



**For and from AngryWorkers -
For a new society**

The current system is in crisis, everyone can see this. What we cannot see is an alternative. We wrote this pamphlet for a discussion about alternatives. The first step is to understand where we are coming from, how the current system emerged. We then have to get to grips with how the system works, or rather, how it makes us work. There would be no alternative to this system if it would not show clear signs of crisis - so we have to know what actually causes this crisis. There would be no alternative if those who are exploited and oppressed would not have tried to fight for a better society. We have to learn from those who came before us.

We don't write this as experts. We write it as workers, who don't just want to stare into the headlights of global events as victims. If we don't question the system as it is, we will fight over the crumbs they throw at us. It will be dog-eat-dog. We write this for discussion with our neighbours and workmates. We might see things wrong, we don't mind re-thinking stuff. Let us know what you think.

angryworkersworld@gmail.com

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* **How the system emerged**

If we like it or not, what happens on the other side of the globe affects us - even in remote places like ours on the far-fringe of London town, in Greenford or Southall. This happens in all sorts of ways. We have seen a 'global financial crisis', where the fact that poor Americans couldn't pay their mortgages caused a domino effect that crippled the economy all over the world. We have seen call centres closing in Sheffield and moving to Bombay. We see the global dimension of climate change - the most industrialised nations produce the most pollution and poor people in less industrialised countries suffer the consequences more. We have seen a 'global war on terror', which caused a lot of mess in Iraq and the Middle East and has now led to the 'refugee crisis' right on our doorstep.

It is easy to see how this worsening situation makes people want to stick their two fingers up to the current establishment. Voting for Trump in the USA or Brexit in the UK has promised people to 'shut out the global problems'. But will this really change things..?

When all this stuff is happening and we realise that things are very connected nowadays, we start looking around for some answers. Some tell us it is the American government that controls everything; others say it is the banks and this can lead to a theory of Jewish conspiracy; others blame the internet or God's will. But we think looking for answers in history is the most useful thing. We start by asking some basic questions: when did people in one part of the world become more dependent on, or more linked to, people in other parts of the world? When and how did this change take place?

Looking back into history can also help us to understand the general situation we are in. The daily grind seems natural to us, something that has always been this way and something that cannot be changed. We have to get up, go to work to get money to pay our bills. We have little say in this, all we can do is look for another job - if we can find one. The only say we have is to make a cross on a ballot paper every four years or so. Which does not change much either. We have a choice though: we can buy a flat-screen TV manufactured in China or Mexico. It all seems like an eternal cycle. But it ain't!

In this series of articles we want to look at this system we're living in. We will see that certain things that we take for granted or as unchangeable are actually pretty new - on a mass scale perhaps only 300 to 400 years old:

* to work for someone for money

* to be a 'citizen' of a nation

* to buy products, especially those made far away

Things were not necessarily better before. We only want to say that they were different. We can see that things changed. They changed not because of 'natural progress' or a 'wicked conspiracy', but because of the struggle of people like us - the struggle against being exploited and oppressed.

Back in the day...

Humans have been on this planet for around 1.5 million years and there has been interaction and migration across the continents. Empires have connected vast regions more than 2,000 years ago, but these connections were fragile, based on trade and conquest. We want to focus on the very recent past, on the conditions since around 500 years ago. This is because we know more about it and because it can show us how much our life and society has changed in a short period of time. We focus on Europe, not because they were not much more developed empires in other parts of the globe, but because the system we live in now spread from here. If we - low-paid workers in 2017 - would have lived 500 years ago, our situation would have probably looked like this:

- * we would have lived in a smaller village in the countryside
- * we would have been either working as a serf for someone or as a poor peasant, who has to give part off their harvest to a landlord
- * we would not have worked for a wage, but either paid in kind (food and stuff) or have had to sell a small share of our produce
- * in many cases the local landlord would have had the right to decide about our personal life, such as marriage, and to punish us if he thought necessary
- * we would not be able to just 'change our job' as we were tied to one landlord, either as servants or through debt
- * the household would have been the centre not just of family life, but also of work
- * the rich landlords would exploit us, but mainly in order to finance their better lifestyles, not in order to invest the money somewhere; nowadays they tell us that 'competitiveness' is 'natural' and that therefore the current system is 'just natural'; back then the rich just wanted to live an easy life, there was little competition or need for 'more and more' going on
- * in most cases there was no central nation state, but smaller local states run by lords, e.g. what is now Germany used to be dozens of small local states
- * even language was still very local, e.g. 300 to 400 years ago people spoke 30 or more different local languages in France and people would have had difficulties understanding each other.

To sum this up, in most cases we would have worked for a local landlord, who could not only exploit us, but also decide about our personal lives. We had little chance to escape all this because we would either be punished or there were no alternative 'jobs' we could easily get. This whole situation was declared 'the God-given natural order' of things. Religion, through its Church/Temple and local priests backed up the lords to keep their own influential and wealthy position. They declared our misery to be 'our divine fate on earth'.

So how could things change?

Since humans ruled over other humans and lived off the work of other humans there have been rebellions. Around 500 years ago we saw many uprisings of peasants and poor folk against the landlords - in particular after bad harvests. People saw that it was them who ploughed the fields and collected the harvest, so why would they need the lords?

The lords saw that people believed less and less that the position of the lord was the 'will of God'. They needed a new justification for their power and they called it 'protection'. Only the lord and his armed men could protect the poor from other lords and their armed men, who might invade the country. Lords started to increase taxation, in order to finance their local armies. They started to take common land away from the poor, in order to finance the increasing expenditures. This only intensified the rebellions and created civil war situations: from the Peasant Wars in Germany to the Civil War in England. At this point history came to a fundamental turning point: the lords were not able to maintain their rule over the poor, but would the poor be able to overthrow their power?

Peasants are revolting...

Here in Europe we saw three different outcomes of this struggle, which decided the future of each region.

1) In main parts of what is now Germany, Poland, large parts of eastern Europe and Russia the poor peasants and serfs and their rebellions were not strong enough. The poor remained largely without their own land and they were still tied to the personal rule of the landlords, backed by the state.

2) In the area of France the revolutions, e.g. the big one in 1789, liberated the peasants from much of the personal domination. Not only that, they were often able to either keep their land or get hold of land. This meant that most peasants, unless they were drafted into the army during war, could 'work for themselves' on their own land. In this way the relationship between rulers and ruled in both eastern Europe and in France - although very different in nature - remained fairly stable.

3) Things were different in England. Here the poor were able to overthrow serfdom and personal slavery, but their struggle was not strong enough to keep their land like in France. More and more people were 'free', meaning they were not tied to a specific landlord, but they had no land and income. This meant that the social situation in England at the turn of the 17th century was the most explosive and unstable. Thousands of 'vagabonds' were slaughtered and thrown into workhouses by the state. The existence of a huge mass of free, but poor and hungry people was the main reason why a relatively small country like England became an expanding empire and the starting point of industrialisation.

A different type of system...

The rulers could only handle this unstable social situation by constantly expanding their rule through development of the 'commodity market and trade', the state and industrial apparatus. They had to move poor people around, they had to provide new sources of income and new ways to convince them of their ruling power. In this way the outcome of the struggle against personal rule and exploitation actually changed the system, meaning it changed the form of society fundamentally:

* People were now largely dependent not on a single lord, but on a job in order to earn money - we were free, but forced to sell our time and energy to the rich.

* The landlords themselves wanted to escape the direct and brutal relationship on the land, so they started to invest in trade and manufacturing - what they had robbed from the poor peasants they now invested into business to exploit the children of peasants.

* Given the enormous migration of poor people looking for income the state had to develop and centralise its administration: establishing workhouses; increasing expenditure on the police; shipping poor people to the new colonies etc.

* The rulers were not able to justify their rule either by God's will nor by pure military power, but they had to pretend that they are the source of 'social development': as industrialists, as politicians, as scientists, as artists - and that the poor can 'work their way up'.

* For the first time in history poor people would have the the chance, at least in theory, to change their class and become rich and powerful; this 'freedom' is a carrot and stick and the rulers became more and more skilled at using them for a new divide and rule: only poor men, not women were allowed to learn certain trades (or to vote and be voted for, later on); in the new colonies black slaves remained slaves, whereas poor white folks could become 'free men' after a certain period of time etc.

Industrialisation...

The main way to integrate the poor into the new system of exploitation was through the development of industry. In the history books we learn that 'industrialisation' was some kind of natural progress or that it came out of the heads of great inventors. Some clever guy all of a sudden thought about a steam engine and that changed the world and so on. If we look back in history we can see it is more complicated than that. The masses of poor people who had lost their land or freed themselves from the ties to their lord started working in the emerging industries.

Most of these industries were so-called cottage industries, where people would work at home or in small workshops. They often worked as independent artisans, using their own tools, e.g. for spinning, weaving or wood work. Men, women and other family members worked together. They depended on the big business owners for the supply of raw material, such as wool. These early workers organised themselves, they went on strike if prices for their products dropped or if bread prices increased too much. They stopped working as soon as they had earned enough. Their rebellions were not scattered and isolated in the countryside like those of the peasants, but they came pretty close to the seats of power in urban areas.

Their increasing power as a class of workers was a threat to the control of the new business owners. They had to break the main power that artisans had: their individual skills and control over their work. The first machines did exactly that: they copied the artisan's physical movements and transferred it onto an apparatus, such as the weaving loom or the spinning machine. Major investment was necessary for engines to move these machines, while workers who operated them could be paid much less, given that they were unskilled. Some of the male artisans were bought over as supervisors, who made sure that the women and children who worked the machines did a good job.

The big bosses told the male workers that they can be small bosses of 'their womenfolk' in both factories and at home. Divide-and-rule. These first factories made dozens, if not hundreds of workers work together under the control of machines and foremen. They were way more productive than the cottage industry and the independent artisans died a rapid social death - becoming unemployed they were forced to become factory workers themselves. They lost the competition not only with the factories, but also with an increasingly global trade that they had no access to, e.g. in form of cotton, coming from the plantations based on slavery in the new colonies.

The state and struggle over markets...

The enormous boost in productivity also meant that the market was more rapidly filled up with goods. The competition over markets became more fierce, not only within England, but more and more so on a global level. Racism as an ideology emerged in order to justify the slaughter and enslavement in the colonies. The emerging industries demanded raw materials and later on markets to sell products to, too - from cotton cloth to opium.

The state increased taxes in order to finance its fleets and armies. The combination of more peasants and poor country folks becoming uprooted, of expanding trade beyond small local areas and of the intensifying competition to grab new markets meant that states were forced to centralise their power. The nation states as we know them today emerged during this period between the 18th and 19th century - mainly as entities to discipline their own emerging working class and to wage wars over colonies and markets.

Today 'money' is presented as something that has always been important. It is presented as if it was powerful in itself. Money as a rare means of exchange had existed before, but by this time money had become a seemingly independent power that ruled society: most poor people, who had previously been paid in kind or consumed their own produce now fully depended on wages; lords had turned into 'capitalists', who needed money in order to invest in new machinery to keep up with their competitors; the state siphoned off more and more money in the form of taxes to finance a growing bureaucracy and professional army. What started in England spread across the globe, sometimes in different ways, but mostly with the same result: peasants became workers and money became the new link between exploited and exploiters - with the state waiting in the background with real shackles, in case workers didn't just accept their new 'freedom' as wage slaves.

The struggle of poor countryside folks against exploitation and oppression has changed the system. The shackle that tied the poor to one individual exploiter has been broken. But the newly gained freedom went only so far. The new shackle in the form of money forces the worker to sell themselves to various exploiters. Being robbed by their former lords they own nothing, but their heads and hands and souls. But they create the wealth which becomes the means of their exploitation: the new factory buildings, the new machines and the guns of the growing armies. Soon enough, workers became aware of this fact and that it could be turned around: if we produce everything, we might be able to change everything too...

*** How does the system work?**

Money is the new link between workers and bosses and it seems like a contract between two free parties. The worker has nothing and needs a job to earn money. The boss has the money to buy tools, raw materials, buildings and so on, but needs workers. Let's look behind this seemingly free and fair deal of 'wage for work' that dominates our lives today.

If you don't like the job you are free to go. There's the door...

Even if conditions vary a lot, we all share a common condition with most people in the world: we have to sell our time and energy to someone – in most cases a company of some sort – to receive a wage to buy the stuff we need to live. They have the money – the building, the machines, the material – we have nothing, but our hands and heads and some time to sell. We don't really ask why all the money and stuff is on one side, leaving those who do the work with little to nothing. We all accept this, we often see it as the outcome of good or bad luck. "The father of the founder of the company had a brilliant idea." Or, "these guys got lucky on the stock market." In most cases the original money was less based on luck, but on violence. Even today a lot of the companies' wealth can be dated back to big landowners, who ripped off the poor peasants; to fortunes made through child-labour in work-houses; through opium and the arms trade during the times of the Empire; or, last but not least, through the slave trade and exploitation on the plantations. BUT the main point is that through the exchange itself – the seemingly fair deal 'wage for work' – pretty much all the produced wealth ends up on one side!

Fair pay?! Bad joke!

When we make ready-meals on the line, stack pallets or program software – the wage we receive is not for the work we have done or a share of the profit the company makes. Even if it might look like it, for example if we work on piece-rate or get a company bonus. With the wage the company buys our time and our strength and creativity to work. The wage has to cover the cost of living: our food, rent, our kids' school uniform. The wage is paid to keep us alive, so that we can work again. If the wage from the company is not enough, the state pays on top out of taxes (working tax credit, housing benefit). Wages sometimes go up, particularly if there is a lack of workers or of a particular skill. AND the wage can go up if workers fight for it. BUT in general the companies will push down wages back to the minimum to pay for the local living standard. This is important for us to think about: for a short period of time we can earn more working overtime, but looking at the general situation, after some time we will earn the same working 50 hours compared to working 40 hours. The companies will try to lower the wage back to cover the basic living costs, no matter if we work 8 or 12 hours a day.

Exploitation is no scandal...

Every company exploits their workers. Why? Because we have to work a part of our working-day unpaid, which goes into the pockets of the company. How does that happen? The wage they pay us covers our living costs, let's say £60 a day. Management makes us work, let's say, producing face creams. In general we produce goods worth £60 within a few hours, let's say three hours. The rest of the day we work unpaid – and once the cost for the buildings and material are paid for, the company makes a profit. It is in the company's interest to make the part of the day that they don't pay us for, longer. There are two ways to do this:

1) The easiest way to increase the unpaid part is to make us work longer hours. In the 19th century 12 or 14-hour days were common. They were so common that workers died too early and the army only found few people strong enough to become soldiers. More importantly, workers themselves got fed up and started fighting for shorter working days. This sets a limit to how long they can make us work, although 12 hour shifts are quite common again (ever worked at McVities in Park Royal?!)

2) The most effective way to make the unpaid part of the day longer is to make us work more productively, for example by using machines. If more machines are used in general, our living costs go down and we can also produce more face creams per hour. Instead of three hours it might take us only two hours to produce enough to cover our living costs. This would leave the company with six hours unpaid work, instead of five.

This is the main way the system works and it has three important outcomes:

- the company has to spend increasingly more on machinery than on workers, which puts pressure on profits;
- the company will try to reduce the numbers of workers, because work got more productive;
- this will increase unemployment, which will put further pressure on wages, leaving few people with enough money to buy face cream.

The profit that the company makes from the unpaid work is normally invested again. The bosses take the money they made with the face cream and buy new raw materials, pay the rent, and workers' wages. This time the wage of the worker comes out of their own (or their colleagues' own) unpaid work from the week, month or year before. There is no fair deal in this! We are paid with our own product! BUT this becomes more important if we look at the whole of society: not only the wages that we are paid come out of what we have already worked for. Everything that the company owns, from buildings to raw material to machines, are also products of workers. This is the cycle of exploitation:

- we are forced to work for them, because we have nothing;
- we have nothing, because they only pay us enough to buy food, school uniforms etc. that other workers produced; we consume what we earn and are left with little to nothing;
- all the things that are necessary to produce (buildings, machines etc.) are kept by the companies; these things necessary to produce are also products of our work.

The fact that they own our products gives them the power to tell us what to do as soon as we enter 'their' company. This gives them the power to kick us out. If we try to take what should be ours, meaning, if we don't accept their ownership they can call the judges and cops. We produce their power. People say "the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer". The main reason behind this is not corruption or nasty politicians, but it is result of the normal fact that we have to work for a wage...

Greedy bosses?!

So is it all because of the greediness of the bosses? Because of their addiction to luxuries and power? They surely like their Chelsea penthouses and Maseratis, but as managers of a company they also have no other chance but to increase the exploitation of their workers. They have to compete with other companies on the market. You can only survive as long as you sell enough products and services at a profitable price. How can you do that? As a company you have less control over the price of raw materials or rent. The main way to lower production costs per sold item and to increase profit is to put pressure on wages and increase the productivity of workers, either through direct pressure or new technology. This is the way the market system forces each boss to increase the exploitation of their workers. But there is not only pressure from the market, but from the workers, too...

Angry workers!

If we look back at history, we can see that workers are not pure victims in the game. There were battles in each country to reduce the hours we have to work: who wants to spend 12 hours a day slaving away?! This forced the bosses to make us work harder, rather than longer. But then many workers also started questioning why they would need a boss at all: as tailors, weavers, blacksmith etc., workers knew best how to produce things. In order to break the power of skilled workers the bosses had to put more money into machines that would allow them to employ unskilled workers (often women, children, migrants). A single tool or small workshop can be operated by a few workers and they can imagine a life without a boss. But a big factory with more complex machines seem to give the boss a new power: someone had to bring all these workers together and coordinate their work. And if the power of the boss is not enough to make workers work, there is always the power of the state. The state apparatus (prisons, work houses, police force, state-run infrastructure) grew together with the big industrial companies...

A big spiral...

The competition on the market and the increase in taxation to pay for the growing state apparatus forces the bosses to increase productivity. In order to increase productivity the bosses have to break the power of skilled workers by introducing new technologies. The struggle with workers who want to work shorter hours and better living standards also forces them to invest more and more into machinery. So is it not a win-win situation?! Workers want a better and easier life and they get it by forcing the bosses to invest into machines?! Doesn't an increase in productivity also give us cheap goods?! We can see that in the long-run things are looking less rosy.

With an increase in investment into machines you also have to make more profits – and the only way to make more profits is to produce more with less workers. This is why in the current system, – where production happens for profits and not for the needs of everyone – an increase in productivity has destructive results for most people and nature:

- To make profit machines are used to replace workers and often employ less skilled workers. This leads to an increase in unemployment. Unemployment puts more pressure on the remaining workers to accept lower wages and longer working hours.
- To compensate for higher costs of machinery, production has to be accelerated more and more. Workers become the slaves of assembly lines, machines and production targets. Instead of making our lives easier, machines are used to give us more stress. Machines have to run 24 hours to be cost effective. But the race for profits does not only damage our health at work, nature in general is plundered and polluted (plastic in water, chemicals in food, toxic air), because it is treated as a cheap resource for short-term goals.
- Companies produce more in a shorter time, more products swamp the market. This means that the competition between companies and the competition between countries increases. Companies that cannot compete go bust and sack workers, which also increases unemployment.
- Regularly we see an overproduction crisis, where too much stuff is produced and no one is able to buy it or too much money is made, but there is no way to invest it profitably. People lose their jobs or small business. This leads to mass poverty. People starve, not because there is not enough, but there is too much! We see empty homes and heaps of unsold products, because workers are too poor to buy them. We see idle factories and workplaces, because bosses don't want to use them if they don't bring profit. This system is absurd: production for profit creates overproduction, which in turn creates poverty.
- Tensions inside society grow: why should the poor be poor if there is enough wealth and idle factories? The bosses and politicians have to look for someone to blame: the unemployed, the single mothers, the migrants, other nations, aliens. Often the economic crisis also leads to more tension between nation states which all try to grab markets and cheap raw materials. The outcome of many economic crises is war. The state creates demand by expanding the army. The rich are safe, because the poor battle each other. More raw materials, more social resources and human labour are invested into the military. Social productivity goes into social destruction: war becomes a profitable business.

Crisis is a normal outcome in a system that produces for profit and where the mass of the working people don't decide how and what for we produce.

* **How the system produces crisis**

A system based on exploitation is not only unfair, but is also very unstable, irrational and prone to crisis. In the past, crises often happened because of natural reasons (bad harvests etc.) that meant not enough was produced. Now, crisis mainly happens because too much is produced that cannot be sold or does not generate profits.

Situations of crisis increase the competition amongst nation states for markets and amongst workers who compete for jobs. In the 20th century this increase in competition due to crisis triggered two World Wars killing 100 million people. And since the 2008 crisis, we have seen an increase in national tension (Brexit and anti-immigrant views etc.) and trade wars (US/China trading tariffs etc.).

As workers who don't want to compete or fight with other working class people we want to understand roughly how these situations of crisis happen.

The fundamental reasons for modern crisis

Situations of crisis in the current system happen regularly. In general, they are not the result of natural disasters or human error or accidents. Unlike in earlier systems they are also not just outcomes of war – ironically wars are often attempts to solve the crisis. The main reasons why modern crises happen is because of the divisions in this society. The system we now live in is built on these divisions. These are:

1. Stuff/Money

In this system production does not take place to produce something in particular, but to make money by selling the product. The thing or service produced is just the means to make money. To every thing or service there is a price attached that can go up and down. The important question is not if things or services are useful or needed, but if they can be sold at a profitable price.

2. Producers/Mean of production and products

Why does money become all important and seem to 'make the world go round?' This happens only in a situation where the majority of people have no option but to sell their time and energy for money (wages). Like any other commodity, our time and energy has a price tag attached to it. And like any other price, our wages go up and down. We need the wages in order to be able to buy the products that we (as a class of people) actually make.

We ourselves are also not interested in what we produce, but how much we are paid in wages. Money symbolises that those who produce don't own what they produce. So money in itself is not the problem, but the fact that we as producers have no say about how production is organised and what for.

3. Political power/masses of workers

The majority of people spend their lives working and are not able to decide how their jobs are organised. This also means that they have little to no say in how society is run in general. The state is a power separate from us and it also wants to keep things this way. To keep a potentially powerful mass of people separate from power needs divide and rule. Some people are given jobs to guard, control or administer things – which gives them a feeling of power. In the long run this means that the state bureaucracy grows and sucks up more and more of societies wealth and resources.

The division between things and their price, between producers and control of production, and between the masses of working people and the state all lead to different forms of crisis.

The most simple form of crisis: over-production

Companies invest in products or sectors where they expect high profits. Once production is running they churn out as many products as possible. This frequently results in over-production, which means that products cannot be sold and their prices can drop under a profitable level. This is why we see wheat being burnt or milk being chucked into the gutter to keep prices up – while hunger still affects millions of poor working class people across the globe.

The most blatant form of crisis: under-consumption

To increase profits (and to be able to compete on the market) companies have to increase productivity and lower wages. 'Produce more with less workers' means that people become unemployed and have little income to spend. The problem is that many products are consumed by working class people, who now cannot afford to buy things anymore. The system shoots itself in the foot. After the 2008 crisis we saw homelessness in Spain or the US increasing rapidly, while thousands of new apartments remain empty because of lack of buyers.

The most fundamental reason for crisis: falling profit rates

While the first two forms of crisis are more of a regular up and down of the system, the main problem in the long run is falling profit rates. In order to increase productivity (and keep workers under control) companies invest more and more of their money into machinery and technology. This cuts into their profits – which then forces them to churn out more with less people. If a company only makes 2 instead of 4 percent profits, they will try to double the mass of profits by expanding production. This results in the creation of huge companies, from General Motors to Amazon.

The falling profit rates lead to financial speculation

If profits are falling in production companies try to find other places where they can invest their money. From the 1980s onwards General Motors made more money from their banking branch than from manufacturing cars. They used the pension funds to create ‘financial assets’ to speculate on the stock-market. The big financial bubbles that emerged since then (dot.com bubble, housing mortgage bubble) are expressions of the fact that profits in production have dropped since the 1970s. These bubbles expand to huge dimensions and if they burst like in 1929 or 2008 they drag the whole economy down.

Role of the state: debts and bureaucracy

The state tries to counteract these ups and downs and instabilities of the markets and the falling rates of profit. The main way the state does this is by pumping money into the economy in the form of credit, hoping that profits will be better again in the future, so that the debt can be paid back. Consumer debt or state treasury bonds are supposed to oil the machine and keep it running. Since the 1970s state and general debts have been increasing rapidly. If all this fails the state tries to ‘run the economy’ itself, by taking over industries through nationalisation. This happened in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and in western economies in the 1950s. The Labour Party now are calling for the re-nationalisation of certain industries. Given the internal tendencies of state bureaucracy (expansion of the apparatus to keep workers under control, corruption etc.) this can only postpone the crisis.

Role of the state: war

If the nation states cannot create more profitable conditions generally, they try to save their economy at the expense of others. We see trade wars and protectionism as a consequence of the 1929 and 2008 crisis. In 1929 we also saw that states invest more and more money into the military, also to boost the local industries. Since then, three factors have pushed the system into global war: the competition between nation states; the attempt to present an external enemy to angry (unemployed) workers at home; and the tendency of the system to want to destroy the unprofitable masses of idle factories and unemployed people in order to 'start fresh'.

Crisis: a threat to humans and the planet

Billions of people who produce this world have no say in how production is organised; and the so called rulers are also not able to run their own system without blatant conflicts:

- The tendency to increase production and churn out more and more product kills nature. Nature is plundered for cheap resources and polluted to the point of no return. Climate crisis is an expression of this and the fact that those 'in power' can do nothing about it.
- Technology that could make life easier for everyone is mainly used to get rid of people to save wages. This increases unemployment, which in turn lowers wages. There is more poverty, despite abundance and more productive machines. If the gap between rich and poor increases, more and more social product is invested to protect the rich.
- Excluded from control and political power, millions of people don't care about 'politics'. Elections and politicians are a joke. The problem is that no alternative seems to be in sight, which means that pessimism and depression are the most widespread illnesses amongst the working class. What is the sense of life in a world of shit jobs and competition? What is friendship without having time? Where is the possibility to live in free community with other people?

This system is out of control. We can't let our lives be ruled by the ups and downs of markets and by a small ruling class that only pretends to be in control. With the global crisis deepening the only way they can pretend to be in control is through divide and rule and an increase of violence.

With modern means of communication we have the chance to decide together what we need and how we produce it. The current system excludes the knowledge and creativity of billions by trapping us in shit jobs – once we get rid of the current system of profits and crisis we can rebuild the world based on conscious decisions: what are our resources, what do we need to produce; what is the best way to do it, not just for us now, but also for nature and future generations etc.. We will have more time and joy of being and deciding together.

* **Workers' revolutions**

We want to look for alternatives. We start by looking into history: at which points in history did the struggle against exploitation and oppression change society? And where did the struggle show alternatives to the current system: a society where we can live more freely and where we can decide together how we run things?

Since there has been oppression, there was resistance against it. Since the class of the rich exploit the masses who work, there have been revolutions for an equal society. Why did revolutions fail? History tells us that revolutions against oppression and exploitation failed because they remained isolated, which allowed the enemy to crush the uprisings or to starve them. Some revolutions were also betrayed from within. Sometimes the poor formed alliances with the middle-classes against the rulers – and the middle-classes then used the revolution to put themselves in power. Sometimes the so-called leaders of the revolution created a strong state – they said it was necessary to defend the revolution – which ended up as a new form of exploitation and oppression...

But even failed revolutions had results: they scared the ruling class and forced them to make concessions. Without violent struggles of the working poor in the past there would be no 'welfare state', no 'health and safety regulations', no 'freedom of speech', no 'equal opportunities'. The struggle of our class forces the state and the bosses to permanently 'revolutionise' the way they exploit us. Here are only a few short examples of historic struggles of our class...

Peasant wars and communities – The problem of isolation

During medieval times it was relatively easy for poor peasants to imagine an end of exploitation and oppression: a lot of the land was still owned in common and most of the things necessary to live were produced locally. The lords were only parasites, who owned most of the land and asked for taxes – it would have been easy to just redistribute the land amongst all. No wonder that there were numerous efforts of poor peasant folks to create such liberated communities – from the Taborites in what is now Czech Republic to the Levellers and Diggers in England, to peasant communes in medieval China. Their main problem was that they remained isolated locally – there was no fast transport or social media. They also had only limited access to arms to defend themselves. Most communities were defeated militarily. The revolutionary peasants tried to prove that their communities were ‘following the will of god’ to create an equal society on earth – but instead of supporting them the official church treated them as heretics (disbelievers).

First urban revolutions and slave uprisings – The problem of alliances with the middle class

By the 17th and 18th century many peasants had lost their land and either worked for wages or as slaves on plantations. More and more poor people lived in towns and cities and the global market started to connect the northern and southern continents of the world. The middle-classes (traders, industrialists) became more important economically, but had little political power, which was still held by aristocrats. Under these conditions the struggle of the poor against exploitation changed: unlike the peasants they were less isolated, living in towns and cities. This made them more difficult to defeat. This also meant that their vision of an equal society changed: while the peasants mainly wanted to be able to live off their land, the poor in the cities and on the plantations could not just go back to a countryside idyll. But overall their numbers in the cities was still relatively small and their power as workers limited, as industries were not developed yet. This forced them into alliances with the middle-classes, who wanted more political influence.

For example, the French Revolution of 1789 and the revolution in Haiti (then Saint-Domingue) in 1791 were fought by the poor workers and slaves, but they were won by the middle classes – who turned against the poor and repressed them as soon as they had got closer to state power. Both revolutions influenced each other. The slaves in Haiti drew hope from the revolution in France, and the slave rebellions in Haiti shook the entire world: slaves who liberate themselves! In 1789, slaves in Haiti produced 60% of the world’s coffee and 40% of the world’s sugar imported by France and Britain.

The livelihood of 1 million of the 25 million people who lived in France depended directly upon the imports from Haiti. In 1789, slaves outnumbered white settlers by 10 to 1, there were in total 450,000 slaves. In order to be able to divide-and-rule the state introduced divisions between the slaves: some were given lighter work, some were declared 'free blacks' or 'mulattoes'. A slave rebellion spread across the island, taking on the French army. The Spanish state and the US state first pretended to side with the slave army and its leader Toussaint Louverture – they hoped that they could take over the world's sugar bowl from the French state. In 1804 Haiti's new leader Dessalines declared independence – the slave army had beaten the world powers! The problem was that the new leaders mainly came from the more privileged 'free blacks' and unlike the slaves from Africa they had education, economic and military connections etc.. They used these connections to put themselves in power and although slavery was abolished, the new rulers could decide on which plantations the former slaves had to work. The whip was forbidden, but the new plantation owners used ropes instead.

This 'betrayal' of the middle classes would repeat itself in various revolutions and uprisings, from 1848 in European countries to 1857 in India. The poor sections of these revolutions developed ideas of a free society worth fighting for – but without the power as industrial workers they were forced to take on the enemy militarily, which often failed. The first time that the poor artisans and workers declared their independence from the middle-class politicians, bosses and traders was in 1871 during the uprising of the Paris Commune – they were defeated by the French and German army, but they had shown to the world that working people can run their own lives.

The council revolutions 1918 –

The problem of international isolation and state power

Society and work changed rapidly between the mid-19th and early 20th century: more and more workers were employed in big industries. Whole towns were organised around large factories. The system works like this: the only way to keep the poor mob calm is to build bigger bakeries to give them a few more crumbs! The trade unions and the bigger 'workers' parties' (like Labour in the UK or the SPD in Germany) slowly became tools in the hand of the state to control workers' struggles.

Factory workers knew that society in general depended on their work. They also saw what the current system used their work for: World War I was an industrial massacre of more than 16 million worker-soldiers and civilians for the interest of the rich and powerful. They had seen that the 'workers' parties' had agreed to the war. Revolution seemed the only solution. Workers and working-class soldiers ended the war by mass disobedience and strikes: in 1918 revolutions and rebellions broke out in nearly every European country.

Particularly in industrial areas workers and soldiers formed new organisations to organise work and social life: councils. The idea of the councils were that we don't need professional politicians and a far away parliament to run our lives and no bosses to run the factories. Councils of different factories, industries and areas could coordinate and allow everyone to take part in making the main decisions of society: how do we produce our lives? Through these councils and other examples of organisation and resistance (factory militias, neighbourhood assemblies etc.) by 1918 many working class people all over Europe experienced that a different society is possible. This experience was defeated from inside the revolution and from outside – as we can best see in Russia.

In the 19th century millions of people in Russia were serfs: their owners could exploit them without mercy. By the time of World War I few industrial areas had developed. The revolution against war and oppression started from industrial towns like St. Petersburg and the promise of land and peace made many peasants join in. Wealth was distributed amongst all, manual workers took part in planning of production. Poor people could enter theatres which had previously been only for the rich, workers sent cinemas and reading groups to the peasant villages. The news that workers had formed councils and beaten the Tsar (king) spread around the world. The rulers of all European countries were afraid that the revolution would spread and they forgot the fact that they had just all been enemies: they sent arms and soldiers to defeat the revolution in Russia.

The attack from outside made problems inside the revolution worse:

* The revolution was started by workers, peasants and soldiers themselves, but the connection between councils in the towns and councils in the countryside was weak. Most of the land that was taken from the big landlords did not enter into common ownership, but was taken by middle-class peasants. Supply from the agricultural areas and from abroad failed – the towns starved. Lenin's party, which had influence in the councils, said that in this situation the councils have to give up power towards a new 'workers' state'.

* The outside attack led the new ruling party to form the Red Army – they disarmed the workers and forced them to join the army. A standing army needs massive resources (food, clothing etc.), so everyone who was not in the army had to work even harder. The new rulers decided to bring back the old generals and the old managers to help squeeze more out of the workforce.

The measures by Lenin's party took away power from normal workers. They became disillusioned and there were rebellions against the new rulers, for example in Kronstadt in 1921, which demanded: 'all power to the councils'. The new 'workers' state' reacted by turning the guns on workers.

Could it have been different? Perhaps if the connections between councils in towns and in the vast countryside had formed quicker? If the revolution in more developed countries like Germany had won and sent supplies to Russia? This is speculation, the result of the 1918 revolutions is fact:

* Workers and poor people have proven that even under difficult conditions they can run society themselves. That there is no need to have rich and poor, rulers and ruled. This hope is still alive today.

* Also because of the isolation and backwardness of Russia at the time, the new rulers established a 'workers state' which turned into a police state. This has given 'communism' a bad name: instead of freedom it meant yet another form of oppression.

* The rulers in the rest of the world were shaken: to prevent revolutions in their countries they gave concessions to trade unions and 'workers' parties' (Labour etc.) and gave money to the welfare state to calm things down; they gave concessions to the local middle-men in the colonies, because if a police state like in Russia can be overthrown, why not British or French colonial rule in India or Vietnam?

*The global uprisings in 1968 –
The problem of taking over modern industries*

The defeat of the revolutions of 1918 had tragic consequences. During the global economic crisis of 1929 many workers felt that we cannot take on the rich and their system and we cannot unite with fellow workers abroad – didn't the failure of 1918 just prove this? Instead the nationalist and racist politicians could mobilise many workers towards a new massacre: World War II killed between 50 and 85 million people across the globe.

But the hope for a different society did not die. By the 1960s a wave of rebellions swept the world – or more precisely, two revolutionary waves that influenced each other.

* In the global north (eastern Soviet Block, Europe, US) the post-war boom and demand for labour had brought many Black and migrant workers and women into the factories. This allowed them to attack racism and women's oppression in society – e.g. in the US, Black workers questioned segregation; in Europe, women workers questioned unequal wages, being criminalised for abortions and having to put up with the bossiness of their husbands at home. The general development of industries allowed workers to question work: why do we still work like mad and for long hours on assembly lines, producing often useless goods? Is there not more to life than just work-work-work? Millions of young kids and workers questioned the authorities of factory and university management. They took more freedom to be with each other and to be creative. The same happened in the so-called 'workers' states' – the 1968 rebellion reached from the general strike in France, the occupied FIAT factories in Italy, to student-worker assemblies in Mexico, Prague or Yugoslavia.

* In the global south the 1960s saw a massive attack on colonial rule in Africa and Asia. In Vietnam the US sent working class soldiers (many of them Black and victims of racism at home) to drop more bombs on a peasant army than they did during the whole of World War II. Many of the anti-colonial revolts were 'successful' in the sense that many countries declared independence. The problem was that in many of the countries there was only a small working class and many people were still peasants – this made it easier for middle-class leaders to establish themselves as the new leaders. Workers and peasants in Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, Algeria etc. quickly had to realise that 'independence' mainly meant that only the name and nationality of their exploiters had changed.

The north and south waves influenced each other, but they had different conditions and goals – which explains one of the weaknesses of 1968. The other main weakness was that the changes in production made it much more difficult to imagine how to run society in general:

* The revolution in 1918 was led by skilled workers in concentrated industries and by women workers in urban areas in close proximity to the industrial zones. On the level of a factory town it is easy to imagine how workers' councils can run the show. That's why we see from the 1920s onwards how more and more skilled workers were replaced by assembly line work – the most famous example is Ford. By the 1960s the role of traditionally skilled workers was weakened and many factories were built further away from where workers actually lived. There was a mass of lower-skilled workers on one side and 'white-collar' technicians who had a university education on the other. The productivity of society allowed workers to think more clearly about a world where work is not the main thing in life – BUT while workers in 1918 formulated clear plans and took actions to take over production for the common good, in 1968 this happened in a much more diffuse way. To take over production would have meant overcoming the separation between manual workers and technicians and to coordinate actions across a much larger geographical area.

What remains?

The rebellions of 1968 created more freedom and equality amongst workers – before 1968 a foreman could beat an apprentice on construction sites in London or Berlin, Black workers in the US or 'lower-caste' workers in India could be excluded from skilled factory jobs and women workers could be paid less for the same work. All this was questioned. In the long run 1968 also led to the revolution of 1989, when the so-called 'workers' states' of the Eastern Block finally collapsed.

We often forget all this and we hear a lot of colleagues say that 'struggle doesn't change anything'. Yes, the situation in Romania or Poland today is not much better than before 1989. Yes, pretty soon after the ANC in South Africa took power and ended racist Apartheid Black policemen started shooting Black slum-dwellers and workers. Yes, we don't die of coal-dust in the mines, but we die of stress in Amazon warehouses...

But, the world is changing and today the big divide that separated the two waves north and south in 1968 has largely disappeared: today most poor folks in the so-called 'Third World' are not peasants anymore, but modern workers. Today, in order to produce most modern goods workers around the globe have to cooperate.

Today, the knowledge of how to produce things is more evenly distributed amongst workers worldwide – which was a weak point of previous struggles. Since the global crisis in 2008 we all face a new revolutionary challenge on a global scale: where will this system go? More nationalism and divide-and-rule? More empty talk of ‘liberal values’ and multi-culturalism on zero-hour contracts? Climate chaos? Or another round of struggles to end exploitation and meaningless jobs?

*** We want a new society - and don't we need it!**

In today's society we are reduced to working in whatever job we find, without much say in how things are run. Although we depend on the work of many others, we have no relationships with them. A small group of people at the top make decisions, but as we have seen, they themselves are not really in control of this system.

We can easily imagine a different society. A society where we don't work for someone else's profits, but for a good life with everyone. Most of the jobs in the current society only exist because of the need to increase and defend profits: through advertising, insurances, stock-markets, useless goods, military interventions. If we abolish these jobs and focus on what we need for a good life we would have to work much less. Working less means we have more time not only for joy, creativity and inventiveness, but also for making decisions about life together. We would not have to let politicians and pen-pushers decide our fate, who might send us to war or announce another round of cuts.

"Keep on dreaming, mate! Get a life!" You are right, sister, this all sounds pretty airy. Let's start instead by looking at what's happening in front of our eyes. What's happening right here and right now gives us three good reasons to think that a different society is not only possible, but necessary:

1) Current society is in really bad shape!

Despite automation, we work more and are poorer. Huge chunks of our hard work either goes towards lining someone else's pocket or goes into preparation for wars that we will be the first victims of. Political leaders cling to power by setting us up against each other. Billions of us are trapped in jobs which make little sense, waste our potential and make us depressed. People are lonelier than ever. And let's not forget climate change, let's think about the future of our kids.

2) We have the means to create something better!

There is an abundance of stuff on this planet. We have technologies to make work easier. Most of the knowledge of how to make things would be freely available - if it was not locked up by patents and copyrights or kept behind doors of corporations and universities. We have the modern means to communicate across borders and amongst thousands.

3) People are already fighting and risking their lives.

While we speak thousands of people are taking to the streets and opposing their governments, the police, the military. Hundreds are getting shot on demonstrations against corruption in Iraq, the same in Sudan. In Chile students and workers fight together, in Hong Kong too. In France the spectre of the Yellow Vests still haunts the streets. People fight and take risks, but at the moment they only fight against the state and its plans to squeeze us more. We don't have a clue yet what we are fighting *for*.

So after looking at the hard facts of life, let's start dreaming again.

A different organisation of society

If you plan anything together with others you would use pretty simple, but logical ways to do it. You would ask yourself things like: what is the most effective way to do this? At the same time have the most joy doing this? How can we do this so that everyone involved can have a say? How will the thing we do affect us, our kids, the future and the planet?

"*Yeah, right, you might organise a garden party like this, but a society of six billion? Get real!*" You are right, brother. To get six billion people to work together is not an easy thing. But see it this way, at the moment our lives depend on the work of six billion people in one way or the other. How do you get your Nike Vapormax? Where's that webpage going that you design? The problem is that all these global connections are random, unconscious, unplanned, messy, wasteful, environmentally damaging. We can do better than that!

Let's start by taking all the useless work out of the equation. If we all had a say, would we spend millions of hours of our time for selling insurance or creating adverts for hundred of types of face-wipe? Let's cut this short and say that if everyone works and we all work in something that actually creates the stuff and the care and the knowledge we all need, we would all work no more than three hours a day.

That's already something. We could finally breath, sit together, heal, and think some more. Now that we work less, how can we organise work in a way that makes it more joyful and gives everyone more of a say? Let's start with a group of 200 people, that is a nice size for various reasons. If you work and live with the same three people, you will get on each others nerves - and you wouldn't be able to do many jobs. A group of 200 people can get to know each other, you don't have to feel lonely, but you also don't have to step on each others toes too much. A group of 200 is not too big a size to imagine making decisions together, organising certain jobs. You can organise work effectively, for example if a group of ten people cook for the rest, this is more productive than everyone cooking for themselves. You can rotate jobs, so you don't have to be a cook for life. The same is true for childcare, care for the sick, doing some gardening, building a wind turbine. With many things it makes more sense to share it, than to use everything individually. You could have one laundrette, instead of 200 individual washing machines. You can have a small cinema, a nice pub, a decent band.

But then we don't live in the middle-ages anymore. There are many things that won't be effective if they are done in millions of small villages of 200 people. There are decisions to be made that affect millions at the same time. And you might not want to stick with the same 200 people for the rest of your life anyway! Things get a bit more complex here, but its not rocket-science - or perhaps it is. We can apply the same main guidelines: effectiveness, joy, decision-making and future impact. We can think about things like agriculture, energy production and manufacturing of the big washing machines for our laundrettes. There are hundreds of possible ways to do this. In the current society profit is the main guideline, which means that some agricultural products or washing machines are transported around the earth, because that's the way to increase profits, although it wastes time and creates more pollution. We still use a vast amount of fossil fuels for energy production, because profit as a guideline is not interested in what is happening fifty years down the line. Most people waste their lives on the washing-machine assembly line, while management keeps a few others cooped up in engineering departments - mainly for reasons of divide-and-rule.

If we apply our guidelines instead of profit goals there will still be different options to decide. One option would be that 20 'villages'... - wait let's call them 'communities' instead, as they are neither town nor village - would pool time and (wo)manpower together and build a local wind farm. They can keep it close to home, many people can engage with the project and it doesn't create much environmental damage. Another option would be to build a bigger hydro-power plant, which would require the input of 200 communities.

The hydro-power would be more effective and its production have less environmental impact in the long-run - but the control over the running of it would be shared by a much larger group of people, which means that there is perhaps a less direct say in it. There are two valid options and a decision has to be made. Again, in the current system these decisions are mainly influenced by very removed factors: the share-price development of the energy company, the political career ambitions of the political parties. The whole thing would keep thousands of bribe-taking bureaucrats busy for ten years: do you remember the fuck-ups of the Crossrail, HighSpeedRail2, Berlin airport construction or Heathrow expansion?

We see that we have to think a bit bigger than a group of villages. But that shouldn't be a problem really - modern means of communication can help us to widen the direct discussion amongst 200 or 2,000 to a much wider scale. Even before the invention of the internet people came up with effective delegate systems to discuss and make decisions about bigger social issues, e.g. through workers' councils during times of upheaval. Some things might be decided by majority vote of delegates. But in the end things are simple: if five pissy communities think they can mess five hundred communities around by not cooperating, let's see how they survive on their own. We need each other, this is not always nice, but in most cases it will help in finding the best solution for everyone.

And our lives would not be confined to a group of 200. We will spend some of our time with others developing better robots for the local washing machine plant. Next day we might be organising a festival for a dozen communities in the region. And after having survived the hangover we engage in discussions about whether or not 5% of the available '(wo)men power' of our region can be spent on building a GPS-controlled solar-tractor, which will save us 10% of time five years down the line. This might seem like having five jobs at the same time. But remember, by focusing on the real stuff we will have to work less hours, we won't have to do the same thing day in day out, but have our hands in the earth on some days and our heads in the (engineering) clouds the other. And most importantly, we will be surrounded by folks who are not as miserable, grumpy and depressed as our current workmates - because it will be fun!

So let's zoom out for a moment, and what can we see from up above? We can see clusters of communities, which are mainly consumption units and units of small-scale production and maintenance. Neighbouring the communities we see bigger agricultural areas, communal tech-laboratories and production units that supply a certain region, interspersed with free-for-all spas, rehearsal rooms and amusement parks. There is a lot of wild forest land and race-track for Mad-Max type of vehicles. People work in the production units according to need and preference. Communities and productive units are all linked up with a top-notch intra-web system that communicates supply and demand for goods and labour and exchanges constant improvement suggestions regarding home-made turnip pickles or the latest automated 3D-printing device. Here we finally find a good use for our friends the algorithm and platform technology, who under the current system are mainly used to supply overweight students with KFC junk delivered from around the corner or Instagram-addicted teenagers with live-streamed advice about how to self-harm. If we think systematically, there will be many decisions on a local and regional level, there will be less, but important decisions on a continental scale (e.g. energy and transport infrastructure) and a few big ones that concern the whole globe (e.g. climate change and how to get coffee to Aberdeen and salmon to Nairobi). We won't need diplomacy, ambassadors and national politics and all that. We only have to decide how to build or maintain certain infrastructure that might affect everyone in a larger region and how we exchange goods that cannot be produced everywhere. In the end we all need each other on this spaceship earth. Not rocket-science.

"Right, rocketman, here is ground-control, what about the slackers, what about everyone just trying to get shit for free without doing their bit?" Sister, the current system gives these people the best opportunities. The current system is anonymous, everyone can get away with shit. If you live in close cooperation with 200 others, they can call you out and kick your arse. In the current system, if you get your hands on money you can order others to kill. In the new system there won't be no money. In the current system you get cosy with the politicians and they will give you power. In the new system there won't be no professional politicians.

"They won't give up their power just like that, just because we've got a better idea of how to run things" You are right, the whole thing won't come out of thin air or by six billion people sitting together having tea. Those who are in power now won't like all this. And us, who are exploited and without power, have to learn how to get things done. This is why the whole process needs a revolution.

The big scary 'R'-word

If you hear revolution you either think blood and massacre or a new conditioner that makes your hair grow back. Fair enough. What we mean by revolution is the process to get from this society to a new one. Because one thing is certain, the new society will not grow out of 200 people sitting together and doing gardening. As we have seen in history, one of the main problems of previous revolutions was that people get isolated in too small units. They were either starved or beaten. Neither can these changes be voted in, not by Corbyn, not by Farage, not by anyone. Because what we want is deeply illegal: we want that everything we produce belongs to everyone, and not a few. We want to take back control for real!

Revolution seems a big dirty word indeed. But in a way we mean something that is already happening. When workers occupy their factory because management wants to close it, they take control and learn how to do things together. If 2,000 people in yellow vests in a small town in France come together and block a roundabout, they learn. If these 2,000 then coordinate their actions with people across the region, and that's what the Yellow Vests did in 2019, they learn. There are struggles everywhere, where working people take back control for a moment. In these struggles we have to build links across sectors and borders. This has happened before, there were many 'revolutionary international organisations' - we have seen earlier on why they have failed. Movements like in Chile or Ecuador in 2019 create the experiences of many 'communities of 200', in assemblies or occupations. At the same time they create experiences of the big necessary links, through strikes that cross the vast space from universities to copper mines.

We need a vision of change that touches all workers around the globe - in their own conditions. Uprisings in war-torn countries like Sudan, Libya or the Congo are different from mass strikes in the new factories in China or India. People fighting against poverty and violence in poor towns in Detroit or Sao Paulo face different conditions to software workers fighting against their management in Silicon Valley. But we all have something to contribute to this revolution. We need a plan of how we make the best use of our specific weapons: for some it is the fact that if they go on strike they can cripple a whole industry - for others it is the fact that they know how to create neighbourhood assemblies and organise community services themselves. The challenge will be to bring all this together in a movement with a common goal: to take-over the means we need to produce our lives.

“If you touch them, there will be murder, man! You seen what happened to old Gaddafi!”. Never mind Gaddafi, but you are right, brother. Those in power will try and stop us - they always have tried. In all revolutions the armies split. The lower ranks of any army is made up of working class people. If a movement can show that a goal of creating a better society for all, many will be on our side. Our biggest weapon is solidarity. See it this way, brother, if we are quick and united and get our friends in the railways, power-plants, food factories, hospitals and telecommunication centres to take over and thousands to defend and support them, who is in power then?

The main task during the transition from the current system to a new system will be to even out the productive assets around the globe - the energy infrastructure, the modern machines, the knowledge. In the end those in power can only stay in power if they make poor people wage war against each other. We have to make a clear proposal: get rid of those in power and the revolution will give workers in all regions access to the means to produce and make decisions about their lives. If all this sounds abstract and scary, let's just look again at what is already happening: since World War II the world has never been at peace, but we have been killing each other for the gains of politicians and corporations. In comparison a revolution is a necessary act to create peace.

And today? Tomorrow?

This is about sticking together when the manager bullies us at work. This is about building groups and organisations that we run ourselves, to oppose the closure of libraries or organise a strike for better wages. This is about feeling solidarity and learning how to organise ourselves here and now. This is about following and learning from what is going on elsewhere, be it strikes at Amazon in Poland or uprisings in Hong Kong. This is about being curious about what is produced where, how, and by whom in our region. This is about finding each other in the moment of struggle and sticking together afterwards. Movements against austerity, against corruption, for better living conditions will erupt again and again, no question - in the current system this is like a law of nature. We have to help these movements find a direction. Instead of banging our heads against the walls of town halls and government buildings we have to prepare ourselves to take things over. In the end it all boils down to the old question: revolution, or waiting for things to get worse.

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