

2019 or 1939 squared.

It is 80 years since the last global war. Technology and culture have advanced significantly since then. In the Second World War, it was the mastery of the air that proved decisive. Now it will be mastery of space. What took a thousand bombers to accomplish can now be achieved many times over with a single nuclear missile. But the rising escalation between the USA and China is but one of four simultaneous crisis facing modern capitalism, raising the prospect that capitalism is no longer in control of its own destiny.

Marxists often speculate whether or not there is a final economic crisis facing capitalism. One which it is unable to resolve even on the backs of its workers. This perspective tends to be anchored on the rising composition of capital, whose successive resolutions require greater quantities of capital to be destroyed to restore the rate of profit, the heartbeat of capitalism.

This represents only one of the four contradictions facing capitalism today. It is likely that flatlining productivity, and subsequently the fall in standards of living in the advanced capitalist countries, is caused by the elevated composition of capital. But in addition, there is the hegemonic or geopolitical struggle to dominate the world economy between the USA and China, global warming, and the relentless march of Artificial Intelligence (really machine learning) which threatens to abolish a third of jobs. All four elements are occurring simultaneously, converging and compounding each other politically.

So, yes it is likely that we are at the end of days for capital. But that is not the real question. The question is whether we are at the end of days for civilisation? Unless the international working class, all 1,800 million expropriate the 2 million capitalist family of their ownership of our planet, we stand to lose everything. Ten thousand years of class struggle will have been in vain.

Workers outnumber capitalists 1000 to 1. But it is not only a numbers game. The social power of the capitalist class grants them control of the labour market and enables them to employ not only propagandists, but mercenaries in and out of uniform. Against them we have the numbers and our ability to organise. An organised working class, united by a common programme is the most powerful force in the universe. But disorganised and divided, it remains vulnerable to the centralised power of the capitalist state.

Bureaucratic centralism.

Stalin entered into a devil's pact with imperialism. His bargain, to stifle world revolution through confusing the aims of the international movement, by crushing democracy in the workers' movement and outright sabotage, all of which has served capitalism well. It has stained the workers' movement and its legacy has long outlived "uncle Joe". But it would be wrong to assume Stalin invented a new form of structure, bureaucratic centralism. It predated him in the form of late 19th Century Bernsteinism in the German labour movement, just as Bernstein was predated by the political forms thrown up by the capitalist class itself once it had emerged from its revolutionary phase.

The first rule of propaganda is to accuse your enemy of your own crimes. It is the height of hypocrisy for right wing labour politicians to accuse the left of bureaucratic centralism. Kinnock, then Blair, these outright agents of capital in the working class, gutted democracy in the Labour Party. Decisions were made only by MPs and functionaries. The annual conference was reduced to a rally supporting the leadership orchestrated to provide nothing more than TV opportunities.

This bureaucratic centralism is built into the modern capitalist state. This was exposed during the Brexit debacle. Taking control seemed to translate into control by the executive alone. Only the cabinet was involved in the discussion and decision making together with hand-picked senior civil servants. Parliament was reduced to agitated bystanders until they rebelled. Theresa May tried to elevate herself above the conflict of interests by monopolising the negotiations only to crash to the ground in a pile of ineptitude.

Bureaucratic centralism in the working class exists for two major and one minor reason. The two major reasons are political while the minor reason is cultural. Firstly, bureaucratic centralism is the investable product of a party or organisation seeking to reconcile irreconcilable class antagonisms. Secondly, when the party or organisation is seen as the vehicle for personal advancement, an escalator so to speak out of the working class and into the upper reaches of capitalist society. Finally, the minor reason results from a society which makes individuals competitive and insignificant leading to the drive for self-recognition. We will only deal with the political side.

The class contradictions in capitalist society are real and irreconcilable in the long term. But in the shorter term, particularly when economic conditions and productivity are in the ascendancy, concessions can be won, and reforms introduced. The British Labour Party and the Trade Unions exist based on these expectations. The leaders of both justify their positions by parading their concessionary trophies.

The capitalists tolerate this situation. Their power derives from property rights, not from political control as long as politics is not turned against them. They tolerate these leaders, this caste of privileged workers within the labour movement, because the small bargains they grant has the advantage of deflecting the fight to abolish wage slavery itself.

But what the capitalist class tolerates, a revolutionary working class will not - that is men and women paid multiple times the average workers' salary, fixed in position, courted by the bourgeoisie who recognise and support their utility of holding back the movement. These men and women fear an insurgent working class more than the capitalist class, which is why the excel in mis-leadership.

It is for this reason that they are adept at the dark arts of bureaucratic centralism. Of monopolising the structures of the organisation, controlling the dissemination of ideas and frustrating any rank and file initiatives. In periods of heightened class struggle they thus play the role of a fifth column in the working class.

Again, in periods of heightened class struggle they fly false flags. They attack the left for undemocratic behaviour when it is these bureaucrats who are tightening their bureaucratic grip on the organisation with the aim of squeezing any opposition out of the organisation. They would rather see a defeat than the victory of the left. The scurrilous depths to which they can sink is staggering. This accusation against the left is predictably echoed by the tax dodging media who instinctively recognise that the machinations of these bureaucrats serve the interest of the employing class.

But sometimes, the left is used in the interest of the bureaucracy. This is exemplified by Momentum in the Labour Party. The influx of new members potentiated a civil war in the Party as the hundreds of thousands of new members clashed with the hundreds of bureaucrats. Momentum prevented this development because it represented the capture of the left and its conversion into a controlled opposition within the Party. Of course, you would not have discovered this from the gutter press who presented Momentum as this rampant movement of the left prepared to eat babies and to mix recyclables with general waste. Director Lansman controlled the lines of communication, held secret meetings to organise slates, handed down ready-made policies, and set the bar so high (5% of the

membership had to agree a resolution before it even went forward) that resolutions could not be proposed or amended, in short, he behaved similarly to the worst right-wing bureaucrat. In the end the membership of Momentum was converted into tech savvy canvassing fodder.

Even in times of subdued class struggle this caste is still concerned to maintain office. They recognise that their loss of office often means a return to poorly paid and unrecognised jobs. If they voluntarily vacate their office they do so because invariably they have been ushered to the revolving door by a grateful private sector employer for services rendered.

A minority can only rule a majority for any period of time with the help of agents in the working class, or what is the same thing, mis-leaders who seek to both deny and defy the historical interests of the working class. In all cases this takes the form of bureaucratic centralism.

Is decentralisation the answer.

In response to bureaucratic centralisation, decentralisation has been put forward. Organisations composed of autonomous self-regulating functional groups are seen the way forward.. This is exemplified by Extinction Resistance. Its constitution is eye opening.

To understand XR's mode of organising it is important to first understand Holacracy. *"This system is inspired by and uses some features of Holacracy[®] practice, and is also influenced by other methods of self-organisation. It is important to understand that **this is not Holacracy and that XR is not practicing Holacracy;**"* So XR's systems are inspired by Holacracy but XR is not actually practicing Holacracy. Surely as question of having your cake and eating it too.

How does the Holacracy organisation define itself: *"Holacracy[®] is a new way of structuring and running your organization that replaces the conventional management hierarchy. Instead of operating top-down, power is distributed throughout the organization, giving individuals and teams more freedom to self-manage, while staying aligned to the organization's purpose."* The "your organisation" gives the game away. It is directed towards the bosses of the organisation or its owners. It says here is a better and more profitable way of running your company.

Power is not distributed throughout the organisation. It is delegated power, power devolved from above. That is contained in the phrase, *"more freedom, not complete freedom"*. This freedom is limited to function and purpose, in short refining processes with the firm and making them more responsive. Holacracy is a product of the Japanese onslaught on US corporations when lean production methods, just-in-time inventory control and teamwork upended many US and European corporations. Corporations such as Toyota selling high quality cheap cars seem unstoppable. In short it was a recognition that the old-style dehumanising assembly line could no longer cope with the complexity of production.

Holacracy is not bottom up democracy but top down delegation. For this reason, it should not be confused with actual workers' democracy. Whatever aspects of self-management are granted, it does not include the right to elect managers, or set wages, or to set the intensity of labour, or hours, or employment conditions or change product lines (when what is being produced is destructive). These policies, whether organisational, financial or marketing, the big circle remains firmly in the hands of the shareholders and directors who have but one purpose, to maximise profits. So, the big decisions, the strategic policies, continue to be made at the top. Let us give that a single name – policy. Workers are allowed to improve their oars, but the rudder remains firmly in hands of management, with the ship's papers in the pocket of the owners.

As we shall see Holacracy, even the name is patented, permeates XR. This posting is completely disinterested in the advantages set out by Holacracy in terms of streamlining organisations, but only to the bureaucratic danger it poses to the environmental movement through the denial of democracy. This can be seen at two levels. Firstly, policy and autonomy. Secondly, the ever-present facilitator.

“A system which only has authority distributed into roles/circles could easily create chaos and fragmentation if there is nothing to constrain the distributed authority with and which creates alignment when needed; to prevent everyone just going off doing their own thing. A Policy is a specific expectation which either grants or restrict authority outside of the mandates of roles/circles.” (6. **Policies: to create constraints which limit the authority given to roles/circles by mandates**) So reads the clause in the constitution dealing with the relationship between policy and mandate so as to avoid chaos. Here we have it. The interplay between centralisation and decentralisation. Decentralisation is constrained by centralisation, autonomy by policy.

But who sets policy? Is it set by an unelected leadership feeding on feedback or is it to be set by the membership? Immediately we are hit by a problem. The membership is compartmentalised into smaller “circles” and decision making is confined to these circles. They have no influence on the big circle which means policy decisions are out of reach.

Nowhere is there found how the policy forum is established and how its’ members are elected. All we find is a new appended clause, almost an afterthought, on how a policy committee should function. It’s the concept of the Anchor Circle. *Mandate for the Anchor Circle (Clause 9)* “. In other words, a policy committee is in overall charge. The word Anchor is not without its irony, because it could also mean that policy is anchored, fixed fast.

If it consists of functionaries rather than elected members, it will become an anchor. Why is this important? For two reasons. Because it is functional, it mitigates against diverse views. Secondly, because it is self-appointed, it is rigid and is likely to represent previous policies which these functionaries promulgated and are joined to. Why is this important? There will come a time when class politics raises its head. The recognition, that the global catastrophe is a product of a system that minimises costs in order to maximise profits, will come to the fore. That its solution goes way beyond governments declaring climate state of emergencies and owning-up the crisis. That these governments will defend the profit system on which they are based, and, will do everything in their power to prevent the transformation of society, the essential condition for rescuing the planet.

The second problem is the outsize role of the facilitator. Derived from Holacracy, the facilitator in this case is the absent manager. Again, it appears that while facilitators require training they do not require electing. There are no provisions for electing facilitators within or without the general meeting. Not only do facilitators conduct meetings, under the constitution they have the power to decide the term length of co-ordinators. *“Term length is decided by the Facilitator (2.5.2)”* Once facilitators have this power to deselect, they have the power of appointment which is antithetical to democracy. Unlike co-ordinators who are elected, there are no provisions for overriding the decisions of facilitators or deselecting them. *“Anyone can call for re-election of any coordinator role at any time. (2. Roles within Teams)* but this does not extend to facilitators.

In conclusion, all struggles require centralisation, this is the nature of conflict. If you deny this to be so, you end up with it in any case. And because you have not prepared for this centralisation, it becomes dysfunctional and latent with harm. This is the case with XR. Far from being decentralised it is in fact highly centralised because strategy and policy is out of reach of the smaller circles. XR follows

the long line of organisation that appeared to be decentralised but in fact were centralised. Indeed, to the cynical authoritarian, decentralisation is a means not of empowerment but of disempowerment.

This is not a semantic discussion. The theoretical underpinning of XR is based on nonsense. As the appendix states: *“group sizes of around 150 people is the upper limit of a human’s ability for intimate, direct relationships with others”*. So, classes will be dissolved into groups of 150. These incestuous and distinct little groups may be an improvement on the nuclear family, but hey, who wants to live in a society comprising 50 million discrete grouplets. This is nothing more than the soulful petty bourgeois yodelling while lost in the foot-hills of society with the wind of history in their face. It is the fear and distrust of the mass, the working class, all 1.8 billion of us.

And the rationale for all this nonsense, *“Why is all this important.”* because *“small groups who can organise have stepped into the power vacuums left after revolutions to replace the ousted elite with another small dominating group.”* What an insult to history. Stalin gained power because of a civil war that killed twenty million and turned the USSR into an economic desert, which was then followed by the crushing of the German revolution in 1923. Stalin did not sneak into power because he had a group larger than 150. The intellectual midgets who framed XR’s constitution may be armed with modern management methods, but their failure to grasp history means they will end up as merely one of many historical sighs.

The real problem is to change this philosophy and XR’s infantile three-point programme, comprising a call for governmental honesty, a climate state of emergency and on matters ecological, a government led by Citizens Assemblies. So, the capitalist state which protects the capitalist class has to reign in the capitalist class but only on matters ecological. So, production for profit which despoils workers is ok, as long as it does not despoil the planet. The point is there is no mechanism in XR to go beyond these demands, because despite its pretensions and decentralisation, it is thoroughly undemocratic. This is why in the end XR is a passing phenomenon.

Democratic centralism.

Democratic centralism is bottom up democracy. Locally, mass meetings make decisions, and, centrally congresses do. Local committees emerge out of the mass meeting and the central committee out of the congress. Committees are not autonomous. They are functional, carrying out the decisions and instructions made at the mass meeting. Should they change any decision in response to changed circumstances, that decision is only provisional until ratified by the mass meeting or congress. A failure to seek ratification at the earliest opportunity means the automatic recall of the committee and its dissolution, with new elections following.

Conversely the execution of decisions is top down. In order to ensure that the locomotion of the party is smooth, seamless, structured and co-ordinated, only unified instructions can be given. If all decisions were taken locally, it would prevent the power of the party being focused and concentrated. It weakens all the sections. This, however, does not rule out systematic local work - interventions, organising, educational and so on.

Evaluating and learning from the execution of decisions is both local (fine grain and reflexive) and centralised (coarser grain and more reflective.) Accurate reporting is essential, and, the dissemination of lessons learnt vital. This is the hormone system of the party switching tactics on and off in the light of information and experience. The more comprehensive and rapidly this communication takes place, the more focused and sensitive is the party’s intervention. Here the role of technology is vital.

A democratic party allows factions, a bureaucratically centralised party does not. It is the hallmark of all bureaucratic party that they ban factions or the entry of smaller parties, particularly if they are to the left of the existing leadership. The right to organise as a faction is essential. This includes the right of factions to communicate internally and to promote their ideas externally up to and including their own paper or website. Factions can put forward nominations for elections to party committees at all levels, they participate in all discussions leading up to the elections as faction members, but they are elected to these committees on the same terms all other nominees are, by a majority.

Tendencies and caucuses are encouraged. Tendencies play a mainly educative role where it is felt theory is lacking or perspectives are skewed. Caucuses based on gender, ethnicity and age ensure that the limitations of capitalist society are overcome within the party and that the specific interest of these sections of society are not submerged, nor their representatives overlooked. They have full access to the internal systems of communication and can put forward or endorse candidates for election. They are allowed regular slots in the party paper and website.

All decisions are taken by majority vote. The minority has to abide by the decision reached. But all decisions can be revisited. The minority is not bound by a vow of silence. They have full rights to continue airing their differences until such time as experience determines who is right.

There can be no defence of wrong decisions. A democratic party does not engage in the shit of self-criticism which is always a free-pass for any mediocre leadership to retain their leadership positions regardless of consequences. Self-criticism is to politics what confession is to religion. In the event of a major mistake on the part of the majority, one endorsed by the leadership, new elections should be called so that the minority, now proven right, and therefore having been proven more capable, can assume leadership roles. The cancer within any democratic party is a leadership that continues on and on regardless of its performance, or one living on past glories, and it always ruins parties and degrades personal conduct.

This is the opposite to XR. Yes, democracy is cumbersome and time consuming. To the short-sighted focused on action only, it can be seen to be obstructive. To those who take the long view, who have learnt from history, it is not only the essential condition for making a revolution but securing the future of the working class.

Programme first.

A party does not exist for its own sake. It is the political platform for its programme. The programme of a party is its software and its structure the hardware. Software without hardware remains elegant lines of code, nothing more. Hardware stripped of code is dormant. The party represents the unity of the two, their interaction and their evolution.

A well organised party endowed with an inadequate or dogmatic programme will fail because it cannot attract nor unify the working class. A badly organised party representing an adequate and evolving programme can be made to succeed. In the end, programme is everything.

A programme and the theory supporting it has to explain the why, the how and the with what. It needs to explain *why* capitalism, society's first industrial society, is a limited, crisis prone and destructive economic mode of production. Here Marx's economic critique of capitalism is indispensable. It has to explain *how* capitalism can be overthrown and replaced. Namely the many billion strong working class whose interest is separate to and in conflict with that of capitalism. Finally, it has to explain socialism, the "*with what*" capitalism is to be replaced by.

It is the last imperative, the “with what” that divides Marxists. Most of the left operate with a primitive programme. Despite their philosophical prowess and tactical nous, Lenin and Trotsky did not understand the grandeur of socialism. Marx and Engels did, but they refused to put forward a programme, or as Marx put it, a “blueprint” for a future socialist society. They probably understood that by the time capitalism had exhausted its potential and become mired in insoluble contradictions, as now, it would be technically and culturally unrecognisable.

They were right, despite Marx’s infatuation with technology, he lived in an age when the dominant form of transport the horse and cart. A programme, if it is to be relevant must incorporate the new possibilities that exist. It must be current. For example, the mass consumer society, in existence only since labour productivity achieved a certain level in the 1950’s, represents not only a cultural phenomenon but a new-found freedom as well. And yet most of the left still talk about the state determining planning and deciding what consumers can consume, which would be both regressive and off-putting.

It is a source of embarrassment when viewing the dogmatic “out of touch” programmes of the “Marxist” left, which when they are not primitive, are idealistic. All we are told is that socialism solves our problems, and, that all will be well in a socialist society. None of the real issues facing the international working class as it emerges from the womb of capitalism are addressed. How the function of a socialist programme is to unite our unequal class while creating the conditions for ending this inequality.

Few incorporate the actual writings of Marx, and none draw the lessons from the economic failures of the USSR. Why, because most Marxists do not understand the concrete workings of the capitalist system itself, the knowledge needed to understand why the Soviet Union failed, or how a breathing living socialist society can work. It is for these reasons that I wrote The Draft 21st Century Programme. <https://theplanningmotivedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/abridged-draft-20th-century-programme-pdf.pdf>

The nature of the workers’ state.

The Draft 21st Century Programme is a manifesto of workers’ rights. It is confined to the fundamental rights needed to organise a socialist society and make it dynamic. It is thus not comprehensive. But if one of these rights are absent a socialist society will fail.

The workers’ state is the legal custodian of these rights. It alone can give them legal expression by turning them into law. It alone can police these laws against misuse and abuse until habit is ingrained voiding further enforcement. But what the workers state is barred from doing is actively participating in the administration of the structures these rights give rights to. That ensures the state remains separate, there to protect and police but not to run.

Take consumer led planning. In the Soviet Union the planning bodies were part of the state and products circulated as state property. The planners alone decided what could be produced and how quickly. In a democratic socialist society, the roles are reversed. Now it is the consumer who is active and the planners who are passive. The planners cannot decide what will be produced. Consumers do. Nor can they decide how quickly it will be produced. Producers do, by setting the common intensity of labour, which when universalised, forms the basis of costing production. Under these conditions there is no political role for the planners, therefore no need for state involvement. This leaves planners with only one role, a technical role, to efficiently allocate the labour time of society in accordance of the plan set by consumers.

The same applies to pricing. Pricing is now objective, reflecting weighted average labour times. The general fall in prices reflecting the general rise in productivity is the collective reward for the collective labour of the working class. Thus, there is no basis for the state interfering in the pricing system. Any intervention by the state would alienate workers and disrupt the plan because consumer decisions have to be based on real costs.

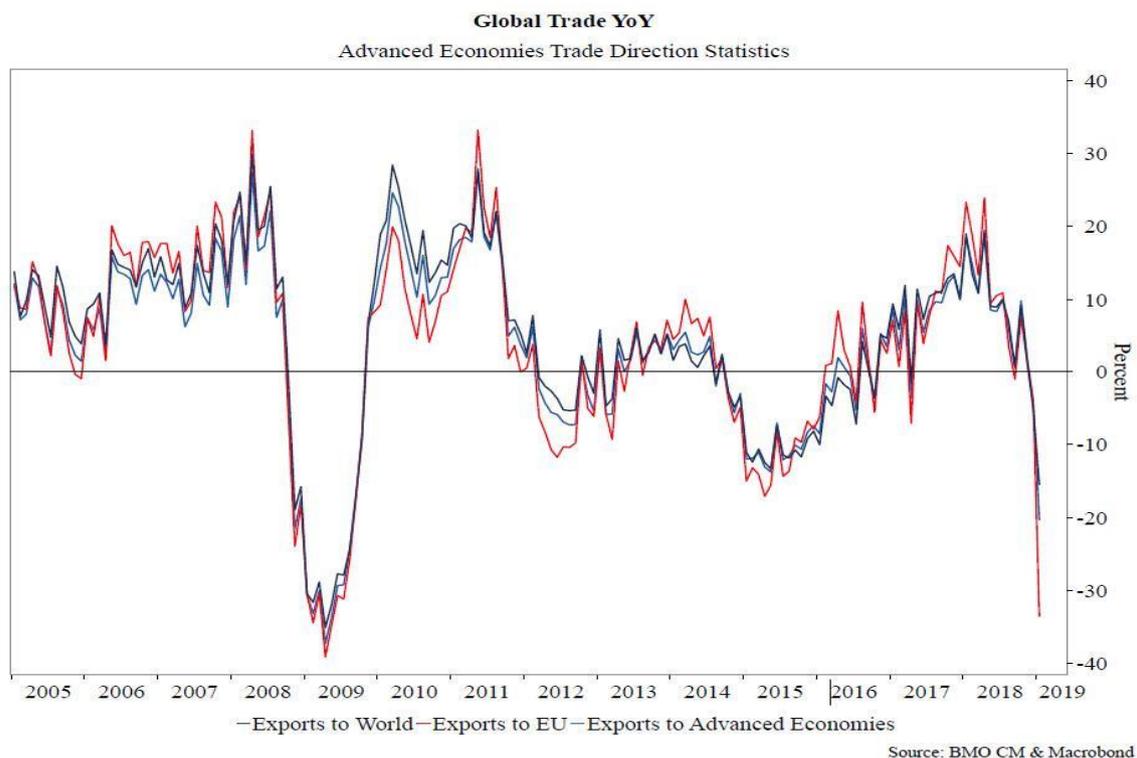
The state is reduced to protecting what is now public property, to making law, to facilitating commissions as and when they are needed. That is all. The left really needs to understand these strict demarcations, otherwise they will not be able to contest the argument that what they are calling for is a form of state led socialism, a variant of the USSR.

Conclusion.

There is a physical game played with an odd shaped ball by fifteen men or women in Europe, parts of the old British Empire and Argentina. It is called rugby. The rules allow up to 8 players to form a scrum where they are able to bind together to drive forward with the ball. This scrum is usually comprised of the largest and strongest players. This scrum is only neutralised by 8 players in the opposing team binding together in a similar formation.

Now imagine if one side was not allowed to form a scrum. Instead their team could double in size to 30 but none one can bind with another. Who would win? The 30 or the 15 allowed to scrum. It would not even be close. The scrum would break through the lines of the opposing team every time. Once they got the ball it would be game over. Sure, the other side may score a few times, but only by keeping the ball away from the scrum.

The moral of the story is that centralising power in the context of conflict allows a minority to dominate the majority. 5000 well organised and determined police can crush a disorganised protest of over 100,000 because they concentrate their power, crushing 5000 then another 5000 and so on.



It is becoming clearer by the day that the cloth of capitalism is ripping apart, and that globalisation is crumbling. Each day more workers recognise that the world is becoming a more dangerous place and

that fundamental change is needed. Behind the veil of lax monetary policy, the Crash of 2019 gathers momentum having already reached the troughs last tested during the financial crash as the graph above depicts.

The Trump administration is determined to prevent, and if not prevent, then to delay the rise of China. It is now clear why the trade talks collapsed. Far from China rolling back what had been agreed, it was the USA who kept adding on more and more conditions, conditions undermining Chinese sovereignty, making negotiations impossible. But China is at the heart of the world industrial complex. Most of the advanced products consumed daily around the world consists of integrated technologies arising in more than one country. Disrupting this chain, not only damages China, but damages the world economy including the USA.

If it does not give rise to war, at the very least China will have to shake off US dependency, which means the world will end up with two intellectual architectures, rather than a unified one. Huawei has already indicated it has developed an alternative to Android. What a colossal waste of labour time. The Chinese recognise that US demands are colonialist in nature. The US's insistence that it is about potential Chinese espionage is fake news. It is about economic competition and that alone.

As economic dislocation proceeds, as austerity continues to bite, as longevity retreats and the drums of war beat, it is clear we need to urgently build a new international comprising new workers' parties. The far-left parties need to shed their sectarianism. We need a new international with a new name which sets it apart. Let us name it the "21st century international". Such parties should be open to any worker who recognise three things: firstly, that divisions in the working class strengthens our enemies, secondly the need to abolish private ownership of the means of production, and thirdly, that this cannot be achieved without workers seizing power first, which requires the mobilisation of the entire working class.

Our tactics need to be informed by these perspectives. Perspectives are like weather forecasting. If you get the forecast wrong, putting on light clothing because you expect warmth, and it turns out freezing, expect some political frostbite. The far left is convinced the noisy far-right is in the ascendancy. Actually, the world is moving leftward. The right is like a sparkler. It burns bright, furiously and then goes out because it has nothing to offer except bluster and scapegoats. Austria is one example. Brazil is another as the Bolsonaro clan implodes: *"The government is heading 'in the direction of becoming unviable,' warned Claudio Couto, a political scientist at the Getulio Vargas Foundation think tank."* If Trump's standing is stable, it is because of strong-arming China, but this is temporary because the consequences of what he has done will hit home before 2020.

It is likely that the dominant political trend will be the re-emergence, as in Spain, of the traditional parties of the working class, in this case the Socialist Party there. The unavoidable Crash of 2019 is likely to propel these parties to the fore as workers are set in motion. Their purpose, to capture and contain rising working-class militancy. No doubt, the press will do a U-turn without so much as a blush, as they come to realise that reformist parties are the buffer against revolution.

We need to work in and around these parties to prevent workers being contained then betrayed then demoralised by these parties. Only united front work can build the bridge from reform to revolution and only transitional demands can link the current struggles to the struggle for socialism. Only workers can prevent trade tit for tat ending in rat-a-tat-tat. History is speeding up. We have entered the white water of history where only robust politics can survive. The world is rapidly unravelling, and our programme is the only knot that can potentially bind it together again, but not as before.

Brian Green, May 2019.