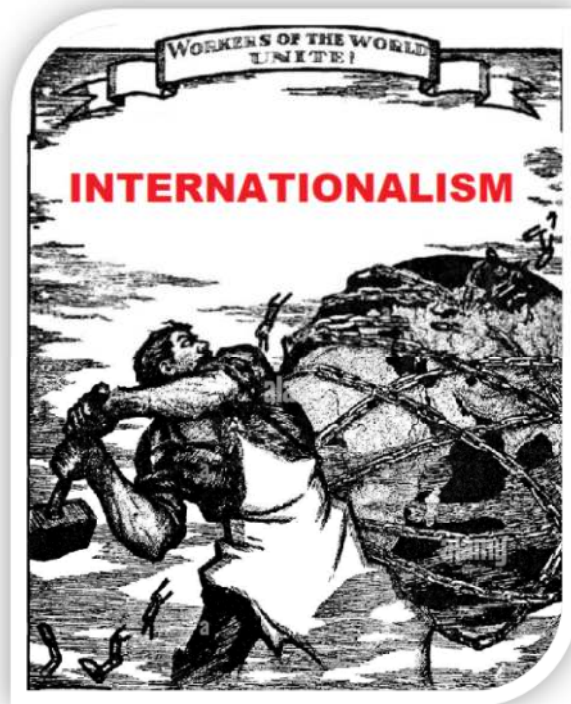


Workers of the world unite!

Discussion Bulletin

n°2 Summer 2023



Groups of the Communist Left

Summer 2023

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Trotsky discusses with other comrades during the Zimmerwald Conference

Short presentation of the bulletin

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine the International Communist Current proposed a joint Internationalist statement on the war to the other groups of the Communist Left. Of these groups three affirmed their willingness to participate and a statement was discussed, agreed, and published by these different groups.

The principle behind the joint statement was that on the fundamental question of imperialist war and the internationalist perspective against it, the different Communist Left groups agreed to take a common position on this question and thus to give more force to providing a clear political alternative to capitalist barbarism for the working class in different countries.

However, on other questions, particularly on the analysis of the present imperialist war, its origins and prospects, there were differences among the constituent groups which should be discussed and clarified. Consequently, the groups decided to

produce brief statements on these questions and publish them in a bulletin. So a first bulletin was published in English, Farsi and Italian:

<https://en.internationalism.org/content/17331/discussion-bulletin-groups-communist-left> (English)

<https://en.internationalistvoice.org/wp-content/uploads/BulletinE1.pdf> (English)

<https://fa.internationalistvoice.org/wp-content/uploads/BulletinF1.pdf> (Farsi)

<https://it.internationalism.org/content/1739/bollettino-di-discussione-di-gruppi-della-sinistra-comunista> (Italian).

As a result of the discussion that developed between these three groups, further texts were produced, criticising each other's positions. Such a critique is very necessary and valuable, allowing

a definition and clarification of class positions, and providing a balance sheet after a year of war in Ukraine.

This second bulletin therefore contains both the debate and the balance sheet texts produced by the various groups. We have also republished, at the beginning of the bulletin, the joint declaration between the three groups so that it can be further circulated among comrades and the various organisations that belong to the working class.

Workers have no country!

No illusions in pacifism: capitalism can only live through endless wars!

Only the working class can put an end to imperialist war through its class struggle against exploitation leading to the overthrow of the capitalist system.



Praesidium of the founding Congress of the Third International (from left: Klinger, Eberlein, Lenin and Platten)

Joint statement of groups of the international communist left about the war in Ukraine

The organisations of the communist left must mount a united defence of their common heritage of adherence to the principles of proletarian internationalism, especially at a time of great danger for the world's working class. The return of imperialist carnage to Europe in the war in Ukraine is such a time. That's why we publish below, with other signatories from the communist left tradition (and a group with a different trajectory fully supporting the statement), a common statement on the fundamental perspectives for the working class in the face of imperialist war.

Workers have no country!

Down with all the imperialist powers!

In place of capitalist barbarism: socialism!

The war in Ukraine is being fought according to the conflicting interests of all the different imperialist powers, large and small – not in the interests of the working class, which is a class of international unity. It's a war over strategic territories, for military and economic domination fought overtly and covertly by the warmongers in charge of the US, Russia, the Western European state machines, with the Ukrainian ruling class acting as a by no means innocent pawn on the world imperialist chess board.

The working class, not the Ukrainian state, is the real victim of this war, whether as slaughtered defenceless women and children, starving refugees or conscripted cannon fodder in either army, or in the increasing destitution the effects of the war will bring to workers in all countries.

The capitalist class and their bourgeois mode of production cannot overcome its competitive national divisions that lead to imperialist war. The capitalist system cannot avoid sinking into greater barbarism.

For its part the world's working class cannot avoid developing its struggle

against deteriorating wages and living standards. The latest war, the biggest in Europe since 1945, warns of capitalism's future for the world if the working class struggle doesn't lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and its replacement by the political power of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The war aims and lies of the different imperialist powers

Russian imperialism wants to reverse the enormous setback it received in 1989 and become a world power again. The US wants to preserve its super power status and world leadership. The European powers fear Russian expansion but also the crushing domination of the US. Ukraine is looking to ally itself to the most powerful imperialist strong man.

Let's face it, the US and the Western powers have the most convincing lies, and the biggest media lie machine, to justify their real aims in this war - they are supposedly reacting to Russian aggression against small sovereign states, defending democracy against the Kremlin autocracy, upholding human rights in the face of the brutality of Putin.

The stronger imperialist gangsters usually have the better war propaganda, the bigger lie, because they can provoke and manoeuvre their enemies into firing first. But remember the oh-so peaceful performance of these powers recently in the Middle East, in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, how US air power recently flattened the city of Mosul, how the Coalition forces put the Iraqi population to the sword with the false excuse that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. Remember further back the countless crimes of these democracies against civilians over the past century whether it be during the 1960s in Vietnam, during the 1950s in Korea, during the Second World War in Hiroshima, Dresden or Hamburg. The Russian outrages against the Ukrainian population are essentially drawn from the same imperialist playbook.

Capitalism has catapulted humanity into the era of permanent imperialist war. It is an illusion to ask it to 'stop' war. 'Peace'

can only be an interlude in warlike capitalism.

The more it sinks into irresolvable crisis the greater the military destruction capitalism will bring, alongside its growing catastrophes of pollution and plagues. Capitalism is rotten ripe for revolutionary change.

The working class is a sleeping giant

The capitalist system, more and more a system of war and all its horrors, does not currently find any significant class opposition to its rule, so much so that the proletariat suffers the worsening exploitation of its labour power, and the ultimate sacrifices imperialism calls on it to make on the battlefield.

The development of the defence of its class interests, as well as its class consciousness stimulated by the indispensable role of the revolutionary vanguard, conceals an even bigger potential of the working class, the ability to unite as a class to overthrow the political apparatus of the bourgeoisie entirely as it did in Russia in 1917 and threatened to do in Germany and elsewhere at the time. That is, overthrow the system that leads to war. Indeed, the October Revolution, and the insurrections it gave rise to in the other imperialist powers, are a shining example not only of opposition to the war but also of an attack on the power of the bourgeoisie.

Today we are still far from such a revolutionary period. Similarly, the conditions of the proletariat's struggle are different from those that existed at the time of the first imperialist slaughter. On the other hand, what remains the same, in the face of imperialist war, are the fundamental principles of proletarian internationalism and the duty of revolutionary organisations to defend these principles tooth and nail, against the stream when necessary, within the proletariat.

The political tradition that has fought for, and continues to fight for, internationalism against imperialist war

The villages of Zimmerwald and Kienthal in Switzerland became famous

as the meeting places of the socialists from both sides in the First World War to begin an international struggle to bring the butchery to an end and denounce the patriotic leaders of the Social Democratic Parties. It was at these meetings that the Bolsheviks, supported by the Bremen Left and the Dutch Left, brought forward the essential principles of internationalism against imperialist war that are still valid today:

No support of either imperialist camp; the rejection of all pacifist illusions; and the recognition that only the working class and its revolutionary struggle could put an end to the system that is based on the exploitation of labour power and permanently generates imperialist war.

In the 1930s and 1940s it was only the political current now called the Communist Left which held fast to the internationalist principles developed by the Bolsheviks in the First World War. The Italian Left and the Dutch Left actively opposed both sides in the second imperialist world war, rejecting both the fascist and anti-fascist justifications for the slaughter - unlike the other currents which claimed the proletarian revolution, including Trotskyism. In so doing these Communist Lefts refused any support to the imperialism of Stalinist Russia in the conflict.

Today, in the face of the acceleration of imperialist conflict in Europe, the politi-

cal organisations based on the heritage of the Communist Left continue to hold up the banner of consistent proletarian internationalism, and provide a reference point for those defending working class principles.

That's why organisations and groups of the Communist Left today, small in number and not well known, have decided to issue this common statement, and broadcast as widely as possible the internationalist principles that were forged against the barbarism of two world wars.

No support for any side in the imperialist carnage in Ukraine.

No illusions in pacifism: capitalism can only live through endless wars.

Only the working class can put an end to imperialist war through its class struggle against exploitation leading to the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Workers of the World, Unite!

International Communist Current
(www.en.internationalism.org)

Istituto Onorato Damen

<http://www.istitutoonoratodamen.it>

Internationalist Voice
(en.internationalistvoice.org)

Internationalist Communist Perspective (Korea) fully supports the joint statement
(국제코뮤니스트전망 - [International Communist Perspective \(jinbo.net\)](http://InternationalCommunistPerspective(jinbo.net)))

Mailing addresses of the groups that signed the Joint Statement

International Communist Current
uk@internationalism.org;
international@internationalism.org

Istituto Onorato Damen
amministrazione@istitutoonoratodamen.it

Internationalist Voice
contact@internationalistvoice.org

Internationalist Communist Perspective
communistleft@gmail.com



In the midst of the massacres of the First World War, long before broader masses of workers came together on the streets to protest against the war, a small but determined number of internationalists gathered in the Swiss village of Zimmerwald in September 1915 to defend internationalism and to stand up for the unification of workers across the world rejecting pacifist illusions and opposing the various imperialist fronts. A year later, from 25 to 30 April 1916, a similar Conference was held in Kienthal (on the left we can see the hotel where it was held). It was on this political path that the vanguards of the workers' movement of the time, and particularly the Bolsheviks, would give birth to the world party, the Communist International. **Revolutionaries cannot wait for the broad masses of the working class to start moving, they must point out the direction to be followed.**

Comments on the positions of IOD's comrades about the war

The comrades correctly evaluate all wars under any title, religious war, national liberation war, humanitarian war, etc., as an imperialist war, which shows the comrades' loyalty to internationalism, and they write very clearly:

"In our time, every war, even if disguised as a war of religion or national liberation, as a 'humanitarian' war for the defense of human rights and respect for international law, and so on, is always a moment of that *permanent imperialist war* that has been raging for decades throughout the world, sowing death, hunger and destruction." [P 160]

Comrades rightly emphasize that as long as the brutal system of capital exists, war will be an inseparable part of the dirty system of capitalism and write:

"Recourse to war will be inevitable as long as capitalism exists;" [P 186]

Comrades rightly assess the class struggle as the only way to fight the war.

Comrades have an economic view of wars and worse, they believe oil to be the cause of all wars and write like this:

"War is raging anywhere there is even just a single trace of oil." [P 10]

Such a view cannot explain the wars in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, etc. The war is not because of the threat of dollar hegemony but because of the threat of imperialist hegemony. The threat of imperialist hegemony causes the dollar to lose its hegemony. Such a view cannot explain Iran's war in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, etc. Will Rial (Iran's currency) lose its hegemony? In addition to military equipment, Iran has spent more than 30 billion US dollars on the Syrian economic system in recent years to keep Syria's economy afloat. Iran sends free oil to Lebanon. It exports electricity to Iraq, which cannot receive money for it. All this while the economy of Iran is completely collapsing, and it desperately needs these funds to deal with inflation. Iran spends so much because it wants to maintain its hegemony as a regional power.

We disagree with the comrades' opinion that Saddam was eliminated because he

wanted to replace the euro with the dollar or Gaddafi was eliminated because he wanted to replace the dollar with the African currency when the comrades write:

"The regime of Saddam Hussein was eliminated first and then that of Qaddafi. The former wanted to quote Iraqi oil in euros and the latter even wanted to use Libyan gold reserves to create a *pan-African currency* with which to replace, at least in African intercontinental trade, both the dollar and the *franc of the French community of Africa*" [P 22]

Such an opinion is unable to explain, for example, why the US does not eliminate Bin Salman (the crown prince of Saudi Arabia), which wants to sell part of its oil to yuan, or he does not answer Biden's phone to increase oil production?

"Saudi Arabia is reportedly in talks with Beijing about pricing some of its oil sales to China in yuan, according to the Wall Street Journal, in a move that observers say could impact the dollar's supremacy in the global petroleum market." (1)

Interestingly, the comrades themselves agree that Saudi Arabia has agreed to sell its oil in yuan, and they write:

"They are no longer willing to pay such a bribe, so much so that the Saudi government has threatened the United States with selling its oil to China and having it paid for in Yuan." [P 144]

The question is why America does not overthrow Saudi Arabia, while Saudi Arabia wants to destroy the American shale industry, and comrades write:

"In the case of approval: Saudi Arabia and many OPEC countries have made it known that a policy will be adopted to push oil prices below \$30 per barrel »to destroy the shale industry of the United States.«" [P 26]

We do not accept the view of the comrades regarding the cause of the war in Afghanistan, who believe that the US overthrew the Taliban because Afghanistan is on the border with some former Soviet republics with large reserves of natural gas when they write:

"The U.S., by occupying Afghanistan and putting under their direct control one of the major oil sources, besides the huge profits that Unocal and its partners would have made from it - the price of oil and gas being denominated in dollars - would also have strengthened their own imperialistic power." [P 144]

And the refusal of the Taliban to build the oil and methane pipeline that the American oil company wanted, and the comrades write like this:

"The refusal of the Taliban to the construction by the American oil company Unocal - in which the then Vice-President Cheney and the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had strong interests - of an oil pipeline to bring oil and methane extracted from the bottom of the Caspian Sea from the coasts of Turkmenistan to the port of Karachi, the capital of Pakistan." [P 143-144]

During 20 years, America spent more than 3 trillion dollars in Afghanistan. But which oil sources were used? Which pipeline or oil line was laid through Afghanistan? Could those oil resources have earned 3 trillion dollars for America?

Comrades point to imperialist hegemony but do not draw logical conclusions from it. First, let's take a look at the statements of comrades:

"They gave themselves the power to appropriate significant shares of the surplus value produced on a world scale by interfering in the process of shaping the price of oil, and therefore also of the dollar, to their exclusive advantage." [P 60] [Our emphasis]

"Of 'Apple' mobile phones, for example, not a single component is produced in the United States: they are produced in about a hundred different countries, from Latin America to Eastern Europe, Japan, Vietnam, and so on, and then assembled by the infamous Chinese Foxconn. The result is that of the overall surplus value extorted from the proletarians in the various production phases, 50% ends up with 'Apple', which owns the patent and the trademark, because all transactions are settled in dollars. Only about 2% remains in China." [P 30]

It is undeniable that the capital accumulated in the US has not only come from the exploitation of the American working class. Despite the highest labour productivity in the US, the American working class is unable to accumulate this amount of capital. Due to monopolies, a large part of the surplus value produced by workers in other countries also flows to the US. It is imperialist hegemony that guarantees the security and continuation of imperialist monopolies. Without American imperialist hegemony, Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, etc., will not be able to play such a role in the world.

Apparently, the comrades have left aside the issue of oil in relation to the war in Ukraine and believe that the Kremlin and the White House have reached a more or less tacit agreement at the expense of the EU and Ukraine itself, and they write:

“Nonetheless, putting all the pros and cons on the scales, it cannot be ruled out that some kind of agreement, more or less tacit, has been reached between the Kremlin and the White House, at the expense of the EU and Ukraine itself, which risks ending up in a pile of rubble.” [P 163-164]

The comrades go on to say that the United States, Russia, and China have a common interest in weakening the European Union so that they can more easily compete on the world stage, writing:

“Certainly, in this umpteenth war, the United States, Russia and China have a shared interest in preventing the EU from having a common foreign policy and a common army, so as to be able to compete with them on the geo-strategic world stage on equal terms.” [P 161]

The comrades have rightly pointed out that until now, the gangsters mainly were fighting proxy wars, but now it has led to the direct intervention of the great imperialist powers, and therefore we will see more tensions. Comrades write:

“Hitherto fought almost always by “proxy”, that the direct involvement of the major imperialist powers has become inevitable.” [P 82]

This correct argument by comrades cannot be explained by the economic justification of the war and, worse than that, by the oil issue. The war costs are very high, and the global working class is paying the price. Inflation not only in the countries involved in the war but also in countries with negative inflation has reached two digits.

The comrades rightly consider the con-

tainment of China's advance as one of the priorities of the American bourgeoisie:

“Containing the Chinese advance is therefore a matter of vital importance.” [P 80]

Again, the comrades rightly point out that the evacuation of Afghanistan was merely a transfer of forces to deal with a more important enemy, that is, to deal with China's advance:

“And so goodbye to Afghanistan, but not to go home to lick his wounds; only to reposition his forces in an attempt to counter the advance of China and the further decline of the dollar.” [P 148]

Comrades have also rightly considered the closeness of Russia and China to each other not as a real alliance but as a convergence, each pursuing its independent interests:

“Russia, in the first place, is very careful not to be crushed by the powerful ‘friend’ that towers over it economically and financially. The pompous declaration of a “comprehensive strategic partnership for coordination in a new era” signed by Putin and Xi Jinping in June 2019 expresses well the vagueness of the commitments and the prudence of the relationship. This is not a real alliance but a non-binding rapprochement, both parties wanting to keep their hands free.” [P 93]

An examination of the relations between China, Russia and Iran shows that each has pursued its imperialist interests, and the divergence in their imperialist inter-

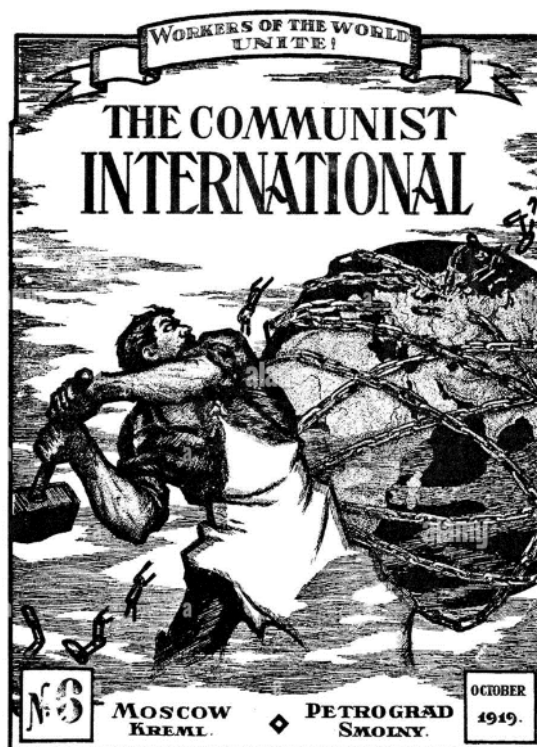
ests can clearly be seen. However, all three of these countries seem to converge on the issue of competition with the West, led by the US.

Despite the correct statements of comrades, the new arrangement of imperialist powers and the balance of social class forces in the new global conditions, that is, on the one hand, China, Russia and Iran, and on the other, the NATO member countries led by the United States and their followers cannot be justified by the hegemony of the dollar, oil, etc. We examined this issue a few years ago in a pamphlet entitled “The New Arrangement of Imperialist Powers in the New Global Conditions”. (2)

Concerning the tension between France and Australia, which sought to cancel the purchase of a multi-billion-dollar submarine from France in favour of joining the new security treaty with the UK and the US, the comrades write:

“We have more than one reason, instead, to believe that it was chosen to hit France because it is not part of NATO and so tell it and all the other EU countries that if they don't stand in every way with the United States they will be treated as their enemy.” [P 149]

Comrades rightly point to the punishment of France by the US, but we disagree with comrades about its cause and reasons. Like Italy, France was a founding member of NATO, which left in 1966 in pursuit of an independent defence system but re-joined as a full member on April 3, 2009. The reason for punishing France is that in the EU,



France has, more than any other country openly emphasized its imperialist interests, which have sometimes conflicted with American interests. Germany, the economic engine of Europe, has only grumbled about its imperialist interests. In the future, we will witness the emphasis of the leading European powers, France, Germany, Italy, etc., on their imperialist interests, which will interfere with each other's interests and with the interests of the US. In other words, we will see more tension between the great imperialist powers in the future.

Comrades refer to a quote from Comrade Bordiga regarding revolutionary defeatism today:

“Turn the war of the bourgeois states into civil war of the whole proletariat against the bourgeoisie of all countries.” [P 167]

The transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war was completely logical and correct at that time, but this slogan is not logical in today's conditions and cannot reflect on the working class. Therefore, emphasis on class struggle is the only alternative.

Comrades evaluate the formation of the internationalist and international communist party as a condition for ending the war and write:

“A new communist and internationalist

party is needed to stop the war.” [P 160]

We need an internationalist and international communist party, but only the working class can end the imperialist war, not an internationalist and international communist party.

Internationalist Voice

1) <https://www.asiafinancial.com/saudi-arabia-could-accept-yuan-for-chinese-oil-sales-wsj>

2) <https://en.internationalistvoice.org/wp-content/uploads/NewArrangementE.pdf>

IOD response to criticism of IV

Comrades,

We have read your criticisms of our analysis of the war very carefully and quite frankly we had not thought that our divergences on the question were so great.

You write: “*The comrades have an economist vision of war and, what is worse, think that oil is the cause of all wars... The threat isn't because of the dollar's hegemony but because there is a threat to imperialist hegemony.*” First of all, we want to make it clear that we do not think that oil as such is “*the cause of all wars*”, but rather oil as the basis for determining the value of the dollar as a means of **payment and international reserves**; this is something that you don't take into account even though it furnishes the United States with enormous economic and financial advantages and constitutes, along with their military capacity, one of the greatest strengths of US imperialism.

In the attempt to demonstrate the fallacy of our analysis, you write: “*Such a view cannot explain Iran's war in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon etc. Will the rial (the Iranian currency) lose its hegemony? In recent years, as well as supplying military equipment, Iran has injected more than 30 billion dollars into the Syrian economic system to keep it afloat. Iran sends oil to Lebanon free of charge. It exports electricity to Iraq and receives no money in return... Iran pays all this out because it wants to maintain its hegemony as a regional power*”.

Comrades, you place a non-convertible currency that serves only for internal circulation, the rial, on the same level as

the dollar, which has been used as a means of payment and for international reserves for more than 70 years. Anyone who knows the mere a,b,c of monetary policy and the system of international exchange can see that this is like placing gold and paper money on the same level. The rial is issued in direct proportion to the actual wealth produced in Iran (see the monetary equation of Keynes and Fisher); the dollar, on the other hand, as a means of payment and of international reserves, is issued not only in proportion to the wealth produced in the USA, but also to a larger or smaller proportion of that produced abroad by those countries that have to use the dollar to regulate their interchange. The advantage is so considerable that it is no accident that in February 1945 – on his way back from the Yalta conference – Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the president of the USA at the time, stopped over in Saudi Arabia to sign a binding agreement stating that the US would defend the Saud monarchy from any external threat or from internal rivals on the condition that its oil would be quoted and sold in dollars. That was six months after the signing of the Bretton Woods agreement (July 1944), by means of which the United States obliged their allies to use the dollar instead of gold for their interchange. Keynes, who was present at B.W. as a representative of Great Britain, realised that such a system would give an enormous advantage to the US to the detriment of their partners and proposed an international payment system based on an account currency (Bancor) that would have no value as a reserve currency but would only serve to carry out exchange between countries who adhered to the agreement and would be based solely on each country's net trade balance – with-

out success. The US objected that gold would remain pivotal as it would be possible at any time to convert dollars into gold at the rate of one ounce to 35 dollars. In fact, this did not reduce by a single cent the income that the US would accrue from the new system of international payments and which they would not have renounced for anything in the world.

What form did – and does – this advantage take? The American economist, John Mueller, explains: “*Imagine for a moment that everyone you meet accepts the cheques you print as payment. In addition, the beneficiaries of your cheques throughout the world do not cash them, but instead use them as money to pay their own expenses (e.g., their oil imports – editor's note). This would have two important consequences for your expenses. The first is that if the entire world were to accept your cheques, you would no longer need money (real – editor's note). Your cheque book would suffice. The second consequence would be that, when you looked at your bank statement, you would be surprised to find that the balance was greater than the amount you had not spent. Why? For the reason already mentioned, that is, the cheques you printed would circulate (from hand to hand) without ever being cashed. The practical result is that this would make available to you more resources to consume and invest. The more others use your cheques as money, the more abundant are the additional resources that you will have at your disposal.*” (1)

In fact, in order to finance US welfare, the Korean war, the one in Vietnam and the enormous American military spend-

ing, the Federal Reserve printed so many that by the late 60s of the last century, it was clear that a lot of them were 'overdrawn' when issued, that is, they were not covered by the agreed amount of gold. Consequently, first France, then Japan, Germany and gradually most of the other countries who had signed the agreement, began asking that the dollars they held be converted into gold. However, they managed to do so only up until 15th August 1971, when the then President Nixon suspended the convertibility of the dollar. For the first time in history a completely inconvertible currency took on the role that up until then had been the exclusive prerogative of *merchandise money*, that is, a money whose intrinsic value corresponds to its nominal value, like gold or another precious metal. However, this also gave rise to the need to control at all costs as many sources of oil as possible, together with its commercial routes, in order to manipulate its price – by raising or lowering it (raising it especially) – in direct proportion to the number of 'cheques' that needed to be circulated in order to maximise the resulting income. From then, there is no oil-producing country, that has tried to escape the dictatorship of the dollar, that the US has not attacked militarily or with relevant sanctions.

To go back to the rial: it is obvious that, as a currency for internal circulation only, it cannot lose a *hegemony* that it has never had.

Now, make an effort to imagine that you possess the largest army in the world with just under 800 bases scattered over the planet and that you are the ones who enjoy the privilege of printing these famous 'cheques' and, suddenly, someone refuses to exchange his oil or gas or some other commodity for them because he thinks it more profitable to be paid in his own currency (as with Gheddafi's Libya) or in the currency of your rival (Saddam and the euro). Would you send him flowers to congratulate him, or would you mobilise your army to bring the rebel to heel? Maybe – in order to show that the cause of the war isn't economic - you would indeed send flowers, but the United States, the country in which not a leaf moves unless the god of money decrees it, set in motion – 'logically, to use your term – its army. They did so against Iraq, against Gheddafi, and against Afghanistan. You deny it but there is extensive literature, even from the United States, which confirms this and that you would do well to read before accusing us of falsehood.

Now we come to Afghanistan. You write: "*Over the last 20 years America has spent more than 3,000 billion dollars in Afghanistan, but what oil sources*

were used? What pipeline or oil line has been constructed in Afghanistan? Where are the oil resources that could have earned America 3,000 billion dollars?" And with that you think you have completely dismantled our entire analysis, calling our conclusions *illogical*.

Just one month after the invasion, a validation of our analysis was provided by the then President of the US and oilman, George Bush. This is what he said in an interview to the San Francisco Chronicle of 2nd November 2001: "*Make no mistake, this is about oil. It's always about oil. It's may be boring to repeat a cliché of the late 90s but it's true.*" It's certainly true that the US were unable to construct the pipeline that they had planned because the Taleban resisted so forcefully, but it's also true that no other country managed to do so either. It's also true that they withdraw from Afghanistan (carrying off all the reserves in dollars held by the Afghan central bank as compensation for war damages) only after a new network of pipelines and the construction of the *new silk road* had made the planned Afghan route entirely superfluous. But it was not superfluous twenty years earlier when the cost of the war could be seen as a very profitable investment as it could substantially increase the quantity of those famous 'cheques' that the US – we repeat – does not earn from the sale of oil or gas that it produces itself or takes from others, but from the fact that these commodities are traded mainly in dollars. In 1990, Mueller, the American economist cited above, estimated that US income from this was about "*500 billion more than what it collected from American taxpayers and with securities underwritten by American and foreign savers.*" (2) It is more difficult to calculate this figure today because, since Alan Greenspan became president of the Fed, it has stopped making public the data necessary to do so. The Chinese analyst, Quiao Liang, says of this, in his book, *The Arc of Empire*, recently translated into Italian, that on the day of his inauguration, Greenspan warned his colleagues, "*You can talk about anything here except the dollar*" and Quiao Liang comments: "*This question is tabu; it concerns the survival of the nation and Americans are reluctant to talk about it.*" (3) However, in the course of time the American public debt, a large part of which is in the form of these 'cheques' with no expiry date, has continued to grow uninterruptedly. *According to data from the analysts of Teleborsa, at the end of the third quarter of 2020 America's public debt and net foreign debt were, respectively, 132.8% and 109% of GDP. At the end of the third quarter of 2020 the net external debt position of the United States had reached a record of 13,950 billion dol-*

lars. This makes the United States the most indebted country in the world in absolute terms. Nevertheless, the dollar is still – 'illogically' according to your criteria – the main reference currency for most *international* financial and commercial transactions. In the attempt to demonstrate that our analyses are unfounded, to the example of Afghanistan you add that of Saudi Arabia – in a way that is completely out of order in our opinion. You say: "*According to the Wall Street Journal, Saudi Arabia is supposed to be negotiating with Beijing to fix the price of some oil sales to China in yuan, which, according to observers could affect the predominance of the dollar on the global oil market... One wonders why America does not overthrow Saudi Arabia, as it is trying to destroy the American shale industry etc., etc.*"

Why? Because:

- a) Saudi Arabia is one of the largest customers of the American war industry.
- b) Together with Israel it is an important bulwark against the expansion of Iran in the Middle East.
- c) It is the biggest oil exporting country in the world that, except for some consignments to China, still quotes and sells oil in dollars.

However, for some time now the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US has not been as idyllic as it was in the period following the Second World War: particularly after the recent decision of OPEC+ to reduce crude oil production by two billion barrels per day. Even as we write, the Italian press has printed a declaration made to the CNN by the spokesman for national security, John Kirby, in which he states bluntly that the relationship between the two countries has come to an end: "*I think that the president has made it clear that we must re-think this relationship in the light of the decision made by OPEC+.*" The president of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee is even more explicit, asking Biden to "*freeze all cooperation with Riyadh, including arms sales*" because, as Richard Blumenthal, the Senator from Connecticut has stressed, it has "*allied itself with an enemy*", Russia (4). If this is not the prelude to a full-scale attack, it certainly comes close. And you think that the decision to sell oil to China in exchange for renminbi has nothing to do with all this?

Now let's look at what you write on page 3 of your document: "*The comrades seem to have dispensed with the question of oil as regards the war in Ukraine and maintain that the Kremlin and the White*

House have reached a more or less tacit agreement at the expense of the EU and of Ukraine itself.” This makes us strongly suspect that you find it very difficult to interpret reality in terms of historic materialism, which for us is the only method that makes it possible to grasp reality with all its contradictions. We hope that your erroneous interpretation of what we have written is due to a bad translation or to a superficial reading of our article “*On the Russian (and American?) invasion of Ukraine*” (<http://www.istitutoonoratodamen.it/joomla34/index.php/documenti/577-sull-invasione-russa-e-americana-dell-ucraina>) and we can only invite you to read it again with more care, especially the second paragraph, “*Sharing and conflict*”. You will easily see that “*as regards the war in Ukraine*” the “*question of oil*” and of the currency in which it is traded remains central to our analysis.

Now we come to the reasoning that leads you to the conclusion that the permanence of imperialist war, of which that in Ukraine is the most recent episode, has no economic logic. You write: “*It’s undeniable that the capital accumulated in the United States does not derive from the exploitation of the American working class alone. Even though the United States has a higher rate of labour productivity, the American working class is not able to accumulate such a large quantity of capital. Because of monopolies, a large part of the surplus value produced by the workers in other countries ends up in the United States. Imperialist hegemony guarantees the security and the continuity of imperialist monopoly.*” Comrades, it is not at all the case that labour productivity is higher in the United States than elsewhere. In fact, because of the constant increase in the parasitic appropriation of surplus value, from Ronald Reagan’s times onwards, it has become cheaper for the United States to import goods than to produce them domestically, to the point that the manufacturing sector is now worth little more than 8% of GDP. On this point, permit us to recommend the book by Anne Case and Angus Deaton, “*Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*” – Princeton University Press 2020 or, if it is easier, our essay “*Sul declino degli Usa e l’inasprirsi della guerra imperialista permanente*” (“*On the decline of the USA and the escalation of permanent imperialist war*”) (<http://www.istitutoonoratodamen.it/joomla34/index.php?start=20>).

To get back to the point: you reject the fact that war has an economic justification, but you admit that the United States appropriates a substantial share of surplus value produced abroad, however you say that this is not for the dollar but

“because of monopolies” and you draw the conclusion that: “*Imperialist hegemony guarantees... the continuity of imperialist monopoly.*”. Comrades, this is a tautology: *imperialist hegemony* and *imperialist monopoly* are two faces of the same coin: imperialism. It’s like saying: *It is imperialism that guarantees the continuity of...imperialism* which seems to explain everything but in fact explains nothing at all.

With the birth of the euro, alliances that had been consolidated over time, cracked; others were formed with the declared aim of excluding the dollar from international trade but, for you, the apple of discord is supposed to be a vague “imperialist hegemony”, which, for some mysterious reason, has nothing to do with the dominance of the dollar. We have to say that this is a case par excellence of the illogicality of...logic.

Libya, for example, has been reduced to rubble, not because it wanted to create an alternative currency to the franc CFA and the dollar, but because, following your logic, it constituted a threat to US “imperialist hegemony”, simply by existing. The same for Iraq, Syria, the sanctions against Venezuela etc.

Basically, you defend a cruder version of the ICC’s position. They too think that war “does not have an economic logic” and that it ceased to have any from the first world war onwards: “*Economic policy in the post-war period is a policy of permanent crisis...the end result of production is chaos*”, unlike in the XIX century when war was still: “*a means of conquering new markets in order to develop the productive forces*” (5). As Carlo Levi would say, *Christ stopped...at the end of the 19th century* although it has been during the 20th century, and after two world wars, that there has been a more vigorous development of the productive forces and of the productivity of labour than in all the previous history of humanity.

This is what happens when you abandon the Marxist critique of political economy and the materialist conception of history which produces it, in the belief that history has outdated them, and substitute them with a sort of historical teleology, in which the driving force is no longer, or not principally, the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but rather ‘*chaos and irrationality*’. In this way you lose sight of the ground beneath your feet. However, we will return to this, if necessary, at another time and in another place. To return to your criticisms, specifically the last one. We read: “*The comrades – that is, us of the IOD – hold that the formation of the internationalist and international party is a con-*

dition for putting an end to the war, they write: “To stop the war a new communist and internationalist party is needed”. They add: “We need an internationalist and international communist party, but it is only the working class can put an end to imperialist war - not an internationalist and international communist party.”

No, comrades, we do not think that it is the party that makes the revolution and stops the war; that is the task of the class. However, we do think – and we repeat it here – that without the organised and organising presence of the party within the class, the class will not be able to spontaneously achieve a revolutionary consciousness. This is even more the case today, divided as it is, by the new organisation and international division of labour, into a plethora of segments scattered all over the planet. It is unable to oppose, even by means of the economic struggle, the attacks on its living and working conditions that the bourgeoisie mounts daily, let alone oppose imperialist war. For this reason, in our view, the party is not only ‘necessary’ but **indispensable**. For the same reason we hold that it is the primary duty of revolutionaries today to devote their energy and intelligence to its construction.

In the absence of the communist party worldwide, the communist revolution is destined to remain a utopia.

In conclusion, comrades, we signed the joint declaration against the war because we agree with the class framework that identifies capital as solely responsible for the conflict and the proletariat as the real victim. However, we think that on the causes of the war and on the analysis of imperialism we see things very differently and this cannot be ignored when considering the prospect of continuing the discussion.

With our most fraternal greetings.

Istituto Onorato Damen

1) Michel Albert – *Capitalismo contro Capitalismo*, Il Mulino edition, pp. 41-42 or *Capitalisme contre Capitalisme*, Seuil edition.

2) Ibid – p.42.

3) Quia Liang – *L’Arco dell’Impero*, Italian editor LEG, p.93.

4) See *Il Fatto quotidiano* of 14th October 2022.

5) So says comrade Ramon of the ICC in his written intervention for the US public meeting of 28th September.

ICC contribution on the causes of the war in Ukraine and its implications for the proletariat

In the opinion of the ICC, the contribution of the comrades of the IOD has two important merits:

- it gives a condensed account of the analytic framework that the IOD uses to explain the causes of the current war in Ukraine;
- it clearly affirms the internationalist position against this war and energetically denounces all the lies aimed at enlisting the working class into one of the contending camps.

On the second point, we want to mark our wholehearted agreement with the following passage in the IOD's contribution: *"In our time, every war, even if it is disguised as a war of religion or of national liberation, as a "humanitarian" war for the defense of human rights and respect for international law, and so on, is always a moment in the permanent imperialist war that has been raging for decades throughout the world, sowing death, hunger and destruction.*

The narrative that distinguishes between "attacked" and "aggressor" is a miserable ploy to conceal the true nature of the imperialist war, and to enlist into the war effort those who are its real victims, namely the millions of proletarians forced to fight, die under bombs or flee their homes so as not to end up under a pile of rubble."

"The conflict in Ukraine demonstrates once again how war is generated by the contradictory mechanisms of the capitalist system and that the real victims of the disasters of war are primarily the workers: the whole of the proletariat, the Ukrainian proletariat as well as the European one, the Russian one as well as the American one, the Chinese one; the proletariat of the whole world."

Having said that, we think that the text contains, not only some contradictions, but also an erroneous analysis of the present period in the life of capitalism, which leads the IOD to explain wrongly

the causes of the war in Ukraine.

We cannot enter into detail about all the formulations that we think are wrong as we, as the IOD have done, want to keep this contribution as brief as possible. We think it more important to show the ICC's analytical framework and bring out how it differs from that of the IOD.

The joint appeal signed by the IOD, IV, the ICC and the ICP rightly points out that it is up to the Communist Left to give the clearest proletarian response to imperialist war. This has two implications:

- only the marxist method can arm the proletariat, and in particular its vanguard, to interpret the direction that society is taking and so enable it to overthrow the capitalist system that dominates it;
- it is essential to study how the Communist International, which gave rise to the CL, analysed the historic period opened up by the First World War, 'the period of war or revolution', as they called it.

The IOD's contribution affirms that the marxist method is indispensable in understanding the current war. However, what it says about this method, particularly on the significance of crises, applies to the situation prevailing in the 19th century with its cyclical commercial crises, and not to the 20th century (and the 21st). We must be very clear about the fundamental difference between these two periods in the life of the capitalist mode of production. In a text that summarises historic materialism very clearly, Marx wrote:

«At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution». (Preface to A Contri-

bution to the Critique of Political Economy, 1859)

What distinguishes the life of the capitalist mode of production in the 20th century from that in the 19th century, is that the capitalist relations of production that made possible the enormous development of society's productive forces, have become an impediment. These are two radically different periods in the life of capitalism and this is expressed very clearly in the Platform of the Communist International of March 1919:

«A new system has been born. Ours is the epoch of the breakdown of capital, its internal disintegration, the epoch of the Communist Revolution of the proletariat».

This radical change in the life of capitalism affects all aspects of society. First of all, its economic base; the nature of its crises obviously changes, moreover the nature and the meaning of war changes too, and with it the attitude that the proletariat must have to it. Lenin states this very clearly. In 1915 he wrote:

« Whoever refers today to Marx's attitude towards the wars of the epoch of the progressive bourgeoisie and forgets Marx's statement that 'the workers have no fatherland', a statement that applies precisely to the epoch of the reactionary, obsolete bourgeoisie, to the epoch of the socialist revolution, shamelessly distorts Marx and substitutes the bourgeois for the socialist point of view. » (Socialism and War, Chapter 1).

On this point, the IOD make several mistakes when they write : *«According to revolutionary Marxism, war is always the result of capitalist contradictions and the economic crisis. As capitalism is the dominant economic and social form internationally, wars are fought in the name of and on behalf of capitalist interests. War is always a capitalist war fought against proletarian interests. These are statements of principle, that have been true throughout the history of capitalism, we cannot do a scholastic reworking of the theoretical elaborations carried out by the revolutionary movement during its century-long history».*

It is right to say that, «*As capitalism is the dominant economic and social form internationally, wars are fought in the name of and on behalf of capitalist interests.*» However, the affirmation that «*war is always the result of capitalist contradictions and the economic crisis*» is wrong and does not stand the test of historic fact. We can give the example of three of the most important wars of the 19th century: The Crimean War (1853-56), the American Civil War (1861-65) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). None of them follows an economic crisis.

Likewise, it is wrong to say that «*War is always a capitalist war fought against proletarian interests*» At the time of the Crimean War, Marx and Engels supported France and England, who were allied with Turkey against Tsarist Russia, because, for them, the defeat of the latter represented a weakening of the main defender of the old feudal order in Europe that was blocking the forward march of capitalism, which would create the economic conditions for socialism. They gave their full support to Lincoln in the American Civil War because they maintained that the victory of the industrial north against the agricultural and slave-owning south would promote the development of capitalism and, therefore, of the working class in America.

The IOD is absolutely right to invoke marxism and historic materialism but we think that their interpretation of it is somewhat flawed. First of all, this interpretation, which ignores or underestimates, the developments or ruptures, that occurred within capitalism between the 19th and the 20th century, may be 'materialist' but it is not very 'historic'. Secondly, by trying to find an immediate economic cause for every war, this

'materialism' turns its back on the dialectic vision developed by Marx and Engels. Engels is particularly categorical on this point: «*According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimate determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit : constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (...), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.*» (Letter to Joseph Bloch, September 1890).

The historic crisis into which capitalism has been sinking since the First World War is obviously the economic basis: capitalist relations of production have become a 'fetter' on the development of the productive forces, to use Marx's term. The dynamic of capitalism is based, as the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 says, on the permanent conquest of new markets, which led the European capitalist states to embark on colonial conquest. By the end of the 19th century, the majority of the planet had been divid-

ed up between these states, which dealt a severe blow to this dynamic. From then on, the conquest of new markets and new colonial territories by any national bourgeoisie could only be at the expense of rival bourgeoisies. An important example of this is the crisis of Fachoda in 1898, which was a confrontation between the two main colonial powers of the day, the United Kingdom and France. The former aimed to establish its domination over a continuous zone North-South from Egypt to South Africa, two regions which it controlled and which were essential to the route to the Indies, the 'jewel in the British Crown'. France wanted to establish a West-East link between its possessions in West Africa and Djibouti on the Red Sea, which was of vital strategic importance for - the route to the Indies. The two lines intersected in present-day Sudan, in Fachoda to be exact. The French flag was planted there on 10th July 1898 but, faced with threats from the UK, the French government was forced to take it down on 12th November of the same year and it was replaced by the Union Jack. This confrontation between France and the United Kingdom was resolved shortly afterwards, in 1904, with the 'Entente Cordiale', an agreement of the two countries against a rival that was becoming more and more powerful and more of a threat, the German Empire. The latter was building a navy to rival that of the United Kingdom and it had designs on French possessions, especially those in Africa. As its formation as a country had come late, Germany had been all but excluded from the colonial partition of the world ; it had less possessions than the 'small countries' such as Belgium, Holland and Portugal. Moreover, by building a Berlin-Bagdad railway it was aiming to open up a route to the Middle East with its oil wealth. This ambition conflicted with those of the two colonial



The Christmas truce was a series of widespread unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front of the First World War around Christmas 1914. In particular, soldiers of the German and English armies are shown alongside, photographed together in a day of fraternization between "enemy" troops. Unfortunately, the lack of an internationally organized avant-garde with clear perspectives weighed heavily on this historical moment.

powers in the region, France and, above all, the United Kingdom and also with those of Russia which wanted to gain access to 'warm waters' by taking control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. In this way, the conditions and the causes of the First World War were laid down and the alliances between the various belligerents decided.

As we have already said, for revolutionaries at the time it was clear that the First World War marked a fundamental turning point in the significance of war in the life of capitalism. The wars of the previous century – wars of colonial conquest and national wars – that contributed to the expansion of capitalism, had had their day. From then on, all wars were reactionary, as was the capitalist domination of the world in its entirety. This is why it is impossible for the proletariat to support this or that war, no matter what it is dressed up as, because its task is now to overthrow capitalism.

The First World War, which was an imperialist war to carve up the world between the capitalist powers, also marked the emergence of two important aspects of social life: state capitalism and the growing dominance of militarism. Throughout the 20th century, state capitalism has taken different forms : fascism in Italy and Germany, the stalinist regime in Russia, the New Deal in the United States (with its later materialisation as the 'Welfare State'), etc. but it always expresses the need for the various bourgeoisies to grant the state, their ultimate defender, control over the economic and social life of a dying system (this includes the integration into the state of the union organisations created by the working class in the 19th century). The dominance of militarism shows that imperialist confrontations have become more and more permanent during the 20th century and up to the present day, that these confrontations involve the major powers directly on the military level (as in the two world wars) or they take the form of support for this or that minor belligerent. Since the Second World War, the world has not experienced a single moment of peace, it has been assailed by more than a hundred wars, which have claimed as many or more victims than in the second imperialist butchery. The dominance of militarism over all aspects of the life of society means that this important phenomenon that appeared during the First World War, together with state capitalism, is perpetuated in different forms : it is the economy that is placed at the service of war or the preparation for it : it is no longer war that is placed at the service of the needs of the economy, even though it is the economic contradictions of a dying

mode of production are the « *ultimate determining element* » (as Engels says in the passage above) in the predominance of militarism.

For this reason, ever since the First World War, war has become more and more irrational from the point of view of the capitalist economy as a whole and even for most of the 'victors'. It is enough to look at the terrible destruction endured by the Allied Powers during the Second World War, from which the only power to profit in any way was the US. Moreover, in the subsequent wars waged by the latter (in Vietnam up to 1975, in Afghanistan and Iraq from the beginning of the 2000s), it has spent trillions of dollars for an economic gain of next to nothing, not to mention the abyss created by its military budget, which contributes to the decline of its competitiveness on the world market.

This is the situation in which the current war in Ukraine is unfolding. Try as one might, one cannot find an immediate economic cause. From the point of view of Russia, the war could not have benefited it much even if it had been more successful militarily. This is especially so as the industrial plants in the east of Ukraine have been reduced to rubble. From the point of view of 'Ukraine's friends', the economic cost of the war is already making itself felt, in particular in an explosion at the level of inflation. In fact, this war can only be understood within the framework of general and historic strategic issues.

Obviously, the United States is largely responsible for generating this war, by integrating into NATO, the military organisation under its control, most of the countries of the former Warsaw Pact and even some of those that were once members of the old soviet republic, such as the Baltic countries. It could not extend this policy to the inclusion of Ukraine into NATO because of opposition from France and Germany. On the other hand, the war is enabling America to tighten its control over those countries that tend to pursue a more independent policy. In fact, behind the United States' attempts to bring Russia to heel, lies its need and its will to contain the rising power of its real international rival, China. The latter has understood the message perfectly: it supports its Russian 'friend' only verbally and it is doing so less and less decisively.

That this military adventure of Putin is totally irrational from the point of view of the interests of Russian capital, is becoming increasingly obvious. Its very irrationality convinced most governments and 'experts' that the presence of Russian weapons along Ukraine's bor-

ders at the beginning of 2022, was not a preparation for military intervention. In fact, the intentions of Putin and his regime were basically political; to restore the status of major power to a Russia that had collapsed catastrophically in 1990. As the strategist Brzezinski, National Security Advisor to President Carter, said « *without Ukraine Russia is a country, with Ukraine it is an empire* ». To restore its status as a major power, Russia had to regain control of Ukraine, which was in danger of being integrated into NATO, in accordance with its constitution.

Unfortunately for Putin and his followers, the military and economic power of Russia was not up to their ambitions. It is very possible that Putin will lose his position (or even his life) in the wake of this failure. He obviously deserves no sympathy from the international proletariat or from communists. However, it is also vital that the latter rigorously denounce all the lying campaigns of the so-called 'democratic' and 'freedom' camp, that are intended to draw the exploited into the war-mongering activities of the bourgeoisie as a whole; that they denounce the prophets of the 'apostles of peace', who 'forget' to specify that the barbarity of war can only be ended when the proletariat brings down the system that generates this barbarity – capitalism.

International Communist Current

(Continued from page 14)

Only the international class struggle to overthrow ...

Even if the internationalist workers are a minority now and a revolutionary movement like 100 years ago does not exist, the international action of the communist left and internationalists will contribute to the revival of class struggle, the creation of working class own methods, and the emergence of a new subject.

Workers have no country!

No support for any side in the imperialist carnage in Ukraine!

No War But the Class War!

Let's spread the struggle for the right to live against making the workers pay for the capitalist crisis!

Let's end the imperialist war with the international class struggle to overthrow the capitalist system!

December, 2022

Internationalist Communist Perspective

Only the international class struggle to overthrow the capitalist system can stop the imperialist war

Ten months have passed since Russia invaded Ukraine. The United States and Western countries have imposed all-round sanctions against Russia, but Russia has not stopped its aggression. In the war, the European Union (EU) was the first to finance Ukraine's arms procurement, and Putin warned against the use of nuclear weapons. This war is unprecedented since World War II, and humanity as a whole is faced with a more generalized war crisis.

In 2006, the crisis of war also escalated on the Korean Peninsula, and at the first "International Communist Conference" held in Korea at that time, there was an "Internationalist Declaration Against the Threat of War". The declaration made it clear that it is the worldwide struggle of the working class that can stop the "defence of internationalist principles" and the imperialist war. "We declare that it is the worldwide struggle of the workers that can forever put an end to the barbarism and imperialist wars and the threat of nuclear destruction that are swarming mankind under capitalism."

Fifteen years have passed since the Declaration of Internationalism. The danger of war on the Korean Peninsula persisted, the capitalist economic crisis intensified the imperialist clash, and another war in Europe was provoked. In this crisis, the international solidarity of the working class for the defence of proletarian internationalism and the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, the cause of war, has become more and more important.

The long-standing capitalist crisis that has not been resolved since the collapse of the speculative bubble in 2008 has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, in the capitalist world, the threat of imperialist war is escalating amid the deepening economic crisis, the risk of infectious diseases, and the increase in environmental disasters, creating cracks everywhere. The war in Ukraine that occurred under these circumstances was not Putin's sudden action, but meant a new phase of the imperialist clash that was on the verge of a generalized war amid a prolonged economic crisis. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO continued to expand its influence into Eastern Europe, and Russia tried to regain the status of an

imperialist power again. The war in Ukraine united NATO and the European Union (EU) around the United States and brought Russia into the arms of China, setting the stage for an extensive imperialist war.

All the damage of war for the interests of the ruling class fell miserably on the proletariat. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and soldiers on both sides have already been killed and millions of refugees have been driven into the streets. The war will cause further increases in energy and grain prices, exacerbating poverty and worsening living conditions for workers around the world. Those who benefit from this war that destroys the lives of the working class are the ruling class exploiting the working class. They make the working class die and kill each other through nationalist ideology and war propaganda machines for economic, political and military dominance and profit.

All wars today have the character of imperialist warfare, which has only brought suffering, death, and further destruction to mankind. In these wars, the result of the struggle for national liberation was not the weakening of imperialism, but the replacement of other imperialist forces. This proved that the so-called "national liberation struggle" is far from the "anti-imperialist struggle" because it forces the working class to choose one side of the ruling class or the other of imperialism to identify themselves with some of the ruling class.

In the midst of the deepening imperialist conflict, the position of internationalists against the nationalist ideology that still insists on defence of the motherland and national independence has not changed. It is proletarian internationalism to convert the "imperialist war into civil war" raised by revolutionaries in the First World imperialist genocide war. In 1917-18, the working class put an end to the imperialist genocide by forcing the bourgeoisie through revolutionary struggle. The same is true of the attitude of the working class to the war in Ukraine. It is to turn the imperialist war into a "class war" against the ruling class without taking sides in the war between the ruling classes, where the working class kill each other.

Supporting one side in an imperialist war is supporting the ruling class, and pacifism that refuses to turn an imperialist war into a class war neutralises the class struggle. There is only one way for the working class to escape from the crises of capitalism, suffering and the deadly threat of war. It is to reject all ruling ideologies, including nationalism, and fight in solidarity internationally for the common interests of the working class. It is to stop the imperialist war through international class struggle, recognising that the only war worth fighting for the workers is a class war, a war against the exploiters.

The war in Ukraine expresses the deep and old crisis of capitalism. Today, the war is not only taking place in Ukraine, but also local warfare in more than 60 - 3 - regions. The crisis of mankind as a whole is progressing not only through war, but also through poverty, infectious diseases, and environmental destruction. We live in an increasingly dangerous world. War destroys the lives of the working class and families, but the ruling class fights for its own benefit. The race to war is a result of the operation of the capitalist system itself. It's not because of some bad leaders, it's a problem with the capitalist system. The working class now has no prospects without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Therefore, the real alternative we face is 'War or Revolution?' In order to fundamentally end the imperialist war that will lead to the destruction of mankind, it is necessary for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism through an international class war and to build a new system, a world community of freely united producers.

The working class must reject all the logic of war and peace led by the ruling class in the imperialist war and take a position of its own. In addition, it is necessary to clarify the internationalist position against the hypocrisy of all pacifist anti-war movements that are not associated with the movement to change the capitalist system, and against the support of "less bad" one side of imperialism claimed by pseudo-socialists.

(Continue on page 13)

Balance sheet for a year of imperialist war and legitimacy of the positions of internationalists

The Russian–Ukraine (NATO) imperialist war has reached its one-year anniversary. A balance sheet now needs to be drawn up of the duties of revolutionaries and internationalists in the face of this imperialist war; a balance sheet of the forces of the imperialist powers and, most importantly, the position of the working class in the wake of this war, so that we can determine the internationalist horizon and perspective, looking back over the past year.

Groups within the international communist left have declared that workers have no country to defend it, and workers' blood should not be shed in an attempt to define the capitalists' homeland. The struggle of wage slaves is pitted against the exploitation and brutality of global capitalism. These groups have declared allegiance to the tradition of the Zimmerwald Conference, a political tradition that has fought for internationalism against imperialist wars (and continues to do so), and they have issued a joint statement. The joint statement emphasizes that although today's conditions are different from those of 1915, the basic principles of internationalism versus the might of imperialism (adopted at the Zimmerwald Conference) are still valid today:

No support of either imperialist camp; the rejection of all pacifist illusions; and the recognition that only the working class and its revolutionary struggle could put an end to the system that is based on the exploitation of labour power and permanently generates imperialist war.

In line with the rhetoric of demagogues in democratic countries who have declared that Putin's attack on Ukraine constitutes an attack on democracy, and their calls to defend democracy against this dictator's brutality, the material grounds of this imperialist war must be exposed to the public. In an era of capitalist decline, war has become inescapable for many countries, and not a year goes by without some form of war somewhere on this earth. If we leave aside the lies of the Democrats, the goal of the US and NATO has been to encircle Russia through the incorporation of former Eastern Bloc countries into NATO or to launch "colour revolutions" in countries that were not formerly members of

NATO. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it took time for Russia to assert its imperialist ambitions as a claimant to world power. Russia did not want Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO; rather, it hoped for withdrawal of NATO military equipment from these countries and failure of the NATO blockade, so that Russia could then expand its sphere of influence.

Following the collapse of the bipolar world, the US was no longer able to exercise its hegemony as it had done during the Cold War. Therefore, in order to maintain its hegemony in the new world order and to weaken its rivals, the US tried to line up the other imperialist powers behind itself by waging wars, albeit with humanitarian words.

In recent years, however, the countries that made up the former Western bloc have become more fragmented than before. Although NATO expanded after the end of the Cold War, with France and a number of eastern European countries joining it, internal divisions within NATO member states intensified. French President Macron has publicly stated that NATO has suffered brain death (1). The US has tried to downplay its presence in NATO, and John Bolton, Trump's former national security adviser, declared that if Trump won the election, the US would leave NATO (2). Italy, a major European member of NATO and where US nuclear weapons are based, has shown interest in the New Silk Road. The US has imposed sanctions on Turkey, which is a member of NATO and also has US nuclear weapons. Tensions between NATO members Turkey and Greece over oil exploration and drilling escalated to the point where France sent a warship to the Mediterranean Sea for the purposes of "regional control". Britain has remained far removed from other European countries.

On the other hand, China is an economic competitor for the US. The strategy of trying to contain China started long before Trump's presidency, and Biden has continued to enforce this policy. Examination of developments that have occurred whilst the war in Ukraine has been raging shows that in the new conditions, the US, by lining up NATO and other countries behind it, has tried to create serious obstacles to China's progress and imperialist ambitions in the name of the "New Silk Road".

The events of the last year also show that the Russian military operation has been in the interests of the US in the short term, and the US has been able to consolidate its hegemony for the time being. Having cut trade ties with Russia, the EU has become partly dependent on the US for energy. It is apparent that Russia underestimated the humiliating US withdrawal from Afghanistan and thought that, given the differences between Western countries, the US would not be able to organize resistance against Russia and Russia can not only take advantage of the existing differences but also fuel those differences.

NATO has significantly increased its presence in eastern Europe, and two new countries – Finland and Sweden – are joining NATO. The important point here is that Sweden is a country that was "neutral" during World War I, World War II and has not entered into any war in the past 200 years, yet now feels that it must join the NATO military alliance. This shows the new arrangement of imperialist powers in the new world conditions.

Although the US has lined up NATO member countries, Japan and Australia, etc., behind it, apparently forming a united front, NATO's iron front has had cracks from the very beginning. Two key NATO members – France and Germany – are openly pursuing their own imperialist interests, and this issue will threaten the NATO alliance in the long run. *Politico*, an American magazine, recently published an article entitled "Berlin doesn't trust Washington" (3), discussing NATO's internal disagreements regarding sending tanks. France will not have forgotten its recent punishment meted out by the US and the UK, terminating its submarine contract with Australia. Turkey's objection to acceptance of Finland and Sweden into NATO shows the weakness of the united front. Turkey is a member of NATO, but recently, Ibrahim Kalin, spokesman for the Turkish presidency, pointed out that Turkey does not support Western sanctions against Russia, and he said:

"Ankara will not join Western sanctions against Moscow, they will do more damage to Turkey's economy than Russia's... the world community does not have sufficient desire to create conditions for serious negotiations between Russia and

Ukraine, which makes it impossible to negotiate a peace agreement on the issue of Ukraine...Europe and the USA should also participate in possible negotiations for the settlement of the situation in Ukraine, at the same time, any peace plan regarding Ukraine will be doomed to failure if Russia's opinion is not taken into account.” (4)

Another important issue is that while Russia seeks to expand its sphere of influence through the Ukraine war, Turkey is also expanding its influence in Central Asia, which is considered to be Russia's backyard. Turkey, with the help of Azerbaijan, wants to develop an alternative route for oil and gas from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, bypassing Russia. This interference in imperialist interests will undoubtedly show itself in some way.

Hungary, another NATO member country and also a member of the EU, expressed its opposition to the EU's sanctions against Russia last year. The Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Szijjarto, said:

“We want peace, not another [sanctions] package. We are a direct neighbour of Ukraine. The impact of the war on us is immediate and severe.” (5)

One day after the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs' statement, the EU tried to punish Hungary. Therefore, the EU Commission president announced that she would recommend the freezing of payments to Hungary under the EU pandemic recovery fund as well as under regular EU cohesion funds, because of rule of law concerns in Hungary. (6)

Recently, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs has again stated that Hungary will not support any sanctions by the EU that would limit nuclear cooperation between Hungary and Russia. Regarding the new sanctions package planned by the EU against Russia, he said:

“We will not support any step, no matter how small, that restricts Hungarian-Russian nuclear cooperation...Sanctions have taken the EU to a dead end. Sanctions harm us Europeans more than the Russians. Everyone can see that. This is not a political statement, it's a fact.” (7)

Historically, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region were united by the West and followed by the US. But recently, against the will of America, OPEC+ extended its previous decision not to increase the level of crude oil production, a decision that was tantamount to a rejection of Biden, who had visited the Middle East. This decision by OPEC+ caused more dissatisfaction on

the part of the US, which called it a kind of alignment with Russia in the Ukraine war. China, which has become America's economic rival, has taken advantage of the tension in America's relations with countries in the Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, and wants to increase its influence in the Middle East.

While Saudi-US relations are particularly tense regarding the issue of energy security, Xi Jinping paid a several-days-long visit to Saudi Arabia on 7 December, where he participated in meetings, including the leaked “Summit of the heads of Arab countries and China”. Before his trip, Xi Jinping published an article in Saudi Arabia's *Al-Riyadh* newspaper in order to prepare for his trip and achieve the intended outcomes. In this article, he talked about the strategic view of China and the fact that relations between China and Arab countries go back as far as 2000 years ago and to Chinese and Arab civilizations. Xi Jinping emphasized that the Silk Road made exchange between civilizations possible.

During this meeting, dozens of memorandums and agreements were signed between the parties, the most important of which is the 2030 vision document of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the China Belt and Road Plan (New Silk Road). The important point to note is that in 2022, Saudi Arabia attracted the most Chinese investment in the New Silk Road project globally. In the same year, trade between China and Saudi Arabia grew by about 30% and was several times greater than the trade between China and Iran; on the flip side, Iranian media reported “the Chinese turning away from investing in Iran”. (8)

Differences following the imperialist war in Ukraine have even extended to Latin America because of the imperialist interests of the parties involved. Throughout the war in Ukraine, Argentina has been dissatisfied with the sanctions imposed on Russia and has stated that these sanctions will not help to solve the crisis and will negatively impact on Argentina's economy. Because of the sanctions, the volume of trade between Russia and Argentina has decreased by 30%.

During the outbreak of the imperialist war, we announced that although Russia, China and Iran have found a kind of convergence in opposition to America, each of them is pursuing its own imperialist interests, which sometimes conflict with the others' interests. Contrary to the notion that China considers Iran to be its strategic ally, the visit of the Chinese president to Saudi Arabia and the final statement of the joint summit meeting of the leaders of China and six emirates of

the Persian Gulf in the capital of Saudi Arabia came as a shock to everyone and confirmed the internationalists' belief that each of the gangsters is pursuing its own imperial interests. The statement highlighted Iran's “nuclear file, ballistic missiles, military drones and support for terrorist groups” as being problematic for the Gulf countries in their relations with Iran. The statement asked the Islamic Republic to refrain from “interfering in the internal affairs of countries”, to respect the “principles of good neighbourliness”, to observe the “non-proliferation regime” of nuclear weapons and to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The president of China also called for resolution of Iran's disputes with the United Arab Emirates over the three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb. In other words, the Chinese president even questioned the territorial integrity of Iran.

While Saudi Arabia is leading a Western-backed military coalition in the war against Iran-backed Houthis, the Sino-Saudi statement emphasizes that the Houthis must commit to a ceasefire and cooperate with the UN in establishing peace.

Although Russia has close relations with Iran, and Iran has recently helped Russia by sending it drones, imperialist interests in relation to Russia are also evident. Iran has not been able to sell its oil because of the sanctions imposed on Iran. China was formerly one of Iran's oil customers, buying Iran's oil at a special discount. However, following imposition of the Russian sanctions, the sale of Russian oil to China, at a discounted price, has overshadowed the sale of Iranian oil and has limited Iran's income, to the detriment of its economy. In line with its imperialist interests and desire to maintain some kind of relationship with Azerbaijan, Russia has recently arrested five citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including Yusufov, who wanted to form a religious group related to the Quds Force, called the “Azerbaijan Muslim Unity”. These individuals were handed over to Azerbaijan on 21 December 2022 (9). Considering Israel's influence in Azerbaijan, this issue was a hard blow for Iran.

With a green light from the US, Israel has repeatedly carried out large-scale air and missile attacks on Iranian positions in Syria, and Iranian gangsters have remained silent and humiliated. Russia's knowledge of Israel's attacks on Iranian positions in Syria and positions in Syria itself, together with a lack of effort on the part of Russia in terms of preventing these attacks, indicates that Putin would rather pursue Russia's imperialist interests and maintain some kind of balance

in its relations with Iran and Israel.

The European Union is trying to take advantage of the current situation (Russia's involvement in the Ukraine war) and expand its influence in Central Asia. In this context, the EU, with the support of the US, has sent 100 officials to monitor the borders of Armenia for two years. Russia has accused the EU of trying to fuel "geopolitical conflict" in the region and seeking to expand its influence in the region. (10)

Although there is a kind of synergy between Russia and China, and some of Russia's military actions have China's tacit support, we must not forget that each of them is pursuing its own – sometimes conflicting – imperialist interests. It is in this context that the *Financial Times* has reported that China's new investments in the Russian section of the New Silk Road have reduced to zero following the imposition of Western sanctions in protest against the Ukraine war. (11)

In line with its imperialist interests and a kind of balance of power on the imperialist chessboard, China recently invited President Raisi of Iran to China. On 14 February 2023, Raisi arrived in China for a three-day visit. Previously, Iranian officials had said that Raisi would travel to China to operationalize the 25-year agreement between Iran and China, but it was later announced that 20 cooperation documents were signed during this meeting. Iranian newspapers questioned Raisi's trip ahead of an apology from China and wrote:

"Why did the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran visit Beijing before the President of China apologized or corrected Iran's anti-territorial integrity stance during his visit to Saudi Arabia in December?" (12)

In the meeting between the presidents of Iran and China, Xi Jinping did not mention the issues raised in the final statement of the joint meeting of the leaders of China and the six emirates of the Gulf region and only emphasized the national sovereignty of Iran, saying:

"Xi Jinping emphasized that China supports Iran in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national dignity, supports Iran in resisting unilateralism and bullying, opposes external forces interfering in Iran's internal affairs and undermining its security and stability." (13)

China, now the world's second-largest economy, is projected to become the world's largest economy by 2030, overtaking the US. While China's economic

growth was initially sluggish, Western countries (led by the US) supported China's economic growth. But when China emerged as the world's second-largest economy, tensions took a serious turn. China's rise as an economic power is directly related to the decline of the US, which is at the centre of the global capitalist crisis. China now presents a serious challenge to the US.

The undeniable fact is that today's tensions are a foretaste of future imperialist tensions. The main confrontations will be between the US and China. The US wants to contain China, which is a strategic enemy, and its containment strategy began long before Trump. Biden is continuing this policy, wants to create serious problems in order to curtail China's imperialist progress and thwart its ambitions in the name of the Silk Road. The New Silk Road, with its infrastructure, will allow China to access the ends of the earth and expand its imperialist power everywhere.

In previous decades, mastering oil resources could be a tool for hegemony, but semiconductors and chips are now rivalling the supremacy of oil. Whoever controls this industry has economic power. America has been a key player in computer technology, but its dominance is now being challenged by China, intent on developing modern semiconductor technology (nanometre-sized components) (14). The US has banned sales and exports of semi-media production technology, including specialized labour. Modern semiconductors are designed in America and manufactured in Taiwan, South Korea and Japan but assembled in China. Most modern semi-media technology is currently produced in Taiwan, and China alone buys more than 50% of the semi-media manufactured globally. Access to modern semi-media is not only desirable but vital for China's economic growth, and Taiwan plays a vital role for both China and America.

The pursuit of imperialist interests has been clearly visible both on the NATO front and among countries that have somehow converged in opposition to America, and this imperialist interference means that we will witness a new round of imperialist tensions and more chaos across the world. Instability will spread from Europe to the Middle East, and from the Caucasus to Southeast Asia.

In the wake of the war, many countries have increased their war expenses (defence budget) to an unprecedented level. Naturally, increases in military budgets will have a knock-on effect on the living standards of the working class. The working class is – again – paying the price of war, with rampant inflation and

falling living standards. Inflation has reached double digits – not in peripheral capitalism but in metropolitan capitalism.

An era of imperialist war is not favourable ground for the flourishing and expansion of proletarian battles, but the capitalist crisis provides ideal conditions for the growth of class consciousness and proletarian battles. The conditions of the working class during the Ukrainian war are not comparable to those of 1914, and the working class was in an even more desperate situation than 1914. However, internationalists have declared, regarding the current situation, that revolutionaries should not wait for a class movement. The activities of revolutionaries will not be carried out in a vacuum and will not be in vain. Most importantly, this imperialist war reminds us of the need to raise the flag of internationalism even if it isolates the revolutionaries from the masses of the working classes. This is one of the doctrines of Lenin and Luxemburg, and this doctrine continues to inspire revolutionaries.

The communist left has proclaimed that peace carnivals and anti-war campaigns in Western and European countries are part of NATO's war propaganda, in line with NATO's imperialist goals. As long as we remain in the grip of capitalism, there will be no peace. The flames of war will continue to be fanned. Only the working class can offer real peace to humanity – through class struggle and by challenging capitalism.

Internationalists declared, in the same joint statement, that proletarian internationalism is a reaction to imperialist war and that the international proletariat is the only force capable of stopping imperialist war. The global working class, for its part, must continue to fight against deteriorating wages and living standards.

Today, we can see the joint statement's predictions of a year ago. We are witnessing massive labour protests and strikes by the working class in defence of living standards across the globe, from Europe to Asia and from Africa to America. In other words, we are currently witnessing a revival of the class struggle the world over. Internationalists declared that the working class is being forced to defend its standard of living, which is likely to involve a confrontation with the imperialist war.

Blood, filth and sludge fall from head to toe of the cruel capitalist system. From within the capitalist peace, only the flames of war will ignite.

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The war in Ukraine is fuelling barbarism and chaos around the world

More than a year already of appalling carnage; hundreds of thousands of soldiers massacred on both sides; more than a year of indiscriminate bombings and executions, murdering tens of thousands of civilians; more than a year of systematic destruction turning the country into a gigantic field of ruins, while the displaced populations number in the millions; more than a year of huge budgets sunk into this butchery on both sides (Russia is now committing about 50% of its state budget to the war, while the hypothetical reconstruction of the ruined Ukraine would require more than 400 billion dollars). And this tragedy is far from over.

In terms of imperialist confrontations, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine was also an important qualitative step in the sinking of capitalist society into war and militarism. It is true that since 1989, various warlike ventures have shaken the planet (the wars in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria...), but these had never involved a confrontation between major imperialist powers. The Ukrainian conflict is the first military confrontation of this magnitude between states to take place on Europe's doorstep since 1940-45. It involves the two largest countries in Europe, one of which has nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction and the other is supported financially and militarily by NATO, and has the potential to result in a catastrophe for humanity.

Beyond the indignation and disgust provoked by this large-scale carnage, it is the responsibility of revolutionaries not to limit themselves to general and abstract condemnations, but to draw the main lessons of the Ukrainian conflict in order to understand the dynamics of imperialist confrontations and to warn the workers about the exacerbation of chaos and the intensification of military barbarity.

Offensive of US imperialism exacerbates chaos

While Russia invaded Ukraine, a major lesson of this year of war is undoubtedly that behind the protagonists on the battlefield, US imperialism is on the offensive.

Faced with the decline of its hegemony, the US has been pursuing an aggressive policy to defend its interests since the 1990s, especially towards the former leader of the rival bloc, Russia. Despite the commitment made after the disintegration of the USSR not to enlarge NATO, the Americans have integrated all the countries of the former Warsaw Pact into this alliance. In 2014, the 'Orange Revolution' replaced the pro-Russian regime in Ukraine with a pro-Western government and a popular revolt threatened the pro-Russian regime in Belarus a few years later. Putin's regime responded to this strategy of encirclement by employing its military strength, the remnant of its past as a bloc leader. After Putin's 2014 takeover of Crimea and Donbass, the US began arming Ukraine and training its military to use more sophisticated weapons. When Russia deployed its army to Ukraine's borders, they tightened the trap by claiming that Putin would invade Ukraine while assuring that they themselves would not intervene on the ground. By means of this strategy of encircling and suffocating Russia, the United States has pulled off a masterstroke that has a much more ambitious goal than simply halting Russian ambitions:

- As of now, the war in Ukraine leads to a clear weakening of Moscow's remaining military power and a lowering of its imperialist ambitions. It also demonstrates the absolute superiority of US military technology, which is the basis for the "miracle" of "little Ukraine" pushing back the "Russian bear";

- The conflict also allowed them to tighten the screws within NATO, as European countries were forced to fall in line with the American position, especially France and Germany, which were developing their own policies towards Russia and ignoring NATO, which French President Macron considered to be "brain dead" until two years ago;

- The primary objective of the Americans in teaching Russia a lesson was undoubtedly an unequivocal warning to their main challenger, China. For the past ten years, the United States has been defending its leadership against the rise of the Chinese challenger: first, during the

Trump presidency, through an open trade war; but now the Biden administration has stepped up the pressure militarily (the tensions around Taiwan). Thus, the conflict in Ukraine has weakened China's only important military ally and is putting a strain on the New Silk Road project, one axis of which passed through Ukraine.

While a polarisation of imperialist tensions has gradually emerged between the US and China, this is the product of a systematic policy pursued by the dominant imperialist power, the US, in an attempt to halt the irreversible decline of its leadership. After Bush senior's war against Iraq, Bush junior's polarisation against the "axis of evil" (Iraq, Iran, North Korea), the US offensive today aims to prevent any emergence of major challengers. Thirty years of such a policy have not brought any discipline and order to imperialist relations. On the contrary, it has exacerbated every man for himself, chaos and barbarism. The United States is today a major vehicle for the terrifying expansion of military confrontations.

The intensification of every man for himself and of tensions

Contrary to superficial journalistic statements, the development of events shows that the conflict in Ukraine has by no means led to a "rationalisation" of the contradictions. In addition to the major imperialisms, which are under pressure from the US offensive, the explosion of a multiplicity of ambitions and rivalries accentuates the chaotic and irrational character of imperialist relations.

The accentuation of the American pressure on the other major imperialisms can only push them to react:

- For Russian imperialism, it is a question of survival because it is already obvious that, whatever the outcome of the conflict, Russia will emerge clearly diminished from the adventure which has exposed its military and economic limits. It is militarily exhausted, having lost two hundred thousand soldiers, especially among its most experienced elite units, as well as a large quantity of tanks, planes and modern helicopters. It is eco-

nomically weakened by the enormous costs of the war and the collapse of the economy caused by Western sanctions. While the Putin faction is trying by all means to keep power, tensions are arising within the Russian bourgeoisie, especially with the more nationalistic fractions or certain "warlords" (eg Prigozhin, leader of the Wagner Group of mercenaries). These unfavourable military and unstable political conditions could even lead Russia to resort to tactical nuclear weapons.

- The European bourgeoisies, especially France and Germany, had urged Putin not to go to war and were even prepared, as Boris Johnson's indiscretions revealed, to endorse a limited attack in scale and time to replace the regime in Kiev. Faced with the failure of the Russian forces and the unexpected resistance of the Ukrainians, Macron and Scholz had to sheepishly adhere to the US-led NATO position. However, there is no question of submitting to US policy and abandoning their own imperialist interests, as illustrated by the recent trips of Scholz and Macron to Beijing. Moreover, both countries have sharply increased their military budgets with a view to a massive reequipment of their armed forces (a doubling for Germany, i.e. 107 billion euros). These initiatives have also raised tensions in the Franco-German couple, particularly over the development of joint arms programmes and over the EU's economic policy.

- China has positioned itself very cautiously in relation to the Ukrainian conflict, in the face of the difficulties of its Russian "ally" and the thinly veiled threats of the United States towards it. For the Chinese bourgeoisie, the lesson is bitter: the war in Ukraine has shown that any global imperialist ambitions are illusory in the absence of a military and economic force capable of competing with the US superpower. Today, China, which does not yet have armed forces equal to its economic expansion, is vulnerable to American pressure and to the surrounding war chaos. Of course, the Chinese bourgeoisie is not giving up its imperialist ambitions, in particular the reconquest of Taiwan, but it can only make progress in the long term, by avoiding giving in to the numerous American provocations ("spy" balloons, banning of the TikTok application...) and by carrying out a broad diplomatic charm offensive aimed at avoiding any international isolation: reception in Beijing of a large number of heads of state, Iranian-Saudi rapprochement sponsored by China, proposal of a plan to stop the fighting in Ukraine.

On the other hand, the imperialist every man for himself is causing an explosion

in the number of potential conflict zones. In Europe, the pressure on Germany is leading to dissension with France and the EU has reacted with anger to the protectionism of Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, seen as a real declaration of war on European exports to the US. In Central Asia, the decline of Russian power goes hand in hand with a rapid expansion of the influence of other powers, such as China, Turkey, Iran or the US in the former Soviet republics. In the Far East, the risk of conflict persists between China on the one hand and India (with regular border clashes) or Japan (which is massively rearming), not to mention the tensions between India and Pakistan and the recurrent ones between the two Koreas. In the Middle East, the weakening of Russia, the internal destabilization of important protagonists such as Iran (popular revolts, struggles between factions and imperialist pressures) or Turkey (disastrous economic situation) will have a major impact on imperialist relations. Finally, in Africa, while the energy and food crisis and war tensions are raging in various regions (Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Western Sahara), aggressive competition between imperialist vultures is stimulating destabilisation and chaos.

Explosion of the irrationality of militarism

A year of war in Ukraine has underlined above all that capitalist decomposition accentuates one of the most pernicious aspects of war in the epoch of decadence: its irrationality. The effects of militarism are, in fact, becoming ever more unpredictable and disastrous, regardless of initial ambitions:

- the United States fought both Gulf Wars, as well as the war in Afghanistan, to maintain its leadership on the planet, but in all these cases the result was an explosion of chaos and instability, as well as streams of refugees;

- whatever the objectives of the many imperialist vultures (Russian, Turkish, Iranian, Israeli, American or European) who intervened in the horrific Syrian or Libyan civil wars, they inherited a country in ruins, fragmented and divided into clans, with millions of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries or to the industrialised countries.

The war in Ukraine is an exemplary confirmation of this: whatever the geostrategic objectives of Russian or American imperialism, the result is a devastated country (Ukraine), an economically and militarily ruined country (Russia), an even more tense and chaotic imperialist situation in the world, and still millions of refugees.

The increasing irrationality of warfare implies a terrifying expansion of military barbarity across the globe. In this context, ad hoc alliances can be formed around particular objectives. For example, Turkey, a member of NATO, is adopting a policy of neutrality towards Russia in Ukraine, hoping to use this to ally itself with Russia in Syria against the US-backed Kurdish militias.

However, and contrary to bourgeois propaganda, the Ukrainian conflict does not lead to a regrouping of imperialisms into blocs, and therefore does not open the dynamics towards a third world war, but rather towards a terrifying expansion of bloody chaos: important imperialist powers such as India, South Africa, Brazil and even Saudi Arabia clearly retain their autonomy from the protagonists; the bond between China and Russia has not tightened, on the contrary; and while the US is using the war to impose its views within NATO, member countries such as Turkey or Hungary are openly going it alone while Germany and France are trying in all sorts of ways to develop their own policies. Moreover, the leader of a potential bloc must be able to generate trust among the member countries and guarantee the security of its allies. China, however, has been very cautious in its support for its Russian ally. As for the United States, after Trump's "America First" approach, which had chilled the "allies", Biden is basically pursuing the same policy: he is making them pay a high energy price for the boycott of the Russian economy, whereas the United States is self-sufficient in this area, and the "anti-China" laws will hit European imports hard. It is precisely this lack of security guarantees that led Saudi Arabia to conclude an agreement with China and Iran. Finally, as a major obstacle to a dynamic towards a third world war, the proletariat is not defeated and ideologically mobilised in the service of the nation in the central industrialised countries, as illustrated by the current struggles in various European countries. An ideological weapon capable of mobilising the proletariat, such as fascism and anti-fascism in the 1930s, does not exist today.

The war in Ukraine is stirring up the other dimensions of the "polycrisis"

The situation is all the more delicate because the "Ukrainian crisis" does not appear as an isolated phenomenon but as one of the manifestations of this "polycrisis" (1), the accumulation and interaction of health, economic, ecological, food and war crises, which characterises the twenties of the 21st century. And the war in Ukraine constitutes in this context a real multiplier and intensifier of barbarism and chaos at the global

level:

“The aggregation and interaction of these destructive phenomena produces a 'vortex effect' (...) it is important to stress the driving force of war, as an action deliberately pursued and planned for by capitalist states.” (2). In fact, the war in Ukraine and its economic repercussions have favoured rebounds of Covid (as in China), accentuated the rise in inflation and recession in various regions of the world, provoked a food and energy crisis, caused a setback in climate policies (nuclear and even coal-fired power stations are back in operation) and led to a new influx of refugees. Not to mention the ever-present risk of bombing nuclear power plants, as still seen around the Zaporizhzhia site, or the use of chemical, bacteriological or nuclear weapons.

In short, one year of war in Ukraine

highlights how it has intensified the "great rearmament of the world", symbolised by the massive military investments of the two great losers of the Second World War, Japan, which has committed 320 billion dollars to its army in 5 years, the biggest armament effort since 1945, and above all Germany, which is also increasing its defence budget.

As an obviously deliberate product of the ruling class, the carnage in Ukraine clearly illustrates the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. However, the feelings of impotence and horror generated by the war do not favour the development of a proletarian opposition to the conflict today. On the other hand, the significant worsening of the economic crisis, and the attacks against workers which directly result from it, is pushing the latter to mobilise on their class terrain to defend their living conditions. In this dynamic of renewed struggles, warlike barbarism

will eventually constitute a source of awareness of the bankruptcy of the system, which today is still limited to small minorities of the class.

International Communist Current

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Notes:

1) The term is used by the bourgeoisie itself in the Global Risks Report 2023 presented at the World Economic Forum in January 2023 in Davos.

2) "The 20s of the 21st century: [The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity](#)", *International Review*, No. 169 (2022).

The war in Ukraine, one year on

That den of murderers,

that bloodies the earth,

knows quite well that war

is big business,

paving the way

for the thieves of the stock exchange.

(Trilussa) (1)

More than one year has now passed since the war between Russia and Ukraine broke out and it looks like it's destined to carry on for much longer yet.

Peace? No matter how much they all cry out for it, in fact they neither want it and nor can they afford it.

Firstly, the United States: for them it was particularly important to prevent the formation of an economic-financial zone that would have enabled its members to dispense with the dollar as an international reserve currency and a means of payment for commercial exchange. From a geopolitical point of view this means preventing the Berlin (EU)/Moscow/Beijing axis from being consolidated to the point that it becomes irreversible, which would have been the case had the North Stream 2 been implemented.

After a year of war, they have succeeded in:

1. putting both North Stream 1 and 2 out of action by means of military attacks – as the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Seymour Hersh (2), has reported,

2. in this way they have forced Germany and half of the European Union to buy gas from them, although it's much more polluting and more expensive than that of Russia,

3. they have delivered a heavy blow to the Berlin (EU)/Moscow/Beijing axis,

4. the dollar has been revalued thanks to the dizzying price-increase of all energy products and raw materials, so giving a boost to their financial situation, weighed down as it is by an enormous budget deficit and commercial debt,

5. the complete submission of their reluctant European 'allies' within NATO.

However, although Biden misses no opportunity to cry victory, in fact he has not achieved his most important aim; the isolation of Russia from the rest of the world, including China, in order to reduce it to a semi-colonial status and force it to sell its rich store of raw materials exclusively in dollars.

An historic turning point

As the Head of Missions at the American embassy in Saudi Arabia, David H. Rundell, and the former political advisor to the American Central Command, Michael G. Foeller, have reluctantly recog-

nised:

“Our familiar system of global political and economic alliances (those of the US – editor's note) is shifting, and nothing has made this change clearer than the varied reactions to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While the United States and its closest allies in Europe and Asia have imposed tough economic sanctions on Moscow, 87 percent of the world's population has declined to follow us” (3). Moreover, that 87 percent includes not only China but also some of their historic allies, like India and Saudi Arabia.

India: *“In spite of its close relationship with Washington - a consequence of its rivalry with China - (...), in addition to its customary acquisition of armaments (from Russia – editor's note) it has now signed major oil contracts with Russia (almost a million barrels per day), (and) Saudi Arabia, the pillar of US influence in the Middle East, has allied itself with Russia within the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC plus) in order to sabotage the initiative (of the US – editor's note) to limit the price of oil. The cartel made the decision to reduce its production behind the back of Washington, despite a visit to Riyadh, on 14th and 15th July, from the president of the United States, who is now declaring that there will be repercussions”* (4).

Besides India and Saudi Arabia, other countries have also refused to be obedient to the will of Washington: Brazil, half of the African continent (including South Africa) and even Hungary and

Turkey, although both are members of NATO. This isn't a complete surprise as the conditions for this to occur have been present for a long time.

As far back as 2006 the American economist James K. Galbraith wrote:

"Over the years (...) we have allowed our commercial position within the world economy to deteriorate (it was so much cheaper to import goods and services from abroad than to produce them at home – editor's note), so going from absolute supremacy (...) to the present situation (...). To maintain our standard of living we have become dependent on the willingness of the rest of the world to accept assets in dollars (stocks, bonds, cash) in exchange for actual goods and services: produced by the hard work of people much poorer than us in exchange for notes that are produced with no effort whatsoever. For decades the western world has tolerated the 'exorbitant privilege' of an economy based on the dollar as an international currency reserve because the US had the strength necessary to guarantee reliable safeguard against communism" (5).

The fear of communism has disappeared but, above all, the ability of the 'American' system has failed generally:

"to directly inject added value into the industries of other countries. The added value generated (...) in the rest of the world by the US over almost 20 years (2008 – 2020) has declined from 11 to 5.5 percent (...), it has dropped by a third within the global economy and production (...). According to data from CEPII-BACI, its share of world trade (...) has fallen (...) from 23.3 percent to 16.9 percent. Its share of intermediate goods, which show the interaction between productive organisations, has fallen even more dramatically: from 24.5 to 16.1 percent. The same tendency is revealed if we restrict the figures to pure manufacturing: between 2000 and 2018, the share of manufactured goods owned by America fell from 23.2 to 15.7 percent and that of intermediate manufactured goods from 24.6 to 16.1 percent" (6).

In other words, America takes much more from other countries than it gives, and in exchange it only provides 'notes that are produced with no effort whatsoever'.

The analyst and former Major General of the Chinese Air Force, Quiao Liang, complains:

"The economic development of China depends a great deal on cheap labour dividends. Within the context of economic globalization (ardently desired by the

US – editor's note), China has derived a fairly small dividend from cheap labour, whereas the United States and the other western countries have derived a much larger one" (7).

To return to the work of Rundell e GFoeller that we have already quoted: *"Globalization can function only if most participants believe it advances their interests. If the rest believe the West is unfairly using the system for its own benefit, the rules-based international order falls apart and alternatives will emerge." (8)*

The object of contention is this: each wants to grab the largest possible share of "cheap labour dividends", in other words, the surplus value extorted from the workers of the world.

So: on the one hand we have the US and their closest allies-vassals who appropriate the biggest share by 'producing paper money' and, on the other hand, the many 'Chinas' who oppose this by rejecting increasingly the dollar, which is the main weapon used in the robbery.

The recent behaviour of Saudi Arabia can teach us a lot about this: it has issued a challenge to the United States, first by drawing up an agreement with China to regulate their respective currencies between themselves, then a few weeks ago they made the same kind of agreement with Iran despite *"the US-led attempts to isolate Iran economically by means of sanctions" (9)*. However, they did so only once *"China managed to gain the upper hand, thanks to its economic and geo-political weight" (10)*.

Yes, China - the country that the United States considers to be an enemy to its very existence. As the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud, said, China *"is our main trading partner. It is also the biggest trading partner of most countries. This is a reality that we must take into account" (11)*. In other words: we can do without the US and the dollar, but we can't do without China, 'the factory of the world'!

Paradoxical as it may seem, what has complicated the situation even more for the United States is in fact those 'unprecedented' (12) sanctions against Russia.

The failure of sanctions

Just one year ago Biden, convinced that sanctions, as a weapon, *"are as damaging as military might" (13)*, was sure that they would have brought Russia to its knees within a few months.

Elina Ribakove, Deputy Chief Economist at the Institute of International Finance in Washington was also firmly convinced of this when, in February last year, she predicted: *"a collapse of the currency and pressure on the reserves, and possibly total collapse of the Russian financial system"*. By the end of April, she had to acknowledge that: *"Russia is (was) swimming in liquidity" (14)*.

It is often the case that those who have power, maybe because they are blinded by arrogance, maintain that what is good for them is also good for the rest of the world; therefore neither Biden nor his retinue foresaw what is apparent in the article of Rundell and GFoeller already quoted:

"Economic sanctions have weaponised parts of the international banking and insurance sectors including the SWIFT fund transfer system. Assets have been seized and commodity contracts cancelled, calls for de-dollarization have become louder. When Russia demanded energy payments in rubles, yuan or UAE Dirhams, China and India complied" (15).

Not only has Russia not collapsed but it has also discovered that it has many more 'allies' than maybe even Putin expected prior to the attack on Ukraine. What is certain is that, thanks to them, Russia has even improved its financial position during 2022: *"the ruble reached its highest exchange rate in history. Russia's 2022 trade surplus of 227 billion dollars was up 86% from 2021. The US' trade deficit over the same period rose 12.2%" (16).*

The United States, on the other hand: *"at the close of 2022 had a trade deficit of 1,181 billion dollars, a budget deficit of 1,400 billion dollars and a federal debt of 31,420 billion dollars. But that's not all. Following an improvement between the fourth quarter of 2021 and the second quarter of 2022, with a drop from 18,124.293 to 16,285.837 billion dollars in liabilities (-1,838.456), their net financial position once more deteriorated rapidly, reaching 16,710.798 billion dollars, despite the huge outflow of capital from the European to the American side of the Atlantic, which took place following the degeneration of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. (...) Overall, the volume of American Treasury Bonds held internationally decreased by 170.9 billion dollars between September and October (2022) (from 7,302.6 to 7,131.7 billion dollars), in addition to the 243 billion dollars in liabilities (from 7,545.6 to 7,302.6 billion) recorded the previous month, despite the Federal Reserve having raised the interest rate from 0.25 to*

2.5% between March and September” (17).

The numbers speak clearly: the country that is most at risk of default today is the United States itself, as is demonstrated by the partial default recently of the real estate fund Blackstone – a colossus that manages about a thousand million dollars – and the bankruptcy of the Silicon Valley Bank, the 16th largest bank in the United States, as well as the First Republic Bank.

In the light of all this, a crystal ball is not necessary to foretell that, as what is at stake for all the antagonists is their very existence, the only end to this (by now international) war that is possible, is the defeat of one side or the other – and this threatens the very survival of humanity. Or else by the communist revolution that, by ending the capitalist system and the exploitation of wage labour, would root out the primary cause of all wars.

Istituto Onorato Damen

1) Trilussa - *La Ninna nanna de la guerra (Lullaby of War)* - Complete Poems – A. Mondadori ed. 1954 – p.500.

2) Seymour Hersh is an American journalist who won the Pulitzer prize in 1970 for having made public the massacre of My Lai in Vietnam, when American soldiers butchered between three hundred and five hundred unarmed civilians.

3) D.H. Rundell e Michael GFoeller - *Nearly 90 percent of the world isn't following us on Ukraine* – Newsweek of 15.09.2022 - <https://www.newsweek.com/nearly-90-percent-world-isnt-following-us-ukraine-opinion-1743061>.

4) Helen Richard - *Ukraine, the escalation – Sanctions are double-edged* - Le Monde Diplomatique – Nov. 2022.

5) J.K. Galbraith - *Unbearable Cost. Bush, Greenspan and the Economics of Empire*. The quotation is taken (and re-translated) from: G. Gabellini – *Crisis - the formation and crumbling of the United States' economic order* - p.246 - Editor Mimesis – 2021.

6) Paolo Bricco - *America searches for its green years, lost in the desert of manufacturing* - Il sole 24 ore of 14.09.2022.

7) Quiao Liang - *The Arc of Empire with China and the United States at the extremities* - LEG edition – p.233.

8) D.H. Rundell e M. GFoeller, see note 3.

9) Robert Zunini - *China forges peace between neighbours in the Gulf - Iran and Saudi Arabia from enemies to business mates* - Il fatto quotidiano of 11.03.2023.

10) Ibidem.

11) Ibidem

12) ‘Unprecedented’ - so says Mario Draghi, who has processed them based on input from the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

13) Helen Richard - *Ukraine, the escalation - Sanctions are double-edged* - Le Monde Diplomatique - Nov. 2022.

14) Ibidem.

15) Article cited in note 3.

16) Robert Freeman – *Ukraine and the Tunnel at the End of the Light* - <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/ukraine-and-the-tunnel-at-the-end-of-the-light>.

17) Giacomo Gabellini – *The State of the US Economy: towards the Point of No Return?* - <https://www.sinistrainrete.info/articoli-brevi/24890-giacomo-gabellini-lo-stato-dell-economia-usa-verso-il-punto-di-non-ritorno.html>.

Balance sheet for a year of imperialist war...

(Continued from page 17)

As long as capitalism continues to go unchallenged, wage slavery, war, pandemics etc. will be a part of our daily lives. Our interests lie in the class struggle, where the workers come together and fight for common class interests. Instead of being cannon fodder in the gangsters' war, instead of continuing barbarism, instead of adhering to the filthy capitalist system, we must strive towards communist revolution and end the viciousness and wretchedness of capitalism.

Long live the war between the classes!

Internationalist Voice

26 February 2023

Notes:

1) Emmanuel Macron

2) Bolton

3) Politico

4) İbrahim Kalın

5) France 24

6) As source 5

7) Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto

8) Etemad Online

9) Deutsche Welle

10) Euronews

11) Financial Times

12) Donyaeqtesad

13) Embassy of the China

14) The latest semiconductors are about 3 nanometres in size, compared to a human hair, which is between 50,000 and 100,000 nanometres thick. The smaller their size, the better the quality because more transistors can be inserted.



Delegates to the 1907 Stuttgart Congress.