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Statement by Xekinima (CWI Greece)- Translated by Narmada Liyanage

Meet The Fist-Shaking Socialist Behind America's Highest Minimum Wage



This article is part of a Huffington Post series, on the occasion of the site's 10th anniversary, looking at some of the people and issues that will shape the world in the next decade. SEATTLE – On a recent afternoon in the city's Capitol Hill neighborhood, hundreds of

progressive protesters poured into a pavilion at Seattle University. The demonstration was loosely tied to Fight for \$15, the three-year-old, union-backed movement that has workers roiling the service sector with intermittent strikes and corporate shaming campaigns. The protesters were demanding union rights for the Jesuit school's stable of adjunct professors. When the microphone was passed to Kshama Sawant, a former adjunct herself who once taught economics in the building where the protesters now stood, the crowd erupted in cheers. The most visible figure in the local living wage movement here, Sawant, a native of India, became the first socialist elected to citywide office in Seattle in decades when she toppled a four-term incumbent in 2013. She quickly played a pivotal role in bringing about Seattle's \$15 minimum wage law, the most aggressive of its kind in any major U.S. city. According to Sawant, that \$15 minimum wage law marked the beginning of a broader social movement. Her message to the troops: Don't thank the Democratic establishment, the city's business leaders, the mayor's office or anyone in Seattle's ruling class for putting it on the books. "This did not happen because the government suddenly decided to care about workers," Sawant said, jabbing a forefinger for emphasis, as she likes to do on the stump. "We made it happen. We left them with no choice. They could either support us or be swept aside into the dustbin of history. That is how it's going to be." In typical fashion, Sawant capped her remarks with a fist and the word "solidarity," setting off another round of raucous cheers. Once offstage, she grabbed a marker and created her own sign with which to join demonstrators: "I was an adjunct professor making poverty wages. \$15 for all workers!" Like Bill de Blasio in New York City and Marty Walsh in Boston, the 42-year-old Sawant rode into office on a tide of lefty

populism, buoyed by the growing concern over income inequality in the U.S. Unlike those Democratic city leaders, Sawant does not fit neatly into the political establishment. She rose out of Seattle's Occupy movement and identifies as a member of Socialist Alternative, an anti-capitalist, democratic-socialist party. She sees meaningful policy change as something that grows out of the streets instead of city hall. With a few exceptions, Sawant views her own city council as generally in cahoots with the business and development elite. Staunchly anti-corporate and willing to shame colleagues, her council resume would not include the descriptors "consensus-builder" or "pragmatic deal-maker." In conversation, she tends to speak of city council in the third-person, as if she were still an outsider and not sitting in one of its nine seats. [coque telephone pas cher](#) But her ability to marshal fervent, populist support for issues like the minimum wage and affordable housing has pulled an already liberal council further in her direction. This, she said, was done against the council's will. "The whole council has moved to the left, but not because they want it, or because they secretly were wishing for this, but because they see the writing on the wall," Sawant said in an interview. "They see a movement developing in Seattle that they have to be held accountable to." Sawant will soon be held to account herself. She'll be running for council again this year, for either an at-large seat or the district seat she currently holds. She has already drawn a challenge for the district seat from Pamela Banks, president of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle. Sawant's charisma and unbending progressivism may cut both ways for her: In a recent poll, she enjoyed the council's second-highest favorability rating, but also its highest unfavorability rating. Aside from the city's influential alternative weekly *The Stranger*, almost no established voices carried a banner for Sawant in her first race, including labor unions. This year, her campaign senses a bullseye on its back, and it's eager to prove that Sawant's election was more than a coincidence of timing. As Clay Showalter, an aide to Sawant, put it, "The establishment is hell-bent on crushing us this time around." Sawant seems to agree that she's become a symbol of something. She's currently writing a book that, in a pre-publication listing on Amazon, once had the working title of

The Most Dangerous Woman in America. (In a recent profile in the Seattle Times, Sawant said the title wasn't her idea and won't be used for the final product.) Her re-election efforts may ultimately determine whether the Occupy faction can successfully occupy elected office for more than a brief spell – without compromising its values, anyway. Sawant, for one, insisted it's now possible anywhere. "The most misleading message to take from our success in Seattle would be that this is somehow unique to Seattle, and that it can't be replicated elsewhere," she said.

A common knock is that Sawant may be too preoccupied with tackling the nation's One Percent to make sure the potholes get filled. And with a growing national profile – thanks in part to national news outlets that parachute into Seattle to interview her – there's also the question of Sawant's commitment to a career in her adopted city. (After getting her PhD in economics at North Carolina State University, she moved to Seattle in 2006 and recently bought a house in the city.) Her detractors say Sawant is too concerned with elevating the socialist cause. In announcing her challenge, Banks took a veiled swipe at Sawant for delivering a socialist rebuttal to President Barack Obama's State of the Union address – Sawant described Obama's as "a presidency that has betrayed the hopes of tens of millions of people" – and said a city council member can "solve more problems with a telephone than a megaphone." (Banks' camp didn't respond to HuffPost's request for an interview.) Though she isn't known for brokering deals on legislation, Sawant has been highly influential on the council, said David Rolf, president of Service Employees International Union 775, a powerful player in local politics. Rolf's union would seem a natural ally of Sawant. But it endorsed Sawant's opponent, incumbent Richard Conlin, back in 2013, when it seemed even Seattle wasn't ready for a socialist lawmaker. This time around, four SEIU local unions, including Rolf's, have already declared their backing for Sawant. "What's primarily hers that's become law, you'd have to say it's not much," Rolf said. "But in terms of influencing a lot of bills and budget items, you'd have to say she's had a significant impact on the council. When she raises an issue, it pulls the body. The council may not vote for her version of a budget item, but it guarantees that thing will be debated,

and the point of the policy will end up to the left of where it began. "People get a little afraid of looking like they are the voice of the far right in comparison," Rolf added. A prime example is the \$15 minimum wage, which Rolf's union and other SEIU affiliates laid the foundation for in Seattle and, earlier, in SeaTac, the suburb that encompasses the region's airport. In 2013, SeaTac voters made national news by narrowly approving a referendum jacking the minimum wage to \$15 in one swoop. Once elected, Sawant was poised to mobilize the masses and lead a Seattle ballot initiative along the lines of SeaTac's. Regardless of whether she had the organizational heft to pull it off, her threat was credible. Seattle businesses came to the bargaining table, where they would at least have a hand in the crafting of a bill. The version that passed, with newly elected Mayor Ed Murray playing lead broker, phases in a \$15 minimum wage in steps over the course of several years, depending on the size of the employer. Sawant opposed elements of the compromise that made it more palatable for businesses, like the longer phase-in period and a lower training wage allowed for minors. Michael Wells, head of the Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce and a member of Murray's task force on the minimum wage, recalled Sawant supporters booing and shouting "shame" at the business-friendly provisions, even though employers were hashing out a historically progressive piece of legislation. "That was really difficult for me to stomach," said Wells, adding that his local chamber, which includes coffeeshop and bookstore owners, isn't exactly a bunch of right-wing fat cats. "It was so frustrating to me that we were so close to getting something done – a national model – and we were still getting attacked for being brutal capitalist monsters." But therein lies part of Sawant's effectiveness: By holding strong as the far-left flank, she moves the needle for what might be considered compromise. Her principle can leave her as the odd member out in an 8-to-1 vote, as when she was alone in voting against the city's budget and confirmation of the police chief. But she sees shifting the debate as part of her job. "Ordinary people in Seattle are extremely progressive. But the reality is the council is nowhere as progressive as what people want," Sawant said. "The American public as a whole is well to the left of the entire gamut of the political

establishment that we are presented with. These choices are so defunct – they are completely out of touch with the reality of what Americans want.” Sawant’s role as agitator-in-residence can create discomfort for her colleagues, including those who generally see themselves as being on the same team on big issues. Mike O’Brien, one of the more liberal Democrats on the council, was supporting fast-food workers long before it was fashionable, and he shares plenty of common ground with Sawant on environmental and economic matters. (O’Brien spoke to workers at Seattle University before Sawant, joking that he wouldn’t want to follow her.) Even O’Brien said Sawant can make him squirm. “She’s definitely a different legislator, and she makes me uncomfortable at times, often in ways that I don’t necessarily appreciate at the moment,” O’Brien said. “Sometimes she makes me uncomfortable and I think, You know what – that’s not right. Other times she makes me uncomfortable and I think, I should be uncomfortable.” According to O’Brien, the city council tends to be a congenial body, and win or lose, members don’t go out of their way to reproach one another. Sawant doesn’t necessarily adhere to that unspoken code, he said. [coque huawei pas cher](#) The dynamic is readily apparent in the council’s official photo: all the members are smiling, save for Sawant, who appears braced for a fight. “Is she an effective legislator doing things the way the playbook says we do things around here? No,” O’Brien said. “Is she getting things done in a way that a lot of folks couldn’t get done? Yeah.” In March, O’Brien joined Sawant in leading a council resolution condemning so-called fast-track authorization for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the mammoth trade deal being pursued by the White House and mostly Republican members of Congress. Progressive Democrats have torched the deal as secretive and bad for U.S. workers and the environment. Seeing as the president doesn’t answer to Seattle officials, the council’s resolution was symbolic. But it turned out to be more local than it seemed. Ahead of the vote, a representative of Redmond-based Microsoft, one of the area’s most powerful employers, pressed council members to ditch the resolution. It ended up passing 9-0 in front of a cheering crowd. Sawant said no corporations deserve a pass, regardless of what they might contribute to Seattle’s economy. “It’s important to make a distinction between the billionaire

shareholders of these companies and the workers whose labor creates their profits,” she said. [coque samsung pas cher](#)

Sawant hitched her 2013 campaign to the \$15 minimum wage movement. Her second act appears to be affordable housing, and rent control. Like in other desirable cities, low-income earners are feeling increasingly squeezed in Seattle’s rental market. Sawant and one of her council colleagues, Nick Licata, co-hosted a town hall on the subject in late April, with hundreds of residents packing city hall to bemoan sky-high rents. [coque iphone occasion](#) One council member derided the event as “a political rally designed to inflame emotions and get one council member re-elected,” clearly referencing Sawant. Rent control’s heyday passed long ago in the U.S., with mainstream city leaders fretting that strong caps on rental rates will discourage developers from creating more units and, hence, more supply. The state of Washington has a ban on rent control; Sawant said it should be challenged. She proposes allowing landlords to raise rental rates according to the consumer price index, but not at “runaway” rates. She also has recommended that the city build more public-owned units to rent at below-market rates. Such propositions play well with the \$15-an-hour crowd that propelled Sawant into office. As Sawant marched to Seattle University with protesters, several residents approached her to egg her on in an affordable housing fight. “All of my money goes to rent,” one man lamented. If the prospect of another Sawant term rattles the establishment, it should be less for her socialist ideas than for her connection with the disaffected. Sawant had barely wrapped up her speech in the Seattle University pavilion when she was asked to step outside and give a pep talk to workers who were about to get arrested in a call for higher wages. “But I just gave a speech,” Sawant said with a laugh. She gamely hustled to the Capitol Hill streetcorner where 21 workers and activists were seated in a circle blocking traffic. (Sawant herself would not be getting arrested on this day – she was already facing disorderly conduct charges stemming from an act of civil disobedience at the headquarters of Alaska Airlines, which has been fighting SeaTac’s minimum wage law in court and has so far kept it from going into effect on airport grounds. The charges were dropped in April.) Sawant gave some words of encouragement to the workers, then

shook hands and posed for photos with those who were destined for the police wagon. One of them was an airport worker named Michael Church. At 31 years old, Church makes \$9.50 per hour setting up ramps for major airlines at SeaTac. He commutes two hours each way on public transit and makes so little money that he has to live at his grandmother's house. A few days after his arrest, a reporter asked Church what made him willing to be pulled off the street in handcuffs just to make a point. "My inspiration was Kshama Sawant," Church responded. "She's a politician. She could just collect a check and be like all the other politicians and not do anything. But with Kshama, she helps workers and people who are struggling with their rent.

[Kshama Sawant re-elected - Seattle's political revolution continues](#)



“There has never been a better time to become a socialist and join

Socialist Alternative.” – Kshama Sawant *By Patrick Ayers, Socialist Alternative, Seattle, USA* **Initial election results give Kshama Sawant 8,197 votes (52.56%) and her Republican backed Democratic challenger Pamela Banks 7,349 (47.12%)** Not only can socialists get elected, we can get re-elected. At the time of writing, and with about a third of the votes counted, 52.6% of voters in Seattle’s District 3 have chosen Kshama Sawant to serve another four years on the City Council. Since late votes tend to trend in our favour, we can safely claim victory. In Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighbourhood tonight, hundreds of campaign supporters are celebrating at our election night party. [Coque iPhone 6S](#) People arrived confident due to Kshama’s outstanding work in the council and our ferocious ground game. The night before, on Monday, Socialist Alternative member and Boeing IAM machinist Jeremy Prickett addressed volunteers gathered for the last doorknocking effort of the campaign. “Brothers and sisters,” he began, “it’s a privilege for us to be here today because for so long politics have been out of the hands of working people. Socialist Alternative and Kshama Sawant are changing that.” Over 600 volunteers, more than 30 union organisations, and dozens of progressive organizations had Kshama’s back against our opponent who had the support of CEOs, the Chamber of Commerce, the real estate lobby, the landlord lobby, Amazon.com, slumlords, six conservative members of the city council, and even a handful of Republican millionaires who created their own PAC to attack us and support our Democratic Party opponent in the final weeks. Against this powerful establishment opposition, along with their echo chamber of vitriolic anti-Kshama attacks and their exorbitant bank accounts, we knocked on 90,000 doors and made 170,000 phone calls. We talked to thousands of people about affordable housing, inequality, taxing the rich, and working class politics. It was an unprecedented grassroots effort for local Seattle politics. **A New Kind of Politics** As Jeremy’s words above suggest, for many people, this campaign was about far more than re-electing Kshama. It was about building a whole new kind of politics

that fights unapologetically for working families, and not corporations. It was about showing what was possible if working people get organized. In the age of unlimited corporate election spending following the 2010 Supreme Court's Citizens United decision and in a year when corporations in Seattle spent five times more than ever before on City Council elections, we shattered fundraising records for a council race and defeated corporate cash. We raised nearly \$500,000 from almost 3,500 individual donors. Our median donation was merely \$50 and more people donated to our campaign from Seattle and our district than for any other candidate running for City Council across the city. Like Bernie Sanders' campaign which also refuses corporate money and raised \$28 million in three months, Kshama's campaign is a demonstration of the huge potential for independent working class politics in the US. "The degree to which [Kshama Sawant] blows everyone out of the water in some funding categories, and her ability to rely on many small donors, is this election's clearest sign that the old guard is being shaken." – Crosscut.com **Movement Building**

Nobody in Seattle has caused more headaches for the political establishment over the past two years than Kshama Sawant. "I wear the badge of socialist with pride," she declared in her January 2014 inauguration speech after upsetting a 13 year incumbent. She promised at that time: "There will be no backroom deals with corporations or their political servants. There will be no rotten sell-out of the people I represent." And Kshama delivered. Her office became a centre for working class resistance, helping tenants, workers, people of colour, LGBTQ people, immigrants and indigenous people. Kshama pushed the political debate in Seattle to the left. "Affordability" has become one of the most repeated buzzwords. Nevertheless, she was blocked many times by a conservative majority on the council that was tied by a thousand threads to the corporate establishment. But Kshama never relented in her unapologetic fight for the interests of working people, explaining again and again that what could be won inside city hall largely depended on the strength of movements outside – and actively

doing everything she could to help build those movements. This same spirit imbued the election campaign. While we knew we were in a strong position with a visible sea of red posters and yard signs blanketing the district, we nonetheless took nothing for granted given the way democracy is warped by capitalism, where cash buys votes and the corporate media narrows and distorts the discussion. Instead, we relied on building up our own independent force that could reach thousands of voters by activating working and young people to talk with thousands of people on their doorsteps. When \$60,000 was dumped into our race by three different corporate PACs in the last weeks of the campaign, our grassroots movement was prepared. Within days, we were able to get a leaflet to thousands of doors across the district alerting voters to the flood of PAC money. And when our opponent sent two negative attack mailers in the last week, we again got another leaflet out to thousands of doors exposing the dishonesty of the attacks. **An Example to Build On** As the first elected socialist in Seattle in a century, Kshama's re-election campaign took on far more significance than the average local election. Al Jazeera called it one of seven elections in the whole US to watch this year. The campaign took place against the national background of surging support for Bernie Sanders' campaign for president as a socialist and his call for "a political revolution against the billionaire class". Undoubtedly, the experience of the last two years in Seattle has provided a wealth of lessons for socialists and working people everywhere. [coque imprimé huawei pas cher](#) Kshama would be the first to say that what has made the key difference in Seattle has been the existence of an organized socialist movement and Socialist Alternative in particular. We have provided key political support to Kshama to help navigate the pressures of elected office and movement building. Together, we were able to give a successful lead and turn the growing anger at inequality, skyrocketing rent, and out-of-touch establishment politicians into a movement that relies on its own strength, its own organizations, and its own resources. The

opportunities to build the socialist movement across the US are only getting bigger. Capitalism has completely failed working families. People are fed up with the corporate establishment and there is a growing interest in socialist ideas reflected in the intense interest when Bernie Sanders explained why he considers himself a democratic socialist in the debate with Hillary Clinton. The movement for a \$15/hour minimum wage has won a number of key victories around the country, students are beginning to fight back against student debt, and a whole new generation of young activists has been activated by Black Lives Matter. [coque huawei](#) The world is changing and there has never been a better time to join the socialists. By no means does our work end tonight. We need to use this opportunity and build on our victory. First of all that means we need to get even more organized. It has been movement building that has gotten us this far. People should join Socialist Alternative and help us build an even stronger movement that can win more victories over the next years. [coque de telephone samsung galaxy j5](#) And tonight in Seattle, now that Kshama's seat is safe, our hard-working volunteers are enjoying a well-deserved celebration that will likely last late into the night. We're proud to know that many people around the country and the world are celebrating with us. This victory belongs to socialists and working class people everywhere. Together, we have a world to win.

[World relations, economy and the class struggle](#)



05/12/2015 **There has been a profound change in the world situation and world relations since the CWI's last World Congress in 2010** *CWI International Secretariat*

The following is an edited version of a draft document on world perspectives, , that will be discussed at the January 2016 World Congress of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). The meeting will be attended by comrades from 35 countries, from all continents. This document does not fully cover developments in Africa or Latin America, which will be dealt with in separate documents. The amended version of this document will be published on socialistworld.net, later in the new year. socialistworld.net

There has been a profound change in the world situation and world relations since the last Congress. This has been reflected in the continuing economic crisis, the ratcheting up of tensions between the major world powers, clashes and wars as well as intense politicisation on a world scale. The eruption of the student movement in South Africa and the defeat of the military in Myanmar are reflections of this. The period has been marked by a significant development of the class struggle, particularly in Europe, shown markedly in the heroic and tenacious struggles of the Greek workers – with nearly 40

general strikes since the beginning of 2010 – followed by the workers of Spain, Portugal and an echo of this in important countries of Northern Europe, with strikes in Germany, Finland and elsewhere. Eastern Europe saw the overthrow of the Romanian government and many other important events. It has not been a quiescent period; on the contrary, it has been marked by rapid changes and abrupt turns in the situation. In Greece alone in just 2015 we saw the historic election victory of Syriza at the beginning of the year. This was followed by the splendid rejection of austerity in the July referendum, with 61% voting 'No', and then the capitulation of the Greek government followed by the plans of the troika for the introduction of planned and seemingly endless poverty for the Greek masses. The right-wing German magazine 'Stern' boasted about Greek workers being "crushed". The gross betrayal of Tsipras is comparable to the 1914 sell-out by the social democratic leaders of the time, which led to the slaughter of millions in the First World War. In the ongoing class war of the employers against all the hard-won gains of the Greek workers, Tsipras opted to stand on the side of the Greek and international capitalists. Millions of workers are being educated in the brutal school of the class struggle, underlining the absolute incapacity of all varieties of reformism to arm the working class to resist the onslaught of capitalism and create the basis of a new socialist society. Similar movements, although not yet on the scale of Greece, have taken place in Spain and Portugal, with the recent election of a 'left' government in the latter, supported from the outside by the Left Bloc and the Communist Party. Italy is likely to enter a similar cycle of struggle in the next period with the re-awakening of the working class, the renewal of the trade unions and the rediscovery of the revolutionary traditions of the Italian workers. The working classes on a European level are beginning to stir. The German political situation is undergoing a big change with the economy facing multiple problems: the effects of the slowdown in China have already been felt, the refugee issue has led to the far right

flexing its muscles and that, in turn, has provoked the growth of the antifascist movement in which our organisation has successfully intervened. Scandinavia has also been affected, which in fact has been at the forefront in Europe of introducing vicious neoliberal measures, privatisation of schools, attacks on living standards, undermining of past gains, etc. It has begun to approach in some respects the same kind of deteriorating social conditions as Britain, a product of the collapse of the Swedish and Scandinavian model. At the same time, we have seen a growth in the far right throughout Scandinavia as the number of refugees has swelled, which is the highest influx into Sweden since the Second World War. Following this was a wave of far-right violence, including arson attempts on three buildings occupied by members of Rättvissepartiet Socialisterna (RS), the Swedish section of the CWI in Gothenburg. The party is a well-known and significant organisation of the left in the city, participating in many local campaigns on housing, against cuts, prominent participants in antiracism work as well as support for the Kurdish struggle. In Britain, the unexpected election of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour Party signifies that it has entered a period of political convulsions. He recorded the highest leadership vote of any British party leader in history, much higher than Blair. However, this was a spectacular manifestation of the law of unintended consequences. A measure eagerly approved by the right of the party, aimed at further undermining the collective voice of the unions and the left, voting by email in the contest for the same price as a pint of beer, worked spectacularly in his favour. His election was only possible because of the already huge anti-austerity mood and, with it, the rejection of right-wing social democracy, which had been evident in Britain for at least 20 years. This remained untapped by the refusal of the trade union leaders to break and form a new mass party. The forces around Corbyn represent a new party in the process of formation. However, it is not certain that he will be able to consolidate this victory – which is only possible by boldly

appealing to the forces inside but mostly outside the Labour Party. They are predominantly young and fired up to defeat the right. But Corbyn – although genuine in his desire to change the Labour Party towards the left – manifests the features of reformism shown in other countries: wishful thinking and a refusal to boldly organise and mobilise his base to crush the right. His indecisiveness irritates the bourgeois and, at the same time, disappoints the politically advanced workers. A state of open civil war exists. The right don't even pretend to hide their intentions of replacing Corbyn and the ranks ferociously resist this. Instead of preparing for this inevitable conflict, the forces around Corbyn wish to conciliate the right and have a completely electoral perspective. However, the key issue in Britain now is how to defeat the cuts and particularly the massive round of £20 billion which the Cameron/Osborne government has introduced. This, by the way, is the same as the sum which the government used to bail out just one collapsed bank, Lloyd's/HBoS. This is a new chapter for the organisation in England and Wales because it has broken the political logjam, has stirred up issues which were not widely discussed before and pushed into the background, and provides a favourable opportunity for Marxism to explain its programme and to win new forces. Some of the sects have sought to capitalise on the situation by attacking us for our alleged 'mistakes', which the CWI was supposed to have made on the Labour Party issue at the time of the split in 1991. But we have produced material tracing out the evolution of our ideas. We made the point in 2002 that if the trade union leaders did not move to create a new mass party, it could not be excluded that a new party could originate within or around the Labour Party and we would be prepared to orientate towards this, which we have done successfully.

WORLD ECONOMY

The world economy has demonstrably failed to fully recover from the devastating effects of the 2007-08 crisis. Stagnation, while not quite on the scale of the 1930s, has lasted longer with little prospect of immediate, dramatic improvement. Indeed, the 'next recession' looms on the horizon, indicated by the stock exchange collapse in China in July representing the heat lightning flashes of the coming economic storm. Europe has not solved its accumulated problems, just inching ahead economically with meagre 0.3% eurozone growth in the third quarter of 2015. The 'recovery' in the US, while quite impressive on the surface – particularly with recent improvements in employment – has not solved but deepened the problems inherited from the crisis. A big class polarisation has developed throughout the US symbolised by the splendid victory in Seattle of Kshama Sawant and Socialist Alternative, political sympathisers of the CWI. This in turn has played a decisive role in laying the basis for the nationwide Bernie Sanders presidential campaign. His anti-corporate, anti-big business message has found a wide resonance with workers, reaching significant sections of the trade unions but also increasingly impoverished alienated sections of young people and the middle class. Our task in the US is to further sharpen and develop the class features evident in this campaign to the point where significant sections of his supporters, when Sanders loses the Democratic Party nomination, can draw the conclusion that it is necessary to break and prepare the ground for a new mass radical left party. If such an initiative is undertaken it will find a big echo and moreover develop at American speed to become a major force in what is still the world's strongest capitalist power. Although having less than 5% of the world's population, the US still accounts for 22% of the global economy. But the stored up discontent fuelled by stagnating incomes can provide opportunities for the forces of Marxism, gathered around

Socialist Alternative, to grow spectacularly in numbers and influence. This in turn can attract significant forces elsewhere, particularly in Central and South America, not forgetting Canada which has entered a new and potentially radical phase with the election of the Liberal Party, in words at least 'anti-austerity'. In the post-crisis period, China played a crucial role as a kind of 'mini-Atlas', propping up the battered world economy. Its economic effects were felt everywhere but this was particularly the case for the countries of the neo-colonial world, which experienced a so-called commodities 'super cycle', their products feeding the voracious turbocharged appetite of Chinese industry. This in turn was reflected in the astonishing overall growth in China's economy by 78% since 2007 while the US could only manage 8% in the same period. The comparison with the performance of British capitalism is even more dismal. In 2005, the British economy was just about larger than China. Now, China is three times bigger than ailing British capitalism! The maintenance of a significant state sector allowed the Chinese elite – a 'state capitalist regime with unique features', combined with its economic size and weight – to directly intervene on an unprecedented scale. Of course, this has been at the cost of an enormous, unsustainable debt pile which has helped to transform China from 'rescuer' of world capitalism to a huge threat. The neo-colonial world, dubbed the 'emerging markets' and the great hope for world capitalism, has become the 'submerging' market. They have experienced massive upheavals as a direct effect of China's economic travails, which combined with the slashing of oil prices has severely affected whole continents and many sizeable countries: Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa and Angola. Ghana only discovered oil in 2007 and began pumping it in 2010. It was expecting, as a result, bumper government revenue and consequently gave big concessions with increased salaries to civil servants, subsidies, etc. Now with oil prices falling on average by 40% in the past year (and it could go much lower to \$20 a barrel) there are many commodity producers in Africa and

elsewhere plunged into severe 'belt tightening', largely for the masses not the elite. In Nigeria, a combination of falling oil prices and corruption has led to large numbers of public sector workers and pensioners not being paid. The new Buhari government is hesitating before implementing austerity measures out of fear of provoking the working class and poor; the last attempt to raise fuel prices in January 2012 failed in the face of the biggest mass protest and general strike Nigeria has ever seen.

ASIA

Together with the drop in oil prices, one of the consequences of the world economic slowdown, particularly in China, is the political fallout in Asia. The fate of many of the countries in the region is linked to China with the prospect for them now of economic stagnation and the political convulsions that will develop in its wake. This in turn has big political implications and opportunities for our sections in Australia – which has seen a 27 year boom, come to a juddering halt – and Malaysia, already mired in government corruption scandals and now faced with a new round of struggle.

India

The Modi government in India, which was supposed to be firmly ensconced in power for the foreseeable future – although we rightly pointed out in the general election it only received 25% of the popular vote – has been shaken by severe electoral setbacks recently, such as in Bihar. Despite the much-remarked on economic growth, India remains home to most of the world's most poverty-stricken people. Over 80% of the population is classified as being on a low income or poor. It is increasingly clear to growing numbers of workers and poor people that the Modi government represents the interests of the big corporations and super-rich. The recent government

attempt to 'reform' the labour and land laws are met with vehement opposition. Discontent against the Modi government is growing, particularly among the city workers. This was revealed in the massive participation of 150 million workers in the general strike this year, which exceeded the expectation of the organisers. This strike and numerous other struggles that are taking place across the country have shown the mood for struggle that exists. The development of a generalised struggle against the capitalists and landlords is only held back by the lack of leadership and mass organisations that can articulate and act on the desire for struggle. No clear perspective and programme for mobilising a mass movement is put forward by the so-called Marxist parties such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the party-aligned trade union leaders. Abrupt revolts in the rural areas should be linked up with the discontent emerging among workers in the cities. Such events will open up opportunities for the ideas of the CWI to grow rapidly among militant workers.

Sri Lanka

The competition for influence between the West and China in the South Asian region is sharpening. This is reflected partly in Sri Lanka where the US has made an unprecedented number of state visits to capitalise on the political change that has taken place in 2015. The grip of the pro-China President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family was broken in the January presidential election as enormous discontent developed due to the nepotism, corruption and deteriorating conditions for workers and poor farmers. The Tamil and Muslim minorities, who have faced continued communal oppression, helped to oust the notorious warmonger president. The victory of the pro-western traditional bourgeois United National Party (UNP) in the parliamentary election marked a second defeat for Mahinda, further weakening his supporters and opening a way in for the West. With the ousting of the dictatorial president and the populist programme initially put forward by the new president

to win votes, huge hopes and expectations were created among the majority of the population. The current so-called 'national government' – formed by the UNP bringing in a section of the SLFP around the president – aims to exploit this mood to push forward its neoliberal policies, such as changing the labour laws, pension reforms, etc., which were outlined in the latest budget proposals. The UNP-led change in economic policies reduced economic growth to under 5% in 2015 as many Chinese-led development projects have been halted. The slowing down of the Indian and Chinese economies will have a further impact. This change has also created a fresh mood for struggle which is reflected in the number of unions that are coming forward to organise strikes and protests. Recent student protests have shown the combative mood that exists on the ground. The national question is also back on the agenda as the Tamil-based right-wing party, the TNA, and Muslim-based parties are increasingly, and correctly, seen as collaborators and real allies of the anti-working class UNP-led government. The TNA will not be able to deliver their promises to the Tamil masses, whether that is a genuine war crimes investigation, improved conditions of life or an acceptable political solution that can satisfy their national aspirations. There was a one-day hartal in the North and East of the country in support of a recent hunger strike by political prisoners, which followed by the suicide of a young Tamil who was demanding the release of all political prisoners. These are significant events that have taken place since the end of the war in 2009. In these circumstances, the main demand put forward by the United Socialist Party, the CWI section in Sri Lanka, of a united struggle by the trade unions, along with other democratic demands, including addressing the national aspirations of the Tamils, can have an enormous echo, creating new possibilities for the growth of our section.

Pakistan

Pakistan is of crucial geopolitical importance. The masses in Pakistan have faced a horrific situation with the growth of religious intolerance, right wing political Islam and economic destitution: capitalism, feudalism and slavery all existing side by side. The coming to power of Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N despite the devastating economic and social situation which remains has represented a change. On the one side, it has attempted to undertake a number of infrastructure investments involving Chinese investments. The most recent of which is to build an economic corridor linking Kashgar in China to the Pakistani port of Gwadar. While these developments have not in any way alleviated the dire poverty carried on the backs of the masses, they do represent a significant change. At the same time, the military has gone on an offensive against the armed militant religious groups. This reflects a certain change within the army with the coming to power of a new Chief of Staff. The army has succeeded in driving back the armed groups in order to prevent the situation spiralling out of control. They have acted in a bonapartist fashion – taking action against those groups they formally indulged – either officially or unofficially. While the armed groups have been driven back, religious sentiment has also grown. However, this has enormously boosted the public standing of the army which effectively rules the country behind a fig leaf of parliamentary democracy. Politically there has been a collapse in the Punjab of the PPP and even the PTI of Imran Khan. The only party of the ruling class which fully functions is the PLM-N. This situation may not last long; however, it does give an opportunity for our forces to undertake work which has not been possible in the recent period.

Hong Kong

Moreover, in some countries in the region, new opportunities

will be presented to the CWI with the changed and worsening economic situation. The 'umbrella movement' in Hong Kong of 2014 was the biggest protest against the Chinese dictatorship since Tiananmen Square. The first elections to follow saw the ruling parties losing out often to young candidates who had participated in those events. The CWI's contender received a magnificent one third of the votes cast in her ward, showing the enormous potential for energetic and clearly socialist campaigns to get a response.

Myanmar

The colossal defeat of the military in the recent Myanmar general election is symbolic for the whole of the region, with rising popular discontent against the remnants of the old regime of the generals, who are completely incapable of solving the problems of the masses. Any new government which seeks to conciliate the military will fail. The workers and youth of the country have proud traditions of struggle to follow, such as the mass uprising of 1988 which lasted more than five weeks before it was drowned in blood.

China and the World Economy

With the slowdown in China, the OECD now says that the world economy will expand by just 2.9% in 2015, slipping below the 3% level often used to classify a global 'growth recession', the most optimistic scenario for world capitalism. The cut in the estimates for growth is largely because of a sharp decline in Chinese imports, which were previously sucked in from the whole of the world. Not least are the political ramifications internally of the slowdown in China's economy, which is now probably on a 'growth path' of less than 5%. Chinese manufacturing and industry generally still contributes 30% of China's GDP. But big factories have been shedding labour in the last two years and 'labour costs' – wages – are coming

down, which together with the introduction of new technology and robotics in particular to Chinese factories, could lead to a significant rise in unemployment. Not least are the rising levels of inequality. China, incredibly, has overtaken the US in the 'Rich List' of billionaires. As in the past, this in turn can further the mood of discontent of the Chinese masses. There are other factors which can contribute to a significant slowdown in the Chinese economy. There is the demographic factor with the prospect of a big drop in China's population – compounded by the one child policy in the past, which has now been dropped by the regime. There is massive overinvestment, with crippling excess capacity – ghost shopping malls – with no outlet now for Chinese goods given the scale of the enduring economic crisis affecting all corners of the world. The Chinese regime is scouring the world looking for new fields of investment. It greedily looks towards Central Asia with much talk of a new economic 'Silk Road' centred on countries like Kazakhstan. The latter is itself facing a much bigger crisis than in the past with the loss of oil revenue. In response, Nazarbayev has launched a massive programme of privatisation and allowed the currency to massively devalue, causing hardship for millions. All this will mean a new upsurge of mass discontent and opportunities for us if we can build a stable determined organisation in the country, which in turn can have an effect on other countries in the region that will be affected by the crisis. China, however, could clash with Putin's Russia, who has his own ambitions for 'collaboration' with the regimes in Central Asia, which are considered to be a Russian sphere of influence. This could bring Russia up against China despite the talk of collaboration between both regimes. Then there is China's terrible environmental problems which, together with ingrained corruption, the present regime is attempting to cut down but without much success. There is the potential for flare ups on any number of issues, which if they take place in the cities could be a trigger for revolutionary upheavals and uprisings. The faltering prospects of the world economy remain a central and enduring concern for

the 'experts' of the system. Even before the Chinese slowdown, there were major doubts about future economic prospects and particularly about the 'imbalance'. Some commentators compared the world economy to a car engine with a major mechanical fault. There were 'good prospects' for growth in some areas but the outlook was dismal in others. There is also the massive inherited debt overhang of the 2007-08 crisis, which now stands at \$200 trillion, three times world GDP! Like leaden boots, this holds back growth. This in turn leads to 'risk aversion' – the failure to reinvest some of the surplus extracted from the labour of the working class back into creating production opportunities, jobs growth, etc. One of the consequences of this is that the super profits of big business – widely recognised by all serious economists – is not leading to an increase in productive potential but, on the contrary, to massive cash piles, often described as a 'savings glut', which has grown by a colossal \$57 trillion since 2007. Consequently a major banking crisis is brewing – with economic indicators, particularly on debt, already flashing red! As we have pointed out before, the contraction in 'demand' – which is being fuelled by inequality and other factors – also acts to repress investment. Bourgeois governments have attempted to overcome this through low interest rates combined with printing money – quantitative easing, etc. – which has served to accumulate the debts of governments, corporations and households. Much of this extra money in the past seven years has also been recycled into the financial markets of the neo-colonial countries, but this has not led to a significant increase in production. All of this has acted as a colossal drag on world capitalism, resulting in low growth in general, fears of a long period of 'secular stagnation' and serious political repercussions for the system. What is even more alarming from the standpoint of the strategists of capitalism is that they appear to have no answers in place if, or rather when, they are confronted with a new crisis. Stephen King, economist for HSBC bank, summed up the situation: "The world economy is like an ocean liner without lifeboats." The

capitalists have used up all their 'ammunition': zero or near zero interest rates, quantitative easing on a vast scale particularly for the US, Britain and the EU. Given their mountainous debts, they are reluctant, to say the least, to embark on another significant round of printing money. However events – particularly on the scale of 2007-08 or worse – would compel governments to intervene through semi-Keynesian measures in order to try and avoid the massive political fallout which would develop in the wake of a new crisis. They have not been assisted either by the big fall in world trade, which in 2015 recorded its largest contraction since 2008, the volume of global trade falling by 0.5% at one stage. The first half of 2015 recorded global trade's worst situation since 2009. This is in marked contradistinction to what happened during the post-war boom, where world trade grew at twice the rate of the economy. One of the features of the 1950-75 world economic boom was that capitalism, through 'trade liberalisation' – with tariffs on imports dramatically cut – did partially overcome the national limits of the nation state which enormously assisted its growth. This resulted in a spiral of growth ended by the economic collapse of the 1970s. Then barriers to trade developed, including currency manipulation and devaluations, which had the opposite effect in depressing economic growth. We see the opposite process to the post-Second World War situation today. Even before the present clashes over trade agreements, there has been the stalling of trade liberalisation efforts at Doha. The Obama regime, through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) – aiming to liberalise trade in the Pacific to the advantage mainly, of course, of US imperialism – has been for the moment thwarted by opposition amongst others from the working class and the US unions. This even compelled Hillary Clinton, who indicated earlier support for TPP, to perform a somersault and come out in opposition to it because of the need to get the US unions onside. China described the TPP as partly designed to undermine China and enhance the position of US imperialism in the Pacific as an 'economic NATO'.

UNITED STATES

The opposition of the US unions and the working class to these measures – which they see as compounding their problems – aroused resistance to US capitalism. Martin Wolf, Financial Times chief economics commentator, indicated the scale of the social crisis in the US when he pointed out that 12% of US men – one in eight- are neither in work or looking for work. What is called the ‘participatory’ rate – having a job of one kind or another – is well below that of the UK, Germany or France, standing at roughly 8% non-participation. The figures for women are even worse, close to the ratio of Italian women at 26%. This in turn has a knock-on effect in terms of US productivity and is a real measure of the lack of a substantial ‘recovery’ for the working class from the crisis of 2007-08. A period of sustained insecurity for the US working population has opened up. Lifetime employment is a dream in the new cutthroat competition for jobs. 53 million Americans – 34% of the workforce – are now ‘freelancers’. ‘Portfolio careers’ have become the norm with constant switching between one form of employment and another. This new system is called ‘Knowledge Integration Toolkit’ (KnIT) meaning that individual workers compete against one another and unions are diminished, which in turn has had a serious effect on the wages and conditions of the working class. Decades ago, General Motors was the biggest employer where workers earned \$35 an hour in today’s money. Now Walmart is the biggest employer with its workers on \$9 an hour. GM workers were no more educated or more capable than Walmart workers. The crucial difference was a strong union in GM and no union in Walmart. Fewer than 7% of US workers in the private sector are now in a union. The ground is being prepared for a mighty explosion of union expansion in the US but this would have to be accompanied with renewal at the base and leadership, drawing on the experiences of Seattle which has pioneered \$15 an hour and led to a nationwide movement.

Our sympathising party will play an important role in rebuilding the power and effectiveness of the US workers' organisations. At the same time, the middle classes are being hollowed out. Once the 'professions' were 'islands of security'. No more! The systemic crisis of US capitalism, aggravated by the new stream of technological improvements which are being introduced – and which we have analysed – will result in the slaughter of previously secure jobs for workers but also for the middle class as well. This goes together with even greater inequality than existed prior to 2007-08! That is what Robert Reich, Bill Clinton's Labour Secretary, has called a process of 'distribution upwards' from the working class and poor to the rich. [coque iphone occasion](#) The ratio of the wages of employees and the top CEOs in corporations has grown to about 300 to 1 in the US and about 200 to 1 in Britain. This at a time when two thirds of the working class is living from 'pay cheque to pay cheque'. The US unions are down to 6 million members, roughly the same number as Britain with almost six times the population. This in turn is generating a big revolt against right-wing trade union leaders who are clueless and impotent on how to build the unions. This will be a vital step in defending the working class from downwards pressure on their wages and conditions. This means a rising tide of discontent affecting more and more layers who may have previously felt that they had a stake in capitalism but are now questioning it. In a recent poll, 55% of Americans agreed with the proposition 'the rich are getting richer'. There is a widespread perception that the rich are being bailed out by the state and that bank bailouts in the aftermath of the last crisis was 'socialism for the rich'. There is also the potential for growth particularly in the US of socialist and Marxist ideas, reflected in Kshama's election victory, the support for Bernie Sanders and, not least, the rapid growth of our political sympathisers in the US. There have also been feeble counter-efforts in Britain, the US and elsewhere to ideologically answer what appears to be the rising tide of anti-corporate and anti-capitalist feelings amongst growing

sections of the population, particularly the young. This has been taken up by sections of the 'liberal' wing of the Tory party in Britain, resurrecting a campaign in favour of 'popular capitalism'. Given the scale and the depths of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis and what looms on the horizon, this is unlikely to generate big support. On the contrary, elements of the politicisation and left radicalisation of the 1960s – heralded by the entry of the youth onto the political arena – are lodged in the present situation. A new phase of world relations has emerged since the last Congress. Then, as we commented at the time, 'Pax Americana' – the military domination of US imperialism which had been overwhelming in the previous period and was reflected by the Iraq war, intervention in Afghanistan, etc. – was already on the wane. The unipolar world of George Bush – with his military 'full spectrum dominance' – was already giving way to a multipolar world, particularly because of the rise of China, not just economically but also increasingly demonstrating its enhanced military prowess. US imperialism is having difficulties accommodating to this new situation but its strategists – taking the long view – have conducted a kind of campaign to reconcile the US to the real situation, which one commentator describes as 'relative decline'. The US has been far and away the most powerful military actor, the only power with global reach. In fact, following the collapse of Stalinism and, with it, the weakening economically of Russia this domination was 'lopsided' in favour of the US. Although Russia and now China are beginning to reassert themselves – the former in Ukraine and now its intervention in Syria – the US is still likely to be the overwhelmingly dominant military power on the globe for years. China has furiously begun to step up its military posture, particularly in the development of a 'blue water' naval strategy, concentrating first on the Pacific, where it vies for support and influence against US imperialism. The EU cannot compete militarily with China or the US, with the bourgeoisie of the continent preferring to largely shelter under the US military umbrella. Yet

economically the combined weight of the EU is equal to or even in some reports, ahead of the US. But Britain, which is no longer really a world power, signified by its keenness to become an economic colony of China, now spends a paltry sum on 'defence'.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Syria

Following the Iraq and Afghanistan disasters and subsequent social catastrophes, the US giant is effectively politically paralysed, prevented from unleashing its full military power now in Syria. The mood of opposition of the American people – foremost the working class – to any proposals for large-scale military operations in the Middle East or elsewhere is clear. It can conduct military-police type operations – including aerial bombing – in concert with its allies but cannot extend this to significant forces, 'boots on the ground'. The four-year long civil war has resulted in 11 million people out of 26 million being driven from their homes and at least 250,000 losing their lives. The original uprising was fuelled by hunger, in turn the product of climate change. Drought took hold in the largely Sunni dominated countryside and an influx of impoverished farmers into the cities laid the basis for the uprising against the Assad regime, which rested mainly on the minority Alawite sect, an offshoot of the Shias. Imperialism – and not a few on the left as well – believed that this movement, embracing the majority of Sunnis, would quickly overwhelm the regime. However, the CWI, together with a few farsighted bourgeois commentators, did not believe that Assad would be quickly overthrown. Assad did not just rest on the Alawite-Shia population of Syria but on other minorities as well, such as the Christians and the Druze, who later felt mortally threatened by the brutal, murderous torturers of ISIS. Moreover, the conflict assumed an increasingly sectarian

form, with a major element of a proxy war between Shia Iran and the Sunni Saudi Arabian regime. The latter, with its billions of petrol dollars, was prepared to fund almost indefinitely an uprising against the hated Assad regime. This, they hoped, would once and for all remove the Shia-aligned regime from the face of the Middle East, in the process curbing Iran's regional ambitions that had been boosted by the Iraq war, which saw a Shia regime emerge linked to Iran. However, they and the 'farsighted' Obama and Cameron had not reckoned with the reaction of the hundred million Shias in the region: in Syria itself, in Iraq, in some of the Gulf States and in Iran with nearly 70 million Shias alone. Iran and its Lebanese co-religionists Hezbollah supplied the foreign fighters necessary to bolster the Assad regime, alongside Pakistani and other Shias from the Gulf States. This proved necessary at critical moments when Assad faced formidable opposition forces – bolstered by sectarian jihadis – that appeared to be about to overthrow his regime. As the war's toll of the dead and injured rose so did the increasing difficulties of conscripting young people into the government forces. This was aggravated by the low pay for those enlisted in the Syrian army, contrasting with the lush living of the elite who did not dirty their hands with much fighting. Isis and the other reactionary anti-Assad forces suffered no such economic difficulties. Those who joined its ranks from other countries in the region received handsome remuneration through much higher wages than the impoverished conditions 'at home', with access to the latest technological goods too. It was these factors which determined the intractable character of the conflict. Assad as well as Isis and other anti- Assad forces were too strong to be beaten but were also too-weak to defeat each other! However, recently, it appeared that the regime faced a looming 'catastrophe', admitted Assad, with the increased strengthening of opposition forces by the US, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States in particular. This changed everything particularly for Putin's Russian regime, which had inherited from Stalinism military and financial ties with the

Syrian regime. The implications of his possible overthrow forced the Iranians to intervene and urge Russia to seek to militarily underpin his regime. Russia's commitment to increased air cover for the regime, backed up by the possible use of 2,000 troops, against Isis, completely changed the situation. Obama – with his own air campaign not working – was completely wrong-footed, as was the hapless Cameron. Putin intervened not out of any deep-seated sympathy or loyalty to the Syrian people but for its own imperialist interests. Faced with increased hostility from the 'developed' world – US and Europe – over the war in Ukraine – he took the opportunity to enhance the power and prestige of Russia in the region. History shows, the present conflict attesting to this, that wars cannot be successfully fought just from the air with intense bombardment. The US and France, restricted to air attacks alone, and without any reliable ground forces – apart from the Kurdish forces in the north – are incapable of defeating Isis. Russia can rely on ground forces – those of the Syrian regime itself – to coordinate attacks on Isis. This forced a switch in tactics by the US and Britain who have indicated that they will possibly 'coordinate' attacks with Russia, and therefore with Assad himself. They have invoked once more the example of Roosevelt joining with Stalin to defeat Hitler. At the same time, they have repeated that any political settlement cannot include Assad! The aim is for some kind of political deal along the lines of the Dayton Accords following the Balkan war which brought the different warring powers together including President Milosevic, representative of the Serbs. However, he ended up being found guilty in The Hague for 'war crimes'. Assad is unlikely to agree to voluntary suicide, which is what such a deal means for him and his regime. It is not clear whether others like Russia and particularly Iran will also go along with this. However, the interests of Assad let alone the fate of the Syrian people, is so much small change to the outside powers who have one concern on how to enhance their own power, prestige and income. It is true that this war, with comparisons drawn with

Europe's ruinous mediaeval Thirty Years War, has produced a yearning for peace in the region and elsewhere. Its effects, as the CWI anticipated, have radiated out to all the neighbouring countries and beyond, ratcheting up sectarian, national and religious conflicts, not to say murderous terrorism, the fleeing of millions to Europe to what they imagine will be a 'safe haven', dividing and destabilising in the process whole societies. Even the Pope has described it as a new version of a 'Third World War', particularly for the Middle East. There is no possibility of a real world war breaking out from the present conflagration for the reasons – particularly 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD) – that have been analysed previously by the CWI. The YPG/YPJ, the military units linked to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) associated with the PKK, has been one of the most effective forces in deterring ISIS. This is linked to their programme containing some radical elements – in terms of women and Kurdish national rights in particular – that has appealed to important sections of the Kurds, as well as to a layer of youth internationally. Yet the PYD has not been able to secure active popular support outside of the Kurdish majority areas. Securing people's support and reaching out to working class and poor communities beyond Rojava is a vital task to break the area's isolation. But this task is undermined by the PYD leaders' policy of balancing between and seeking deals with the rival powers active in the region – forces that put entire communities under bombing and persecution – especially the Arab Sunnis, whose sense of victimisation in both Iraq and Syria has been instrumental in ISIS securing a social base. Socialists recognise some of the gains which have been achieved in Rojava, but insist on the need for a mass and democratically organised struggle armed with a principled programme based on the unity of working people and the poor, on the uncompromising defence of the rights of all minorities and internationalism.

Terrorism and Isis

The indiscriminate, murderous, terrorist Paris bombing seems to represent a new stage in the tactics of Isis, following the downing of a Russian airliner over Sinai and the bombs in Baghdad, Ankara and Beirut. Needless to say, as our French comrades made clear, we unreservedly condemn these fascistic-type attacks which target the innocent. Just eight terrorists were able to inflict so much death in Paris. It may have been a lot worse if they had got into the French German football match which François Hollande, the French president, was attending. There is naturally mass outrage at this atrocity but the bourgeois media have attempted to drown out those voices that try to explain how and why this terrorist wave has developed. As terrible as the Paris killings were – particularly to the families who are affected – and the mass fear which it generated, the total number who died is equivalent to the numbers killed and maimed each day in Syria. This does not in any way underestimate the fear effect in France, first and foremost on the working class. But as even bourgeois commentators have sought to explain, this represents 'blowback', a phrase originally coined by the CIA in relation to the conflict in Afghanistan and its effects on the whole of the world. The Iraq war, Afghanistan, Libya and not least the murderous conflict in Syria itself have reinforced the conclusions of the CIA! Isis (referred to as 'Daesh' by many in the Middle East), at least its original cadre, was drawn primarily from the officer ranks of the predominantly Sunni Iraq army who had been sacked and excluded by the purge which followed the overthrow of Saddam and the occupation which followed. Until recently, its strategy seemed to be concentrated in the immediate region of Syria, Iraq etc., in seeking to create a 'caliphate'. It rejected Al Qa'ida's approach of spectacular global terrorist attacks, like those of the World Trade Center. From the outset, it appeared to be quite different from previous attempts at Arab resistance. It

proclaimed the need to capture territory in order to establish a state – an Islamic ‘caliphate’ – with all the ramifications that this implies, including the establishment of sophisticated financial arrangements. It helped to sustain itself through the trade in captured ancient artefacts as well as oil arising from the seizure of Mosul with its considerable oil producing facilities and resources. It has even traded with the Assad regime itself. Therefore Cameron’s bluster that Isis should “not be dignified with the name Islamic state” is completely bogus. As Patrick Cockburn has commented: “Unfortunately it is a real state and one which is more powerful than half the members of the UN, with an experienced army, conscription, taxation and control of all aspects of life within the vast area it rules.” It will therefore not be easily eradicated. But it has been pushed back in the past months, giving up territory under pressure from Kurdish forces. Its leaders seems to have concluded that the best means of deterring effective intervention from outside powers is now to take the ‘war’ to the enemy, through sustained terroristic actions along the lines of Paris. It cannot be excluded, in fact it is likely, that similar attacks will be launched in other European cities and wider afield. Isis has found ready recruits from amongst the North African and Middle Eastern diaspora of discriminated against and alienated Muslims in Europe. Moreover, an appeal is now being made to the wider ‘Muslim world’, with a noticeable rise in interest and hardening of support for Isis in Africa, in Asia – it is growing in Bangladesh, for instance – in Malaysia and elsewhere. On the other hand, seamless progress for Isis is not inevitable. The bourgeois, for its own reasons, can take effective action against it in the neo-colonial world. In Pakistan, for instance, the army, which plays a balancing bonapartist role, appears to the masses as the only cohesive force in society. It also has considerable economic stakes in the economy and has combined repression of the Taliban and the incipient Isis threat with economic reforms which benefit a layer of the masses and is paid for by Chinese largesse. It

remains to be seen whether some kind of ramshackle military coalition could be put together to push back Isis from its existing present shaky stronghold. The intervention of Russia, supported by the Syrian regime, has introduced a new crucial factor in the war. Isis still maintains elements of a guerrilla-type force. However, to be successful, such forces cannot rule by repression and terror alone or by taking on every power. Ultimately, only a sympathetic and supportive population – ‘the sea in which the guerrilla fishes swim’ – can sustain its grip for any length of time. Isis’s methods – its religious death cult, the propagation of a Hobbesian hell of ‘each against all’ – will over time alienate the population under its control as well the disastrous economic effects of terrorism. Witness the catastrophic fallout for the masses from the Isis-inspired attack on the tourist town of Sousse in Tunisia in 2015. It is now a ghost town, shunned by visitors and tourists, which will inevitably lead to mass unemployment. The terrorist attack in Luxor in Egypt in 1997 had a similar disastrous effect on the economy.

War in Yemen and Saudi Arabia

The other bloody conflict in the Middle East, next to the Syria/Iraq nightmare, is the civil war in Yemen. Seven months of air strikes, together with the intervention of ground forces by the Saudi-led coalition, has heaped even more terrible suffering on what is already the poorest population in the region. Over 5,000 Yemenis have been killed, including at least 2,400 civilians. The coalition is fighting the Iranian-backed Houthis, which seized Sana’a, the capital, and other areas last year. Yemen, with a population of 23 million people, was the poorest country in the Arab world long before the removal of President Saleh following an uprising against him in 2011. The Saudis, the richest country in the region, supported by the Gulf sheiks and American imperialism, have imposed a vicious blockade of ports and other outlets, resulting in the prospect of famine, with 13 million people

already defined as 'food insecure'. The Houthis are located in the Yemeni highlands and are allied to Saleh against the Saudi coalition, resulting in stalemate between the two sides. The Saudi regime is acting more and more openly as a counter-revolutionary gendarmerie in a conflict which also has all the hallmarks of a proxy war against Iran, with the poor Yemenis facing the prospect of further bombing and starvation with no solution in sight. However, the rotten Saudi regime is paying a price for its costly interventions in regional conflicts and in seeking to maintain its leading position in the oil trade. Its decision to keep on pumping oil in order to protect its global market share is in danger of rebounding on the regime in the next period. In an upcoming meeting in Vienna of Opec, it has been indicated that it is likely to shift its position. Last year, they rocked the oil market by abandoning the traditional position of reducing supplies in order to stabilise prices. Since then, oil prices have collapsed from a \$115 to below \$50 a barrel with billions of dollars of investment in oil production elsewhere being put on hold. But the other side of declining oil revenues have rebounded on Saudi Arabia, which now has a budget deficit of at least 20% of GDP. This has led the government to dip into its huge reserves, which has had an effect on investment in infrastructure and squeezed government spending. This in turn sparked a private sector slow down, cuts in subsidies and the general squeezing of living standards. Taken together with the disaster of hundreds killed at the annual Hajj pilgrimage, this has resulted in unprecedented criticism of the corrupt Saudi regime. Letters in Arabic have circulated calling for the overthrow of the King and have been welcomed by wide layers of Saudis, having been read by 2 million people. This represents the wind famously 'blowing the tops of the trees first'. Increased repression by the regime is probably a symptom of growing opposition. The removal of the more corrupt layers in the 'kingdom' could open the floodgates to unprecedented demonstrations, which can have a significant impact not just in Saudi Arabia but throughout the region.

Iran

A new situation has opened in Iran as Obama has moved to negotiations and proposed the lifting of sanctions, although this has still to be ratified in the US Congress where it will meet opposition from hard-line Republicans. At the same time, Iran itself has intervened to back Shia forces in various conflicts in the Middle East, sometimes in opposition to the forces supported by US imperialism. Within Iran itself there are growing social tensions and some divisions within the regime. We need to be ready for major social upheavals within Iranian society in the coming period.

Tunisia, Egypt and Libya

The working class and its allies remains the key to the situation in the Middle East. The North African and Arab revolutions – particularly in Tunisia and Egypt – showed their colossal strength and the potential political power which the working class and its allies have to change the situation. However, the fallout from the splintered and disturbed state of the world has enormously complicated the situation. If the workers' organisations had possessed a clear perspective and programme linked to a socialist vision and a leadership equal to the situation, things could have turned out entirely differently. Big opportunities have been lost because of the absence of the mass 'subjective factor'. This was partly determined by the fact the working masses had been kept under the heel of dictatorial and authoritarian regimes in the preceding period. In Egypt, the independent trade unions played an important role in the struggle against the Mubarak regime. But they were not strong enough to impose themselves on the revolution in its early stages. Tunisia was an exception to the general pattern. The country which had seen the development of a powerful independent trade union movement, the UGTT, in the first period of the revolution when

a big element of dual power existed could have played a decisive role in leading the revolution and, in the process, initiated a new mass party of the working class. This would have found a big echo throughout the region. Because of the absence of the subjective factor and the speed of events, it was not possible for the formation and crystallisation of a distinct class and socialist consciousness. In general, we have seen big but as yet unsuccessful movements of the working class. The Egyptian revolution presaged powerful movements of the working class in Europe, which has shaken the continent, particularly southern Europe – Greece, Spain, Portugal – to its foundations. This was clearly underlined in North Africa and the Middle East where the initial revolutionary wave saw US imperialism as an impotent bystander unable to intervene. Only with the ebb of the revolutionary wave – which in turn was contributed to by the weakness, virtual absence in fact, of a conscious revolutionary core able to win the masses and direct the movements – did reaction gradually take the reins of power back into their hands. They could not directly intervene in the first phase but sought a role for reaction through the back door by establishing a foothold in Bahrain, Libya, etc. We should never forget that they were helped ideologically – although ineffectually – in this task by alleged Trotskyists, including some in the USFI along with the poisonous little sect the AWL in Britain, who gave ‘critical’ support to imperialism’s ‘civilising’ role in intervening in Libya in overthrowing Gaddafi. They justified this scandalous position of alleged ‘Marxists’ on the grounds that it was ‘progressive’, would prepare the way for democracy, independent workers’ organisations, etc. One commentator wrote: “It was utterly predictable that military intervention would be a fiasco.” We did not back reaction, unlike these groups who indirectly bear some responsibility for the disastrous situation where sectarian war, gangsters and rich Libyans lord it over the Libyan workers and peasants. Libya has never existed as a homogenous entity. It was a collection of “fiercely autonomous, proud and unruly tribes”, suspicious

of centralised rule, which through the Ottoman Empire and the imperialist domination which followed was only loosely held together by Gaddafi through divide and rule, who kept “a weather eye open, heaping privileges on some and prestige on others in order to consolidate alliances and plaster over any cracks that threatened to appear”. Only a policy which looked towards the victorious independent mobilisation and movement of the masses was guaranteed to move Libya in a ‘progressive’ direction. Failure to base a struggle upon the working class and its allies in the poor peasantry, looking for a ‘liberator’ – and a foreign one at that – will ultimately lead to disaster and the complete discrediting of organisations which ascribe to this false policy, as we predicted at the time. However, the imprint of revolutionary events has left their mark on the masses which will be reflected in their political re-awakening in the next period. Egypt is one giant prison and torture chamber of an estimated 40,000 prisoners, with hundreds condemned to death. Sisi is himself a product of the ‘security apparatus’, which as we pointed out at the time of the revolution had a big economic stake under Mubarak and remained largely intact despite the upheavals. It is a dictatorial, authoritarian regime ratified by a ‘fig leaf’ of ‘parliamentary elections’, in which only a handful – an estimated 16% – turned out on the first day of voting. In the wake of Sisi’s assumption of power, the stalwarts of the Mubarak regime have made a comeback: “[Sisi] has restored the security state, uniformed and unreformed, constitutionally embedded the power of the army, ring-fenced its privileges and greatly expanded its business empire – helped by billions of dollars in aid from the Gulf [reactionary sheiks].” Not for nothing did Marx insist that a precondition for the success of a revolution was “the breaking up of the old state machine”, and the creation, amongst other things, of popular militias to defend the gains of the revolution. Particularly necessary is the removal and disarming of the officer caste which, in the main, defends the interests of the possessing classes, of which they were a component part in Egypt. None of this, of

course, was undertaken because of the lack of consciousness on the part of the masses in the absence of a clear revolutionary leadership. Therefore, the military was free to plot, to use the autocratic and authoritarian measures of the Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi, then leant on the consequent mass discontent to usher in a military regime which has now led to Mubarak's release along with his cronies. This does not mean that the Egyptian masses and those throughout the region have suddenly gone to sleep. They are besieged by unemployment, the scramble for a piece of bread, but nevertheless are turning the events of the Egyptian revolution over in their minds; they will come back onto the stage at a certain time. Already, there is a stirring of the working class through strikes and a renewal of the unions. In Tunisia, a new generation of workers has joined the UGTT after the revolution. Work within the UGTT remains a priority for the forces of Marxism there. Strikes reached a high peak during the first part of 2015, but were partially cut across by the effects of two successive high-profile terrorist attacks. As a wave of regional private sector-based strikes on wages had begun to newly gather momentum in the autumn, a suicide bombing in central Tunis which killed 13 members of the Presidential guard at the end of November was used by the union bureaucracy to cancel all planned industrial actions. While the leadership of the UGTT has acted to try and collaborate with the ruling class. However, it is above all the weight of the organized union movement in Tunisia that has prevented a counter revolution of the same ferocity as in Egypt. The bourgeois counter-revolution in Tunisia is adopting a more 'democratic' attire. Yet the economic situation has dramatically worsened and the Tunisian government, led by the restorationist party Nidaa Tounes, has renewed attempts to attack the democratic gains from the 2010-11 revolution, notably by using the anti-terrorism card. A law of economic amnesty for corrupt businessmen linked to the old regime has also provoked mass street demonstrations, spearheaded by young people. The revolutionary 'moment' opened by the uprising five

years ago has not been closed, and the ruling party is facing a deep internal crisis. New upsurges of the Tunisian masses are hence inevitable.

Preparation for a new ups

urge lies in the development of theoretically sound organisations with a tested leadership throughout the region. The situation will develop in the future where a small force can have a colossal impact on mass movements. As in other situations where sectarian polarisation has wreaked havoc, at a certain stage the masses become disgusted and conclude that they have no alternative but to intervene in an attempt to unify themselves on a class basis. The same thing happened, not once but on a number of occasions, in Northern Ireland where our comrades played a key role in organising solidarity action which did, at least for a time, bridge the sectarian divide. Similarly, the Iraqi workers rose spontaneously in 2011 and showed their revulsion at the mass sectarian slaughter which was convulsing society by marching through the streets of Baghdad and other cities chanting "We are not Shia or Sunni but Iraqi workers." At the same time, they also protested at corruption, including the sell-off of Iraq's oil and demanded nationalisation of this vital national asset. They again protested in 2015 against corruption and power cuts. A similar process will develop in other countries in the region and we must be prepared programmatically, drawing on our experiences elsewhere, to intervene and attempt to cement class unity through independent unions and mass parties of the working class. The CWI does not have a quiescent or pacifist approach to the nightmare confronting the masses of the Middle East and North Africa. We reject pacifism and are prepared to defend – if necessary with arms in hand – the democratic rights of the working class as the Spanish, Chilean and other workers did when the ruling class attempted to take them away by force. We also recognise that all aspects of right-wing political Islam must be combated politically and over time by

the masses in the region who will also recognise a similar need. It is therefore crucial that we systematically raise the need for independent political action by the working class. This should include, when the situation requires, the organisation of cross community/religion class-based united workers defence forces to protect the working class from the state and the murderous threats made by the Taliban, Isis, Al Qa'ida, etc. against working-class militants, including some of our own comrades and leaders in countries like Pakistan.

Turkey

Turkey, in which we have a base now, has over the last period been turned upside down mostly through the fallout from the war in Syria with millions of refugees now ensconced in the country. This is a consequence of right-wing Islamist President Erdoğan's open support for the Islamist opposition to Assad. Previously, he had been cautious, seemingly facing both ways, but when it looked as though the Syrian regime was about to be overthrown he became more supportive of the opposition. He imagined he would be allowed to bathe in the adulation of imperialism. Instead, the economy has worsened as Turkey's exports to its two biggest trading partners of Europe and Russia have contracted. The biggest terrorist incidents in the country's history have taken place recently, with hundreds of victims. Isis openly operates attacking demonstrations of the left and murdering left-wing activists. We have witnessed a growth in strikes and experienced two general elections in six months which have done nothing to resolve the political deadlock. When the governing party AKP lost its majority in the general election in June, this appeared to scupper Erdoğan's plans to use the expected victory to enhance his position in the presidency which he then intended to run for. Instead that election saw the breakthrough of the pro-Kurdish HDP with 13% of the vote which prevented him achieving an outright majority. In the election in November, he partly compensated for this after a vicious scare campaign including

the use of terror particularly in the Kurdish areas and against the left in general. However he and the AKP still got less than the 50% which would have allowed the launch of constitutional changes to the presidency and then, if he won that, to use it to bypass parliament and rule through bonapartist methods. There was disappointment on the left at the outcome of the results but Turkey is still moving leftwards. The 2013 events around Gezi Park shattered the 'strongman' image of Erdoğan and his regime. The mass demonstrations showed he was not as 'all-powerful' as he imagined. That mood and movement has not gone to sleep. As social conditions deteriorate under the devastating impact of the regional war – together with the inflaming of the Kurdish question – and the worsening general world economic situation, this will severely impact on Turkey as on other 'emerging' countries. This in turn will lead to new movements of the Turkish workers and youth and provide us with favourable opportunities to build.

Israel/Palestine

Although not on the same scale as the horrors of Syria the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine has been recently inflamed, particularly in seemingly random clashes which have taken place in Jerusalem. Some of the attacks on Jews and Palestinians have been quite gruesome and horrific. The most accurate picture of what is happening is to be found in our articles and press and not in the bourgeois media, whose reporters write at arm's length and without a real feel or understanding of the situation on the ground. Daily stabbings and killings saw in October 58 Palestinians and 10 Israelis killed with the injured running into thousands. In one horrific incident, an Eritrean asylum seeker was first shot and then lynched, with two of the suspects identified as prison service officers! As comrades commented: "The mob, particularly the two prison officers, implemented the new semi-official policy: execution without trial for every (non-

Jewish) suspect of terrorism.” Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has called this arrogantly: ‘management of the conflict’ but almost three quarters of Israelis in polls have expressed discontent with the way that he has dealt with the ‘terror wave’ and his complete failure to calm the situation. On the other hand, almost the same percentage doesn’t believe that the ‘centre-left’ – in reality the right wing Labour Party – would do any better. They have supported the catastrophic policies: the closure of East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, greater latitude to fire at stone throwers and heavier prison sentences. Support for the even more right-wing parties and figures like Lieberman is growing but not by much. While our comrades recognise that there is a growth amongst the Israeli-Jewish population of nationalism, there is a layer drawing the conclusion that the establishment parties cannot find a way out. Nor is a military solution likely to work in the long term, with even the chief of staff admitting: “There’s no clear military solution to this kind of challenge.” Consequently, our comrades have tried to turn those workers and youth that we can reach toward united mass action: “Joint struggle between Jews and Arabs and against escalation of the conflict or indiscriminate attacks on civilians through the policies of the government”. This is not a new demand but it needs to be restated in the dangerously polarised situation of Israel/Palestine. Moreover, it is not just the Israeli right who stoke up tension but also right wing Islamist forces, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad which also promote terrorism against Jews. The outlawing of a number of Islamist organisations – most of whose activities have been to shout at Jewish visitors to the Temple Mount – fuelled the tension and wider conflict between the different religious communities. One of the consequences is increased repression and action against Palestinian minors from poor families, who face ‘official permits’ to shoot them and jail them more easily! This means that “the strongest military power in the region (the Israeli army) is sending armed soldiers to fight kids”. Despite all the difficulties, it still remains

necessary for us to raise the question of the workers and poor in Israel from the different national groups having clear common interests in opposing the escalation of the conflict and posing workers' unity. The very clear programme of our Israeli/Palestinian organisation shows the way forward: "Establish two capitals in Jerusalem, securing welfare, equal national and Jerusalem, securing welfare, equal national and religious rights... Down with the dictatorship of the occupation and the settlements in Palestinian territories. End the siege of Gaza! Establishment of an independent and equal democratic Palestinian state alongside a democratic and socialist Israel" in a democratic and socialist confederation of the region.

EUROPE

The euro crisis which erupted in Greece in the last five years has confirmed the analysis of the CWI. Keeping Greece temporarily in the eurozone has not resolved this crisis and it will re-erupt again either in Greece or other countries such as Italy, Spain or Portugal. At a certain stage, this will lead to the break-up of the eurozone in its current form. At the same time there has been a dramatic increase in national tensions as a result of this crisis and also the refugee crisis. These and the threat of 'Brexit' (British withdrawal from the EU) could develop and result in a reconfiguration of the EU itself in its' current form. Europe remains the most important continent for the CWI, given our political weight there. However, our European sections could be caught up and overtaken by our co-thinkers in the US. We would be delighted if this was to happen, given the colossal impact of events in the US on the world. Nevertheless, the potential for significant growth for our sections in Europe in the next period is also rooted in the enduring economic, social and political crisis.

Greece

The events of Greece indicated the shaky nature of the 'European Union'. 'Grexit' is not entirely off the table. Events could push Greece to the edge once more. The September general election was marked by a big abstention rate, around 45% of the electorate, which is much higher than previously when 25-30% did not vote. It saw workers refuse to buy papers or even take leaflets during the election. This indicated the extreme disillusionment, to say the least, of the masses with all parties, resulting in all of them losing votes. For instance, Syriza saw its percentage of the vote fall only marginally, but actually lost 320,000 votes compared to the previous election in January 2015 while New Democracy, the right-wing former governing party got 200,000 less. Pasok, which until January 2015 was still a coalition partner in the government, was beaten by the fascist Golden Dawn! The Communist Party (KKE) with its organic sectarian, ultra-leftism, kept its percentage of the vote, but also lost votes in a period when an established left party with a correct programme and perspectives should have made substantial gains. The left split from Syriza, Popular Unity, failed to reach the 3% threshold needed to enter parliament and therefore is without parliamentary representation, with a certain political fallout from their ranks likely to follow. It behaved in an ultimatumist and arrogant manner in the initial period of the pre-election negotiations with the rest of the left outside their ranks. Although formally against austerity, Popular Unity failed to put forward a credible socialist programme to end the deep crisis and shifted to the right during the election campaign. They identified themselves solely with the transition to a national currency, refusing to make any mention of a socialist programme or even a mild anticapitalist one. Our comrades in Greece have therefore faced a quite difficult conjuncture. We have essentially maintained our forces intact when the vast majority of the left faced

numerous divisions and splits, but have not been able to grow substantially in a situation marked by mass disappointment and disillusionment amongst the masses. We have, however, made significant advances and conquered new ground in the local communities and the mass movement, in view of the future battles which sooner or later will take place. There is an intense questioning, political ferment amongst a minority of politically advanced youth and workers on the left. Elements of Latin America have existed in Greece for some time, particularly reflected by the fracturing of the left into many groups. This in turn is a product of the different tempo, scale and serious test of events, which have developed much more rapidly in Latin America in the past and now in Greece and southern Europe compared to Northern Europe, the US, etc. Organisations are tested in the fire of events and are often found wanting, unable to measure up politically to the situation, resulting in splits. This imposes for us in this concrete situation difficult and 'unusual' tactics, which are not required at this stage where it is a question of two or three Trotskyist organisations competing for influence in the youth and workers' movement. Where the ground is cluttered – with an alphabet soup of groups – it is incumbent on us to help to clear the ground and simplify the task for the working class by seeking maximum collaboration and unity on a principled basis. Even in Britain we have pursued such tactics through TUSC, not just collaborating with the rail union RMT but also with the other sizeable left group, the SWP. Without in any way dropping our Marxist criticism of these groups, they can be accompanied with strenuous efforts to maximise common work: a united front on a limited basis on an agreed programme, etc. This could ultimately lead to the emergence of a coherent left. Old alliances are falling apart and new realignments are taking their place, with some promising prospects in Greece. The aftermath of defeats has often led to splits and divisions. But the opposite process can also develop by increased collaboration and the strengthening of the forces of the left, which can in turn prepare for a new

upsurge in the movement. Other sections of the International may be compelled in time to adopt some of the approach and tactics – adapted to the concrete situation in each country – which our Greek section is implementing now. Of course, the political cycle will be different in each country, even between the different countries of southern Europe. In Greece, it is not entirely excluded, though extremely remote, that Tsipras, despite his grovelling retreats, if he is pushed too far – for instance on the EU's mean and cruel insistence of forced evictions of workers who cannot pay their rent – could be pushed into opposing the troika and set in process a chain of events that may result in Greece being pushed out of the eurozone. On the other hand, it is quite probable that his government, which has already lost two MPs in the first two months of its second term, will end up in crisis and some kind of coalition government with parties of the establishment like PASOK, the River or the Centre Union. The crisis inside SYRIZA has not completed its cycle. New splits, smaller or bigger are still on the agenda.

Spain

Spain, approaching its general election on 20 December, has already had a dress rehearsal in the local and regional elections earlier in the year. The government experienced a severe defeat losing power in many of its big-city strongholds while at the same time losing overall domination in the regions. The extent of their defeat was masked by their reliance on the support of Ciudadanos, the 'new' right-wing populist party, which was created as a 'safety net' for voters moving away from the PP, the governing party, who might otherwise have decamped to Podemos. This was nevertheless a decisive rejection of the government's claim to have presided over a spectacular economic recovery. The Spanish ruling class's programme of savage austerity was repudiated in these elections. Unemployment has dropped to just over 20% from almost 24%, still one of the highest in the world and second

only to Greece in Europe! Just under 5 million Spaniards are still unemployed. Their desperation was summed up by a man who offered to pay employers €5,000 to just give his unemployed son a start with a job! Then there is the relentless daily enforcement of evictions and resistance to this, which has provoked charges by the bourgeois media of 'terrorism'! Some well-known left radical figures that have supported such militant action and some leading the resistance were subsequently elected as mayors in the two major cities of Madrid and Barcelona. Podemos, riding on the success of Syriza in Greece, at one stage rose to over 20% in opinion polls and was seen as a threat to the established parties. Now, it has fallen back from this high point. This reflects its leadership's failure to formulate a clear class programme – substituting the concept 'caste' in place of class – with a top-down organisational approach which dissipates the voice of its members and concentrates real power in the hands of the leadership, with the ranks pushed into powerless 'networks'. It has also moved steadily to the right over the last period. The national question, particularly in Catalonia but also to a lesser extent immediately in the Basque country, has entered a new and explosive phase. The Catalan parliament has voted for a resolution calling for "the beginning of a process of the creation of an independent Catalan state in the form of a Republic". This is seen as a potential step towards a unilateral declaration of independence and is being virulently opposed by the parties of the Spanish state, the PP and the 'socialist' PSOE. In the 1930s, the issue was posed starkly with much greater overall support for separation than there is today. Mass immigration from the south of Spain, particularly from Andalucía, took place under the Franco regime and continued after this, which changed the situation. The 'plebiscite' elections on 27 September showed that society is almost split down the middle on the question of independence. We adhere to the general principle of the right of self-determination. We therefore stand for the democratic right of the peoples of Catalonia to decide their own fate through a

referendum. At this stage, we would give a critical support to a 'Yes' vote in an 'independence' referendum, which many would see as a chance to escape Madrid's austerity. At the same time, because of the polarisation that is evident in the polls with roughly half supporting independence and half opposed, the workers' movement has to clearly intervene in the debate, clearly defending minority rights within an independent Catalonia. But we will not reinforce nationalist illusions that a capitalist independent Catalonia could exist or succeed without linking up with the peoples of the Spanish state and the Iberian Peninsula as a whole in a democratic socialist confederation. It is not likely that this issue will be voted on immediately. Rajoy could make this an issue in the upcoming general election, by invoking the threat which it poses to 'Spanish unity' and the benefits which allegedly flow from 'all the peoples of Spain' living and cooperating together. This message could find an echo in Catalonia and throughout Spain unless it is effectively answered by the radical left. However, Podemos has, to say the least, an ambivalent position on the national question, similar to Corbyn's position on Scotland, giving the impression of being sympathetic but not speaking out clearly and appearing to be dodging the issue. We are for the building of a united movement which, on a socialist basis will allow all the peoples of the Spanish state and Iberian Peninsula to decide upon their own shared future. If Rajoy wins again and takes power in a coalition, then the position of the government will be to implacably oppose a referendum. This would deny the legitimate democratic rights of the Catalan people, and also the Basques and others who wish to pursue their claims for autonomy or separation. However, any new government following the general elections will be under huge pressure to put forward a solution to the crisis in Catalonia, including a possible reform of Spain's constitution to provide for further recognition and financial powers for Catalonia. The existing right-wing leadership of the independence movement – which has never really been pro-independence – would willingly accept such a compromise.

However, this would be unlikely to fully stem the tide of the mass movement, which is split along class lines and between right and left. The national question is being resurrected, as we have explained in a number of documents of the CWI, throughout Europe and the world. We must train our cadres to be able to respond to the emergence of 'old' national questions but also of entirely new situations that flow from the stagnation and decline of capitalism in the modern era. The last word has not yet been spoken on Podemos. It is possible that, despite its leadership, under the impact of a further deepening of the crisis and the possible re-election of some kind of right-wing coalition government, it will undergo further growth and pressure from below for opening up and democratising its structures. The new generation of young people and workers in Spain and everywhere are very different to previous generations: more open and mistrustful of bureaucratic centralised leadership. They demand open and inclusive forms of organisation, including the idea of alliances or federations of different organisations coming together in one party. This is not fundamentally different, it is true, than what was once considered the norm, in the formative stages of the labour movement before a crystallised bureaucratic layer had been able to develop.

Portugal

Portugal shows how the pressure of the working class can be exerted even on the most unreconstructed bureaucratic parties' leaderships – like the Portuguese CP – when the needs of a situation are pressing. After the last general election, none of the 'old' parties – the ex-social democrats (PSP) or the previous right wing coalition – could rule alone. The government coalition failed abysmally to get majority support winning just under 37% of the votes but with an abstention rate of a colossal 43%. This meant that only a very small minority of the population voted for them. As comrades explained: "During the campaign, they tried to hide the faces

of the government leaders – the executioners who dragged working people to a level of exploitation not seen since before the 25 April revolution in 1974.” The hysteria of right-wing commentators is a measure of the extreme crisis Portugal has been thrown into by these events. It has become very clear to the masses that all these parties – including the right wing of the so-called Socialist Party – are parties of rotten capitalism, of austerity. The president scandalously intervened after the results of the election to try and hand power back to the representative of the right and previous prime minister, Passos Coelho, launching at the same time a tirade against the left. The inclusion of the Left Bloc and the Communist Party – even by giving critical support to a Socialist Party-led government – shows the fear of the Portuguese and European ruling class to any involvement or pressure exerted by the workers’ organisations. Cooperation of the Left Bloc and the PCP, if it is to be principled, can only be on an issue-by-issue basis with negotiations conducted publicly – before the court of opinion of the workers’ movement and with the Portuguese masses being able to express their views openly. Moreover, as our comrades have pointed out, it is through the mass mobilisation of the Portuguese workers that real pressure needs to be exerted to ensure that the demands of the workers are implemented. Portugal has entered a period of renewed struggle and our predominantly youthful forces can play an important, indeed a crucial role in winning and organising the new generation, by drawing on the revolutionary history of the Portuguese working class and the role of the CWI in intervening in the country and the movement in the Iberian Peninsula as a whole.

Britain

The present Tory government in Britain will come under severe pressure on the EU referendum that must be held by the end of 2017. The decisive sections of the British bourgeois have come out overwhelmingly for remaining ‘In’. What is involved are

the prestige and economic interests of British imperialism, which have already diminished dramatically. They are terrified of being locked out of the decision making process of the EU. This in turn could see China and the US bypassing Britain as an economic launching pad – which it is now – into the EU. Cameron has recently invested a great deal of political capital in courting the Chinese government, persuading them that Britain is a fruitful field of investment. This would all be put in jeopardy if the ‘No’ camp won. Additionally, the problem for Cameron is that he has a significant section of his own party – the ‘eurosceptics’ – who are opposed to his proposals to keep Britain in the EU. It is not excluded that the Tory party could split and a new general election be called because on this issue the government could lose its majority in the House of Commons although the majority of Labour MPs would probably back Cameron on this issue. Crucial decisions on the direction of British and European capitalism are posed by this. Accordingly they will use all the propaganda weapons at their disposal to try and ensure a ‘Yes’ vote. However, it is not guaranteed that they will be successful in getting the desired result. The referendum is increasingly seen as providing an opportunity for the working class to strike a blow against Cameron and the Tory government by mobilising and voting ‘No’. We have come out for a ‘No’ vote but have linked this to a class and internationalist position: ‘No to a capitalist EU, Yes to a socialist Europe.’

Germany

The eurozone as a whole has not fully escaped from the ravages of the 2007-08 crisis. Some of the key countries – France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, quite apart from Greece, are mired in depression and still have levels of mass unemployment. Britain and Germany have seemingly escaped from the worst effects of the crisis but this is an illusion. Britain has created hundreds of thousands of low paid, insecure ‘throwaway jobs’. Germany has one of the largest sectors of the labour

force of Europe which is part-time, low paid, etc. Now the storm clouds of a new economic downturn are gathering. This is why Mario Draghi, European Central Bank president, has already floated the possibility of him taking measures to boost the European 'recovery'. He was prompted to do this by what the Financial Times described as "the dire state of the eurozone economy". This was highlighted by the drop of 0.3% in industrial production in September 2015 compared to the previous month. Billions are swilling around in the world economy arising from ECB measures of quantitative easing, previously estimated at €1.1 trillion. But when faced with another serious crisis, symbolised by very low inflation, deflation in other words, the central banks will not hesitate to intervene to prop up the 'markets'. Germany is the most important country in Europe, both from the point of view of the bourgeois of the continent and also from the standpoint of the working class. It has in the last year faced massive upheavals. The biggest number of strikes for a considerable period – only commented on internationally by our comrades – has taken place. Some of these strikes have been bitter and protracted and not all resulted in success, as with the postal workers. However, some have resulted in victory such as the train drivers and the kindergarten strikes. At the same time, there was a massive demonstration of 250,000 against the so-called free-trade agreement Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), in which our comrades reported there was a keen interest in socialist ideas. The other issue which is dominant in German politics is of course the refugee crisis. Upwards of a million refugees, German Chancellor Merkel admits, will be allowed into Germany. This is partly because she been unable to stop the human flood and also because temporary 'open borders' have the agreement of the more farsighted German bourgeois. They have been concerned for some time about the demographic pattern in Germany, where the population is getting older. On present trends, the country will in the future be smaller than the number of people expected to live in Britain. Therefore making a 'virtue out of

necessity' – and at the same time burnishing her 'liberal' image, that was not evident over Greece – Merkel kills two birds with one stone by presenting her chancellorship as a magnanimous one. But the enormously enthusiastic and welcoming reaction of the German workers – particularly of the youth – is beginning to give away to doubts and opposition because of the huge strain on resources which a sudden mass influx of people means, even to a 'rich' country like Germany. The mood on this issue is largely dependent upon how the refugee crisis impacts on different countries. In those in which the refugees are just 'passing through' and don't intend to take up permanent residence – Greece, some of the countries of the Balkans, Austria, etc. – our comrades have been involved in a general welcoming approach, engaging in solidarity actions, providing shelter, clothes, food, etc. Of course in Germany and elsewhere we also participate in such activity where we can. But the issue is posed somewhat differently where we defend asylum seekers and others, at the same time raising transitional demands about the intervention of the labour movement in allowing transparent and democratic intervention and judgement on immigration cases, the right to stay, etc.

Finland

The general strike in September in Finland also indicated that an element of Greece and Spain is coming to Northern Europe. Plans to attack the trade unions were suspended after almost 30,000 people gathered in Helsinki to demonstrate with extensive strikes which stopped all transport and much of heavy industry. This was accompanied by student occupations with the youth showing a sure instinct in lining up behind the working class. Our comrades intervened in these events, both from Sweden and Finland, raising the demand that the strike must be continued with more decisive action.

Belgium

Belgium has also faced upheavals and not just following the fallout from the Paris terrorist attacks. The Belgian workers are faced with an avalanche of attacks by the right-wing government, which provoked anger and opposition from the workers: "No Thatcher here". In autumn 2014 it provoked a colossal elemental movement – including a quarter of a million strong national demonstration of opposition to the attacks of the government. Yet the government was able to re-establish its equilibrium because the trade union leaders were not prepared to escalate the action. This is a pattern that we have seen elsewhere, including in Britain in the period from 2010 to the 2015 general election. Essentially, the trade union leaders are afraid of their own potential power with even the best of them seeking to rein in movements and divert them onto the electoral plane. Belgium is a crucial arena for the CWI, given the specific weight of the industrial working class together with the roots that we have built in the country. We are presently 'competing' with the ex-Maoist PTB. They have attained a certain electoral position – 9% in opinion polls – but on the basis of discarding Maoist ultra-leftism and shifting sharply towards a reformist position. History showed, said Marx, that a party can be raised up, particularly when the masses are searching for a left alternative, and political deficiencies are not immediately obvious. However, once reaching a certain 'popularity' these parties can be put to the test, be undermined and in the process tend to disintegrate. It is the test of events, combined with severe Marxist criticism of all opposing political trends, which is crucial for all those who wish to attain leadership in the workers' movement. Belgium has always played a key role because of its central position in relation to other countries. The other side of Belgium has been displayed over the recent terrorist incidents. The country was the jumping-off point for the jihadis who initiated the Paris

massacre. We have a long and fruitful experience in maintaining in the country the banner of genuine Marxism/Trotskyism, but a new favourable chapter can open up which will provide opportunities for the CWI to build a powerful position both in Flanders and in French-speaking Wallonia in the next period.

France

In France, the aftermath of the terrorist outrages has certainly assisted the National Front (FN) of Marine Le Pen in making big gains in the regional elections. A poll taken before the Paris bombing and published in the Economist showed that the FN was the “most popular party amongst working class voters” with 41% compared to a slump in the standing of the Socialist Party (PS) which was supported by just 24% of working class voters, a nadir compared to previous all-time lows. The FN is even attempting to court Muslims: “Muslims perhaps, but French first.” A party spokesman declared: “Nobody wants Islamism least of all Muslims.” This reinforces the trend at this stage for predominantly far-right parties who wish to attain electoral popularity to shed their more open militarist, neo-fascist features. In the case of Le Pen, it meant brutally ditching her father’s heritage, too overtly associated with his ‘extremist’ past. He lamented that it was not very nice “to kill your papa” . Hollande, on the other hand, could improve his approval ratings in the short-term. Yet it could hardly be any different given the complete failure of his presidency so far to arrest the searing unemployment level of at least 10% and twice that in the banlieues surrounding Paris, where four million people live. For young people, the unemployment rate in these areas is 40%. Little wonder that the president was booed when he visited these areas on a “goodwill tour” with one youth asking him: “When are things ever going to change here?” They had illusions that the Socialist Party could change things and voted heavily for Hollande in the presidential elections.

Bitter disappointment has inevitably followed which will probably see these areas and huge swathes of the poorest section of the population not necessarily voting for the right, but abstaining and allowing them back into power by default. The Socialist Party seems destined to inevitable defeat as it shifts further towards the right with Macron, the economy minister, brought into the Cabinet as an open voice of big business – ‘business friendly’. He declared his desire to see “more French youngsters who want to be billionaires”. This while the working class has grown increasingly furious at the increased burden placed on their backs by failing French capitalism, including further attempts to water down and eventually eliminate the 35-hour week. This anger was evident in the Air France incident when an executive of the company literally had the shirt ripped from his back by workers! Predictably the hue and cry went up in France and elsewhere that this was an example of ‘terrorism’. This demonstrates the reactionary effects of terrorism, which is invariably used as an excuse by the bourgeois to crackdown on civil liberties and curtail democratic rights. Trade union rights, the right to demonstrate and press freedom are all under attack. Demonstrations and strikes were called off by the cowardly trade union leaders in Belgium after the Paris attacks. [Coque Huawei En Ligne](#) In France, however, the CGT rank and file in Paris and elsewhere opposed the national leadership’s call for ‘national unity’.

Reaction to Isis attacks

The British Tories have used the terroristic actions of right-wing political Islam to condemn ‘extremism’, but this is also directed against the left in general and Marxism in particular. The Freedom of information Act shed some light on the undemocratic actions of the state but Blair, who introduced it, now ‘regrets’ this! It is now threatened with being reversed on the ‘security’ grounds in order to prevent terrorism! The terrorism of the jihadis complements the

terrorism of the state. We must be vigilant and while opposing terrorism at the same time combat all anti-democratic threats, both to the working class and labour movement. Europe is in the first stages of possibly travelling the same path as the US did following the 9/11 attack, which saw the introduction of the Patriot Act and ultimately to the obscenity of Guantánamo Bay. There is already enough existing reserve, 'emergency' measures without adding much more in order to introduce a police state! But the current relationship of class forces does not allow the bourgeois to proceed along this path. Nor is the position of capitalism yet desperate enough for them to resort to such extreme measures without risking a working class and popular uprising, which would put the very existence of the system in jeopardy. However, the gradual encroachment on democratic rights after each terrorist alert is sinister and must be fought. The bourgeois will use every means at their disposal to bend public opinion, including sections of the working class, to their ideological standpoint. They not only frame the questions but the answers as well! Any attempt to give a basic objective explanation of the reasons for the attacks are systematically shouted down, whether this is directed at Jeremy Corbyn or ordinary workers. The explanation for the murderous wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and now the Syrian catastrophe, their effects on the Muslim masses – including on alienated, often unemployed youth in the 'developed' world – is met with "these actions are plain evil, the products of deranged people – nothing can excuse indiscriminate war against the innocent". Yes: nothing can excuse these actions of Isis which we unreservedly condemn. However, didn't the CIA itself originally coin the phrase 'blowback' to explain the inevitable violent reaction – recoil, retaliation – when countries are bombed back to the Stone Age and the bodies piled high? Such attempts to distort objective reality is in order to prevent working people from drawing the obvious conclusion that any further military intervention in the Middle East – specifically in Syria which is immediately posed – would be counter-productive and sure to

trigger further terrorist attacks at a certain stage on those powers and its people who are engaged militarily in the region. The British government of Cameron is seeking to acquire parliamentary approval for an air campaign in Syria against Isis. This is not because of any likely important military effects which are likely to be puny and ineffective but these are likely to make Britain even more of a target for terrorist attacks. The main reason why this measure is being proposed by Cameron is purely for reasons of prestige, an attempt to ingratiate the Tory government with the US, which has been critical of Britain's lack of military capacity 'to share the burden' in confronting Isis in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Ireland

Ireland is of course a key country for the CWI, with a strong parliamentary presence and a leading role in the mass anti-water charges campaign. The level of non-payment –with 52% of the 1.52 million households not paying their second bill. The government – which is on its last legs and will be compelled to go to elections by April 2016 – has resorted to intimidation against nonpayers. They – particularly the discredited Labour Party – have been behind the prosecution of 27 campaigners including Socialist Party TD Paul Murphy, which could result in his jailing. They will find that this will only widen the circle of protest even more. The approach of the general election has in turn increased speculation and pressure for the formation of a left alternative in the south to the present discredited right-wing government. Our party and the Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA) – to which we belong – has come under pressure to sign up to the formation a left alliance, including by leading left trade unionists, which would include Sinn Féin, the republican party. This is against the background of recent revelations of past IRA killings, with which Sinn Féin is suspected of being involved. In the North of Ireland, Sinn Féin is still viewed with suspicion,

particularly from the Loyalist/Protestant population because of the legacy of IRA actions and killings during the Troubles. The North is very important, with a big anti-austerity movement taking place, in which we have a strong presence. One of our comrades challenged for the general secretaryship of the main civil service trade union and received a splendid 44% of the vote. The successful right-wing candidate received the plaudits of the main parties, including both the leader of Sinn Féin on Belfast City Council and a former Democratic Unionist party minister! Both of these had warned of the dangers of the left in the union winning the position of general secretary. This is why they resorted to the vilest sectarian slanders against our comrades. However, the NIPSA broad left has emerged politically strengthened, larger and more capable of playing a leading role both in the union and the wider anti-austerity struggle. Notwithstanding the complications, our party in the South has indicated that it will give general support and not stand in the way of a left alliance coming to power to replace the discredited right-wing government. However, we would not enter such a government, which would remain within the framework of capitalism, as already indicated by the policies of Sinn Féin and their possible collaborators. If we and others have sufficient weight – the polls currently put the AAA and People Before Profit on 8 to 10% – then we would advocate giving critical support from outside, with votes on a case-by-case basis. The significant roots that we have laid, and the sheer dedication of our members and cadres in Ireland, can pay off handsomely in the next period, through a significant growth in influence and increased membership.

Italy

Real GDP in Italy is at the same level as at the start of 2000 and 9% below the pre-crisis level in 2008. If it cannot emerge from recession, its membership of the Eurozone is even put in question. The government of Democratic Party leader Matteo

Renzi has been able to survive mainly due to the lack of a coherent opposition. This is in spite of unpopular policies of cuts and privatisation which have created anger amongst a wide layer of workers and middle class people. In 2015's regional and local elections, an unprecedented 50% did not go to vote. Discontent amongst teachers and young people over education 'reforms' and sky-high youth unemployment has not found a political voice on the left and the major trade unions have failed to conduct a fight-back. The Northern League under the leadership of Salvini has come to the fore in a number of traditionally left areas and not only in the North. It has exploited fears about immigration but also adopted a populist stance against austerity. A scandal in Rome over Mafia activities involving all the major parties ('Mafia Capitale') led to the closing down of the city's administration. [Coque Huawei P20 pas cher](#) New elections can favour Beppe Grillo's 5Star Movement (M5S) which has moved up and down in the polls. In spite of its lack of consistency in opposition and its leader's racist comments over immigration, it can be seen as a clean pair of hands. A new formation called Sinistra Italiana (SI – Italian Left) was launched at a packed meeting in a Rome theatre in November 2015. It includes a number of dissident MPs elected from the PD (including a group called 'Possible'), Vendola's SEL (Left Ecology and Freedom Party) and one or two M5S senators. It is under the leadership of an ex-minister in the Letta government, Stefano Fassina, who has aligned himself with Melanchon of the Parti de Gauche in France and Lafontaine of Die Linke in Germany. SI is aimed to be a challenge to the neo-liberalism of the PD but its policies do not represent a major shift in a socialist direction. It will have the 'Keynesian' Joseph Stiglitz as its economic consultant. Landini, the leader of the left-wing metal-mechanics union, FIOM, who has not very successfully launched a 'Social Coalition' of 'civil society groups, is not supporting the SI. The campaign of the ControCorrente comrades for a genuine workers' party to fill the vacuum continues.

Austria

In Austria, also the social crisis arising from the general collapse of capitalism is clear. There is a housing crisis, increasing unemployment and a rise in poverty. But the country displayed marvellous solidarity to the thousands of refugees who flooded into Austria, usually while in transit to other countries like Germany. Our organisation has intervened energetically in the debates thrown up by the influx of immigrants and also in the Vienna elections in which we stood in August. Our comrades pointed to the billions piled up by the super-rich while 80,000 flats are empty, just kept for capitalist speculation. In Europe as a whole there are 11 million empty properties, enough to house all refugees and the homeless. We demanded that these should be taken over and used to house local people and some of the refugees who wanted to stay. The far right FPÖ did not manage to capture 'Red Vienna'. This was not because of the political attractiveness of the social democratic SPÖ (they almost maintained their vote on the basis of the mood of solidarity which grew up around the refugee issue). However, the FPÖ made big gains in the provinces of Styria and Burgenland, in the latter entering a coalition government with the SPÖ! The FPÖ's leader in the province said the two parties had "no differences". Of course, moods of solidarity will not remain unless they are organised to make additional resources available. And not just in occasional actions but politically by the creation of a new mass party of the working class, which is the goal of our Austrian section. The determined, self-sacrificing work of sections like Austria cannot be underestimated by the CWI both in its effects on a mass level later, but also in the contribution that has been made in solidarity actions with our comrades internationally.

Russia, Ukraine and Eastern Europe

The plummeting of the crude oil price – Russia's main economic strength now with the demise of its industrial base following the collapse of Stalinism and the remnants of the planned economy – has completely altered the economic outlook for the Putin regime. This, together with the imposition of sanctions following the Ukraine crisis, has cut off many Russian companies from Western capital markets since 2014. The economy is in recession with gross domestic product set to fall between 3.5% and 5% this year even according to the government's own forecasts. Additionally, the rouble has lost over 4.5% of its value to the dollar over the past year. The government has expressed its determination to use the economy's present problems as a means of reviving manufacturing industry, which can help the country's export sector. Despite the economic difficulties and the fact that the average Russian has experienced a period of 'belt tightening' of their budgets and living standards, the Putin regime has still managed to remain at well over 50% in opinion polls. This is primarily because the government has been able to draw on the deep reserves of Russian nationalism, first of all over the Ukraine and Crimean wars, and also recently in relation to the attacks of Isis in the Middle East, as well as the perceived threats of the US in general to Russia. The defeat of the Polish neoliberal 'Civic Platform' in the country with the largest population in the region is the most significant recent event in Eastern Europe. This party was in power for eight years. Its overthrow was preceded by a wave of workers' struggle, including miners protesting over unpaid wages and nurses fighting for increases of their very low wages. Other workers followed their example and the right-wing Law and Justice party capitalised on this, promising the earth to striking workers and shifting the axis in Parliament towards the right. The biggest surprise, as our comrades have pointed out, was the fact that the ex-social Democrats of the

Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) did not win enough support to enter parliament, despite receiving 11 % (there is a strict electoral law which requires parties' electoral alliances to exceed a very high threshold, a measure aimed at keeping all but the largest parties out of parliament). This was a massive blow to the DLA, which had been in parliament since 1990. [coque de samsung galaxy s3](#) On the other hand, a new left formation 'Razem' (Together) – was successful in winning over half a million votes, 3.6% of the overall total. Although this was not enough for them to enter parliament, it gave a big fillip to their financial resources. Their programme was generally pro-worker, concentrating on the 35-hour week, increases in wages, etc. However, their political limits were indicated during the election by their support for the 'Nordic model', which is increasingly discredited in Scandinavia itself. Despite the limits of their programme, this formation has seen an unprecedented influx of several thousand members – mostly youth – and they can grow in the next period. Polish Marxists will be orientating towards this movement in the hope of winning fresh forces and establishing a powerful basis for our ideas in the country. But Poland is not the only country which has faced upheavals. The whole of the Balkans faces a period of economic and social turmoil. We have already mentioned the revolt in Romania, and a similar movement has taken place in neighbouring Moldova where the government has collapsed because of a \$1 billion theft from the country's banks, which dragged one of Europe's poorest nations into an economic abyss. A vote of no-confidence came after a fortnight in which the former prime minister was arrested for his part in the fraud, in which the equivalent of one fifth of the gross domestic product was stolen from three of the country's largest banks! This was connected to one of Moldova's richest figures, which only heightened the disgust at the government and initiated widespread protests against the oligarchs who have been running Moldova. Little wonder that Merkel worries that a new flashpoint could be the Balkans in the next period. She warned that if her government had closed the borders with

Austria and Eastern European countries, as some in Germany had urged, there would have been an escalation in the already heightened tension. Up to now, the Balkans has been a transit point. But the barriers which have been raised against the refugees could produce an extremely volatile situation. Serbia and Croatia briefly imposed mutual trade blockades and recriminations over the handling of the migrants. Similar tensions have arisen with Hungary already under the heel of the right wing Viktor Orbán, while across the region unemployment levels are very high: 27% in Macedonia, 20% in Serbia and 16% in Croatia. Even in Kosovo, the parliament had to be halted and teargas was thrown into the chamber after two weeks of upheavals: "Opposition MPs smuggled in teargas canisters and set them off before the day's session could begin... The opposition has enough gas to block any session." This high tension threatening to explode at any time – including in Bosnia – has its roots in the incapacity of rotten landlordism and capitalism in Eastern Europe and the Balkans to solve the problems of working people and the poor. New forces will arise in these areas which can find a way to genuine Marxism, Trotskyism, in the next period.

Climate change

Climate change and the complete incapacity of capitalism to provide a solution is an important ingredient of the analysis and programmatic demands of all of our sections. World temperatures have risen by at least 1°C since the industrial revolution and the climate change pledges that were made at the Paris summit will have to be significantly improved if there is to be any hope of coming near to levels that will avoid significant and dangerous warming levels. The Paris summit was noticeable for the abundance of speeches but with little commitment to real action. Indeed, the US is reluctant to sign a legally binding agreement because of the fear that it would be necessary for this to be approved by a hostile US Senate which must ratify all treaties. This is why US

Secretary of State John Kerry told the Financial Times that “there was not going to be legally binding reduction targets like Kyoto”, a reference to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the UN climate treaty that set targets for emissions cuts and were ‘legally binding’. Before the Paris summit, French government spokespersons suggested that the talks were not just “hot air”. But in effect they were. The melting of the ice caps will continue and world temperatures will continue to rise although the technology is already at hand to switch from polluting sources of energy to renewables: wind, wave and solar power. There have been some efforts to check the environmental degradation that takes place under capitalism. In China, for instance, which is both the world’s worst polluter and, at the same time, ahead of most of the world in the application of renewables. However, these efforts are very late and feeble and will not solve the problems. This can only be done through a democratic socialist plan of production, applied on a world scale, to the benefit of the great majority of the peoples of the planet.

Latin America

Latin America has entered into a new phase of economic and social turmoil. The entire continent has run into a ‘brick wall’! There are currently two distinct features affecting the continent. On the one hand there is ending of the ‘Pink Revolutions’ in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. Interlinked with this development is the accelerating process of capitalist restoration in Cuba. On the other side, the former economic stars of the continent like Brazil and Chile have entered a profound crisis provoking social and political turmoil. As we warned, the ‘Nicaraguanisation’ of Venezuela in the sense of a ‘creeping counter-revolution’ has continued. The exhaustion and demoralisation of the masses as a result of the failure of the revolution to advance and break with capitalism threatens a victory for the forces of the right-wing coalition, ‘MUD’, in the forthcoming parliamentary

elections. These features have all dramatically worsened under Maduro following the death of Chavez. Venezuela has been crippled as a result of the collapse in oil prices. Added to this are the dire consequences of economic sabotage by the capitalist class and also crippling corruption and bureaucracy. The government has not published any GDP figures since December 2014! However, the IMF anticipates shrinkage of GDP by at least 10%. 30% of the government gold reserves have been used to make debt repayments and pay for imports. The social and economic situation is catastrophic. This all now threatens a return of the right-wing. In Bolivia at this stage, the stagnation of the revolution has taken another form. Despite almost plunging into a civil war in 2007 as the right-wing controlled states threatened to break away and overthrow Morales, his regime has proved to be one of the most stabilising governments in Bolivian history. By making his peace with the ruling class, incorporating them into the government and, at the same time, taking advantage of an especially favourable if temporary economic situation, the government was able to make concessions to the most oppressed. Bolivia currently has an annual growth rate of 5% – the fastest in Latin America. Based on the exports of natural gas and zinc thus far, the growth rate has been sustained. Since 2001, the average income has increased by 307%! The middle class has expanded by an estimated 2.6 million. However, this exceptional situation will not last as the entire continent is ravaged by the effect of the slowdown in the Chinese economy, as the dramatic crises in Brazil and Chile now demonstrate. Chile was exporting 40% of its copper to China – the price of which has crashed. As we have explained the changed policy by the US in relation to Cuba is extremely significant. The process of capitalist restoration has clearly accelerated – at least on paper. However, the bureaucracy has not yet fully applied the steps agreed. Indeed, all private and foreign investment is still undertaken only with the agreement of the state. As we have explained, it is quite possible that the state will maintain a strong presence in the economy resulting

in a hybrid situation. In the event of a serious global economic crash, under such conditions the regime could be compelled to move to increase and strengthen state intervention. The recent elections in Argentina which saw the victory of the right and defeat of Kirchner's candidate Daniel Scioli by neoliberal Mauricio Macri will further aggravate the crisis and contradictions in the Peronist movement. The Trotskyist alliance, FIT, significantly managed to maintain its electoral base in general and won over 800,000 votes. However, the task it now has is to be able to win the support of those dissident Peronist or former Peronist workers. The FIT has not proved able to do this so far and, given its wrong tactical and strategical approach to this task, it seems unlikely it will be able to do this. From the great hope of the BRICs, Brazil has now plunged into its deepest economic recession since the 1930s. Significantly, the slowdown in the economy triggered a large strike wave and social movements. Unemployment has rocketed with over a million workers made redundant in less than a year. At the same time, Dilma's approval ratings have collapsed and she is the most unpopular president since the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1985. The toxic consequences of a massive corruption scandal where an estimated \$10 billion was syphoned out of Petrobras, the state petrol company – which implicated Dilma and the PT – has had a devastating effect which could see it being electorally shattered á la PASOK. At the same time, attempts by the far right to impeach Dilma have contributed to political confusion. This poses challenges for P-SOL and the LSR (Brazilian section of the CWI). However, this crisis will present the left and the CWI with important opportunities to take big strides forward. The new phase of the crisis has also been reflected in the dramatic changes which have rocked Chile, giving rise to tremendous movements of the youth and also some sections of workers. The massive social anger and contradictions building up in Chilean society will give the opportunity for a new left workers' movement to be built. The degree of the anger and bitterness here could easily give rise

to a major social upheaval. Developments in Mexico, with the mass protests against the slaughter of 43 students and other recent social upheavals, are of crucial importance especially given the importance of Mexico to the USA.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis shows that since the last Congress world capitalism has shown its inability to even begin to solve the problems of humankind. The theoreticians of the system have postulated that the crisis of 2007-08 would be just history by now. Instead, they are confronted with its lingering effects, a splintered and divided world, endemic unemployment, a colossal growth of inequality and a working class that has shown in recent years a capacity to struggle, only thwarted by its own leadership, which is incapable of facing up to this new phase of capitalism in decline. The CWI's record of analysis of events together with a close involvement in the struggles of our class has been evident throughout this period. But the essence of Marxism is to always seek to tell the truth and in that way educate and prepare the more politically advanced layers of our class for the tasks ahead. Despite all the gallant efforts that have been made – the enormous exertion of energy from the members and cadres of the CWI – we have not yet been able to make a breakthrough on a mass level, even on the scale of the past, like in the battles of Liverpool and the poll tax in Britain, the water charges battle in Ireland in the 1990s, etc. The explanation for this is not to be found, as some seek to argue, in the innate incapacity of the working class and the poor to fight against the system and its deleterious effects on millions throughout the world. On the contrary, there has been no shortage of examples, as we have shown in this document, of the preparedness of working people to struggle: Greece, the Middle East and the Egyptian revolution, the electoral victories of ourselves in the US, etc. No, the barrier to successful struggle is to be found in the

inadequacies of the leadership of the mass movements. Rather than raising the capacity and confidence to struggle, the opposite has taken place as a succession of 'leaders', through a combination of inexperience, lack of willpower but above all no clear programme have been unable to overcome capitalism and usher in a new society. It is this above all which has acted as a corrosive factor, lowering the expectations of the masses, sapping their confidence in their own capacity. The necessary mass consciousness required for this has yet to develop but will in the important battles to come. The next stage will see the reconstruction of the labour movement and its rearming on the basis of a Marxist programme and the leadership equal to the struggle. The CWI will play a key role in this process.

Time for a new, mass revolutionary left to oppose all austerity!

On 13 July Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras reached a deal with [Eurozone](#) leaders, securing a third bail out in return for pledging to implement huge austerity. This comes after months of 'negotiations' following the election of Tsipras' party, [Syriza](#), on an anti-austerity platform at the start of the year. As described in the statement below, Tsipras first tried to concede on 9 July – but the harsh measures he signed up to then were not enough for the EU leaders, who demanded more again. [coque telephone pas cher](#) The 'deal' now agreed is the harshest that had been discussed. [coque huawei pas cher](#) The Guardian quoted a senior EU official as saying that this was

'payback' for the Greek people's heroic 61.7% 'No' vote in the recent referendum on a previous austerity 'offer'. Among the measures Syriza leaders signed up to:

- Sell off €50 billion of Greek public assets
- Undo measures carried out since they were elected in January – possibly including sacking the government cleaners they famously re-hired on coming to power
- Increase the retirement age and cut retirement benefits for the poor
- Increase sales tax on the Greek islands and apply the highest rate of sales tax to more items
- Implement automated spending cuts if spending deviates from the Troika's plan
- Review collective bargaining and industrial action laws
- Privatise energy distribution

As this article was written (14 July) the situation is a moving picture. [Coque pour Huawei](#) The Adedy civil servants union has called a 24-hour strike in response to the deal and other unions may join in.

- For updates see www.socialistworld.net

For international struggle against the austerity elite

The capitulation of Alexis Tsipras to the demands of the Troika is a massive blow to the Greek [working class](#) and to all forces, in Europe and internationally, that are fighting austerity. The EU ministers are implementing regime change – not like they did in Iraq with guns and military 'shock and awe' but through the market – with banks not tanks. It is an act of colonialism by the EU. The hard line taken has provoked hostility not just to the EU as a whole but to German

[capitalism](#) and to its boot boy, finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble, in particular. Schäuble suggested [Greece](#) should be forced to leave the Eurozone on a temporary basis and organise a parallel currency. But there is no such thing as a temporary exit in this situation. Such a step would have been the beginning of the end of the single currency. There are some on the left in Greece who see this as a solution in itself. But on the basis of capitalism there is no solution in or out of the Euro. For this reason it is necessary to appeal to the international working class. The strength of such an approach has already been shown – in the run up to the referendum there were at least 250 demonstrations across [Europe](#) in solidarity with the Greek people.

Contagion

The capitalists are worried about contagion – that Spain, Italy, Ireland, and even Britain, could be next to reject austerity. That's why they decided on punishing the regime by rubbing the noses of the Greek people in the mud – as a warning to the Greek working class and the working class of the whole of Europe. We need an international struggle against austerity. Tsipras will probably only be able to get the proposals through the Greek Parliament by relying on opposition MPs. He is likely to resort to expelling from Syriza those MPs who continue to oppose the deal. The effect of the proposed measures on the Greek working class will be huge. Already the depression in Greece has been economically and socially devastating. Some sections of Greek workers could be demoralised by the disappointment of the magnificent 'No' vote in the referendum one week, followed the next by the acceptance of huge cuts. But not everyone will feel resigned. We hope, along with our Greek sister party [Xekinima](#), that workers will fight with all means at their disposal. This may have to include, if all possibilities are used up inside Syriza, the fight for a new party which will confront Greek and European capitalism and blaze the path to socialism in

Greece.

The Socialist

#ThisIsACoup

As EU ministers negotiated the ins and outs of the 'deal,' hundreds of thousands of Twitter users appended '#ThisIsACoup' to their tweets opposing the terms imposed on Greece by the Troika. The hashtag was trending internationally as well as in both Greece and Germany, showing the solidarity felt by working class people across the world. The German left party, Die Linke, has also opposed the deal.

Preparing the ground

In 2013 Socialism Today (the Socialist Party's magazine – www.socialismtoday.org) reported on the structural changes agreed at the Syriza congress of that year. This included dissolving the federal components of Syriza and ending their ability to speak publicly of their independent positions – an attempt to limit the influence of Syriza's left wing. We said: "The right-wing of Syriza and the leading group around Tsipras have made their choices. They have rolled up their sleeves and showed their intentions in the clearest way. "The left is obliged to answer back. In a sense, the really big clashes in Syriza have just begun." For more see www.socialismtoday.org/172/greece.html

Time for a new, mass revolutionary left to oppose all austerity!

**Editorial statement by Xekinima (CWI Greece),
10/07/2015**

July 9th was a black day for the Greek left. SYRIZA's leading team, around prime minister Alexis Tsipras, subordinated itself completely and absolutely to the demands of the Troika lenders. The Greek working class finds itself in a tragic position. They voted for SYRIZA in order to find solutions to their problems and to escape from the Memoranda (austerity packages). Yet after five months in government the only thing that SYRIZA was able to deliver was another catastrophic Memorandum which finishes off the pro-austerity policies of the previous governments of New Democracy and PASOK. The working masses do not forget that the same people who are today betraying the ideas and principles of the Left are the same people who had promised to get rid of the Memorandum "within one day and with one law". It's the same people who promised the Salonica Programme (SYRIZA's more radical pre-election promises), which they claimed would be carried out irrespectively of the negotiations with the Troika. The leading group in SYRIZA and Alexis Tsipras have been proven tragically incapable of responding to the tasks of the moment and unworthy of the confidence of the working class. They are unworthy of the earth-shaking 'No' vote on 5 July which reverberated throughout Europe and the whole world. They betrayed the confidence of workers, pensioners, the unemployed and the poor, who voted by 70%-80% in favour of No in the working class neighbourhoods and cities. They betrayed the great struggle launched by the Left and the working class, all across Europe, in support of the struggling Greek workers. And yet, even at this time, the SYRIZA leaders around Tsipras have the gall to ask people to rally today in favor of 'No' because, supposedly, this 'government of the Left' needs the support of people in the streets! But why should the working

class rally and demonstrate to defend those who have stabbed it in the back! Particularly when, only a few days ago, on Friday 3 July, workers and youth came out in their hundreds of thousands into the centre of Athens and on 5 July voted No by a massive 61.3%. The so-called negotiations with the Troika are still, supposedly, continuing and it seems that the only possibility, however remote, of a reversal of the process of the subordination of SYRIZA is if sections of the ruling classes in Europe simply decide to kick Greece out of the Eurozone. This would be the only instance in which Tsipras could come into a head-on clash with the Eurozone. If this happened, it would of course not change even one iota any of the above criticisms of the leadership of SYRIZA.

Serving capitalism

July 9th represents a historical turning point in the transformation of SYRIZA from a party of the Left into a party in the service of the capitalist system. Tsipras and the ruling team have crossed the Rubicon. And they will continue on this road even if this leads them into the hands of a 'national government' along with the enemies of yesterday, even if they have to expel the left wing of SYRIZA and 'destroy' the party. What lies behind this new historical tragedy of the Greek Left is nothing else but the complete lack of understanding by the leadership of the class character of living reality. And a complete lack of understanding of what class struggle means. They went to the EU to "fight for their proposals" with water pistols against machine guns. They tried to "explain" and to "convince" Schauble and the rest of the capitalist gang leading the EU, naively and foolishly, that they were applying wrong policies and should change them. They never had and never showed any confidence in the power of the working class and its ability to take destiny into its own hands. They swallowed the fairy tale perpetuated by the ruling class that their profit system is invincible, that capitalism can never be overthrown and that the exit from the euro would

be equal to a social catastrophe. The defeat in which Tsipras and his government has led the Greek working class is historical but it is not final. It not like the defeat suffered by the left and working class in the Civil War in Greece. There is still a lot of potential for resistance. The immediate task is the coming together of the forces of the Left which understand the need for a regroupment along the lines of revolutionary socialism, to plan the next steps. There are serious forces in the non-parliamentary Left, inside ANTARSYA (Anti-capitalist Left) and SYRIZA etc., which understand that without rupture with the capitalist system and the Eurozone there is no perspective for a better life. These forces must urgently meet and discuss and take all the necessary steps, to lay the basis for a new, mass revolutionary Left. To lead the struggles of tomorrow and to offer the perspective of struggle for a future against the false hopes of Tsipras and his circle. On the evening of 10 July, a planned SYRIZA demonstration taking place in Syntagma, in central Athens, will now probably become a rally mainly of the SYRIZA Left and of ANTARSYA against the Tsipras U-turn. Members of Xekinima (CWI Greece) will distribute the above statement at the protest. Xekinima (CWI Greece) calls for the Left SYRIZA MPs and MPs from the other Left parties to oppose and to vote against the latest proposals of the Tsipras leadership. The Left in Greece must appeal to workers and youth to mobilise against the new Memorandum, including organising mass protests and demonstrations, invoking the powerful No mandate from last week's referendum to oppose any sell-out of their class interests. [CWI in Greece] calls for the Left to break with austerity and to adopt a socialist programme. [coque iphone prix](#) This includes refusal to pay the debt; controls on capital flows; for a state monopoly of foreign trade; the [nationalisation](#) of the banks and the commanding heights of the economy, under democratic workers' control and management; reversal of austerity; jobs for all, with a living wage, and free, quality health, education and welfare. Planning the economy for the needs of the people and

not the profits of the capitalists – the socialist re-organisation of society – would see an end to economic crises, poverty, joblessness and forced emigration. To achieve this it is essential to build independent class politics, inside and outside of SYRIZA. Following the enormous No rallies last week across Greece, continue, deepen and expand the active participation of the working class and youth in the struggle against the Troika and for a socialist alternative. This means the creation of popular assemblies and action committees of the rank and file in workplaces and communities. And appeal to workers and youth across Europe to fight austerity and for a socialist Europe.

What programme for the Greek Left?

Xekinima calls for the Left Platform Syriza MPs and MPs from the other left parties to oppose and to vote against the latest proposals of the Tsipras leadership. The left in Greece must appeal to workers and youth to mobilise against the new Memorandum, including organising mass protests and demonstrations, invoking the powerful No mandate from last week's referendum to oppose any sell-out of their class interests. Xekinima calls for the left to break with austerity and to adopt a socialist programme. This includes refusal to pay the debt; controls on capital flows; for a state monopoly of foreign trade; the nationalisation of the banks and the commanding heights of the economy, under democratic workers' control and management; reversal of austerity; jobs for all, with a living wage, and free, quality health, education and welfare. Planning the economy for the needs of the people and not the profits of the capitalists – the socialist re-organisation of society – would see an end to economic crises, poverty, joblessness and forced emigration. To achieve this it is essential to build independent class politics, inside and

outside of Syriza. Following the enormous No rallies before the referendum, we need to continue, deepen and expand the active participation of the working class and youth in the struggle against the Troika and for a socialist alternative. This means the creation of popular assemblies and action committees of the rank and file in workplaces and communities. We must appeal to workers and youth across Europe to fight austerity and for a socialist Europe.