

# the Communist Party

WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY – The line running from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Leghorn (Livorno) 1921, and from there to the struggle of the Italian Communist Left against the degeneration in Moscow and to the rejection of popular fronts and coalition of resistance groups – The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoeuvres

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## Yellow Vests Movement in France: The Big Fear is that the Working Class will Move

The "Yellow Vests" movement started in France at the end of October. The protest was triggered by the increase in fuel prices, partly due to the increase in the tax on petroleum products. But the protests have become an outlet for all the discontent of part of the population against the social and economic measures implemented by the Macron government and its predecessors. A good number of demonstrators live where the use of the car is a necessity, and therefore the continuous increase in the price of gasoline deprives them of part of their income, sometimes dramatically for the poorest. In fact, in one year the price at the pump increased by 23% for diesel and 15% for petrol (gasoline).

But the economic crisis as well as the slowdown in growth, affects the capitalist world as a whole. The ruling classes of nations are coming into conflict more and more. Trump, a typical businessman, is the court jester, proclaiming aloud what all the world's leaders think in their heads: economic war, exacerbated and increasing competition, isolationism. This is scandalous for some but their only ethical question is how to conduct business and take possession of increasingly large sectors of the global market. Something which is increasingly divided.

In France, the government explains that its economic policy and the "gifts" given to the wealthiest citizens are intended to revive businesses in a context of economic crisis, where the bourgeoisie is reluctant to invest. The increase in the price of gasoline has been justified by the need to finance an energy transition policy started in 2015. Not a day goes by without the media rehashing the sad degradation of the planet, predicting an irreversible, even catastrophic, effect for the survival of humanity within a decade.

But is it true that the ruling classes are concerned about the future of the Earth and are trying to prevent the disastrous and even irreversible degradation caused by the capitalist mode of production? Or is it not rather a matter of withdrawing money from the largest part of the population, even if with difficulty, to fill the coffers of the State, and especially those of the companies and those of the increasingly restricted part of citizens who hoards the vast majority of wealth.

Marxism has always said that the State is at the service of the ruling class. But government decisions do not depend simply on the goodwill or intelligence of the ruling class. They must serve the ruthless economic mechanism of the capitalist mode of production. To survive, this system must constantly increase profits, countering the inherent tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This is beyond the control of even the most powerful individuals, as Marxism has stated for some 150 years.

The current movement in France is spontaneous and was born outside the political parties and official unions which are considered "ineffective" by the rebels. By comparison, the "Red Berets" movement, which appeared in Brittany in October 2013 in response to the environmental tax on pollution caused by vehicles, was triggered by the owners of economically struggling agri-food companies and was supported by their employees.

The Yellow Vests movement, on the contrary, started from the initiative of a "motorist" who launched a call to mobilization on social media, calling for a drop in fuel prices. The call appeared in an article of the popular newspaper "Le Parisien" (October 12, 2018) and then found great success gathering signatures (over a million by late November). Local groups have been created on Facebook throughout France.

In response, the Macron government launched a campaign to fight against air pollution a few days before the announced blockade on the national road network, which occurred Saturday, November 19. In Paris, blockades took place around Paris but the repression by the police forces limited the impact made by the demonstrators. The Ministry of the Interior reported the figure of 288,000 demonstrators for the whole of France.

The blockades continued for the rest of the week and there were a few

episodes of violence. The movement extended as far as Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. In the following days, the mobilization continued with numerous gatherings throughout France.

A new national mobilization and demonstrations were called for Saturday, November 24. The Paris government banned demonstrations on the Champs Elysées but these took place anyway, with clashes with the police. The Ministry of the Interior finally provided the figure of 166,000 demonstrators for the whole of France, of which 5,000 were on the Champs Elysées.

Events and clashes took place in the following days in many regions. On Saturday, December 1, there were roadblocks across the country - sometimes leading to violent clashes with law enforcement agencies. In Paris, demonstrations on the Champs Elysées returned with violence. Demonstrators also graffitied the Arc de Triomphe (on the tomb of the unknown soldier!), set cars on fire and looted shops. The Ministry of the Interior estimated 136,000 demonstrators throughout France. Clashes also occurred in other cities.

On December 3, students from roughly 100 high schools protested against the planned reform of the high school system, an increase in tuition fees for foreigners, and joined the Yellow Vests.

But who are participating in the Yellow Vests movement? Mainly they come from the outlying cities around Paris, and from rural areas which have suffered from being abandoned by the public authorities (withdrawal of services as well as abandonment of administrations). They include industrial workers, low-paid workers and independent workers, pensioners, small bosses. They are united by a general discontent with the decline in their buying power, and, for the proletariat, the suffering caused by the precariousness and degradation of their working and living conditions.

An economic crisis has shaken capitalism for the last several decades. The neo-liberal policies conducted by various governments, both right and left, are there to defend the interests and class privileges of the big bourgeoisie. These policies have led to the impoverishment and precariousness of the French population. According to older data, provided by the National Institute of Statistics, 14.5% of the population lives below the poverty line, i.e. with less than €850 per month. In 2018, the average income per household in France decreased by 1.2% compared to 2008, particularly for 67% of the middle classes. But even the most modest strata suffered a drop in income. At least 20% of employees are precarious and poor, and many pensioners live on a miserable pension. At least one third of the population is suffering. This explains the anger and violence.

So far these conditions and the mistrust of the official parties have only resulted in mass abstentionism. Abstentionism is now the largest working class political party. "Why go and vote if economic and social reforms will still be against us?" The regime trade unions, after repeated betrayals, have been sidelined by the movement.

Of course, far right and "autonomous" anarchist groups have infiltrated the movement and taken the opportunity to vent their rage, for whatever reasons. But these elements have no useful political perspective. All they have accomplished is to make it easier for the government to justify repression.

But there is also a mass response here from people who are desperate and feel abandoned by those in power. Large sections of the working class understand that they can make no progress within the limits of permissible political debate, and that violent bourgeois oppression must be countered with mass action. They have seen through the government lie that the increase in taxes is only there to finance ecological transition.

The main labor unions have refused to join the movement and are accusing it of being the work of far-right parties. Only the transport section of Force ouvrière (FO) has called for

solidarity with the Yellow Vests. The CFDT put itself forward as a negotiator with the government, saying it was time to recognize that they were needed! To stamp out the flames of the social struggle, there are no better firefighters than the big trade union federations!

In conclusion, we will also join in and call the Yellow vests a popular movement! Term derived from the word "people" that we have well defined in our text of the Dialogue with Stalin (1952, 2nd day: Society and Fatherland): "But the people, what the heck is that? A mishmash of different classes, an "integral" of expropriators and slaves, of political or business and the starving and oppressed masses. Since before 1848, we left the use of the word "people" to the associations for freedom and democracy, pacifism and progress. With its notorious "majorities", the people is not the subject of economic planning, but merely an object of expropriation and fraud."

The resumption of the class struggle, after so many years of counter-revolution, betrayal and disorganization, necessarily passes through spontaneous movements outside of any organization, since everything has to be reconstructed. It is only from the generalization of the spontaneous but radical struggles of the proletariat that class organizations will be reborn and that a proletarian vanguard will separate and enter the ranks of the Communist Party.

Under the current conditions it certainly would not take long for a general strike to break out. The trade union leadership is on its guard to prevent this happening. But they can only do this so long as they are not overwhelmed by the crisis of capitalism.

Large sections of the proletariat are obviously participating in the Yellow Vests movement, but not as a class for itself, only as part of this amorphous "popular" mass. It is not organized into militant defensive economic organizations or led by a political party - a communist vanguard. Until this comes about, the class struggle cannot express itself directly and the proletariat can only expect more disillusionment, betrayals and defeats. Ultimately, the proletariat must face the challenge to take political power not just in France but internationally, and this can only be achieved with the leadership of the International Communist Party.

## Hungarian Slavery Act

A law nicknamed the "Slavery Act" has passed in the Hungarian Parliament. This law increases the annual overtime that capitalists can impose on workers from 250 to 400 hours a year, or an extra hour a day. In addition, these hours can be paid after three years and no longer within a year as currently. If a worker loses their job sooner, they may not receive overtime pay.

In addition to the slave law, it also weakens collective bargaining by allowing employees and companies to directly negotiate overtime work. The minimum wage in Hungary is €296 per month and for skilled workers it is €388.

The government argues that such "flexibility" will reward companies which invest in Hungary, especially the German car companies, which have many factories there. But of course, Prime Minister Orbán's ruling party has argued

## BREXIT: No Way out for the British Bourgeoisie

The draft withdrawal agreement between Theresa May's Conservative government and the European Union, which at the time of writing seems unlikely to get the necessary backing of the British parliament on 11 December, offers no solution to the bundle of contradictions that is Brexit.

Both the ruling Conservative Party and the opposition Labour Party are split on the issue. But we will not waste time on the complex parliamentary arithmetic that makes virtually any solution impossible. Nor with the debates about a possible further referendum, or the legal and constitutional wrangling. Of more interest are the economic factors that have created this impasse.

A substantial part of the British ruling class believed that Brexit was a simple matter of walking through a door and leaving behind regulations which, in its opinion, were holding back the competitiveness of the British economy. This viewpoint, though false, reflected the growing competition and rivalry between the United Kingdom and most of continental Europe, led by Germany, and the misalignment of the economies, as Britain has stayed outside the Eurozone.

The reality is that the UK has not passed through an open door but entered a vast maze of uncertainty that offers no obvious or easy way out.

Since Britain dismantled much of its unprofitable and state-subsidized heavy industry in the 1980s, its focus has been largely on the services sector, which is largely dependent on selling abroad. This shift was only made possible by inflicting serious defeats on the working class, most notably the steelworkers (1980) and miners (1984-5).

These developments have helped British capitalism to attract inward investment from many overseas firms wanting to sell into the European Union. This makes the job of extracting Britain from the EU extremely complicated, so there has been stiff resistance from many sectors of big business to any Brexit that would diminish free access to the European single market or to other markets via EU-negotiated free trade agreements. (Ironically it was Margaret Thatcher who pushed hardest for the

single market, though today her nationalist rhetoric is echoed by the Brexiters, who want to withdraw from it, arguing that it benefits Germany more than the UK).

Much of the British economy is intricately interwoven with that of the European Union. To take just one example, as frequently reported in the British press: the crankshaft used to manufacture the Mini (an iconic "British" brand now owned by the German firm BMW) crosses the Channel three times in a 2,000-mile journey before the finished car rolls off the production line. The same story applies to many other components in the Mini, as well as to components used in other car plants in Britain.

The UK is ranked second for Japanese foreign direct investment and is a major economic partner for Japan. In the automotive sector, Japanese manufacturers such as Nissan and Toyota represent more than 40% of British car output and 142,000 jobs. All of this depends on just-in-time delivery and therefore the frictionless trade of the single market and customs union. Other sectors such as aerospace, scientific research and pharmaceuticals also have a strong pan-European dimension.

Should Britain leave the EU without a deal, going onto World Trade Organization (WTO) rules), as favored by the Brexiters, companies in these sectors are likely to choose to divert future investments to other EU countries.

Meanwhile French and German capital, in order to "protect the integrity of the single market" (i.e. the interests of the national bourgeoisies) have threatened retaliatory action should the UK try to leave and undercut EU capitalism. For example, France has repeatedly threatened border checks to disrupt cross-channel trade that would potentially turn motorways in Kent, southeast England, into a lorry park. President Macron has also said that France would ignore any British imposition of coastal waters (the fisheries sector, though insignificant in terms of British GDP, has taken on huge emotional significance for embattled Brexiters).

Meanwhile Ireland and France have been working to create new sea crossings to avoid the UK as a land bridge.

And that is just the situation for manufacturing industry and physical trade. Questions also arise over the future of the services sector, and in particular financial services. Although it accounts for just 6.5% of total economic output and 1.1 million jobs, 44% of financial services exports go to the EU and 39% of financial services imports come from the EU. This business also depends on compliance with a whole raft of EU regulations.

## Falling EU immigration: a pyrrhic victory for the populists

These are the considerations behind the May proposal, which effectively ties the UK to EU single market and customs union rules for the foreseeable future, while making some concessions to the pro-Brexit demands, notably on the free movement of labor.

Immigration was a key factor behind the leave campaign, which was led by populists such as Nigel Farage and backed by capitalists who have little or no stake in the European Union.

In fact, there seems to have been a "Brexit effect" on migration patterns. Figures released by the Office for National Statistics at the end of November showed that net immigration from the EU to the UK slumped to a six-year low, while non-EU migration is the highest in more than a decade. There were 74,000 more EU citizens who came to the UK than people leaving for other EU countries. This was the lowest level of EU net immigration since 2012. On the other hand, non-EU net migration was at its highest since 2004, with 248,000 more non-EU citizens arriving than departing, the ONS data shows.

The underlying reality of course, that immigration is largely driven by the labor market. The scapegoating of immigrants, along with all other populist

(continued opposite)

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# For the Class Union

programmatically approaches and struggles from the  
International Communist Party

For the rebirth of the class union against regime unionism. To unify the workers' demands and struggles, against submission to the national interest. For the affirmation of the Communist Party's directing the proletariat's economic defense organizations, with the purpose of the revolutionary emancipation of workers from capitalism

## On Immigration

At present, migration from Latin America is among the most significant political issues in the United States. Donald Trump, now a self-professed nationalist, campaigned on a xenophobic platform, and has enacted a slew of anti-immigrant measures in his nearly two years in office. Along with Muslims, the primary targets have been the aforementioned arrivals from the south. This is not a new development: George W. Bush was the first president to float the idea of a border wall, inciting protest and ridicule. Barack Obama subjected more than three million people to forceable deportation, at a rate even higher than that under Trump. Obama also established the practice of imprisoning children and entire families in detention centers. Trump created the infamous childhood concentration camps which have captured global attention.

Now this immigration issue appears to be headed for open confrontation. A migrant caravan from Honduras, now numbering about 5,000, has made its way by foot, truck, and train to the Mexico-United States border at Tijuana. Organized by a left-leaning group, the migrants declare their intention to seek asylum in the United States. The first among them are currently encamped in Tijuana, and have just started attempts to cross the border. Trump has taken a typically confrontational position. Declaring the caravan an "invasion" and a threat to United States sovereignty, he has dispatched 5,000 members of the army to the border.

It will be helpful, at this point, to explore this political and humanitarian crisis in the context of the bourgeois nation-state's basic premises. This will reveal the real nature of capital's uneasy relationship with human migration.

The political unit of bourgeois society is the nation-state. No action is possible unless it takes place within the nation, where the local bourgeoisie dominates the exploited classes and poisons their consciousness, or between nations, where the various bourgeois factions strategize as politics in themselves.

Within the national political sphere, the local bourgeoisie crafts citizenship in its own image. The right of this citizenship is, as Marx observed, the right to be alienated from others and from the material basis of one's life, the right to be alone with one's property and one's ideology ("On the Jewish Question"). For the bourgeoisie, politics is an annoying necessity to guarantee the maintenance of a state in line with their class reality. Where the exploited classes are politically emancipated, the bourgeois state creates for them a politics based on vague movements of petty egoists, fighting for their right to the property they do not possess. Nationalism, the most unifying movement to emerge from bourgeois politics, is really the militant definition of the terms of isolation. It defines the largest unit possible in which individuals may put aside their differences in the name of shared chauvinism.

On a world scale, every nation-state is a community of self-aware exploiters, jettisoning around to the same places. Where they fight, they do so self-consciously, imitating and one-upping each other.

As we see, capitalism seeks contradictory ends. It atomizes people within the nation, but on the world stage it packages them into homogenous units, each equally sovereign.

When working class people from impoverished regions decide, for their immediate survival, to move from one nation-state to another, they begin to unravel this lie the bourgeoisie tells. It is a dispossessed humanity. They demand, out of desperation, that their most basic needs be answered, showing by that act the callousness of the ruling class that brought them to that point. Each bourgeoisie fears that these new departures and arrivals will upset the balance of terror and illusory privilege that keeps the proletariat in check within each nation. It fears that the proletariat will see in these migrants a mirror of its general exploitation, and understand the obvious: that it has no country, and that it has nothing to lose.

Communists must be unwavering internationalists. We must demand the immediate and unconditional admission of all migrants workers

appearing at any national borders with the full legal rights afforded to citizens. We must also actively oppose all militarization of the borders in our own countries, and any imperialist efforts to impose such measures abroad. We must organize to interfere with any police efforts to harass, arrest, or deport any fellow foreign worker in our country.

## ICP Intervention on Immigration

*Distributed at a Rank and File Union demonstration in Rome, Saturday 15 December 2018*

*Against the attack on the conditions of all workers, natives and immigrants!*

*Against the "Security" Decree! For a United Working Class Trade Union Front!*

For years the living and employment conditions of workers have been deteriorating, subjected to attack by the capitalist class - national and international - which hides its dictatorship over the working class through the false and misleading democratic theater that only serves to turn the puppets that are in the government.

The so-called "security" decree, recently passed by the right-wing government, reveals the true face of the ruling class forced to reduce the so-called "democratic spaces" to divide the working class and repress their struggles. It goes against the struggles of workers, turning roadblocks into criminal offences, punishable by imprisonment of up to 6 years (12 for the organizers), increasing the penalties against the occupants of houses, extending the prohibition of participation in events. At the same time, it attacks the unity between native workers and immigrants, forcing the latter to be illegal, eliminating the humanitarian protection permit, the main channel for regularizing asylum seekers; moreover, it doubles from 3 to 6 months the maximum period of detention in the Stations for Identification and Expulsion and provides for the revocation of the residence permit and also of citizenship to immigrants accused or convicted of certain crimes.

This decree does not serve to reject immigrants but only to make their situation even more difficult and precarious, to make workers more blackmailable and therefore more exploitable, with undeclared work, without contract, without rules, for starvation wages.

The question is not whether to accept or reject immigrants. Immigration from countries devastated by the economic exploitation of imperialist states that produces wars, famine and hunger is an unstoppable process that affects tens of millions of people all over the world and there are no walls or barriers that can stop it.

The central issue for the proletariat is to find unity in the struggle, to unionize immigrant workers, to fight together to overcome any division that may foment downward competition between proletarians, to demand for them the possibility of having a residence permit and citizenship to escape the blackmail of employers.

Combating racist propaganda by opposing it with anti-racist propaganda on the humanitarian level, as the Church does, is insufficient and can only lead to failure because it means not being able to recognize the true objective of the ruling class, which is not the affirmation of the infamous racist ideology in itself, but its use to divide the working class, keep it oppressed and exploit it more.

Immigrant workers are a "resource" for every national bourgeoisie as long as it manages to exploit them more than it already does with the indigenous ones. But they are also a "resource" for the workers' movement in general when indigenous workers and immigrants fight together for the same class goals.

The winning ground on which to respond to the attack of the boss and the State is that of the struggle and unity of the workers, above all divisions, for their general class objectives:

- strong wage increases, greater for the worst paid categories;
- reduction of working time for the

same wage, for the whole working class;

- full wage to the dismissed workers (not "citizenship income" linked to the acceptance of low-wage jobs and therefore also useful to lower the average wage);
- lowering of the retirement age.

These claims, because of their general nature, have an intrinsic political value, which is not that of being against a government of this or that colour but against the entire bourgeois regime. However, they can only be carried out by a strong trade union movement capable of deploying general and extreme struggles.

For this reason it is increasingly urgent and necessary to overcome the division that passes within the grassroots unionism and of which this demonstration is also a result having been called by the Unione Sindacale di Base only! The unity in the struggles of class struggle unionism (in the rank and file unions and in the class currents inside the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) would in fact inflict a hard blow to the wall that the masters want to erect to divide the Italian workers from the immigrant ones; it would be the best way to give strength to the authentic class unionism within the grassroots unionism and to defeat its opportunist leaders.

The capitalist economy is on the verge of collapse because of the inevitable crisis of overproduction of goods and capital and the inexorable decline in the profit rate. The only solution available to the bourgeoisie of all countries against the catastrophic blockade of global markets is to unleash a new war, a new world slaughterhouse to destroy excess goods, putting the proletariat of the different states once again against each other. To this end, it is essential for them to return to the nationalist, populist, "sovereign" propaganda that not by chance is beginning to take root in every country and that has among its pillars fear and hatred of foreigners and immigrants.

The importance of the international unity of the workers' movement is also demonstrated by the movement of the "yellow vests" that in recent weeks has shaken France and that for many false claims would even represent the antechamber of the revolution. In that movement the proletarians are present only individually, they are not framed in their economic organizations, they are not led by their political party. It is true that the resumption of the class struggle, after so many years of counterrevolution and betrayal, can only forcibly pass through spontaneous movements outside any organization, but if the movement of struggle does not give itself a class trade union organization, claiming its proletarian nature, and does not reconnect with the party, it can only fall prey to the bourgeois reaction and the workers will suffer a painful defeat.

This is also why unity among workers in every country and beyond national borders is vital, because it concretely opposes nationalist and patriotic propaganda with the practice of proletarian internationalism, of revolutionary and international struggle, above all frontiers, to break down the regime of capital.

The proletarians have no homeland!

## Canadian Post Strike

The recent strike of postal workers in Canada has once again exposed the weaknesses of the present capitalist situation. Logistics, including shipping, warehousing, distribution, and computer systems, is vital in an economy dominated by offshore manufacturing and mail-order businesses. The month-long Canada Post strike had such a devastating effect on capital's ability to move product that the state stepped in to break it. This acknowledgement of workers' power by the bourgeois state should receive the attention of communists everywhere.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), with a membership of 50,000, has been in contract negotiations with Canada Post, the state-owned mail service corporation, since last winter. The negotiations have centered on the significant rise in parcels mailed over the past several years (20 percent between 2016 and 2017 alone), which has drastically increased the workload for postal employees. This has led Canada Post to hire more temporary workers (23.98% of employees and 29.97% of hours in 2017) and to impose mandatory overtime on permanent staff. Overtime has led to an increase in work-related injuries among postal workers. According to the CUPW, "one out of every 12 workers at Canada Post experienced a disabling injury in 2017."

With no contract after ten months of negotiations, the CUPW began rotating strikes on October 22. Workers

walked out in different major cities on different days over the course of the following month. Though it stopped short of a complete shutdown, the effects of the strike were dramatic. By mid-November, there were 260 semi-trailers of undelivered mail at the Toronto processing plant, and over 100 in Vancouver. Canada Post was forced to reject international shipments, and Canada-bound mail piled up in foreign airports. Slowdowns on days when strikes were not occurring in the different cities prevented the postal service from recovering.

Bleating from capital and its government began immediately, and by the middle of November had reached a feverish intensity. On the first day of the action, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business declared, in biblical terms, that "every time [postal workers] even threaten a strike, more small business customers move to use alternatives, many never returning to Canada post." The message was clear: form a corporate connection with the bosses or become obsolete. eBay, the middleman for independent sellers who rely on primarily the postal service for shipping, publicly called for the government to ban the strike. Canada Post, in the official press release coinciding with its final contract offer on November 14, warned of "significant impacts to the Canadian retail economy," and, on top of this, that "charities and not-for-profits still use the mail for major fundraising activities."

The strike's timing was key to this very welcome disruption. The CUPW announced it on October 16, the day before cannabis was to become legal in Canada. Cannabis sellers, including the state-run Ontario Cannabis Store, received tens of thousands of mail orders which they could not fulfill, damping the introduction of what is expected to be an economic boom for the country. The strike heated up precisely when businesses and the shipping industry were preparing for the Christmas shopping season.

Under this tremendous pressure from businesses, the Canadian government took action. After Canada Post's November 14 offer was rejected by the union, Bill C-89 was read before parliament. It became law on November 26. The strike was officially banned effective the following day, with severe penalties for the union and any union members if they were to continue the action. Rank-and-file members could face summary judgements of up to \$1,000 per day, union officers \$50,000 per day, and the organization \$100,000 per day of non-compliance. Non-compliance could be construed in nearly any way the government wished. While it maintained the pretense of forcing both the CUPW and Canada Post to comply, the real target was clearly the union. The CUPW called off the strike, while issuing an appeal for protest from the public and other trade unions. Protests occurred at postal facilities across the country, some of which interfered with mail processing.

The Canadian postal strike demonstrates clearly how much impact a relatively mild labor action can have on the economy if it takes place in a vital industry. One can only speculate as to what effects a complete stoppage would have created, and what this would have done for the postal workers' position. Large parts of the global economy are vulnerable if the workers who connect them take action in their own interests. Logistics workers in Italy, Israel, the United Kingdom, and Germany, among others, have realized this fact and taken action, as we have reported in the past. The bourgeoisie and its governments in every country cannot fail to take notice as well.

The unfortunate lesson of the strike is that wider class support came too late to be meaningful. While effective where implemented, solidarity pickets from members of other unions did not become widespread until after the Canada Post strike had been banned. Unfortunately that was a far cry from solidarity actions across the shipping industry in other countries. This points to a weakness of the CUPW and other unions in its position, namely, that it represents workers of only one firm. By contrast, capital has access to a variety of firms for its every need. Amazon.com, for example, ships through government postal services, commercial parcel carriers, and its own delivery network. Only workers' unity across and between industries can effectively confront capital on this scale.

## BREXIT (con't)

arguments, are merely expressions of the inability of capitalism to offer any solutions to economic decomposition (see our article on sovereignty in Communist Left No 42/3).

### Ireland

The current draft withdrawal agreement is therefore a messy compromise to buy the UK time, during a transition period, to negotiate a free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU, while giving it a free hand to negotiate FTAs with other countries and economic blocs, notably the USA (though President Trump has already signaled his unwillingness to do the UK any special favors if the UK agrees to the draft withdrawal agreement. The fact is that the best the UK can hope for at the moment is to piggy-back off existing EU FTAs).

However, the so-called Irish backstop could keep the UK tied by single market and customs union rules for the foreseeable future. This is anathema to Ulster Unionists and to Brexiters.

Under the agreement the EU and UK agree to "use their best endeavors" to have a future trade agreement concluded six months before the end of the transition period in December 2020, but that if this is not the case the EU and the UK could "jointly extend the transition period" for an unspecified time.

Otherwise the backstop solution for Ireland and Northern Ireland, aimed at preventing a hard border, would come into force. The backstop, consisting of "a single customs territory between the Union and the United Kingdom", will apply from the end of the transition period "unless and until ... a subsequent agreement becomes applicable".

The single customs territory would cover all goods except fishery products, the agreement says, and will "include the corresponding level playing field commitments and appropriate enforcement mechanisms to ensure fair competition between the EU27 and the UK".

There would necessarily be extra non-customs checks on some types of goods passing between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, which will not please the Democratic Unionist party.

On exiting the backstop, the agreement says that if "either side considers the backstop is no longer necessary, it can notify the other" setting out its reasons.

Brexiters have consistently argued that Britain must be able to exit any all-UK customs union as and when it wants to be able to pursue free-trade deals around the world.

## The Need for a Working Class Response

Thus, at the moment none of the options can possibly satisfy the British bourgeoisie. May's deal has received lukewarm support from the City of London and the bosses' organization, the CBI, but only on the basis that it is the "least bad" option. Few want to crash out of the EU without a deal. Another referendum would cause more political upheaval, while a complete reversal of the Brexit decision would hand power back to Britain's economic rivals; the terms for returning to the EU might be worse than they are now.

All of these "choices" must be seen in the context of the global crisis of capitalism and increasing national rivalries. None of the bourgeois parties (whether established parties or populists) can offer a solution that will benefit the working class in any way whatsoever. Any notion that the economic integration or unification of Europe through EU state institutions could serve as the basis for socialism, or alternatively, that there could be a "socialist Brexit" is nothing but rank opportunism. Now more than ever the British working class needs to develop its own class perspective in solidarity with the working class across Europe and beyond. Only then can we benefit from the confusion and discord among our enemies.

The only way out of the Brexit maze is to burn it down, along with the rest of capitalism!

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