Let us leave aside this panicky, thunderstruck moaning and their grotesque and yet significant warnings. For example, the

puppet president of the Council of Europe, Van Rompuy, hopes to be “convinced that the new Italian government will continue on the path of its predecessors”. Clearly this is one towering intellect with not a clue what is going on (we shall see later how his prayers were answered). In any case, they all “discreetly did homage to the great loser, Mario Monti” (Le Monde, 28 February 2013). In other words, whatever a great European people massively and unequivocally voted for, these unblushing democrats lost not one whit of their determination to smash working people in order to save the bourgeoisie. Anybody who thinks you can budge these ferocious defenders of capital should ponder these words.

However, much as it is an unpardonable illusion to believe that elections can turn the situation around to the benefit of working people, it would also be a serious mistake to believe that they are no use at all. As for the Italian elections, they have not only radically changed the political terrain in the country, but also inflicted a perceptible shift in the European political scene. This still weak but nevertheless apparent metamorphosis is merely the visible expression of a hardening in the class struggle which, at this stage, is still largely entangled in various intermediate linkages.

What is indirectly reflected in the recent clear fissure splitting the alleged unity of bourgeois Europe is the pressure from workers amplified by the Italian election results. One part, especially in the South where they are more openly exposed to workers’ fury, openly questions the so-called unilateral policy of austerity. One should not overestimate this vague desire, which is only a pale echo of the powerful proletarian rumbling. But nor should one underestimate it, but use it and push it further, which, fortunately, the Front de Gauche seems to realise.

But it is also urgent for the Front to use it to extend and consolidate its struggle to generalise it into a European working-class orientation, and within this framework to work for the formation of a political European force alongside Syriza, Die Linke in Germany and other similar organisations –

possibly also Italian, so as to bring together opposition to the destructive policies of Brussels.

Now such an opposition could not be limited simply to rejecting the bourgeois offensive. Were to be content simply to say "another policy is possible", this would disarm it and render it ineffective. We need, on a European level, to back this assertion concretely with positive policies for a Europe of Working People. This practical orientation backed by demands leading up to it are what we should be putting forward. One main demand of this sort must be to propose measures to get a grip of finance and its instruments, such as banks, and the use of indebtedness. A programme of that sort would put some backbone into the preparations for European elections in May 2014.

A rallying call of this sort for a Working Peoples' Europe, without going into detail about the demands which should accompany it, is urgently needed. It would be a genuine political expression of the intensification in working-class mobilisation and radicalisation. Already on 2 March, hundreds of thousands of Portuguese workers, following in the footsteps of their Italian brothers and sisters, organised powerful demonstrations to demand: "Troika Go Away!", and while bourgeois politicians and journalists strive to present these same workers as docile sheep you can keep shearing, they have themselves calmly disproved such self-serving fabrications. And the Portuguese Socialist Party, terrified of losing influence, immediately denounced the very austerity it used to support. Even the right-wing government has caught the spirit of revolt among those who are now openly trying to soften the intransigence of austerity in Europe.

Horse-trading over this was the only agenda item at European meetings (finance ministers on 4 March, then heads of state and heads of government on 14-15 March). At the very heart of a Europe already variously divided, cracks now appeared within the Euro-zone itself. Two opposed camps started to emerge, with France, Spain, Italy and Portugal pitted against inflexible members like Finland and Austria with Germany at

the helm, the latter also having a real grip on the European bureaucracy.

The issue they are fighting over is relatively significant; they are arguing about choosing and deciding the best way to secure the bourgeoisie's power in current extremely difficult circumstances. Should they continue and even reinforce the austerity policy, or should they not – without abandoning their goals – slow down the pace and soften their demands to avoid a social explosion?

No sooner had this row started, than the finance ministers came up with their "solution" to Cyprus' debt problem. It's a pity we cannot spend more time on this point which is most instructive from every angle. Let us just say that they took a series of dictatorial steps which flagrantly breach their own bourgeois rules protecting bank deposits. In their high-handed impatience towards a vulnerable little country left high and dry on the unfathomable mud-banks of the bourgeois offensive, they took money straight out of the Cypriots' own pockets. To "rescue" Cyprus from her debts, they "generously" robbed her of 10 billion euros, and – as if that were not enough – they simply and unblushingly slapped a tax on all bank deposits. When the leaders of the Parti de Gauche used the word "bastards" to describe the 17 finance ministers who decided on this particular act of burglary, the press squealed in scandalised outrage. But it would be difficult indeed, not to say impossible, to find another name for this shameful theft. When, under pressure from the entire population, the Cypriot parliament rejected this theft, Le Monde ("the bourgeoisie made newspaper") talked about "Europe at an impasse" (21 March).

The European puppets and their new, greenhorn, financier had to go back on a decision which was as brutally undemocratic as it was blatantly aimed at people of modest means. But the mask slipped again. Their ever-poorer and more dispossessed Europe has crossed another threshold in its slide towards inglorious general rout. There is no way to know in advance what concrete steps this disintegration will involve, but particularly since

the Italian elections the warning signs have become more palpable. The growing tension in the relationship between the anti-democratic executive centre in Brussels and the rubber-stamp European Parliament in Strasbourg is more obvious by the day. At the 13 March session, the MEPs by a huge majority rejected the new European budget which had taken 26 hours of painful and angry negotiations between ministers to achieve. It would be wrong to overestimate the significance of this act, which in any case left intact the total set at 960 billion, and failed to discuss the surprising fact that for the first time ever this budget was smaller than the previous one. This astonishing reduction ought itself to have as a warning to all those who keep crowing about the progress their Europe is making.

This is not the place to go through all the other signs that bourgeois Europe is tending to fall apart gradually, but just note how in a single year (official) unemployment has risen from 10.9 per cent of the active population in the eurozone to 12 percent. It is 26.4 per cent in Greece and Spain, followed by around 12 per cent in Italy and France. And consider the disturbing conclusion of a survey which estimates that 67 per cent of young people under 30 in Spain are thinking about emigrating. This shows up not only the state bourgeois Europe is in but how destructive it is, too.

There has been a hint of a ministerial revolt against austerity in France, too, particularly in the week ending 13 March. That was when fifty or so striking PSA-Citroen workers at the closure-threatened Aulney car plant invaded the building where the National Council of the Socialist Party was meeting. These workers accused the government of betraying them, and the left wingers there, including several ministers, applauded them. An open breach was only avoided because everybody present suddenly started to "talk left". Even prime-minister Ayrault talked about the "European right not listening" and the need to "restore the balance of forces in Europe". As if! ... The paid conciliators had a real job on their hands, as very often, if not always, is the case, one is

tempted to say.

It is surely no coincidence that that dyed-in-the-wool bourgeois politician and Giscard d'Estaing's former right-hand-man, François Bayrou, reacted immediately with quite a significant open letter to President Hollande. This political boss without a following – Bayrou had so clearly anticipated Sarkozy's defeat that he alone among his bourgeois colleagues voted for Hollande – saw the danger immediately. It's a shame we cannot look in more detail at this panicky warning which at the same time was a real apology for the European bourgeoisie's offensive and a profession of faith in sustaining it. That on its own constituted an unequivocal offer to serve Hollande in a more structured way. To put it broadly, he offered his services as Prime Minister under Hollande in the place of the largely discredited Ayrault. In any case this threat had a certain impact in moderating the mood of revolt in the Socialist Party and the government, since even if it did lead a small number of critics did vote against ratifying in law the anti-working class agreements between the employers' associations and some unions, this time, again, the conflict was blurred and an actual break avoided.

But since the crisis is only going to get worse, sharpening the contradictions, this rebellion has not said its last word and a more trenchant expression of it is still brewing. That is why Mélanchon's tactic of trying to encourage criticism of bourgeois Europe inside the Socialist Party is fully justified, particularly if such criticism can be underpinned with a clear anti-bourgeois European policy that can identify its goal in a Working People's Europe.

Now the bourgeoisie is vigilant and sees the dangers which threaten its plans. Most recently its Brussels janitors opted to slacken the pressure slightly and give and give members states a bit more time to reduce budget deficits below 3 per cent of GDP. But we need to be vigilant, too, because this is a trick. They present this new timetable as if it were a gift, a sign of some supposed change in the rigor of their policy,

whereas in reality the budget plans had turned into a fiasco they could not keep up. They are simply displacing the pressure on budgets into a determination to carry out more and greater attacks on employment rights, pensions, social security and all the rest.

For a working class and socialist opening in Italy, too!

Political life has not stood still in Italy, either. The elections were a testimony to the fact that the bourgeoisie has not been able – now its traditional tandem of Christian Democracy and Stalinist CP has broken up – to reorganise a durable political, governmental, expression of its power. The elections testified not only to this, but also to a veritable political fault-line in the bourgeoisie over programmes and methods for re-constituting this power in some renewed form. Subsequently a series of successive setbacks in forming a government have confirmed the fact – which has dramatic implications for them – that Italy is now radically ungovernable using traditional political means. But on its own this dramatic situation for the bourgeoisie does not imply any relief, never mind a solution, for working people who cruelly lack any theoretical equipment or practice that matches their aspirations.

Under these conditions and in view of the fact that politics, too abhors a vacuum, various dangers start to take shape on the immediate horizon. One of them – and it is real – is that the bourgeoisie will take one of the authoritarian roads leading to fascism in order to overcome its crisis. It will not be held back by any democratic principles or rules, but by the fear that such an upheaval might arouse a massive revolt by working people. However that may be, while they deploy some fascist objectives and slogans, the Italian bourgeoisie, like the rest, is not yet quite ready to institute and operate fascist power.

That is the main reason why the gestation of a new government is so long and painful, and its content so explosive and in such violent contradiction to the verdict of the elections – while in the end somehow maintaining the illusion that nothing

has changed. In reality the forced marriage between Berlusconi the groom getting the most out of the prenuptial agreement, and the Democrat Party as reluctant bride, is inevitably heading for a series of conjugal dramas. It will be all the more paralysed in action and unsustainable in the long run for being based on cheating the voters. To put it another way, it has thumbed its nose at the new disposition of class forces, so it has set off on the wrong foot in relation to them. Whatever promises and paltry concessions the new government made when it came in are like plasters and poultices applied to a dying man.

And yet ... condemned as it is the rack, even this government might just, precisely in order to prolong its existence, tie in with the rising anti-establishment wave across southern Europe for a "softening" of austerity. In fact everything points to the possibility that it will add its voice to Hollande and others who are begging for a respite. Meanwhile, since this new Italian government was first installed, the European bourgeoisie and certain of its factions here and there have cherished the illusion that they might be able to avoid the split in Europe and the threatening political crisis by uniting "left" and right wings in the same governments. In precisely such a "united" government in Italy they see an opportunity to overcome the crisis and prevent an opposition from crystallising through this kind of "grand coalition". But at the moment only a very nervous "left" in the shape of the so-called "socialist" parties would take such a lure seriously and give up the prospect of forming a consistent opposition in the face of such a "threat".

Now in fact such a "grand coalition" is unviable even in Italy, where the bourgeoisie is well aware that it cannot find a satisfactory way out of the crisis, and has finally resigned itself to an improvised lash-up. The more the different components of it cling to their certainties, the more radically and swiftly the worsening social contradictions will tear apart its artificial unity. And that is where the danger of a fascist adventure by a section of the bourgeoisie becomes

real. The Northern League could well be biding its time to exploit precisely that situation, using the strength of an enraged and disorientated petty-bourgeoisie and a desperate Lumpenproletariat to try such an adventure.

It is high time for really socialist and communist activists who up to now have been trapped in the bourgeois blind alleys offered by “Rifondazione Comunista” and “Critica Sinistra” to pull themselves together. Not because there might be a danger of fascism, but because the worsening contradictions make necessary a political re-grouping of the working class. In particular they should address the abovementioned organisations because we cannot agree with the American comrades of David North’s World Socialist Web Site who stigmatise them as bourgeois organisations. The more lucid and closest to the working class of their members should make an honest assesement of a conception and a political line hanging on to the extreme left of a bourgeoisie in its dotage. A renewal is possible, and its beginnings lie beyond the national soil. It will have to open up via a clarification of the socialist attitude at a European level, which nowadays is the only way to delimit oneself from every version of bourgeois politics, either nationalist or originating from Brussels.

In this respect, Marxist practice will shrug off the heavy burden of the “Rifondazione” / “Critica Sinistra” combination groaning under the weight of a Stalinist heritage, either completely ossified or somewhat amended, by following in the footsteps of Syriza and the Front de Gauche. This route is also open to Italian comrades. By struggling for a Working People’s Europe, they will find a way towards living Marxist and towards the re-appearance of the Italian working class directly on the political scene, a working class long relegated to the background by a Stalinism which, although officially defrocked, never abandoned its political practices.

Balazs Nagy

May 2013

Draft Unified Programme of the Namibian Working People

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Our programme will be titled the Unified Programme of the Namibian Working People to take political power.

Our objective is to consolidate and strengthen the socialist movement in this country through a Unified Demand of the nation engendering the following two tasks:

1. Rebuilding the working class's basic organisations, the trade unions and civic organisations, and,
2. Consolidating and strengthening the socialist movement in this country through rallying the working people around a Unified Demand of the nation.

The Unified Demand comprises the transitional demands of the working class, individual demands of the various national groupings (peasants) and the general demands of the nation. These constituent (individual) demands will be more significant, more empowering and all-embracing as they will be different facets of the same National Demand. They will be unifying and not distinctive, as separate demands tend to be.

Organisation of the Socialist Social Movement.

It was resolved in a meeting in February 2013 by Workers International members, the Forum of the Future, the NAMRIGHTS and individuals to call on the various working class groups we are working with and other groups fighting on individual issues to unite in a social movement. The necessity to form it as and call it socialist was unanimously agreed.

The groups we are working with are:

The former Goldfields South Africa (TCL) miners and mineworkers;

Members of the teachers' strike committee.

The Southern Peoples Allegiance.

Women and youth groups.

The Mboroma Camp Committee.

Housing and homeless groups.

Poor peasants in the struggle for reparations and land.

Fundamental rights groups.

The leadership of this movement will initially be comprised of representatives of each group in a national committee. This committee will begin the centralisation of the movement by propagating and organising around the Unified Demand and Programme. The leadership is formed on the principle that the working class leadership is independent and leads the poor peasantry and articulates the land and national issues in correspondence with working class interest.

It will assist the poor peasantry to organise independently and to develop appropriate demands wherever they endeavour to do so such as in the current land struggles, land seizures and demands.

The Unified Demand

The following demands amongst others constitute a summary of demands informing the propaganda and organisational work of the SSM.

1. In general it is true that the capitalists seek to load off their intensifying woes and their falling profits onto the working class these days by labour rental and waning benefits and wages. However, in Namibia profits are maximised by the legacy of apartheid and by a new servile caste of officials which sell for example US\$80 billion worth of mineral reserves for a million dollar kick-back or give it away free through their courts to international firms. It is guessed that fishing companies make 800% profit. Banks run uncontrolled scams such as housing loan schemes. Companies, banks and mines do not go bust in Namibia. Rio Tinto Zinc declared in 1980 that it had long-term uranium contracts until 2025 and it would not be affected by periodic slumps in demand as were others. Since independence it periodically threatens to close

shop due to unrealistic workers' demands and the world economic situation.

The national government does not know nor endeavour to know the extent of the extraction of mineral reserves and fish and the GNP and GDP.

Thus, the SSM demands a public inquiry into the natural and national resources of the country and the opening of books of all mines, corporations and business in general.

2. Nationalisation of oil and gas.

3. The working class seeks immediate measures for full employment with a living wage. Such a programme of allocating quotas of employment to the various branches of industry and commerce to fill, public works, renationalisation of rail and road transport services, postal services for expansion of employment and work security, and collective and co-operative farming, shall be financed through levies on large scale mining and industry.

4. The derogation of labour rights through a corruption and derogation of labour supervisory state mechanism through the changes in labour legislation and employment of semi-literates shall be reversed by the establishment of workers councils in each town and city.

5. Education will be reviewed to remove it from the control from Cambridge and to put it under national control through the various communities.

6. The SSM encourages and assists workers to organise to remove their trade union functionaries who are stifling each struggle and assisting the derogation of rights and conditions by the capitalists. The trade union experience at Marikana should caution against short-cuts of forming new unions instead of fighting for the expulsion of corrupt and reactionary leaderships. However in mergers with the state and the old unions such as at Marikana the only way may be to substitute the union for new organisations.

National question and the Contract Labour System

The SSM spearheads the conceptualisation and formalisation of demands of national groups/nations into a comprehensive

coherent demand for national self-determination and in the process uniting the working class. (Recent experience has amply illustrated that the peasant leadership comprised by the tribal chiefs is unable to formulate consequential demands and create appropriate strategies in their demands and struggles for land and reparations against the incumbent regime directed and assisted by the German Government.)

7. SSM supports unconditionally the demand for War Reparations by the Herero and Nama groups. However, it puts forward a more comprehensive demand centring on the land and properties (corporeal (movable and immovable), and incorporeal) within Namibia which had been expropriated or engendered and on which untold wealth is continued to be produced with the labour of the expropriated. Moreover, our demand is not for war reparations alone, but for restitution of property expropriated by Imperial Germany from 1884 to 1915. It forms a significant part of the land issue and is based on the demand for socialisation of land without compensation. The demand serves further as a propaganda tool to focus on Germany's imperialist role and relations in Namibia to maintain colonial bondage and to shackle all and any development tending towards the material and social emancipation and development of the Namibian nation. With it, it tends to publicly highlight imperialist relations generally as it has already achieved with sections of both the Namibian and German peoples.

8. A similar demand against South African colonialism as the above by national groups in particular the Nama, the San, the Damara and the Baster.

9. A demand for restitution of the abuse under the contract labour system which has displaced whole communities from especially Ovamboland and Kavangoland to southern Namibia where independence released the administration from the responsibility of provision of proper shelter, food, healthcare and employment. The compounds had been imploded and the masses of contract labour ejected into cities of squatter camps where they are left to their own devices for survival, and where they continue to serve the objectives of the

contract labour system, but without its liabilities and responsibilities. Farm labourers both contractual and traditional are ejected from commercial farms where the latter had for generations created the wealth on these farms and had served the landlords with kith and kin in production, maintaining and serving the households. The vast majority are unemployed. The demand for provision of permanent proper shelter, free food, healthcare and permanent employment issues against the self-same mines, corporate commercial and industrial concerns, commercial farms or their successors and the State. Failure to meet the demand must be met with confiscation, compensation and socialisation.

10. The demand for return of Namibian remains from Germany killed during the wars of extermination and shipped to Germany is extended to the Angolan, Zambian and Tanzanian States and the SWAPO for the remains of Namibians killed by themselves and by the SWAPO leadership in exile until 1990.

11. The institution of a public inquiry into the period of 1962 to 1990 into the abuse and extermination of political fighters and refugees for a full report on the circumstances and causes of the treacherous period in the life of the Namibian nation.

12. A demand to the same instances for accounting of the unaccounted missing persons. This is a continuing crime against the Namibian nation whose resolution is intimately linked to the struggle against the obscenities and abuses of the imperialists and the abuses of their surrogates.

13. The high profile international publication and propaganda around the last four demands are absolutely necessary as part of a concerted effort to preclude the revisiting of the continual, extreme and punctuated tragedies perpetrated on a resistant people by imperialism.

Most of the above demands are at least partially articulated as single issues by particular groups.

Through the Unified Demand and Programme we will unify the nation.

The inaugural meeting of the SSM will be on 12 October 2013

The people's struggle will destroy the Memorandums and fascism

Speech to the second festival of the Youth Section of SYRIZA:
by Alexis Tsipras, the leader of the radical left party, SYRIZA.

“Fury in Greece and abroad is what has lit a fire under the Greek government, which up to now seemed not to understand and was looking forward to collaborating with the neo-Nazis”, Alexis Tsipras emphasised during his speech to the SYRIZA youth section's second festival.

“You can be quite sure that (Conservative Prime Minister) Mr. Samaras and his colleagues have not changed their minds. They were forced to change tack. And we don't care, in fact we are glad they did and we celebrate it. It's a big victory, a victory for democracy, a victory for the anti-fascist movement, a victory for European democracy”, the president of SYRIZA said, at the same time explaining that it would nevertheless take a lot more other measures to eliminate the fascist threat.

“There is a Chinese proverb that when your enemy retreats, you have to chase him down. Fascism will not die on its own, we have to crush it. Because alongside all young people in Greece, we know, we think and we proclaim that our future is not fascism. Our future is neither barbarism nor capitalism. And today the Memorandums are not our future. Our future is to OVERTURN them.”

Tsipras went on to denounce what Antonis Samaras had said the previous day. "Those who made the current regime have got to a point where they see national elections as an enemy, an adversary, a scarecrow for justice and liberty in the country. Mr. Samaras' justice can put up with government by decree, with limitations on liberty and basic rights. It can put up with authoritarianism and repression, with immigrants living in fields and with tolerating Nazis. But it cannot put up with elections. According to TV reports, elections are a threat to regularity and stability. There in two words is justice according to Mr. Samaras and the people he represents, which is the greatest, the most brutal, the most barbarous, the most abominable injustice for the majority of Greeks. Their stability is social instability, a disaster for the lives of millions of people, a blind alley for young Greeks."

In conclusion, the President of SYRIZA emphasised that Greece cannot any longer put up with being governed by people who have led it into a catastrophe. "We are many, and we are become more every day. The people trust us, not because they have all suddenly turned left, but because we are not like the other liars, hypocrites and egoists. Because we do not look at politics as a career but as a way of changing our destiny and that of the country. Because we dream of a country dominated by liberty, social justice, democratic stability, a sense of perspective, and prestige. Because we have a long history. Our origins lie in the EPON battalions, insurgents, rebels. We are among the most resolute defenders of democracy. So don't expect us to bend. We have a country. We have values and ideas. We have experience. And we are determined to win".

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