

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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Racism Protects the Capitalist System Only the Working Class can Eradicate it

The severity of the crimes committed by the representatives of the bourgeois state in recent weeks and the strength of the proletariat's response to them certainly prompts a search for historical comparisons. The protests and riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 come immediately to mind, as do those that followed the acquittal of the police who beat Rodney King in 1992.

In the more recent past, one can turn to the uprising in Baltimore in 2015, prompted by the police murder of Freddie Gray (for which, it should be noted, no cop was ever convicted).

These events and others like them are connected by the intensity of the black proletariat's response to persecution. Yet the same type of events continue to occur, the same cycle of brutality and murder, despite vigorous responses like the one in the present moment. Why does bourgeois violence continue, and what will stop it?

Rosa Luxemburg commented in 1919 that "the best defense is a strong blow."

This was in her final essay, written only hours before she was abducted and murdered for her role in the failed Spartacist uprising.

The bourgeoisie appropriate labor-power by forcing the proletariat to sell it for the minimum possible wage in order to survive. This is the foundation of racism in the United States.

Workers of color earn far less than white workers for the same labor, which makes labor in general cheaper to buy and increases profits for the bourgeoisie. So long as workers, divided by race, are forced to compete against each other, everyone's wage is kept low, and workers' power is limited. The police enforce this social order within the country, and the military enforces it abroad through imperialist wars. Whites are taught a pack of racist lies, preached from the very top of society, to dissuade them from recognizing their common cause with workers of other races.

The present anti-racist movement makes a serious mistake when it separates itself from the class basis of racism, continuing political action solely along racial lines in hopes of appealing to the bourgeois state. It has stopped short of openly declaring the role of law enforcement and the military in the maintenance of the capitalist state and the political domination of the bourgeoisie. For people of color, and for the proletariat as a whole, the solution lies in the conquest of political power away from the state, not in appealing to it.

The proletariat's ownership of labor-power holds the solution to its

misery. Labor action is the answer to racist violence.

As an old IWW song says, "without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn."

The wheels that keep money pouring into corporations must be jammed. Strikes and other workplace actions do this by removing the labor component of the accumulation of capital.

Strikes in certain critical parts of the economy can have a disproportionate impact on the whole. Logistics and transportation strikes are especially damaging to capital because they prevent commodities from getting to market. It is no coincidence that those who work in warehouses and make deliveries are some of the most exploited people in the country, and that their efforts to unionize at companies like Amazon have been suppressed. Workers in stores can also have a powerful impact because their absence prevents commodities from being sold. Many of these workers are people of color from the same communities that the police constantly terrorize. Educators also have an important role to play. Their strikes impact the entire economy because the bourgeoisie relies on schools to provide childcare while parents are at work. Teachers have suffered from the police invasion of public schools over the past 25 years, and see firsthand how the racist policing system impacts young people. They have every reason to strike against it.

The regime trade unions will certainly resist these actions. They exist to diffuse the workers' struggle by directing it in legalistic, electoral, and bureaucratic directions. New working-class bodies need to be formed against these collaborationist trade unions.

Workers' assemblies should form in every workplace and within every existing trade union.

Workers themselves will coordinate their response to the oppression they face, not union bureaucrats. The role of the International Communist Party is to build upon these immediate struggles so that the workers are prepared when the revolutionary moment arrives.

Take Action Against Racist Violence

Witness how workers protected themselves from the pandemic

The labor actions that took place early in the Covid-19 pandemic show the power that strikes have in effecting immediate change. A wave of strikes broke out in March and April as employers put workers' health at risk. Most of these were wildcat strikes, organized without union approval or in non-unionized workplaces. Because workers

in over 300 workplaces, involving tens of thousands of workers dared to walk off the job to protect themselves and their fellow workers, the strikers rapidly won concessions from their bosses, including safer working conditions and sick pay.

Form Workers' Assemblies

Labor actions need to be coordinated in order to tackle serious threats to workers' interests. Workers' assemblies are necessary to organize efforts to fight racism and its capitalist foundations. The effects of strikes and other actions in individual workplaces are mostly limited to those specific places. Strikes by teachers and auto workers in the past two years have shown that large, well-coordinated actions are effective far beyond the workplace or the region in which they occur, even influencing other industries. At the same time, coordination can only grow from specific workplaces and locations, as it did in those cases. Workers' assemblies are venues where people come together as members of their class to plan and act for its interests.

Support the protests

The extent of the protests that emerged following George Floyd's murder shows that workers across the country recognize that his death was one example of the present system's general tendency to abuse people of color. Not everyone recognizes that this system is capitalism, and that racist violence is a component of the bourgeoisie's war against the proletariat, but they recognize the different instances of police brutality are in no way separate. Communists' role in times of protest is to show the masses that capitalism is the root of the problem against which they are demonstrating, and that revolution is the only means to stop it.

The working class has the power to transform society.

What the COVID 19 quarantine proved was who generates wealth in capitalist society - workers. When we stopped working capitalist wealth collapsed. If we generate the wealth, doesn't it make sense we build society? And if we build it, can we not transform it in any manner we decide to?

Workers! Your only defense is in organization and struggle as a class The answer to racism is communist revolution!

The Dangerous Implications of the Collapse of Oil Prices

Speculators care about predicting the price of oil in three or six months in order to profit from the fluctuation in prices. One buys a supply of oil at a certain price, often with money on credit and without cover, betting that at the time of delivery the quotation will have increased. The difference between the purchase price and that at which oil can be resold turns into a financial profit.

In the fourth chapter of the first volume of "Capital", Marx had already explained that the bourgeoisie's dream has always been to go from the M-C-M cycle (money-commodity-money) to the M-M (money-money), avoiding the production of commodities. In the case of futures, the commodities do not change in value, as occurs in a production process with the addition of surplus value to machinery, semi-finished products, and raw materials. Here you only bet, in those casinos that are the financial markets where futures and derivatives are exchanged.

Today, however, forecasts of the barrel price of oil futures already traded at three or five months are two or two-and-a-half times higher than today's prices. Why did the lords of high finance do such damage to their accounts? Why didn't they predict the imponderable manifestation in the form of the coronavirus?

Capital cannot survive except by means of an unceasing expansionary process. But the limit to accumulation is in capital itself. Smooth production progress without cyclical crises is therefore impossible. It is equally impossible for the bourgeoisie to plan in the long term. Within this there is already the implicit admission that the future does not belong to them.

The economist par excellence of growth and intervention, John Maynard Keynes, joked ironically about the doctrine of liberalism: "in the long run we are all dead." They, the cynical and desperate bourgeoisie, who chase the moment, will all be dead! The species remains. We Marxist communists, alive and kicking for two centuries, evaluate economic and social processes in their long historical evolution; certain of the revenge that our theory will give us over the doctrines of their dead economic science.

Therefore, the ruling class in particular, even that of an imperialistic economic power, is unable to inscribe its energy policy usefully in certain guidelines.

The economic mechanism of rent, and in particular that of differential rent, already described by David Ricardo at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was applied by Marx himself, who inserted it into his much more solid and organic theoretical construction.

When you take advantage of a mineral resource such as oil, you come across a form of income completely similar to that of agriculture. One field can have a higher quality oil than another, or it can be extracted from shallower wells, using less manpower and fewer technical resources. The field more within reach of the drills will offer an additional profit, a differential rent.

But on international markets the price of the various qualities of oil, the best-known being Brent Crude and WTI (Western Texas Intermediate), is also determined by other factors besides the cost of production. Against the background of all the tensions that are gathering on the commodity markets, its importance is played by the "liquidity available to economic operators," namely: excess capital in search of some speculative valorization.

Yet the mechanism of differential rent remains as the element that most influences prices. As manufacturing output grows, the demand for oil rises accordingly. Its price then also grows because a temporary supply shortage may occur, but mainly because the expansion of the productive base requires the exploitation of inferior deposits, which drives higher costs.

This is the case with shale oil, the oil from bituminous shale extracted mainly in the United States and Canada, which necessitates very high exploitation costs in relation to those of the Persian Gulf countries. In Iraq and Saudi Arabia, extraction costs are generally below \$3 a barrel; if these are added to transportation and other costs, they will reach \$9. In the United States however, opening a new shale oil field for exploitation becomes profitable with a market price above \$48-52. If the price falls below \$27, it is not worth exploiting the existing wells.

If a barrel of crude oil produced in Saudi Arabia at the beginning of January of this year could be sold for \$60, against a production cost of \$9, Aramco, the Saudi state-owned oil company, cashed in more than \$51 in rent, over 5 times the initial investment.

This sorcery is achieved thanks to the fact that the Saudi state, monopolist owner of the best wells, appropriates the value of their superior product, obtained with the same capital investment, compared to the worst wells. Marxist theory identifies three classes on the basis of production relations: the proletarians who receive a wage, the capitalists who receive a profit, and the landowners who receive rent. The historical tendency is towards a certain organic confluence between rent, interest, and profit in the large financial groups, which are banks, industries, and landowners at the same time.

In the oil industry, profit and rent have reached an agreement to accumulate immense wealth and great weight in the international economy and politics. We discussed this topic in our detailed study "Oil, monopolies, imperialism", published in Italian as "Il petrolio, i monopoli, l'imperialismo" in 2013.

As early as the 1970s, capitalism entered a chronic crisis, particularly in the manufacturing industry, caused by the low rate of profit, which was due to the high organic composition achieved in mature capitalism. Huge masses of capital were then transferred to the oil industry, thanks also to the huge pressures following the first oil shock of 1973.

Since then the interminable series of wars that have battered the Middle East are essentially explained by the contest that has seen the major imperialist powers and the producing countries as protagonists, all interested in shares of oil revenues. A permanent conflict has systematically escaped any attempt at concerted management, yet another demonstration of the impossibility of quelling the irrepressible greed that characterizes each faction of the ruling class.

"The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are greed, and the war amongst the greedy – competition," wrote Marx in the 1844 manuscripts concerning alienated labor. Marxism defies any moralistic connotation here; the real engine of this greed is nothing other than the need to valorize capital, while human behaviors only subject themselves to this imperative.

Already in the summer of 2019 some tensions on oil prices suggested that they could jeopardize the shale oil industry, then flourishing in the United States and Canada. In August there was talk of a possible bursting of the bubble. In the United States, the extractive industry has made it possible to compensate for the stagnation in the manufacturing sector which in the last 12 years has not yet managed to recover its 2007 production peak. If US manufacturing is indexed at 100 in 2007, in 2019 the index was still at 96, whereas for industry in general, also including mining, it reached 103.8. The 7.8 percent difference was due almost exclusively to the increased production of shale oil.

The real amount of oil production in the various countries can only be known roughly. Part of it escapes the official figures, both to circumvent cartel agreements such as those of OPEC and to hide transactions on the so-called spot markets, in which the exchange takes place with the immediate payment of the equivalent value.

We can therefore give some credit to what was stated by the former boss of the Italian petroleum company Eni, and current vice president of the Rothschild Bank, Paolo Scaroni, who stated in *Il Sole 24 Ore* on March 29 that the current oil price war was started by the United States, which in recent years has increased production by 4 million barrels per day, becoming the world's leading producer.

From these data we can draw three considerations. The first is that, since world oil production has remained stagnant over the last four years at 100 million barrels per day, the four million more barrels produced by the United States have subtracted market shares from other countries. The second, that this explains why Trump has wanted to tear up the Iranian nuclear agreement by imposing economic sanctions that have drastically reduced Iran's energy exports. The third, if world crude oil production has been stagnant for four years, this means that the global production of industrial products has also lagged behind, in line with the general fall in prices of all raw materials. (over)

The counter-proof of the imminent crisis had already occurred on September 14, 2019, when an attack on Saudi territory by drones from Yemeni Houthi rebels, available thanks to military support from Iran, hit the two Aramco desulphurization plants at Abqaiq and Khurais. Saudi oil is high in sulfur, therefore without this treatment it cannot be loaded onto oil tankers or put into oil pipelines. On that occasion, the export capacity of Saudi crude was reduced by 60%, reducing the market supply of world production by 5%. While the Saudi nabobs were in a hurry to find spare parts and promised to pay gold for them in order to get the plants up and running again, a sudden jump in oil prices was expected, and was supposed to continue until the Aramco plants were once more fully operational. But this was not the case. After an increase of five dollars in a couple of days, the price returned to its original level. It was already, then, a sign that the crisis was knocking at the door and that it would not have been slow to manifest itself, even without the passage of the "black swan" of the lethal virus.

By the end of March, six and a half months since the attack on the plants and now with the coronavirus, world oil production had already fallen by 29%, to just 71 million barrels per day. A similar drop in production had never occurred, not even during the 1929 crisis. And in the coming weeks extraction could drop further.

Between the end of March and the beginning of April the price of crude oil had reached an eighteen-year low. Brent Crude had fallen below \$25, WTI below \$20, too low to allow the cultivation of American shale oil.

This was only the beginning. On April 20, in a somewhat agitated session of the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX), the oil future for WTI to be delivered in May was quoted at -\$37.63. The negative price of crude oil has shown how far the deflationary effect of the crisis of capitalism, which had already occurred during the Great Depression in 1931, can go.

This was influenced in part by investment-fund speculation in oil futures, but the fall in prices is rooted in the real economy. The drastic drop in demand brings prices down, while only a long-awaited recovery in consumption, once the quarantine is lifted, would allow for a rise in prices. This expectation translated into a negative quotation of oil futures expiring. If the week ending April 24 marked a rise in oil prices (Brent Crude at \$21.44 and WTI at \$16.94), forecasts for the coming weeks remain bleak, so much so that the Japanese Mizuho Bank does not exclude a price around -\$100.

The decisive cause of the fall in the price quotation is overproduction that has reached a level that can fill the huge tanks around the world and the gigantic oil tankers, whose freight rates are constantly growing. Producers must resign themselves to pay those who are willing to free them of surpluses.

It is evident that physical life collides with capitalist relations of production. The flood of the river of extracted oil, which no one can stop or put back under the ground, overflows, rebelling against the commodity form that is imposed on it, in dismay at the infernal sorcerer's apprentices who claim to rule it.

States pay businesses not to produce: a new form of negative intervention, an incentive to destroy capital. Who knows what Lord Keynes would think of it!

The price, however, is likely to settle at a level that will ruin the economy across the world. If for the major producers, Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United States, the crisis would be mitigated for some time thanks to the large currency reserves available to the first two, the third would always play with the possibility of pouring dollars onto the world market. Things could get worse for Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Angola, Nigeria, and Venezuela, whose exports are predominantly made up of crude oil. Suffice it to say that the price of Merrey, Venezuelan oil, was below \$14 a barrel in mid-April.

In early April, the main producing countries reached an agreement in extremis to cut production in a decisive manner and to try to stop the drop in prices. The agreement concerned the OPEC countries, to which Russia was added, which agreed on a production cut of 9.7 million barrels per day.

Trump took the opportunity to talk about a cut in world production of 20 million barrels, adding to the "OPEC+" barrels the reduction of production in other countries including the United States itself. This is a hyperbolic figure, as is in the style of the US president whose high-sounding statements and random numbers are intended to divert attention from the real issues of the national crisis.

The agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia provides for a reduction in Saudi extraction in exchange for a US commitment to downsize production of shale oil. It is no coincidence that Exxon Mobil cut investments by 30%. But this is a forced choice. Already at the beginning of April the first sizable victim was chalked up: Whiting Petroleum, one of the main shale oil fracking companies in Colorado, went bankrupt.

Meanwhile, the largest reduction in oil supply in history does not seem to have achieved the objective of sustaining prices and a further decline should come as no surprise. After the drop in demand

for oil of 29 million barrels in March, a not much better trend is expected in April. A recovery is expected in June if the closure measures adopted in 187 countries are eased.

But if the optimistic prospects outlined by OPEC speak of a drop in annual demand for crude oil of 6.85 million barrels per day, we have the definitive certification of a global economic recession, which could evolve into a serious new depression. The collapse of oil rents, and of all other revenues and profits, is a prelude to far-reaching social upheavals.

Raleigh's reaction to the Uprising

A Struggle Between a Working-Class Movement and Bourgeois Collaboration

On Saturday, May 30th the first of a series of daily protests was held in Raleigh, NC part of a larger national response catalyzed by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN. The protest started late in the afternoon with a gathering of a few hundred and growing outside the Justice Center. A few people spoke, at least one paying passionate lip-service to capitalism being the core issue. However the messages of each individual speaker were highly disorganized from each other. Any sort of unity on issues, causes, or necessary action outside of the most surface level analyses on the horrid situation of US law enforcement were not to be found. Even the Raleigh Chief of Police was allowed to speak at this initial address.

After the initial speaking, the protest would carry on to marching. The demonstration was loud and peaceful for at least an hour or two, but the Raleigh law enforcement showed out in full riot gear very early. Stun grenades and tear gas were first deployed well before the sun even began to set. Make no mistake, this was instigated by the law enforcement. The most "scathing" criticism to the contrary tells of protesters throwing a few empty water bottles and saying mean things to the full-armored police which "caused" them to assault the crowd. The situation would decay rapidly from this point onwards. People became agitated and would begin throwing things other than mere plastic bottles.

The Law Enforcement-led assault would continue for the rest of the night and escalate in severity. Reports were of a couple to a few thousand protesters in the streets, with much of the action centered on the nucleus of downtown Raleigh; while also jumping around to the peripheries of downtown. There was also at least a small confirmed presence of white nationalists among the fray. Reports of broken business windows came in early, as well as an attempt by a group to breach the Raleigh Police Department. Capital Boulevard, the main street connecting the whole city was shut down by protesters for a while. Soon after, rubber bullets came out from the LE in downtown. People were under attack indiscriminately, the rowdy folk, the peaceful folk, people who were actively disengaging, and even media. The confederate monument at the Capitol building was vandalized. Prisoners in the downtown prison could be seen waving at the protesters from their tiny windows in solidarity. Basically every single business in the center core blocks of the city had their windows broken and some destruction in the front facing areas. The DGX building was momentarily on fire, the Dollar General store was lit on fire and looted. The downtown CVS was the biggest capital casualty, lit on fire, and looted heavily. Multiple other fires were started among other insurrectionary behavior.

When things kicked off again Sunday night, it was much more of the same. Police instigated the situation again with the first volley of gas occurring launched into a crowd of peaceful people sitting in an intersection. White nationalist signs were found sprayed on to LGBTQ+ and POC spaces. Plenty more tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets, and riot gear were in use. In stark contrast to other cities, the Raleigh bus drivers capitulated to the police and were at their service throughout. The National Guard was activated this night. The courthouse and NC Archives building suffered broken windows.

Curfews were put in place by Monday morning, the National Guard presence was now full, and the city buses being used by police ironically displayed "In Honor of Rosa Parks" on their marquee. Obviously the irony was lost on the state apparatus. Protests have continued up to this point very consistently and still with strong numbers, but nothing coming close to the scale of events seen on Saturday and Sunday. They have been much more tame, even though certain moments over the past few days have had serious tensions escalated. Overall there have been dozens of arrests. The leadership of the protests are extremely nebulous and

disjointed, most are not radically focused at all and are pitching class-collaborationist efforts and state-sanctioned reforms or electoralist solutions. Any talk of real radical necessity and militancy is either pure lip-service, or in a stark minority at the present moment. We will see what the coming weekend brings, as all signs point to the protests continuing.

Prison Revolts Around The World: Imprisoned Workers Suffer Under Emergency Measures

Between March 7 and 9, as the coronavirus spread in Italy, violent protests erupted in about fifty penitentiaries on the peninsula. Limits on visitation, the suspension of good-behavior leave and day-release (called permessi premi and semilibertà in Italy), and the prisoners' concerns about the potential for an outbreak made tensions overflow.

At the time of this writing two prisoners and two prison officers have died of the virus and hundreds have tested positive. The inmates' fears about the spread of infection are therefore well founded, considering also that no tests are available in many institutions.

The protests essentially called for the restoration of visitation, house arrest for inmates with minor sentences, immediate actions against overcrowding, and better sanitation. In fact, the protests took place in clearly overcrowded conditions, with unhygienic cells housing up to ten prisoners each.

The democratic bourgeoisie and its states have a history of silence and lies on the matter of prisons, so it is not surprising how they reacted to this sad affair. Justice Minister Alfonso Bonafede, a liberal and civil liberties advocate from the Five Star Movement, told parliament that "the state does not move back an inch in the face of illegality" and asked detainees to "respect the rules." It is outrageous for the state to ask prisoners to respect the rules, forgetting how many times it has been convicted of "inhuman treatment in prisons" even by the European Court of Human Rights, an irrelevant international body created by ruling class. All the other parties in the Senate did not ask for the truth about these deaths, but for more repression.

A cloak of silence has covered the story since it occurred. The government rags supported the hypothesis that all but one inmate died from methadone intoxication or psychiatric drugs, stolen from prison infirmaries during the riots. Photos instead show a massive use of tear gas, which in those closed environments can have serious health effects.

The first protest took place in the penitentiary of Salerno, the following day in Alessandria, Bari, Genoa, Frosinone, Foggia, Modena, Naples, Pavia, Padua, Palermo, Rieti, and Vercelli. The detainees staged protests of varying intensity: from banging dishes on the railings, burning mattresses and sheets, and occupying certain areas for hours, to real riots that included clashes with the police who arrived in support of the prison guards.

The most serious situation was in Modena in the Sant'Anna Correctional Institution where nine prisoners died, five in the prison and four the following day, during transfer to other institutions. The director assured that detainees had been visited before departure. One of the prisoners who died during the transfer was to be released in August, two were awaiting trial, and the fourth had a sentence that could be served by alternative means, but without a permanent address he had not been able to do so.

In Rieti there are three dead and eight others hospitalized; two are dead at the Dozza Correctional Institution in Bologna. In Foggia, 77 prisoners escaped during the riots, and some are still in hiding.

In all countries the exceptional measures for the pandemic have further limited the "rights" of prisoners and worsened their conditions. The result is a flood of riots and repression.

In Iran at least 36 are dead and hundreds injured in violent clashes at several prisons. In the Kurdish region of the country, dozens of prisoners escaped from the Saqqez penitentiary, adding to the 23 who escaped from the Khorramabad penitentiary in the western part of the country. Riots also occurred in Aligoudarz prison. The government transferred 85,000 inmates to house arrest and then granted an amnesty to around 10,000.

In Latin America 43 prisoners were killed while trying to escape or protest, 23 in La Modelo prison in Bogota, Columbia. Also in Columbia, a riot broke out in the prison in San Juan de Pasto, which was repressed. In the Dominican

capital of Santo Domingo there was a rebellion at La Victoria prison. In Venezuela twelve were killed. In Argentina there were five dead and dozens of wounded. In Peru inmates rebelled at the Trujillo prison. And in Brazil, over a thousand inmates escaped from four prisons in Sao Paolo.

There were also protests in Nigeria, in the Kaduna prison where four prisoners died. In Greece, a rebellion erupted at Eleonas prison in Thebes after a 35-year-old woman died with symptoms of the coronavirus. A similar scenario played out at Korydallos prison. In

Lebanon there were several attempts to escape from Qoubbeh prison in Tripoli, and protests in Zahle prison. In Angarsk, Siberia there were clashes and a fire at Penal Colony No. 15, with two dead. As we write to you the protests and escape attempts continue.

The Communists, who recognize the suffering of the many detained proletarians, reiterate that the only possible solution is to destroy and historically overcome the mode of production that created the jails. Prison will cease to exist when, through a revolutionary process, society is freed

from our archives:

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US Riots: American dream under fire

At the end of April, riots broke out in Los Angeles which for three days threatened to destabilize the American Government, bringing the social system in the United States into sharp relief. As the economic crisis deepens, the appalling consequence of bourgeois rule and their accursed market system, riots are becoming neither unusual, nor confined to America, The Land of The Free and The Home of the Brave? Perhaps the looters took the above phrase literally and indulged in their own form of free shopping spree. The initial anger at the results of a trial of policemen turned quickly into social disorder, mounting despair erupting into a social earthquake of mega proportions. California is famous for its geological fault lines which produce physical tremors aid earthquakes; evidently, the economic fault lines with social tremors and quakes are no less destructive. Not only were National Guards put on to the streets (generally speaking the Middle Class under arms) but also combat troops were rushed in. Troops who had been deployed in the Middle East during the Gulf War found themselves where they never thought they would be sent - to quell disorder in an American city. As the British newspaper, the Observer, put it in its banner headline - Superpower retakes gutted second city.

The flash point which sparked off the riots was the trial clearing four L.A. policemen of assaulting a black motorist - it is worth adding that the motorist, Rodney King, was not 'merely' black but also a working class person, the type of person who is fair game for police violence in cities the world over. The trial of these four cops, whose violent attacks and brutal beatings were caught on video tape and showed to the court, was moved to Simi Valley to be 'fair' to the defence. This Simi Valley is the area where the majority of police live (surprise, surprise!), it is also the location for the Ronald Reagan Memorial Library and the venue for Michael Gorbachev's speech asking for money for the Gorbachev Institutes - a veritable bastion of Law and Order.

The sheer outrage at the clearing of these four police is understandable: if they had been black or strikers, and had the same type of evidence brought against them, they would have gone down for a long time. It demonstrates what the state and legal system is there for, to dispense law and order rather than justice. The intensity of the explosion was no doubt due to two factors - the poverty of the lives of people in the Watts area of L.A., and perhaps more significantly the 'failure' of Justice as espoused by the equal rights lobbies. After months of 'give Justice a chance', especially from those who have been working their way into the state system (remember that the mayor of L.A. is black), the whole strategy of equal rights lies in tatters. What other recourse was there but for anger to take to the streets?

The anger was first of all, taken out on the police, then on property and other symbols of wealth, then finally on the super-markets, which were loaded up to the ceiling with goods which the poor could not afford. There are certain areas which the state can allow to burn (like down-town Watts) in order to contain the inferno, but when it spreads to Hollywood, the glittering centre of the Dream Factory, this is too much for the capitalists. The very Temples of Wealth are being desecrated. The American Dream is being torn asunder revealing the living night-mare which is American society. This particular riot, unlike so many in the past in U.S. cities, was far too close for comfort. The poor and dispossessed may be invading the mansions of the film stars next time round. That is a thought that is sending shivers down the collective spines of the American ruling class.

Besides the cleared-out stores, over forty were killed, thousands arrested and half a billion dollars worth of damage to property was estimated. Courts were held instantly, in order to dish out summary 'Justice' to those arrested for looting. Respect for property (other people's) needed to be upheld. For many who appeared before the courts it is just a way of life. Before these riots a third of the young black males in Watts were either in gaol, awaiting trial or on ball. Now that percentage will be much higher.

At first the media was tried to present these riots as Race Riots, black against white. This soon had to be abandoned when it was shown that black and white people were jointly looting, but more importantly Asian shop-keepers were organising their own vigilante patrols against looters. How many of the latter were killed, or rather murdered, by shopkeepers will perhaps never be known. The brutality, the racial slurs (lazy black people) and sheer vindictiveness would probably put the Ku Klux Klan in the shade. In order to finally dispense the notion of 'race riots' it is worth pointing out that black businesses were cleared out as well. It was clearly an uprising of the poor and dispossessed protesting at their appalling conditions and lack of hope, it would be a mistake to make too much out of this event and to see it a revolutionary explosion; that would mean and depend upon class organisation which is lacking at the moment.

The exponents of the 'American Dream' blame the poor for their own situation. They say that those who want to be rich can make it by hard work and determination. Those who don't make it are those who don't want to put in the work - so it's all their own fault. This is where the racial and class slurs come in - blacks are lazy, Portoricans and Latinos can never work hard enough, etc., etc. It all has a very familiar ring. The poor bring it upon themselves proclaim the bourgeoisie in chorus. They praise the market system as the way to solve all the problems of production and consumption. Well, it's alright for those who have money and can afford to pay for the products they want (or can be induced to needlessly consume whether they like it or not). But for the poor who can not afford it, what are their prospects? They stand outside this fancy world, internal exiles (economically speaking) boxed out of consumption by a financial curfew. But those who parade the glories of the market system only talk about buying and selling in the shops. They don't talk about the most important market of all - the labour market. It is the desire, the necessity to keep down the wage levels of the working class which keeps profitability high. It is the need to keep the expenditure on wage labour low which keeps unemployment high and part-time employment as the preferred option for the boss class. It is this labour market which leads to massive amounts of wealth piled up in one place while massive poverty is spread throughout whole areas. It is precisely for this that the overwhelming majority of the population can never make it in the 'American Dream'. It is a Dream for keeping the majority quiet in the belief, the hope, the desire of making it and walking over the poor and dispossessed in due course. It is this impossibility for the majority to make it in the market system which poses the alternative of the destruction of the market system.

Against those who defend the market system we say that the amassing of the disgusting levels of wealth on the one hand and the massive levels of poverty and dispossession IS THE MARKET SYSTEM WORKING ITS WAY OUT! There are no ways of tinkering with the market in order to redistribute the wealth more evenly. The looters came forward with their own proposals for the redistribution of wealth. We communists have our own programme for the redistribution of the means of living, stripped of all the garbage about money value.

It is this fundamental antagonism which needs to be brought to the fore against the notions of modifying the market system. There are of course the equal rights lobbies who point out that sections of the population have less chance of 'making it', whether because of the racial origin or sex. To clarify the situation we would point out that this only makes clear the appalling levels of oppression, of exploitation which prevents the overwhelming majority from getting to the top. The very process of 'making it' means there has to be a corresponding mass of people below, upon which to base the accumulation, of wealth. The rich literally take the bread out of the mouths of the poor, not personally but through the accursed market system.

There are others, like Galbraith, who issue warnings to the ruling class that if they don't make changes to the political system in order to accommodate political aspirations, social explosions can not be avoided. Galbraith's notions of a society propped up by contented majority are a final defence of capitalism, a warning to the ruling class that if too many people get discontented the final barriers to social revolution may fall. With the increasing crises of capitalism we will see whether this contented majority will be so ready to continue defending this crazy anarchic system, especially as more and more will be forced down amongst these those who never made it. Now that will make up an even more potentially explosive cocktail.

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