

## Communism from below

The communist revolution pushes up from below, challenging the power of the bosses and their state. Developing workers self-management is one of the steps in this revolution, taking over our workplaces and removing the capitalist class from power, laying the basis for workers self-government in society.

To assist in effecting the communist revolution, communists need to be organised- the International Communists is one such organisation. Communists aim to persuade workers of the necessity of creating a new society and generate amongst the working class a consciousness of its position in society. For only when our class understands that it has common class interests, that it is exploited as a class, that capitalist rule is the source of its misery, and that it must replace capitalism with its own organisations of self-management—can act to take control of the economy and create a free, communist society.

In generating class-consciousness, communists aim to assist in the process of reorganising the labour movement. The International Communists believe that the overall purpose of communists is to promote and assist the revolutionary process. However, in doing so a communist organisation must not aim to substitute itself for the workers as the revolutionary force, nor as the future instrument of workers' rule.

Thus, the International Communists reject the idea that socialism can be established by "socialist" politicians taking control of and operating the political state, or by gradually reforming capitalism. We reject the idea that a "vanguard party" of elite revolutionaries replacing the capitalist class and state with its own state apparatus can establish a new society. History demonstrates that neither course can lead to a free communist society but only to continued class rule such as we saw in the former USSR and Eastern Bloc or in China, North Korea and Cuba today.

The International Communists hold that the emancipation of the working class must be the conscious act of self-organised workers themselves. Communists seek to embody these principles in their organisation.

Despite the many threats to our lives today, a new society based on participatory democracy; collective ownership of production and distribution; an economy organised for the well-being of humanity and in harmony with our natural environment, stands within our grasp. The potential to create such a society already exists, but that potential can be realised only if workers act to gain control of their own lives by organising for communism.

***If you would like to discuss this text or find out more about our group, email [uncaptiveminds@googlemail.com](mailto:uncaptiveminds@googlemail.com). Send postal correspondence (letters and articles; publications; donations) to The Commune, 2nd Floor, 145-157 St John Street, London EC1V 4PY.***

# why we need workers' self-management

The social order under which we live is a serious and immediate threat to our lives. The Cold War is over, but we still live under the threat of nuclear holocaust. We face ecological catastrophe. Growing unemployment and poverty bring hardship to millions and threaten the lives of many.

In addition, a host of other ills that erode the quality of our lives— declining living standards for workers generally, wars, racism, sexism, anti-social crime, a government that is erasing our democratic rights, and more, menaces us.

We can no longer afford to address each of these problems as separate and individual issues. We can no longer afford to rely on the empty promises of politicians and efforts to solve these problems through legislative reforms. Piecemeal solutions have been tried—and failed. They have failed because all of these problems are products of this social and economic system—the capitalist system. They cannot be solved by any means short of the abolition of that system.

## An Economic Tyranny

The capitalist system does not and cannot work in the interests of the majority.

Under capitalism, society is divided into two principal classes—the capitalist class and the working class.

The capitalist class consists of the wealthy few who own the means of production and distribution. The working class consists of the vast majority who own no productive property and who must, in order to live, seek employment with the capitalist class, or for the present government it controls.

The capitalist class is a ruling class. It makes all the crucial economic decisions that affect our lives, and it makes those decisions solely on the basis of what will increase its profits or otherwise promote its interests.

The capitalist class exploits the working class—that is, as workers we are exploited, we do not receive in wages the full value of the products created in our work. The capitalist class receives or controls the major share of the wealth that workers create because it owns the means of production and distribution.

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In short, workers live under an unjust system, a social and economic tyranny in which their labour is alienated from them. Communists consider that it is the capitalists' control of production, the system's operation according to the profit motive, and the exploitation of workers under the wages system that cause the social ills that afflict the working class.

### **The Class Struggle**

Capitalist control of production and the exploitation of the working class create an ongoing struggle between the classes that will continue as long as capitalism exists. On the economic field, workers have fought for a greater share of the wealth they create and for better conditions, through strikes, slowdowns, and other tactics. On the political field, they have protested the ill effects of capitalist rule through demonstrations, lobbying and the like.

In our many struggles, we have won, only limited and temporary gains. The struggle between the classes goes on, and the overall condition of the working class is again growing worse.

The only way that workers can win the class struggle and make a safe, secure, and better life is by organising to uproot the capitalist system itself. The International Communists, while supporting the day-to-day battles with the capitalist class, emphasizes the urgent need to organise for a revolutionary change to create a new social system—communism.

### **Communist Society**

Communism is a society in which the means of production and distribution are owned by society and are democratically controlled and administered by workers themselves, through their own organisations. With no separate class of owners, communism would be a truly classless society. Communism is a system of workers' self-management: there would be no state, no body or organisation of any kind that would be superior to or exert control over these workers' organisations.

In every plant, every office and every workplace, the workers themselves will democratically decide their own workplace policies, administer, and supervise production.

To administer society as a whole, the workers will also elect representatives to local and national bodies of self-management, of the industries and services.

Communism is a cooperative society, not a 'market economy'. Through workers' self-management human beings can ascertain what goods and services are needed and will determine the resources needed to create them. They will draw up the necessary plans to carry out production and allocate the resources. Workers' self-management will also arrange a just distribution of the output with workers receiving the full social equivalent of the labour they contributed.

All persons elected to posts, at whatever level, will be subject to rank-and-file

control and to removal whenever a majority of those who elected them find it desirable to replace them.

Instead of economic despotism, communism means economic democracy. Instead of production for sale and the profit of a few, communism means production to satisfy the needs of humanity. Instead of the form of government, we have today—a political state controlled by the ruling class—we shall have self-government of the organized workers themselves.

This conception of communism has nothing in common with the so-called "communism" that has been proclaimed to exist in several nations. No nation in the world today is communist, for there is no nation in the world where society itself owns the economy and the workers themselves control it.

### **Reconstruct our movement**

The potential to create a free communist society faces a major contradiction: the absence of a labour movement to turn this into reality. History has shown that the movement cannot continue on the same old way. Many who have experienced the defeats and failed initiatives of the past feel demoralised and disoriented. Yet there is no escaping the reality that if wish to transform society, then we require a radical re-composition of the labour movement. It requires far more than a change of personnel, new leaders or a more determined "awkward squad". The entire movement needs revolutionising.

We need a movement that is independent and accountable to its members, not managers and politicians. We need organisations that can cope with the problems of today and that can become vehicles for the working class and for abolishing capitalism.

They need to be captured, transformed and restructured by the rank and file. If there is no prospect of reforming, the suffocating bureaucratized unions – then we need to consider splitting the TUC and creating a new body with those unions prepared to truly defend the interests of labour.

### **Taking Control**

To establish communism, the *International Communists* believe that workers must organise to put themselves in direct control of their workplaces and the economy as whole. We need to make a start by recognising that workplace organisation and union membership needs to be re-built. If the officials will not fight then we need to take control, to combine and gain the confidence to act independently. The familiar methods of the 'broad lefts', of machine politics and intrigue rather than rank and file action have had their day. This is part of the process of reformatting our movement.

While fighting day-to-day battles for improvements in wages and conditions, Communists believe we must never lose sight of the need to get rid of capitalism. By organising and uniting in our workplaces, we are developing the means and power to gain greater workers control, by which to take hold of workplaces under workers' self-management, cutting off the source of the capitalists' power.