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# International Communist Current

Summer 2023

## International Review

***25th Congress of the ICC***

**International revolution  
or the destruction of humanity**

**The crucial responsibility of  
revolutionary organisations**

**Balance sheet of the congress**

**Resolution on the international situation**

**Update of the theses on decomposition**

**Report on the class struggle**

**Report on imperialist tensions**

**Report on the economic crisis**

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# International revolution or the destruction of humanity: the crucial responsibility of revolutionary organisations

Last spring, the ICC held its 25th International Congress. A true general assembly, the Congress is a privileged moment in the life of our organisation; it is the highest expression of the centralised and international nature of the ICC. The Congress enables our entire organisation, as a whole, to debate, clarify and develop orientations. It is our sovereign organ. As such, its tasks are to

- 1) draw up analyses and general guidelines for the organisation, particularly with regard to the international situation;
- 2) examine and take stock of the organisation's activities since the previous Congress;
- 3) define its perspectives for its future work.

Revolutionary organisations do not exist for themselves. They are both the expression of the historic struggle of the proletariat and the most determined part of that same struggle. It is the working class which entrusts its organisations to revolutionaries, so that they can play their role: to be an active factor in the development of proletarian consciousness and the struggle towards revolution.

It is therefore up to the revolutionaries to give an account of their work to the class as a whole. By publishing a large part of the documents adopted at our last congress, this is the mission which this issue of our *International Review* has set itself.

The first task of this Congress was to take the measure of the gravity of the historical situation.

As the report on the Class Struggle indicates, with Covid 19, the conflict in Ukraine and the growth of the war economy everywhere, with the economic crisis and its raging inflation, with global warming and the devastation of nature, with the rise of every man for himself, of irrationality and obscurantism, and the decomposition of the entire social fabric, the 2020s is not only witnessing an addition of murderous scourges. All these scourges are converging, combining and feeding on each other in a kind of “whirlwind effect”. The catastrophic dynamics of global capitalism mean much more than a worsening of the international situation. The very survival of humanity is at stake.

## The “whirlwind” effect of decomposition

The 25th International Congress adopted as its first report an “Update of the Theses on Decomposition”.

In May 1990, the ICC had adopted theses entitled “Decomposition, the final phase of capitalist decadence”, which presented our overall analysis of the world situation at the time of and following the collapse of the Eastern imperialist bloc at the end of

1989. The central idea of these theses was that the decadence of the capitalist mode of production, which had begun during the First World War, had entered a new phase in its evolution, one dominated by the general decomposition of society. Twenty-seven years later, at its 22nd Congress in 2017, our organisation considered it necessary to update these theses for the first time by adopting a text entitled “Report on decomposition today (May 2017)”.<sup>1</sup> This text highlighted the fact that not only had the analysis adopted in 1990 been amply verified by the evolution of the situation, but also that certain aspects had taken on a new importance: the explosion in the flow of refugees fleeing wars, famine and persecution, the rise of xenophobic populism having an increasing impact on the political life of the ruling class...

Now, only 6 years later, the ICC has decided that it is necessary to update the 1990 and 2017 texts. Why so quickly? Because we are witnessing a spectacular increase in the manifestations of the general decomposition of capitalist society.

Faced with the evidence of the facts, the bourgeoisie itself is obliged to recognise this vertiginous plunge of capitalism into chaos and decay. Our report quotes extensively from texts intended for the world's political and economic leaders, such as

1. *International Review* n° 164.

the Global Risks Report (GRR), which is based on the analyses of a multitude of “experts” and is presented every year at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. The ICC is adopting a method used by the workers' movement, which consists of relying on the work of bourgeois experts to highlight the statistics and facts that reveal the reality of the capitalist world. The same method can be found in marxist classics such as Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and Marx's *Capital*. In the GRR, we read: “*The first years of this decade have heralded a particularly disruptive period in human history... COVID-19... war in Ukraine... food and energy crises... inflation... geopolitical confrontation and the spectre of nuclear warfare... unsustainable levels of debt... declining human development... Together, these are converging to shape a unique, uncertain and turbulent decade to come.*”

Here the bourgeoisie's experts are putting their finger on a dynamic they fundamentally cannot understand. Yes, indeed, all these elements “*are converging to shape a unique, uncertain and turbulent decade.*” But they can only stop there. In fact, they describe this dynamic as a “polycrisis”, as if it were a question of different crises adding up. In reality - and only our theory of decomposition allows us to understand this - behind this explosion of the worst scourges of capitalism lies one and the same dynamic: the rotting on its feet of this decadent system. The capitalist mode of production no longer has any perspective to offer, and given the inability of the proletariat so far to develop its revolutionary project, it is the whole of humanity that is plunging into the “no future” and its consequences: irrationality, withdrawal, atomisation... It is in this absence of perspective that we can find the deepest roots of the putrefaction of society, at every level.

Even in the proletarian camp, there is a tendency to put forward a specific and isolated cause for each of the catastrophic manifestations of present history; to fail to see the coherence of the whole process underway. There is then a great danger of :

- finding ourselves disorientated, lost,

tossed about by one event after another;

- focusing on a single aspect, however spectacular and devastating it may be (like the war in Ukraine, for example), and then falling into a kind of immediate catastrophism ("Quick, we absolutely must act because the third world war is about to break out");
- underestimating the danger, by failing to understand that the global dynamic is in fact a spiral where all the crises are interwoven, interlinked and multiplying.

We need to dwell a little on this risk of underestimating the danger of the historical situation of decomposition. At first sight, when someone shouts loudly about the imminent outbreak of the Third World War, they may say to themselves that they are planning for the worst. In reality, and the war in Ukraine confirms this once again, the real process that could lead to widespread barbarism, or even the destruction of humanity, is a combination of factors: war spreading through a multiplication of conflicts (in the Middle East, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, etc.), conflicts that are increasingly unpredictable and irrational; a warming climate with its share of disaster; the gangsterism and the sense of no-future that are sweeping through ever-larger sections of the world's population... this process of decomposition is all the more dangerous because it is so elusive and insidious, gradually seeping into every pore of society.

And among the various factors which feed the plunge into decomposition, war (and the generalised development of militarism) constitutes the central factor, as a deliberate act of the ruling class. This is why the imperialist situation was the second report debated at our congress: *"In particular, the phase of decomposition accentuates one of the most pernicious aspects of war in decadence: its irrationality. From the opening of this phase, the effects of militarism become ever more unpredictable and disastrous. Our vulgar materialists do not understand this aspect and object that wars always have an economic motivation, and therefore a rationality. They fail to see that today's wars are fundamentally not economically but geostrategically motivated, and even then they no longer achieve their original objectives, but lead to the opposite result. (...) The war in Ukraine is an exemplary confirmation of this: whatever the geostrategic objectives of Russian or American imperialism, the result will be a country in ruins (Ukraine), a country ruined economically and militarily (Russia), an even more tense and chaotic imperialist situation from Europe to Central Asia and millions*

*of refugees in Europe."*

Within the organisation, some comrades disagree strongly with this analysis of the current imperialist dynamic. For them, the war in Ukraine is not just the result of a trend towards the bipolarisation of the world. Around China on the one hand and the United States on the other, two increasingly clearly defined camps are taking shape, two camps which, in time, could form blocs and confront each other in a third world war.

The congress was another opportunity to respond: *"The consequences of the conflict in Ukraine do not lead to a 'rationalisation' of tensions through a 'bipolar' alignment of imperialisms behind two dominant 'godfathers', but on the contrary to the explosion of a multiplicity of imperialist ambitions, which are not limited to those of the major imperialisms (to be examined in the next section), or to Eastern Europe and Central Asia, thus accentuating the chaotic and irrational character of the confrontations"*. To live up to their responsibilities and identify all the dangers hanging over humanity, and especially over the working class, revolutionaries must understand the coherence of the whole situation and its real gravity. Our report shows that only the marxist method and its materialism allow such an understanding, but a materialism which is not vulgar, a dialectical and historical materialism capable of embracing all the factors in their relationship and their movement, a materialism which integrates the force of thought in its relationship and its influence on the whole of the material world because thought is one of the driving forces of history. Our report highlights four central points that belong to this method:

### 1. The transformation of quantity into quality

Applied to the historical situation opened up in 1989/90, it translates as follows: manifestations of decomposition may have existed in the decadence of capitalism, but today the accumulation of these manifestations is proof of a transformation, a break in the life of society, signalling the entry into a new epoch of capitalist decadence in which decomposition becomes the decisive element.

### 2. The whole is not the sum of its parts

This is one of the major phenomena of the present situation. The various manifestations of decomposition, which at first might have seemed independent but whose accumulation already indicated that we had entered a new epoch of capitalist decadence, are now increasingly reverberating one on top of the other in a kind of "chain reaction" that is growing ever stronger, a "whirlwind" that is driving the historical

acceleration we are now witnessing. These cumulative effects now far outweigh their mere addition.

### 3. The historical approach to current events

In this historical approach, the aim is to take account of the fact that the realities we are examining are not static, intangible things that have existed from time immemorial, but correspond to constantly evolving processes with elements of continuity but also, and above all, of transformation and even rupture.

### 4. The importance of the future in the life of human societies

Marxist dialectics attributes to the future a fundamental place in the evolution and movement of society. Of the three moments of a historical process – past, present and future – it is the future that constitutes the fundamental factor in its dynamics. And it is precisely because today's society is deprived of this fundamental element, the future, the perspective (which is felt by more and more people, particularly the young), a perspective that only the proletariat can offer, that it is sinking into despair and rotting on its feet.

It is this method which enables our resolution on the international situation to elevate our analysis from the abstract to the concrete: *"... we are now seeing this 'whirlwind effect' in which all the different expressions of a decomposing society are interacting with each other and accelerating the descent towards barbarism. Thus, the economic crisis has been palpably deepened by the pandemic and the lockdowns, the Ukraine war, and the mounting cost of ecological disasters; meanwhile the war in Ukraine will have serious implications at the ecological level and around the globe; competition for dwindling natural resources will further exacerbate military rivalries and social revolts."*

### The return of the working class struggle

On the other side of this pole of destruction is the pole of the proletariat's revolutionary perspective. The last few months have shown that the proletariat is not only not defeated, but is even beginning to raise its head, to find its way back to the path of struggle. As early as the summer of 2022, the ICC recognised in the strikes in the United Kingdom a change in the situation of the working class. In our international leaflet published on 31 August, "The bourgeoisie imposes new sacrifices, the working class responds with struggle", we wrote: *"Enough is enough". This cry has reverberated from one strike*



*to the next over the last few weeks in the UK. This massive movement, dubbed 'The Summer of Discontent' (...), has involved workers in more and more sectors each day (...) only the huge strikes of 1979 produced a bigger and more widespread movement. Action on this scale in a country as large as Britain is not only significant locally, it is an event of international significance, a message to the exploited of every country (...) the return of widespread strikes in the UK marks the return of the combativity of the world proletariat".*

Theoretically armed to understand the strikes and demonstrations that emerged in many countries, the ICC was able to intervene, to the best of its ability, by distributing eight different leaflets, in order to follow the evolution of the movement and the reflection going on in the working class. What all these leaflets have in common is that they highlight :

- the return of working class combativity
- the historical and international dimension of the movement
- the growing feeling in the ranks of the workers that they are all "in the same boat", a breeding ground for the reconquest of class identity,
- the need to take the struggle into our own hands and, to do so, to reappropriate the lessons of past struggles.

Here too, as with the war in Ukraine, there is disagreement and debate within the organisation. The same comrades who believe they see in the war in Ukraine a step towards the constitution of blocs and the third world war, put forward the idea that the current workers' struggles and combativity do not constitute a break in a negative dynamic since the 1980s, with a long series of defeats which are not definitive but which have led to a particularly serious weakness, especially at the level of consciousness. In this vision, *"in a capitalist world which, more than ever since 1989, is moving chaotically and 'naturally' towards war, the response of the proletariat at the political level remains far below what the situation demands of it"* (one of the comrades' amendments, rejected by the Congress, to the resolution on the international situation). For them, the current situation, while not identical, is a course of history reminiscent of the 1930s, with a proletariat that was combative in many central countries but still unable to avoid war. *"For the moment, the necessary development of mass assemblies and a genuine culture of debate has not yet taken place. Nor has the emergence of a new generation of politicised proletarian militants"*. (ibid.) Another argument was

put forward to explain the scale of the social movements and the proliferation of strikes in many countries: the shortage of labour in many sectors and the need to keep the war economy running at full capacity made the situation favourable for the working class to demand higher wages. For the Congress, the reality unfolding before our eyes, namely the wave of impoverishment underway, with prices soaring while wages stagnate and government attacks rain down, belies this theory.

For the comrades, the leaflets distributed by the ICC, some 150,000 of them, during the various social movements in recent months, do not correspond to the needs of the situation. In line with their analysis of an almost defeated proletariat and a dynamic towards the constitution of two blocs and world war, the first task of revolutionaries is not intervention but involvement in theoretical deepening.

On the contrary, the Congress drew a very positive balance sheet of the organisation's international intervention in struggles. The ICC knew that it would not be able to influence the class and the movement as a whole: revolutionary organisations cannot have such an impact in the current historical period. This role of guiding the masses is only possible when the class has developed its consciousness and its historical struggle to a much higher level. This intervention was addressed to a section of the working class, the minority that is today seeking class positions. The significant number of discussions that the distribution of these leaflets in the processions provoked, the letters received, the newcomers to our various public meetings show that our intervention played its role: stimulating reflection in part of the minority, provoking debate and encouraging the regroupment of revolutionary forces.

Behind the immediate recognition of the historical significance of the return of class struggle in the United Kingdom and its implications for our intervention in the struggle, there is the same method which enabled us to apprehend the novelty in the current acceleration of decomposition, with its "whirlwind effect": the transformation of quantity into quality, the historical approach... But one facet of this method is of particular importance here: the approach to the events through their international dimension. It was already this recognition of the necessarily international dimension of the class struggle which, in 1968, enabled those who were to found the ICC to grasp immediately the real and profound meaning of the events of May. While the entire proletarian political milieu of the time saw it as nothing more than a student revolt, and

claimed that there was "nothing new under the sun", our comrade Marc Chirik and the militants who were beginning to join together saw that this movement heralded the end of the counter-revolution and the opening of a new period of class struggle on an international scale.

This is why point 7 of the international resolution we adopted, explicitly entitled *"The recovery of worker's' combativity in a number of countries is a major, historic event which does not only result from local circumstances and can't be explained by purely national conditions. (...) The fact that the present struggles were initiated by a fraction of the proletariat which has suffered the most from the general retreat in the class struggle since the end of the 1980s is profoundly significant: just as the defeat in Britain in 1985 announced the general retreat at the end of the 1980s, the return of strikes and working class combativity in Britain reveals the existence of a deep current within the proletariat of the whole world."*

In fact, we had been preparing for this eventuality since the beginning of 2022! In January, we published an international leaflet announcing "Towards a brutal deterioration in living and working conditions". Based on the signs that the struggle was beginning to develop, we announced the possibility of a response from our class. The return of inflation was fertile ground for workers' combativeness.

A month later, the outbreak of war in Ukraine considerably aggravated the effects of the economic crisis, causing energy and food prices to soar.

Aware of the profound difficulties of our class, but also knowing the history of its struggles, the ICC knew that there would be no direct, large-scale reaction of our class to the barbarity of war, but that there was, on the other hand, the possibility of a reaction to the effects of the war "in the rear", in Europe and the United States:<sup>2</sup> strikes

2. Our report on the class struggle and the debate at the Congress once again reminded us of the crucial role of the proletariat of the Western countries which, through its history and experience, will have the responsibility of showing the world proletariat the road to revolution. Our report also amply recalls our position on "the critique of the weak link". It is also this approach which has enabled us to be aware of the heterogeneity of the proletariat in different parts of the planet, of the immense weakness of the proletariat in the countries of Eastern Europe, and to anticipate the possibility of conflict in the Balkans. Thus, as early as this spring, our report drew lessons from the war in Ukraine and predicted that: *"The inability of the working class in this country to oppose the war and its mobilisation, an inability which opened the possibility of this imperialist butchery, indicates the extent to which capitalist barbarism and decomposition are gaining ground in ever wider parts of the globe. After Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, it is now part of Central Europe that is threatened by the risk of plunging into imperialist chaos;*

in the face of the sacrifices demanded in the name of the war economy. And that's exactly what happened.

On these theoretical and historical foundations, the ICC did not delude itself about the possibility of a class reaction to the war, it did not believe that internationalist committees would spring up everywhere, still less did it seek to create them artificially. Our response was, above all, to try to defend as firmly as possible the internationalist tradition of the Communist Left by calling on all the forces of the proletarian political milieu to rally around a common declaration. While a large part of the milieu ignored or even rejected<sup>3</sup> our appeal, three groups (Internationalist Voice, Istituto Onorato Damen and Internationalist Communist Perspective) responded to keep alive the method of struggle and regroupment of international forces initiated by the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences in September 1915 and April 1916 in the face of the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

The villages of Zimmerwald and Kienthal, in Switzerland, became famous as the places where socialists from both sides met during the First World War to launch an international struggle to end the slaughter 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, put forward the essential principles of internationalism against imperialist war which are still valid today: **no support for either imperialist camp, the rejection of all pacifist illusions, and the recognition that only the working class and its revolutionary struggle can put an end to the system** which is based on the exploitation of labour power and which constantly produces imperialist war. Today, faced with the acceleration of the imperialist conflict in Europe, it is the duty of the political organisations based on the heritage of the Communist Left to continue to raise the banner of consistent proletarian internationalism and to provide a point of reference for those who defend the principles of the working class. This, at least, is the choice of the organisations

and groups of the Communist Left who have decided to publish this joint declaration in order to disseminate as widely as possible the internationalist principles that were forged against the barbarity of the world war.

This way of uniting revolutionary forces around the fundamental principles of the Communist Left is a historic lesson for the future. Zimmerwald yesterday and the joint declaration today are small markers that will point the way to tomorrow.

### The responsibility of revolutionaries

The preparatory debates and the Congress itself were concerned with the essential question of building the organisation. While this is clearly the central dimension of the ICC's activities, this concern for the future goes far beyond our organisation alone.

*"Faced with the increasingly clash of the two poles of the alternative -destruction of humanity or communist revolution – the revolutionary organisations of the communist left, and the ICC in particular, have an irreplaceable role to play in the development of class consciousness, and must devote their energies to the permanent task of theoretical deepening, to putting forward a clear analysis of the world situation, and to intervening in the struggles of our class to defend the necessity for class autonomy, self-organisation and unification, and for the development of the revolutionary perspective. This work can only be carried out on the basis of a patient work of construction of the organisation, laying the basis for the world party of the future. All these tasks demand a militant struggle against all the influences of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology in the milieu of the communist left and the ICC itself. At the present juncture, the groups of the communist left are faced with the danger of a real crisis: with some exceptions they have been unable to unite in defence of internationalism in the face of the imperialist war in Ukraine, and are increasingly open to the penetration of opportunism and parasitism. A rigorous adherence to the marxist method and proletarian principles provides the only response to these dangers."* (point 8 of the resolution on the international situation).

For revolution to be possible in the long run, the proletariat must have in its hands the weapon of the Party. It is this future construction of the Party that must be prepared today. In other words, a minority of organised revolutionaries carry on their shoulders the responsibility of keeping the present organisations alive, of keep-

ing alive the historical principles of the workers' movement and particularly of the Communist Left, and of transmitting these principles and positions to the new generation which will gradually join the revolutionary camp.

Any spirit of competition, any opportunism, any concession to bourgeois ideology and parasitism within the proletarian political milieu are all stabs in the back of the revolution. In the very difficult context of the acceleration of decomposition, which disorients people, which pushes them to go it alone, which undermines confidence in the ability of the class and its minorities to organise and unite, it is the responsibility of revolutionaries not to give in and to continue to hold high the banner of the principles of the Communist Left.

Revolutionary organisations face a huge challenge: to be able to pass on the experience accumulated by the generation that emerged from the May 68 wave.

Since the late 1960s, for almost sixty years, decadent global capitalism has been slowly sinking into endless economic crisis and increasing barbarism. From 1968 to the mid-1980s, the proletariat waged a whole series of struggles and accumulated a great deal of experience, particularly in its confrontation with the trade unions, but the class struggle declined sharply from 1985/1986 and has almost died out to the present day. In this very difficult context, very few militant forces joined the revolutionary organisations. A whole generation was lost to the false propaganda of the "death of communism" in 1989/1990. Since then, with the development of decomposition, which slyly attacks militant conviction by favouring no future, individualism, the loss of confidence in collective organisation and in the historic struggle of the working class, many militant forces have gradually abandoned the struggle and disappeared.

So yes, today the future of humanity rests on a very small number of shoulders, scattered across the world. Yes, the disastrous state of the proletarian political milieu, gangrened by the spirit of competition and opportunism, makes the chances of success for the revolution even slimmer. And yes, the role of revolutionary organisations in general, and of the ICC in particular, is even more vital. Passing on to the new generations of revolutionary militants who are just beginning to arrive the lessons of our history, the history of organisations motivated by the revolutionary spirit of the militant generations of the past, is the key to the future.

ICC, 11 June 2023

Ukraine has shown that there is, in some satellite countries of the ex-USSR, in Belarus, in Moldavia, in ex-Yugoslavia, a proletariat very weakened by decades of forced exploitation by Stalinism in the name of Communism, decades where it bore the weight of democratic illusions and was gangrened by nationalism. In Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, tensions are indeed rising."

3. The Internationalist Communist Tendency has thus preferred to commit itself to the No War But the Class War adventure. Read our article "A committee that leads its participants into a dead end", *World Revolution* n° 395.

4. See "Joint statement of groups of the international communist left about the war in Ukraine" in *World Revolution* n° 392.



# Resolution on the international situation

## 1. Preamble

The ICC's text on the perspectives opening up in the 2020s<sup>1</sup> argues that the multiple contradictions and crises of the world capitalist system – economic, health, military, ecological, social – are more and more coming together, interacting, to create a kind of “whirlwind effect” which is making the destruction of humanity an ever-more likely outcome. This conclusion has now become so obvious that important parts of the ruling class are painting a similar picture. Alarm bells were already being rung by the 2021-22 UN report on Human Development but the World Economic Forum “Global Risk” report published in January 2023 is even more explicit, talking about the “polycrisis” facing human civilisation: *“As 2023 begins, the world is facing a set of risks that feel both wholly new and eerily familiar. We have seen a return of ‘older’ risks – inflation, cost-of-living crises, trade wars, capital outflows from emerging markets, widespread social unrest, geopolitical confrontation and the spectre of nuclear warfare – which few of this generation’s business leaders and public policy-makers have experienced. These are being amplified by comparatively new developments in the global risks landscape, including unsustainable levels of debt, a new era of low growth, low global investment and de-globalisation, a decline in human development after decades of progress, rapid and unconstrained development of dual-use (civilian and military) technologies, and the growing pressure of climate change impacts and ambitions in an ever-shrinking window for transition to a 1.5°C world. Together, these are converging to shape a unique, uncertain and turbulent decade to come”*.

This is the bourgeoisie talking honestly to itself about the current global situation, even if can only remain deluded about the possibility of finding solutions inside the existing system. And it will continue to sell these delusions to the world population, aided and abetted by any number of political parties and protest campaigns which offer radical-sounding programmes which never question the capitalist social relations which have given rise to the impending catastrophe.

For us, as communists, there can of course be no solution which does not

abolish capitalist relations and lay the basis for a planet-wide communist society. And what the WEF point to as another “risk” in the period ahead – “widespread social unrest” – contains, if we disentangle the term from all the various bourgeois or cross-class movements which it files under this category, the opposite pole of the alternative confronting humanity: the international class struggle, which alone can lead towards the overthrow of capital and the creation of communism.

## 2. The historical framework

The bourgeoisie is not capable of locating the “polycrisis” in the insoluble economic contradictions arising from the existing antagonistic social relations, instead seeing its cause in the abstraction of “human activity”; nor can it place them in a coherent historical framework. For communists, by contrast, the catastrophic trajectory of world capitalism is the result of over a century of decadence of this mode of production.

The war of 1914-18, and the revolutionary wave it provoked, led the First Congress of the Communist International to proclaim that capitalism had reached its epoch of “inner disintegration”, of “wars and revolutions”, offering the choice between socialism and a descent into barbarism and chaos. The defeat of the proletariat’s first revolutionary attempts meant that the events at the end of the 1920s, then during the 30s and 40s (the greatest economic depression in capitalism’s history, an even more devastating world war, systematic genocide, etc), tipped the scales towards barbarism, and after World War Two the ensuing conflict between the US and Russian blocs confirmed that decadent capitalism now had the ability to destroy humanity. But the decadence of capitalism continued to move through a series of phases: the post-war economic boom, the return of the open crisis at the end of the 1960s, the resurgence of the international working class after 1968. The latter put an end to the domination of the counter-revolution, obstructing the drive towards a new world war and opening a new historic course towards class confrontations, which contained the potential for the revival of the communist perspective. But the inability of the working class as a whole to develop this perspective resulted in a stalemate between the classes which became increasingly evident in the 1980s. The collapse of

the old imperialist world order after 1989 confirmed and accelerated the opening of a qualitatively new and terminal phase in the epoch of decadence, which we term the decomposition of capitalism. The fact that this phase was characterised by a growing tendency towards chaos in international relations added a further obstacle to a trajectory towards world war, but this in no way made the future of human society more secure. In our “Theses on Decomposition”, published in 1990, we predicted that the decomposition of bourgeois society could lead to the destruction of humanity without a world war between organised imperialist blocs, through a combination of regional wars, ecological destruction, pandemics and social collapse. We also predicted that the cycle of workers’ struggles from 1968-89 was at an end and that the conditions of the new phase would bring with it major difficulties for the working class.

## 3. The acceleration of decomposition

The present situation of world capitalism provides a striking confirmation of this prognosis. The 2020s opened with the Covid pandemic and this was followed in 2022 by the war in Ukraine. At the same time, we have witnessed numerous confirmations of the planet-wide ecological crisis (heat waves, floods, melting of the polar icecaps, massive pollution of the air and oceans, etc). Since 2019 we have also been experiencing a new dive into economic crisis as the “remedies” for the so-called financial crisis of 2008 reveal all their limitations. But whereas in the previous decades the ruling class of the major countries had managed to some extent to preserve the economy from the impact of decomposition, we are now seeing this “whirlwind effect” in which all the different expressions of a decomposing society are interacting with each other and accelerating the descent towards barbarism. Thus, the economic crisis has been palpably deepened by the pandemic and the lockdowns, the Ukraine war, and the mounting cost of ecological disasters; meanwhile the war in Ukraine will have serious implications at the ecological level and around the globe; competition for dwindling natural resources will further exacerbate military rivalries and social revolts. In this concatenation of effects, imperialist war, the result of deliberate choices by the ruling class, has played a central role, but even the impact of a “natural” disaster

1. “The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity”, *International Review* n° 169.

like the terrible earthquake in Turkey and Syria has been substantially worsened by the fact that it has taken place in a region already crippled by war. And we can also point the finger at the endemic corruption of politicians and entrepreneurs which is yet another feature of social decay: in Turkey, the heedless pursuit of profit in the local construction industry resulted in the ignoring of safety standards which could have greatly diminished the earthquake's death toll. This acceleration and interaction of the phenomena of decomposition marks another transformation of quantity into quality within this terminal phase of decadence, making it clearer than ever that the continuation of capitalism has become a tangible threat to human survival.

#### 4. Impact of the war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine also has a long "pre-history". It is the culmination of the most important developments in imperialist tensions over the last three decades, in particular:

- The collapse of the post-1945 bloc system at the end of the 1980s and the unleashing of "every man for himself" in inter-imperialist relations, provoking a significant decline of US global leadership
- The emergence, within this new global free-for-all, of China as the major imperialist challenger to the US, with its long-term strategy to build the world-wide economic foundations for its future imperialist domination. The USA's reaction to its own decline and the rise of China has not been to withdraw from global affairs, on the contrary. The US has launched its own offensive aimed at restricting China's advance, from Obama's "pivot to the East" through Trump's focus on trade war, to the more directly military approach of Biden (provocations around Taiwan, downing of Chinese spy-balloons, the formation of AUKUS, the new US base in the Philippines, etc). The aim of this offensive is to build a firewall around China, blocking its capacity to develop as a world power.

At the same time, the USA has continued to press forward with the gradual encirclement of Russia through the expansion of NATO, with the objective not only of containing and weakening Russia itself but above all at sabotaging its alliance with China. The trap laid for Russia in Ukraine was the final move in this chess game, leaving Moscow with little choice but to strike back militarily, pushing it into a war which has the potential to bleed it white and undermine its ambitions as a regional

and global force.

In the shadow of these global imperialist rivalries, there is an extension and intensification of other areas of conflict, which are also connected to the struggle between the main powers, but in an even more chaotic manner. Numerous regional powers are increasingly playing their own game, both with regard to the Ukraine war and the conflicts in their own region. Thus Turkey, a member of NATO, acts as an "intermediary" on behalf of Putin's Russia on the question of grain supplies while supplying Ukraine with military drones and opposing Russia in the Libyan "civil war"; Saudi Arabia has defied the USA by refusing to increase oil supplies and thus lower world oil prices; India has refused to comply with US-led economic sanctions against Russia. Meanwhile, the war in Syria, almost unreported in the mainstream media since the invasion of Ukraine, has continued its ravages, with Turkey, Iran and Israel more or less directly implicated in the slaughter. Yemen has been a bloody battleground between Iran and Saudi Arabia; the accession of a far-right government in Israel is throwing oil on the fire of the conflict with the PLO, Hamas, and Iran. Following a new US-Africa summit, Washington has announced a series of economic measures explicitly aimed at countering the growing involvement of Russia and China in the continent, which continues to suffer from the impact of the Ukraine war on food supplies and from a whole mosaic of regional wars and tensions (Ethiopia-Tigray, Sudan, Libya, Rwanda-Congo, etc) which provide openings to all the regional and global imperialist vultures. In the Far East, North Korea, which is one of the few countries directly supplying Russia with weapons, is rattling its sabre in the face of South Korea (particularly through new missile launches, which are also a provocation against Japan). And behind North Korea stands China, responding to growing US encirclement.

A further war aim of the US in Ukraine, a clear break with Trump's efforts to undermine the NATO alliance, has been to rein in the independent ambitions of its European "allies", forcing them to comply with US sanctions against Russia and to continue arming Ukraine. This policy of drawing the NATO alliance together has had some success, with Britain being the most enthusiastic supporter of Ukraine's war effort. However, the reconstitution of a real US-controlled bloc is still very far off. France and Germany – with the latter having the most to lose from giving up its traditional "Ostpolitik", given its dependence of Russian energy supplies – remain inconsistent about sending the weapons demanded by Kyiv – and have persisted

with their own diplomatic "initiatives" towards Russia and China. Meanwhile China has taken a very cautious line towards the war in Ukraine, recently unveiling its own "Peace Plan" and stopping short of supplying Moscow with the "lethal aid" it so desperately needs.

The overall evidence – even leaving aside the question of the mobilisation of the proletariat in the central countries that this would demand – thus confirms the view that we are not moving towards the formation of stable imperialist blocs. But this does not at all lessen the danger of uncontrolled military escalations, including the resort to nuclear weapons. Ever since George Bush Senior announced the advent of a "New World Order" after the demise of the USSR, the very attempts by the US to impose this "order" have made it the most potent force for increasing disorder and instability around the world. This dynamic was lucidly illustrated by the nightmarish chaos which continues to prevail in Afghanistan and Iraq in the wake of the US invasions of those countries, but the same process is also at work in the Ukraine conflict. Pushing Russia against the wall thus contains the danger of a desperate reaction by the Moscow regime, including the resort to nuclear weapons; alternatively, if the regime collapses it could trigger the disintegration of Russia itself, creating a new area of chaos with the most unpredictable consequences. The irrationality of war in the decadence of capitalism can be measured not only in its gigantic economic costs, which far outweigh any possibilities for short-term profits or reconstructions, but also in the rapid collapse of the military-strategic goals which, in the period of capitalist decadence, have more and more displaced the economic rationality of war. In the wake of the first Gulf War, in our orientation text "Militarism and Decomposition" we predicted the following scenario for imperialist relations in the phase of decomposition:

*"In the new historical period we have entered, and which the Gulf events have confirmed, the world appears as a vast free-for-all, where the tendency of 'every man for himself' will operate to the full, and where the alliances between states will be far from having the stability that characterised the imperialist blocs, but will be dominated by the immediate needs of the moment. A world of bloody chaos, where the American policeman will try to maintain a minimum of order by the increasingly massive and brutal use of military force".<sup>2</sup>*

As shown in the aftermath of the inva-

2. "Militarism and Decomposition", *International Review* n° 64, 1991.



sions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s, the USA's increasing reliance on its military power had shown clearly that, far from achieving this minimum of order, *"the imperialist policy of the USA has become one of the main factors in global instability"*<sup>3</sup>, and the results of the USA's offensive against Russia have made it even more evident that the "world cop" has become the main factor in the intensification of chaos on a planetary scale.

## 5. The economic crisis

The war in Ukraine is a further blow to a capitalist economy already weakened and undermined by its internal contradictions and by convulsions resulting from its decomposition. The capitalist economy had already been in the midst of a slowdown, marked by the development of inflation, mounting pressures on the currencies of the major powers and growing financial instability (reflected in the bursting of the real estate bubbles in China as well as the crypto-currencies and tech). The war is now powerfully aggravating the economic crisis at all levels.

The war means the economic annihilation of Ukraine, the severe weakening of the Russian economy by the immense cost of the war and the effects of the sanctions imposed by the western powers. Its shock waves can be felt across the world, fuelling the food crisis and famines through the soaring price of basic necessities and through grain shortages.

The most tangible consequence of the war across the world is the explosion of military expenditure, which has soared above 2000 billion dollars. All the world's states are caught up in the spiral of rearmament. More than ever, economies are being subjected to the needs of war, increasing the part of national wealth devoted to the production of instruments of destruction. The cancer of militarism means the sterilisation of capital and constitutes a crushing burden on commercial exchanges and the national economy, leading to the demand for greater and greater sacrifices on the part of the exploited.

At the same time, the most serious financial convulsions since the 2008 crisis, born of a series of bank failures in the USA (including the 16th largest bank in the US) and then of Credit Suisse (the country's 2nd largest bank), has been spreading on an international scale, while the massive intervention of the US and Swiss central banks has not succeeded in averting the risk of contagion to other countries in Europe and other risky sectors, or to prevent these

failures from turning into a "systemic" credit crisis.

Unlike in 2008, when the failure of major banks was caused by their exposure to sub-prime mortgages, this time the banks are weakened mainly by their long-term investments in government bonds, which, with the sudden rise in interest rates to combat inflation, are losing their value. The current financial instability, although not (yet) as dramatic as in 2008, is approaching the heart of the financial system, as the resort to government debt – and in particular by the US Treasury at the centre of this system – has always been seen as the safest haven.

In any case, financial crises, whatever their internal dynamics and immediate causes, are always, in the final analysis, a manifestation of the crisis of overproduction which resurfaced in 1967 and has been further aggravated by factors linked to the decomposition of capitalism.

Above all, the war reveals the triumph of every man for himself and the failure, even the end, of any "global governance" at the level of coordinating economies, responding to the climate problems, etc. This tendency of every man for himself in relations between states has grown progressively since the 2008 crisis, and the war in Ukraine has brought to an end many of the economic tendencies, described under the heading of "globalisation", which have been going on since the 1990s.

Not only has the capacity of the main capitalist powers to cooperate in order to hold back the impact of the economic crisis more or less disappeared, but, faced with the deterioration of its economy and the deepening of the global crisis, and in order to preserve its position as the world's leading power, the USA has increasingly been deliberately aiming to weaken its competitors. This is an open break with a large part of the rules adopted by states since the crisis of 1929. It opens the way to a terra incognita more and more dominated by chaos and unpredictable consequences.

The USA, convinced that preserving its leadership against the rise of China depends to a large extent on the power of its economy, which the war has placed in a position of strength at the political and military level, is also on the offensive against its rivals at the economic level. This offensive operates in a number of directions. The US is the big winner of the "gas war" launched against Russia to the detriment of the European states who have been forced to end Russian gas imports. Having achieved self-sufficiency in oil and gas thanks to a long-term energy policy begun under Obama, the war has confirmed

America's supremacy in the strategic sphere of energy. It has put its rivals on the defensive at this level: Europe has had to accept its dependence on America's liquefied natural gas; China, which is greatly dependent on imported hydrocarbons, has been made more fragile given that the US is now in a position to control China's supply routes. The US now has an unprecedented capacity to put pressure on the rest of the world at this level.

Profiting from the central role of the dollar in the world economy, from being the world's leading economic power, the various monetary, financial and industrial initiatives (from Trump's economic recovery plans to Biden's massive subsidies to products "made in the USA", the Inflation Reduction Act, etc) have increased the "resilience" of the US economy, and this is attracting the investment of capital and industrial relocations towards American territory. The US is limiting the impact of the current world slow-down on its economy and is pushing the worst effects of inflation and recession onto the rest of the world.

In addition, in order to guarantee its decisive technological advantage, the US is also aiming to ensure the relocation to the US, or international control of, strategic technologies (semiconductors) from which it aims to exclude China, while threatening sanctions against any rival to its monopoly.

The USA's drive to preserve its economic power has the consequence of weakening the capitalist system as a whole. The exclusion of Russia from international trade, the offensive against China and the uncoupling of their two economies, in short the declared will of the USA to reconfigure world economic relations to its advantage, marks a turning point: the US is proving to be a factor in the destabilisation of world capitalism and the extension of chaos at the economic level.

Europe has been hit especially hard by the war, which has deprived it of its main strength: its stability. European capitals are suffering from the unprecedented destabilisation of their "economic model" and run a real risk of deindustrialisation and delocalisation towards the American or Asian zones under the blows of the "gas war" and American protectionism.

Germany in particular is an explosive concentration of all the contradictions of this unprecedented situation. The end of Russian gas supplies places Germany in a situation of economic and strategic fragility, threatening its competitive edge and the whole of its industry. The end of multilateralism, from which German capi-

3. "Resolution on the International Situation", 17th ICC Congress, *International Review* n° 130, 2007.

tal benefited more than any other nation (also sparing it from the burden of military expenses), is more directly affecting its economic power, which is dependent on exports. It also runs the risk of becoming dependent on the US for its energy supplies, while the latter pushes its “allies” to join in the economic /strategic war against China and to renounce their Chinese markets. Because this is such a vital outlet for German capital, this is facing Germany with a huge dilemma, one which is shared by other European powers at a time when the EU is itself under threat from the tendency of its member states to put their national interests above those of the Union.

As for China, although two years ago it was presented as the big winner of the Covid crisis, it is one of the most characteristic expressions of the “whirlwind” effect. Already suffering from economic slowdown, it is now facing major turbulence.

Since the end of 2019, the pandemic, the repeated lockdowns and the tsunami of infections that followed the abandonment of the “Zero Covid” policy continue to paralyse the Chinese economy.

China is caught up in the global dynamic of the crisis, with its financial system threatened by the bursting of the property bubble. The decline of its Russian partner and the disruption of the “Silk Roads” towards Europe by armed conflict or the prevailing chaos are causing considerable damage. The powerful pressure of the US further increases its economic difficulties. And faced with its economic, health, ecological and social problems, the congenital weakness of its Stalinist state structure is a major handicap.

Far from being able to play the role of locomotive for the world economy, China is a ticking time bomb whose destabilisation holds unpredictable consequences for world capitalism.

The main zones of the world economy are already in recession or about to sink into it. However, the gravity of *“The crisis that has already been unfolding for decades is going to become the most profound of the entire period of decadence, and its historical significance will exceed even the first crisis of this era, the one that began in 1929,”*<sup>4</sup> is not restricted to the breadth of this recession. The historical gravity of the present crisis marks an advanced point in the process of the “internal disintegration” of world capitalism, announced by the Communist International in 1919, and which flows from the general context of the terminal phase of decadence, whose

main tendencies are:

- the acceleration of decomposition and the multiple impact of its effects on a capitalist economy which had already been deteriorating;
- the acceleration of militarism on a world scale;
- the acute development of every man for himself between nations against a background of increasingly sharp competition between China and the US for world supremacy;
- the abandonment of the rules of cooperation between nations to face up to the contradictions and convulsions of the system;
- the lack of a locomotive able to relaunch the capitalist economy;
- the perspective of absolute impoverishment of the proletariat in the central countries, which is already underway.

We are witnessing the coincidence of different expressions of the economic crisis, and above all their interaction in the dynamics of its development: thus, high inflation requires the raising of interest rates; this, in turn provokes recession, itself a source of the financial crisis, leading to new injections of liquidity, thus even more debt, which is already astronomical, and is a further factor of inflation... All this demonstrates the bankruptcy of this system and its inability to offer a perspective to humanity.

The world economy is heading towards stagflation, a situation marked by the impact of overproduction and the unleashing of inflation as a result of the growth of unproductive expenses (primarily arms spending but also the exorbitant cost of the ravages of decomposition) and from the resort to printing money which further fuels debt. In a context of mounting chaos and unforeseen accelerations, the bourgeoisie not only reveals its impotence: everything it does tends to make the situation even worse.

For the proletariat, the surge of inflation and the bourgeoisie’s refusal to add to the “wage-price spiral” is drastically reducing spending power. Added to which massive lay-offs, vicious cuts in social budgets, attacks on pensions, augur a future of poverty, as is already a reality in the peripheral countries. For wider and wider sections of the proletariat in the central countries it will become harder and harder to obtain housing, heating, food or social care.

The bourgeoisie is confronted with a massive shortage of labour in a number of sectors. This phenomenon, whose scale

and impact on production is something new, seems to be the crystallisation of a number of factors which bring together capitalism’s internal contradictions and the effects of decomposition. It is at once the product of the anarchy of capitalism, which generates both overcapacity – unemployment – at the same time as labour shortages. Other factors in this phenomenon are globalisation and the growing fragmentation of the world market which obstructs the international availability of labour power; demographic factors such as falling birth rates and ageing populations which limit the number of workers available for exploitation, the relative lack of a sufficiently qualified workforce, despite the selective immigration policies implemented by numerous states. To which can be added the flight of wage-earners away from sectors where working conditions have become unbearable.

## 6. The destruction of nature

The war in Ukraine is also a stark demonstration of how war can further accelerate the ecological crisis, which has been building up throughout the period of decadence but had already reached new levels in the first decades of capitalism’s terminal phase. The devastation of buildings, infrastructure, technology and other resources constitutes an enormous waste of energy and their reconstruction will generate even more carbon emissions. The profligate use of highly destructive weapons leads to the pollution of soil, water and air, with the ever-present threat that the whole region could again become a source of atomic radiation, either as the result of the bombardment of nuclear power stations or the deliberate use of nuclear weapons. But the war also has an ecological impact at the global level, since it has made the achievement of global targets for limiting emissions even more remote, with each country being more concerned with its “energy security”, which generally means further reliance on fossil fuels.

Just as the ecological crisis is a factor in the “whirlwind effect”, it also generates its own “feed-back loops” which are already speeding up the process of global warming. Thus, the melting of the polar icecaps not only contains the dangers inherent in rising sea levels, but itself becomes a factor in global temperature rises since the loss of ice implies a reduced capacity to reflect solar energy back into the atmosphere. Similarly, the melting of the permafrost in Siberia will release a huge store of the potent greenhouse gas methane. The worsening and combining effects of global warming (floods, wildfires, drought, soil erosion etc) are already making more and more parts

4. “Resolution on the international situation”, *International Review* n° 167, quoted in the “Report on the economic crisis” published in this issue of the *Review*.



of the planet uninhabitable, further exacerbating a global refugee problem already fuelled by the persistence and extension of imperialist conflicts.

As Marx and Luxemburg both explained, the relentless quest for markets and raw materials has driven capitalism to invade and occupy the entire planet, destroying the remaining “wild” areas or subjecting them to the law of profit. This process is inseparable from the generation of zoonotic diseases such as Covid and thus lays the basis for future pandemics.

The ruling class is increasingly aware of the dangers posed by the ecological crisis, especially because all this comes at an enormous economic cost, but the recent environmental conferences have confirmed the fundamental incapacity of the ruling class to deal with the situation, given that capitalism cannot exist without competition between nation states and the demands of “growth”. Part of the bourgeoisie, such as a sizeable wing of the Republican Party in the US, whose ideology is sustained by the profound irrationality typical of capitalism’s final phase, persist in their denial of climate science, but as the WEF and UN reports show, the more intelligent factions are well aware of the gravity of the situation. But the solutions they offer can never go to the root of the question and indeed rely on technical fixes which are just as toxic as the existing technology (as in the case of “clean” electrical vehicles whose lithium batteries are based on vast and highly polluting mining projects) or imply further attacks on the living conditions of the working class. Thus, the idea of a “post-growth” economy in which a “benevolent” and “truly democratic” state presides over all the fundamental relations of capitalism (wage labour, generalised commodity production) is not only a logical absurdity – since it is these very relations which underlie the necessity for endless accumulation – but would also involve fierce austerity measures, justified by the slogan “consume less”. And while the more radical wing of the “green” movements (Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, etc) increasingly criticise the “blah blah” of government environmental conferences, their calls for direct action by concerned “citizens” can only obscure the need for workers to fight this system on their own class terrain and to recognise that real “system change” can only come about through the proletarian revolution. As environmental disasters follow each other with increasing rapidity, the bourgeoisie will certainly make use of these forms of protest as false alternatives to the class struggle, which alone can develop the perspective of a radically new relationship between humanity and its natural environment.

## 7. Political instability of the ruling class

In 1990 the “Theses on Decomposition” pointed to the growing tendency for the ruling class to lose control of its political game. The rise of populism, oiled by the total lack of perspective offered by capitalism and the development of every man for himself at the international level, is probably the clearest expression of this loss of control, and this trend has continued despite counter-moves by other more “responsible” factions of the bourgeoisie (for example the displacement of Trump, and the rapid dumping of Truss in the UK). In the US, Trump is still preparing a new presidential bid, which, if successful, would seriously undermine the US government’s current foreign policy orientations; in Britain, the classic country of stable parliamentary government, we have seen a train of four successive Tory prime ministers, expressing deep divisions in the Tory party as a whole, and again mainly driven by the populist forces which pushed the country into the fiasco of Brexit; away from the historic centres of the system nationalist demagogues like Erdogan and Modi continue to act as mavericks preventing the formation of a solid alliance behind the US in its conflict with Russia. In Israel, Netanyahu has also risen from what seemed like his political grave, supported by ultra-religious, openly annexationist forces, and his efforts to subordinate the Supreme Court to his government has provoked a huge protest movement, entirely dominated by calls to defend “democracy”.

The January 6 assault on the Capitol by Trump supporters highlighted the fact that the divisions within the ruling class, even in the most powerful country on the planet, are becoming more and more entrenched and contain the potential for degenerating into violent clashes and even civil wars. The election of Lula in Brazil saw Bolsonaro forces attempting their own version of January 6, and in Russia there is growing evidence of opposition to Putin within the ruling class, perhaps most significantly from ultra-nationalist groups who are not satisfied with the running of the current “special military operation” in Ukraine. Rumours of military coups abound; and while Putin himself is currently adapting to the pressure from the right through constant threats of escalating the “war with the West”, a replacement of Putin by a rival gang would be anything but a peaceful process. Finally, in China, the divisions in the bourgeoisie are also becoming more overt, in particular between the faction around Xi Jinping, advocates of reinforcing central state control over the whole economy, and rivals more committed to the possibilities

of developing private capital and foreign investment. Although as recently as the October 2022 Party Congress the reign of Xi faction seemed to be unassailable, its disastrous handling of the Covid crisis, the deepening economic crisis, and the severe dilemmas created by the Ukraine war, have revealed the real weaknesses of the Chinese ruling class, weighed down by a rigid Stalinist apparatus which lacks the means to adapt to major social and economic problems.

However, these divisions do not put an end to the capacity of the ruling class to turn the effects of decomposition against the working class, or, faced with a rising class struggle, to temporarily put aside its divisions to confront its mortal enemy. And even when the bourgeoisie is unable to control its internal divisions, the working class is permanently threatened by the danger of being mobilised behind rival factions of its class enemy.

## 8. The rupture with 30 years of retreat and disorientation

The recovery of worker’s combativity in a number of countries is a major, historic event which does not only result from local circumstances and can’t be explained by purely national conditions.

At the origin of this resurgence, the struggles which have been going on in Britain since the summer of 2022 have a significance which goes beyond the British context alone; the reaction of the workers in Britain sheds a light on those going on elsewhere and confers on them a new and particular meaning in the situation. The fact that the present struggles were initiated by a fraction of the proletariat which has suffered the most from the general retreat in the class struggle since the end of the 1980s is profoundly significant: just as the defeat in Britain in 1985 announced the general retreat at the end of the 1980s, the return of strikes and working class combativity in Britain reveals the existence of a deep current within the proletariat of the whole world. Faced with the aggravation of the world economic crisis, the working class is beginning to develop its response to the inexorable deterioration of living and working conditions in the same international movement. And this analysis is also valid as regards the massive mobilisations of the working class in France that have been taking place for three months in response to the government’s attack on pensions. For several decades, the workers of this country have been among the most combative in the world, but the mobilisations that began in early 2023 are not a simple continuation of the important struggles of the previous



period: the breadth of these mobilisations must also, and most fundamentally, be explained by the fact that they are an integral part of the combativity being displayed by the proletariat of numerous countries.

The present workers' struggles in Europe confirm that the class has not been defeated and conserves its potential. The fact that the unions control these movements without being challenged should not minimise or relativise their importance. On the contrary, the attitude of the ruling class, which for a long time has been prepared for the prospect of a revival of workers' struggles, is testimony to their potential: the unions have been ready in advance to take a "militant" stance and put themselves at the head of the movement in order to fully play their role as guardians of the capitalist order.

Carried forward by a new generation of workers, the breadth and simultaneity of these movements testify to a real change of spirit in the class and represents a break with the passivity and disorientation which has prevailed from the end of the 1980s up till now.

Confronted with the test of war it was not possible to expect a direct response from the working class. History shows that the working class does not mobilise directly against war but against its effects on life at the rear. The scarcity of pacifist mobilisations organised by the bourgeoisie does not mean that the proletariat adheres to the war, but it does show the effectiveness of the campaign for "the defence of Ukraine against the Russian aggressor". However, it's not just a passive non-adherence. The working class in the central countries is still not ready to accept the supreme sacrifice of death, but also rejects the sacrifice of living and working conditions demanded by the war. The current struggles are precisely the response of the workers at this level; they are the only possible response and contain the premises of the future, but at the same time they show that the working class is not yet able to make the link between war and the degradation of its conditions.

The ICC has always insisted that despite the blows against class consciousness, despite its reflux in the last few decades:

- the proletariat of the central countries has retained enormous reserves of combativity which, up to now, have not been put to a decisive test;
- the development of open resistance to the attacks of capital more than ever constitutes, in today's situation, the most crucial condition for the proletariat to recover its class identity as the starting point for a more general evolution of class consciousness.

Up to now, the expressions of combativity which have come to the surface seem to have had "*very little echo within the rest of the class: the phenomenon of struggles in one country 'responding' to movements elsewhere appears to be almost non-existent. For the class in general, the fragmented and unconnected nature of the struggles does little, on the surface at least, to reinforce or rather restore the self-confidence of the proletariat, its awareness of itself as a distinct force in society, as an international class with the potential to challenge the existing order*".<sup>5</sup>

Today, the combination of a return of workers' combativity and the worsening of the world economic crisis (in comparison to 1968 or 2008), which will spare no parts of the proletariat and will hit all of them simultaneously, objectively changes the bases for the class struggle

The deepening of the crisis and the intensification of the war economy can only continue on a world scale and everywhere this can only generate a rising combativity. Inflation will play a particular role in this development of combativity and consciousness. By hitting all countries, the whole working class, inflation pushes the proletariat to struggle. Not being an attack that the bourgeoisie can prepare and eventually withdraw, but a product of capitalism, it implies a deeper struggle and reflection.

The revival of struggles confirms the ICC's position that the crisis indeed remains the best ally of the proletariat:

"*the inexorable aggravation of the capitalist crisis constitutes the essential stimulant for the class struggle and development of consciousness, the precondition for its ability to resist the poison distilled by the social rot. For while there is no basis for the unification of the class in the partial struggles against the effects of decomposition, nonetheless its struggle against the direct effects of the crisis constitutes the basis for the development of its class strength and unity*".<sup>6</sup> This development of struggles is not a flash in the pan but possesses a future. It indicates a process of class revival after years of reflux and contains the potential for the recovery of class identity, of the class once again becoming aware of what it is, of the power it has when it enters into struggle.

Everything indicates that this class movement, born in Europe, can last a long time and will be repeated in other parts of

the world. A new situation is opening up for the class struggle.

Faced with the danger of destruction contained in the decomposition of capitalism, these struggles show that the historic perspective remains totally open: "*These first steps will often be hesitant and full of weaknesses, but they are essential if the working class is to be able to reaffirm its historical capacity to impose its communist perspective. Thus, the two alternative poles of the perspective will confront each other globally: the destruction of humanity or the communist revolution, even if this latter alternative is still very far off and faces enormous obstacles*".<sup>7</sup>

Although the very context of decomposition represents an obstacle to the development of struggles and the recovery of the proletariat's self-confidence, despite the fact that decomposition has made frightful advances, despite the fact that time is no longer on its side, the class has managed to return to the struggle. The recent period has strikingly confirmed our prediction in the Resolution on the International Situation from the 24th International Congress:

"*As we have already recalled, the phase of decomposition indeed contains the danger of the proletariat simply failing to respond and being ground down over a long period – a "death by a thousand cuts" rather than a head-on class confrontation. Nevertheless, we affirm that there is still sufficient evidence to show that, despite the undoubted "progress" of decomposition, despite the fact that time is no longer on the side of the working class, the potential for a profound proletarian revival – leading to a reunification between the economic and the political dimensions of the class struggle – has not vanished.*"<sup>8</sup>

The struggle itself is the first victory for the proletariat, revealing in particular:

- The road to the recovery of class identity. Whereas the fragile reappearance of the class struggle (USA 2018, France 2019) was to a large extent blocked by the pandemic and the lock-downs, these events did reveal the condition of the working class as the main victim of the health crisis but also as the source of all labour and all material production of essential goods. Workers are now engaging in a collective experience of the struggle where there is a search for unity and a beginning of solidarity between the different sectors of the class, between "blue collar" and "white collar" workers, between the generations. The feeling of

5. 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ICC: "Report on the class struggle: The concept of the course of history in the revolutionary movement", *International Review* n° 107.

6. "Decomposition, Final phase of the decadence of capitalism", *International Review* n° 62.

7. "The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity", *International Review* n° 169.

8. 24<sup>th</sup> ICC Congress: "Resolution on the international situation", *International Review* n° 167.

all being in the same boat will enable the working class to recognise itself as a social force united by the same conditions of exploitation. The recovery of the class identity of the proletariat includes a dimension inseparable from these first steps in the recognition of itself and its strength; it also includes the identification of its class antagonist, beyond this or that employer or government. This restarting of the confrontation between classes sets the conditions for a perspective of a more conscious politicisation of the struggle, a long and tortuous process which is only just beginning.

- A progression in the subterranean maturation of consciousness, which has been developing over a fairly long period and at various levels: in the wider layers of the class, subterranean maturation first takes the form of a loss of illusion in the capacity of capitalism to offer a future, an awareness that the situation can only get worse, that the whole dynamic of capitalism is pushing society up against the wall, above all a deeply-seated revolt against the conditions of exploitation, summed up in the slogan “enough is enough”. In a more limited sector of the class, we see a reflection on past struggles and the search for lessons about the means to strengthen the struggle, how to create an effective balance of force against the state. And finally, “*in a fraction of the class that is even more limited in size, but destined to grow as the struggle advances, it takes the form of an explicit defence of the communist program, and thus of regroupment into the organised marxist vanguard*”.<sup>9</sup> This is concretised by the appearance of minorities interested in the political positions of the communist left.

It was the gradual loss of class identity which made it possible for the bourgeoisie to sterilise or recuperate the two biggest moments of proletarian struggle since the 1980s (the movement against the Contrat Première Embauche in France in 2006, and the Indignados in Spain in 2011), because the protagonists were deprived of this crucial base for the more general development of consciousness. Today the tendency towards the recovery of class identity and the evolution of subterranean maturation express the most important change at the subjective level, revealing the potential for the future development of the proletarian struggle. Because it means the consciousness of forming a class united by common interests, opposed to those of the bourgeoisie, because it means the “constitution of the proletariat as a class”

(Manifesto), class identity is an inseparable part of class consciousness, for the affirmation of the conscious revolutionary being of the proletariat. Without it, there is no possibility of the class linking back to its history in order to draw the lessons of past combats and thus engage in its present and future struggles. Class identity and consciousness can only be strengthened by the development the autonomous struggle of the class on its own terrain.

The revival of class combativity and the subterranean maturation of consciousness require the trade unions, these state organs who specialise in corralling workers’ struggles, and the leftist political organisations, bourgeois false friends of the working class, to put themselves in the front line against the class struggle.

The current effectiveness of union control relies on the weaknesses that derive from decomposition, weaknesses which are exploited politically by the bourgeoisie, and from the retreat in consciousness which has gone on for some decades and which have been expressed by the “*the unions’ return to strength*” and the fact that “*reformist ideology will weigh very heavily on the struggle in the period ahead, greatly facilitating the action of the unions*”.<sup>10</sup>

In particular, the weight of atomisation, the lack of perspective, the weakness of class identity, the loss of acquisitions and of the lessons from confrontations with the unions in the past are behind the extremely important influence of corporatism. This weakness enables the unions to maintain a powerful influence over the class.

Although they are not yet threatened by a challenge to this control of the struggle, the unions have been obliged to adapt to the current struggles, the better to carry out their usual work of division, by using a more “combative”, “working class” language, presenting themselves as the artisans of class unity, all the better to sabotage it.

Parallel to this, the different leftist organisations (and the left in general) are working inside and outside the unions and provide a powerful support for them. Defenders of the most sophisticated anti-working class mystifications in a radical covering, they also have the function of capturing minorities looking for class positions.

The constant barrage in defence of “democracy” and the interests of the “people” are aimed at hiding the existence of class antagonisms, feeding the lie of the state as protector and attacking proletarian class identity, reducing the working class to a

mass of citizens or “sectors” of activity separated by particular interests.

Confronted with movements of non-exploiting classes or of the petty bourgeoisie pulverised by the economic crisis, the proletariat must beware of “popular” revolts or interclassist struggles which drown its own interests in an undifferentiated sum of the “people”. It must stand firmly on the terrain of the defence of its own demands and of its class autonomy, as a precondition for the development of its strength and its combat.

It must also reject the traps set by the bourgeoisie around single-issue struggles (to save the environment, against racial oppression, feminism, etc) which divert it from its own class terrain. One of the most effective weapons of the ruling class is its ability to turn the effects of decomposition against the class and encourage the decomposing ideologies of the petty bourgeoisie. On the soil of decomposition, of irrationality, of nihilism and “no-future” all kinds of ideological currents are proliferating. Their central role is to make each repulsive aspect of this decadent capitalist system a motive for a specific struggle, taken in charge by different categories of the population or sometimes by the “people”, but always separated from any real questioning of the system as a whole.

All these ideologies (ecologist, “woke”, racial, etc) which deny the class struggle, or like those who preach “intersectionality”, put the class struggle on the same level as the struggle against racism or male chauvinism, represent a danger for the class, in particular for the young generation of workers lacking experience but deeply revolted by the state of society. At this level these ideologies are supplemented by the panoply of leftists and modernists (“communisers”) whose role is to sterilise the proletariat’s efforts to develop class consciousness and to draw workers away from the class struggle.

If the class struggle is by nature international, the working class is at the same time a heterogeneous class which has to forge its unity through its struggle. In this process, it’s the proletariat of the central countries which has the responsibility of opening the door of revolution to the world proletariat.

In countries such as China, India, etc even if the working class has shown itself to be very combative and despite their importance on the quantitative level, these fractions of the proletariat, owing to their lack of historical experience are particularly vulnerable to the ideological traps and mystifications of the ruling class. Their struggles are easily reduced to impotence

9. “Reply to the Communist Workers’ Organisation: On the subterranean maturation of consciousness”, *International Review* n° 43.

10. “Theses on the economic and political crisis in the eastern countries”, thesis 22, *International Review* n° 60.



or diverted into bourgeois dead-ends (calls for more democracy, freedom, equality, etc) or completely diluted in interclassist movements dominated by other social strata. As shown by the Arab spring of 2011: the very real workers' struggle in Egypt was rapidly diluted into the "people" then drawn behind factions of ruling class on the bourgeois terrain of "more democracy". Or again, the immense movement of protest in Iran, where, in the absence of a clear revolutionary perspective defended by the more experienced fractions of the world proletariat, in western Europe, the many workers' struggles in the country can only end up being drowned in the popular movement and diverted from their class terrain behind the slogan of women's rights.

In the US, although marked by weaknesses linked to the fact that the class in that country has not been directly confronted by the counter-revolution and does not possess a deep revolutionary tradition, the proletariat of the world's first power, in spite of numerous obstacles generated by decomposition, of which the US has become the epicentre (the weight of racial divisions and populism, the whole atmosphere of quasi-civil war between populists and Democrats, the impasse of movements working on a bourgeois terrain such as Black Lives Matter) shows the capacity to develop its struggles (during the pandemic, then during "Striketober in 2021) on its class terrain. The proletariat of the US is showing, in a very difficult political situation, that it is beginning to respond to the effects of the economic crisis.

The key to the revolutionary future of the proletariat remains in the hands of its fraction in the central countries of capitalism. Only the proletariat of the old industrial centres of Western Europe constitutes the point of departure for the future world revolution:

- because it is the seat of the most important revolutionary experience of the working class from the first battles of 1848 to the revolution in Germany 1918-19 passing through the Paris Commune of 1871;
- because the European proletariat has been the most hardened by the confrontation with the most sophisticated bourgeois mystifications of democracy, elections, trade unions;
- because it also has been confronted with the counter-revolution in the different forms taken by the dictatorship of the ruling class: bourgeois democracy, Stalinism and fascism;
- because the question of the internationalisation of the class struggle is posed right away by the proximity of the most

powerful nations in Europe;

- because the political groups of the communist left, although still a very small, weak minority, are present there.

## 9. The responsibility of revolutionaries

Faced with the increasingly clash of the two poles of the alternative – destruction of humanity or communist revolution – the revolutionary organisations of the communist left, and the ICC in particular, have an irreplaceable role to play in the development of class consciousness, and must devote their energies to the permanent task of theoretical deepening, to putting forward a clear analysis of the world situation, and to intervening in the struggles of our class to defend the necessity for class autonomy, self-organisation and unification, and for the development of the revolutionary perspective. This work can only be carried out on the basis of a patient work of construction of the organisation, laying the basis for the world party of the future. All these tasks demand a militant struggle against all the influences of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology in the milieu of the communist left and the ICC itself. At the present juncture, the groups of the communist left are faced with the danger of a real crisis: with some exceptions they have been unable to unite in defence of internationalism in the face of the imperialist war in Ukraine, and are increasingly open to the penetration of opportunism and parasitism. A rigorous adherence to the marxist method and proletarian principles provides the only response these dangers.

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*"But the movement on the whole does not proceed from the economic to the political struggle, nor even the reverse. Every great political mass action, after it has its political highest point, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes. And that applies not only to each of the great mass strikes, but also to the revolution as a whole. With the spreading, clarifying and involution of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but extends, organises and becomes involved in equal measure. Between the two there is the most complete reciprocal action."*

*"Every new onset and every fresh victory of the political struggle is transformed into a powerful impetus for the economic struggle, extending at the same time its external possibilities and intensifying the inner urge of the workers to better their position and their desire to struggle. After every foaming wave of political action a fructifying deposit remains behind from which a thousand stalks of economic struggle shoot forth. And conversely. The workers' condition of ceaseless economic struggle with the capitalists keeps their fighting energy alive in every political interval; it forms, so to speak, the permanent fresh reservoir of the strength of the proletarian classes, from which the political fight ever renews its strength, and at the same time leads the indefatigable economic sappers of the proletariat at all times, now here and now there, to isolated sharp conflicts, out of which public conflicts on a large scale unexpectedly explode."*

*"In a word: the economic struggle is the transmitter from one political centre to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilisation of the soil for the economic struggle. Cause and effect here continually change places; and thus the economic and the political factor in the period of the mass strike, now widely removed, completely separated or even mutually exclusive, as the theoretical plan would have them, merely form the two interlacing sides of the proletarian class struggle in Russia. And their unity is precisely the mass strike. If the sophisticated theory proposes to make a clever logical dissection of the mass strike for the purpose of getting at the "purely political mass strike," it will by this dissection, as with any other, not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it altogether"*



# Update of the theses on decomposition (2023)

The ICC adopted in May 1990 Theses entitled “Decomposition, final phase of the decadence of capitalism” which presented our overall analysis of the world situation at the time of and following the collapse of the Eastern imperialist bloc in late 1989. The central idea of the Theses was, as the title indicates, that the decadence of the capitalist mode of production, which had begun in the First World War, had entered a new phase of its evolution, one dominated by the general decomposition of society. At its 22nd congress, in 2017, by adopting a text entitled “Report on decomposition today (May 2017)”, our organisation considered it necessary to update the 1990 document, to “*confront the essential points of the theses with the present situation: to what extent the aspects put forward have been verified, or even amplified, or have been disproved, or need to be completed.*” This second document, written 27 years after the first, showed that the analysis adopted in 1990 had been fully verified. At the same time, this 2017 text addressed aspects of the world situation that were not included in the 1990 text, but which complemented the picture presented in that document and which had taken on major importance: the explosion in the number of refugees fleeing wars, famine, persecution and also the rise of xenophobic populism, which was having an increasing impact on the political life of the ruling class.

Today, the ICC considers it necessary to update the 1990 and 2017 texts, not a quarter of a century after the latter, but only 6 years after, because in the last period we have witnessed a spectacular acceleration and amplification of the manifestations of this general decomposition of capitalist society.

This catastrophic and accelerating development of the state of the world has obviously not escaped the attention of the world’s leading political and economic leaders. In the *Global Risks Report* (GRR) based on the analyses of a multitude of “experts” (1,200 in 2022) and which is presented each year at the Davos forum (World Economic Forum – WEF), which brings together these leaders, one can read:

*“The first years of this decade have heralded a particularly disruptive period in human history. The return to a ‘new normal’ following the COVID-19 pandemic was quickly disrupted by the outbreak of war in Ukraine, ushering in a fresh series of crises in food and energy - triggering problems that decades of progress had sought to solve.*

*“As 2023 begins, the world is facing a set of risks that feel both wholly new and eerily familiar. We have seen a return of ‘older’ risks - inflation, cost-of-living crises, trade wars, capital outflows from emerging markets, widespread social unrest, geopolitical confrontation and the spectre of nuclear warfare - which few of this generation’s business leaders and public policy-makers have experienced.) These are being amplified by comparatively new developments in the global risks landscape, including unsustainable levels of debt, a new era of low growth, low global investment and de-globalization, a decline in human development after decades of*

*progress, rapid and unconstrained development of dual-use (civilian and military) technologies, and the growing pressure of climate change impacts and ambitions in an evershrinking window for transition to a 1.5°C world. Together, these are converging to shape a unique, uncertain and turbulent decade to come.”*<sup>1</sup>

In general, whether in government statements or in the mainstream media, the ruling class tries to downplay the extreme gravity of the global situation. But when it brings together the world’s main leaders, or talks to itself, as at the annual Davos Forum, it cannot avoid a certain lucidity. It is significant that the alarming findings of this report have had very little echo in the mainstream media, whose fundamental vocation is not to honestly inform the population, and particularly the exploited, but to act as propaganda agencies designed to make them accept a situation that is becoming more and more catastrophic, to hide from them the complete historical bankruptcy of the capitalist mode of production.

In fact, the findings contained in the report presented at the Davos Forum in January 2023 are largely in line with the text adopted by the ICC in October 2022 entitled “*The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity*”.<sup>2</sup> In reality,

1. *The Global Risks Report 2023*, 18<sup>th</sup> Edition, World Economic Forum. Executive Summary, p.6.  
2. Published in *International Review* n° 169.

it is not by a few months that the ICC’s analysis preceded that of the most informed “experts” of the ruling class, but by several decades, since the observations made in our October 2022 document are only a striking confirmation of the forecasts that we had already put forward at the end of the 1980s, notably in our “Theses on decomposition”. That the communists have a certain lead, and even a definite lead, over the bourgeois “experts” in the prediction of the great catastrophic tendencies at work within the capitalist world is not surprising: the dominant class can, as a general rule, only hide a fundamental reality from itself and from the class which it exploits, and which alone can bring a solution to the contradictions which undermine society, the proletariat: as with the modes of production which have preceded it, the capitalist mode of production is not eternal. Like the modes of production of the past, it is destined to be replaced, if it does not destroy humanity beforehand, by another, superior mode of production corresponding to the development of the productive forces that it has allowed at a certain moment in its history. A mode of production that will abolish the commodity relations that are at the heart of the historical crisis of capitalism, where there will no longer be room for a privileged class living off the exploitation of producers. It is precisely because it cannot envisage its own disappearance that the bourgeois class is incapable, as a rule, of taking a clear-sighted look at the contradictions that are leading the society it rules to its ruin.

In the afterword to the 2nd edition of *Capital* in German, Marx wrote: “*The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society impress themselves upon the practical bourgeois most strikingly in the changes of the periodic cycle, through which modern industry runs, and whose crowning point is the universal crisis. That crisis is once again approaching, although as yet but in its preliminary stage; and by the universality of its theatre and the intensity of its action it will drum dialectics even into the heads of the mushroom-upstarts of the new, holy Prusso-German empire.*”

At the very moment when the ICC was adopting the Theses on Decomposition, announcing the entry of capitalism into a new phase, the ultimate phase, of its decadence, marked by a qualitative aggravation of the contradictions of this system and

a general decomposition of society, the “practical bourgeois”, notably in the person of President Bush senior, was ecstatic about the glorious new perspective which, in its eyes, had been inaugurated by the collapse of the Stalinist regimes and the “Soviet” bloc: an era of “peace” and “prosperity”. Today, confronted with the “contradictory movement of capitalist society”, not in the form of a cyclical crisis like those of the 19th century but in the form of a permanent and insoluble crisis of its economy generating a growing disruption and chaos of society, this same “practical bourgeois” is obliged to let a little “dialectic” enter his head.

For this reason, the updating of the Theses on Decomposition will be based on the analyses and forecasts contained in

the 2023 Global Risks Report, as well as on our October 2022 text, which in many respects it confirms. This is a confirmation provided by the most lucid institutions of the ruling class; in reality it is an admission of the historical bankruptcy of its system. The use of data and analysis provided by the enemy class is not an “innovation” of the ICC. In fact, revolutionaries do not, in general, have the means to collect the data and statistics that the state and administrative apparatus of the bourgeoisie collects for its own needs for directing society. It was partly on the basis of this kind of data, obviously with a critical eye, that Engels fleshed out his study on *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. And Marx, especially in *Capital*, often uses the

“blue notebooks” of British parliamentary enquiries. Concerning the analyses and forecasts produced by the “experts” of the bourgeoisie, it is necessary to be even more critical than on the factual data, especially when they correspond to propaganda intended to “demonstrate” that capitalism is the best or the only system capable of ensuring human progress and well-being. However, when these analyses and forecasts underline the catastrophic impasse in which this system finds itself, which obviously cannot function as an apology for the system, it is useful and important to rely on them to support and reinforce our own analyses and forecasts.

## Part I: The 2020s usher in a new phase in the decomposition of capitalism

In the text adopted in October 2022, we read:

*“The 20s of the 21st century are shaping up to be one of the most turbulent periods in history, and indescribable disasters and suffering are already mounting up. It began with the Covid-19 pandemic (which is still out there) and a war in the heart of Europe which has lasted for more than nine months and whose outcome no one can foresee. Capitalism has entered into a phase of serious difficulties on all fronts. Behind this accumulation and entanglement of convulsions lies the threat of the destruction of humanity. And, as we already pointed out in our Theses: Decomposition, the final phase of capitalist decadence” (International Review n° 107, 4th Quarter 2001), capitalism ‘is the first [society] to threaten the very survival of humanity, the first that can destroy the human species’ (Thesis 1). [...]*

Following the sudden outbreak of the Covid pandemic, we identified four characteristics of the phase of decomposition:

- The increased severity of its effects...
- The irruption of the effects of decomposition at the economic level ...
- The growing interaction of its effects, which aggravates the contradictions of capitalism to a level never reached before [...]
- The growing presence of its effects in the central countries...

2022 provided a striking illustration of these four characteristics, with:

- The outbreak of war in Ukraine.
- The appearance of unprecedented waves

of refugees.

- The continuation of the pandemic with health systems on the verge of collapse.
- A growing loss of control by the bourgeoisie over its political apparatus; the crisis in the UK was a spectacular manifestation of this.
- An agricultural crisis with a shortage of many food products in a context of widespread overproduction, which is a relatively new phenomenon in more than a century of decadence...
- The terrifying famines that are affecting more and more countries.

The aggregation and interaction of these destructive phenomena produces a ‘vortex effect’ that concentrates, catalyses and multiplies each of its partial effects, causing even more destructive devastation ... This ‘vortex effect’ expresses a qualitative change, the consequences of which will become increasingly evident in the coming period.

In this context, it is important to stress the driving force of war, as an action deliberately pursued and planned for by capitalist states, having become the most powerful and aggravating factor of chaos and destruction...

In this context, we can see the calamity of the growing environmental crisis, which is reaching levels never seen before:

- A summer heat wave, the worst since 1961, with the prospect of such heat waves becoming a permanent feature.
- A drought unlike any before, the worst in 500 years according to experts, even

affecting rivers such as the Thames, the Rhine and the Po, which are usually fast flowing.

- Devastating fires, that were also the worst in decades.
- Uncontrollable floods like those in Pakistan, which affected a third of the country's land area (and large-scale flooding in Thailand).
- A risk of collapse of the ice caps after the melting of glaciers comparable in size to the surface of the United Kingdom, with catastrophic consequences’.

The findings of the WEF “experts” are no different:

*“The next decade will be characterized by environmental and societal crises, driven by underlying geopolitical and economic trends. ‘Cost-of-living crisis’ is ranked as the most severe global risk over the next two years, peaking in the short term. ‘Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse’ is viewed as one of the fastest deteriorating global risks over the next decade, and all six environmental risks feature in the top 10 risks over the next 10 years. Nine risks are featured in the top 10 rankings over both the short and the long term, including ‘Geoeconomic confrontation’ and ‘Erosion of social cohesion and societal polarisation’, alongside two new entrants to the top rankings: ‘Widespread cybercrime and cyber insecurity’ and ‘Large-scale involuntary migration’ [...]*

*“Governments and central banks could face stubborn inflationary pressures over the next two years, not least given the potential for a prolonged war in Ukraine, continued bottlenecks from a lingering*



pandemic, and economic warfare spurring supply chain decoupling. Downside risks to the economic outlook also loom large. A miscalibration between monetary and fiscal policies will raise the likelihood of liquidity shocks, signalling a more prolonged economic downturn and debt distress on a global scale. Continued supply-driven inflation could lead to stagflation, the socio-economic consequences of which could be severe, given an unprecedented interaction with historically high levels of public debt. Global economic fragmentation, geopolitical tensions and rockier restructuring could contribute to widespread debt distress in the next 10 years.[...]

“Economic warfare is becoming the norm, with increasing clashes between global powers and state intervention in markets over the next two years. Economic policies will be used defensively, to build self-sufficiency and sovereignty from rival powers, but also will increasingly be deployed offensively to constrain the rise of others. Intensive geo-economic weaponization will highlight security vulnerabilities posed by trade, financial and technological interdependence between globally integrated economies, risking an escalating cycle of distrust and decoupling [...]

“Interstate confrontations are anticipated by GRPS respondents to remain largely economic in nature over the next 10 years. However, the recent uptick in military expenditure and proliferation of new technologies to a wider range of actors could drive a global arms race in emerging technologies. The longer-term global risks landscape could be defined by multi-domain conflicts and asymmetric warfare, with the targeted deployment of new-tech weaponry on a potentially more destructive scale than seen in recent decades.[...]

“The ever-increasing intertwining of technologies with the critical functioning of societies is exposing populations to direct domestic threats, including those that seek to shatter societal functioning. Alongside a rise in cybercrime, attempts to disrupt critical technology-enabled resources and services will become more common, with attacks anticipated against agriculture and water, financial systems, public security, transport, energy and domestic, space-based and undersea communication infrastructure.[...]

“Nature loss and climate change are intrinsically interlinked – a failure in one sphere will cascade into the other. Without significant policy change or investment, the interplay between climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, food security and natural resource consumption will accelerate ecosystem collapse, threaten food supplies

and livelihoods in climate-vulnerable economies, amplify the impacts of natural disasters, and limit further progress on climate mitigation.

“Compounding crises are widening their impact across societies, hitting the livelihoods of a far broader section of the population, and destabilizing more economies in the world, than traditionally vulnerable communities and fragile states. Building on the most severe risks expected to impact in 2023 – including ‘**Energy supply crisis**’, ‘**Rising inflation**’ and ‘**Food supply crisis**’ – a global Cost-of-living crisis is already being felt.[...]

“Associated social unrest and political instability will not be contained to emerging markets, as economic pressures continue to hollow out the middle-income bracket. Mounting citizen frustration at losses in human development and declining social mobility, together with a widening gap in values and equality, are posing an existential challenge to political systems around the world. The election of less centrist leaders as well as political polarization between economic superpowers over the next two years may also reduce space further for collective problem-solving, fracturing alliances and leading to a more volatile dynamic.

“With a crunch in public-sector funding and competing security concerns, our capacity to absorb the next global shock is shrinking. Over the next 10 years, fewer countries will have the fiscal headroom to invest in future growth, green technologies, education, care and health systems. [...]

“Concurrent shocks, deeply interconnected risks and eroding resilience are giving rise to the risk of polycrisis – where disparate crises interact such that the overall impact far exceeds the sum of each part. Eroding geopolitical cooperation will have ripple effects across the global risks landscape over the medium term, including contributing to a potential polycrisis of interrelated environmental, geopolitical and socioeconomic risks relating to the supply of and demand for natural resources.

“The report describes four potential futures centred around food, water and metals and mineral shortages, all of which could spark a humanitarian as well as an ecological crisis – from water wars and famines to continued overexploitation of ecological resources and a slowdown in climate mitigation and adaption”<sup>3</sup>

“Our global ‘new normal’ is a return to basics – food, energy, security – problems our globalized world was thought to be on a trajectory to solve. These risks are be-

ing amplified by the persistent health and economic overhang of a global pandemic; a war in Europe and sanctions that impact a globally integrated economy; and an escalating technological arms race underpinned by industrial competition and enhanced state intervention. Longer-term structural changes to geopolitical dynamics (...) are coinciding with a more rapidly changing economic landscape, ushering in a low-growth, low-investment and low-cooperation era and a potential decline in human development after decades of progress.”<sup>4</sup>

“A combination of extreme weather events and constrained supply could lead the current cost-of-living crisis into a catastrophic scenario of hunger and distress for millions in import-dependent countries or turn the energy crisis towards a humanitarian crisis in the poorest emerging markets.

“Estimates suggest that over 800,000 hectares of farmland were wiped out by floods in Pakistan, ... Predicted droughts and water shortages may cause a decline in harvests and livestock deaths across East Africa, North Africa and Southern Africa, exacerbating food insecurity.

“‘**Severe commodity price shocks or volatility**’ was a top-five risk over the next two years in 47 countries surveyed by the Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey (EOS), while ‘**Severe commodity supply crises**’ registered as a more localized risk, as a top-five concern across 34 countries, including in Switzerland, South Korea, Singapore, Chile and Türkiye. The catastrophic effects of famine and loss of life can also have spill-over effects further afield, as the risk of widespread violence grows and involuntary migration rises.”<sup>5</sup>

“Some countries will be unable to contain future shocks, invest in future growth and green technologies or build future resilience in education, healthcare and ecological systems, with impacts exacerbated by the most powerful and disproportionately borne by the most vulnerable.”<sup>6</sup>

“In the face of vulnerabilities highlighted by the pandemic and then war, economic policy, particularly in advanced economies, is increasingly directed towards geopolitical goals. Countries are seeking to build ‘self-sufficiency’, underpinned by state aid, and achieve ‘sovereignty’ from rival powers. ...

“This may spur contrary outcomes to the intended objective, driving resilience and productivity growth lower and marking the end of an economic era characterized

4. Ibid. “1.1. Current crises”, p.14.

5. Ibid. “Cost-of-living crisis”, p.16/17.

6. Ibid. “Economic downturn”, p.19

3. The Global Risks Report 2023, “Executive Summary”, p7-9.



by cheaper and globalized capital, labour, commodities and goods.

*“This will likely continue to weaken existing alliances as nations turn inwards.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“Today, atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have all reached record highs. Emission trajectories make it very unlikely that global ambitions to limit warming to 1.5°C will be achieved.*

*“Recent events have exposed a divergence between what is scientifically necessary and what is politically expedient.*

*“Yet geopolitical tensions and economic pressures have already limited – and in some cases reversed – progress on climate change mitigation, at least over the short term. For example, the EU spent at least EUR50 billion on new and expanded fossil-fuel infrastructure and supplies, and some countries restarted coal power stations.*

*“The stark reality of 600 million people in Africa without access to electricity illustrates the failure to deliver change to those who need it and the continued attraction of quick fossil-fuel powered solutions – despite the risks.*

*“Climate change will also increasingly become a key migration driver and there are indications that it has already contributed to the emergence of terrorist groups and conflicts in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.”<sup>8</sup>*

This assessment of the state of the world today contains all the elements that were cited in our October 2022 text, often in greater detail. In particular, the four major characteristics of the present situation:

- *The increased severity of its effects ...*
- *The irruption of the effects of decomposition at the economic level ...*
- *The growing interaction of its effects, which aggravates the contradictions of capitalism to a level never reached before ...*
- *The growing presence of its effects in the central countries ...*

are indeed present in the WEF document, even if in somewhat different words and formulations, and even if the political impact of decomposition on the most advanced countries is addressed in somewhat “timid” terms: one should not anger the governments and political forces of these countries by referring to their increasingly irrational and chaotic policies.

In particular, the WEF report highlights

the increasing interaction of the effects of decomposition, which we call the “vortex” or “whirlwind” effect”. To do this, it introduces the term “polycrisis”, which was already used in the 1990s by Edgar Morin, a French “philosopher” and friend of Castoriadis, the mentor of the Socialisme ou Barbarie group. The definitions of this term used in the WEF report are the following:

*“A problem becomes a crisis when it challenges our ability to cope and thus threatens our identity. In the polycrisis the shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts.*

*“Another explanation of polycrisis would be - when multiple crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity’s prospects.”*

This “considerable deterioration in the prospects of humanity” is found in the WEF report in the chapter entitled “Global Risks 2033: Tomorrow’s Catastrophes”, a title which is already significant for the tone of these perspectives. Some of the sub-headings are also significant: “Natural ecosystems: past the point of no return”; Human health: perma-pandemics and chronic capacity challenges; Human security: new weapons, new conflicts”

More concretely, here are some examples of how the WEF report addresses these themes:

*“Biodiversity within and between ecosystems is already declining faster than at any other point during human history.*

*“Human interventions have negatively impacted a complex and delicately balanced global natural ecosystem, triggering a chain of reactions. Over the next 10 years, the interplay between biodiversity loss, pollution, natural resource consumption, climate change and socioeconomic drivers will make for a dangerous mix. Given that over half of the world’s economic output is estimated to be moderately to highly dependent on nature, the collapse of ecosystems will have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. These include increased occurrence of zoonotic diseases, a fall in crop yields and nutritional value, growing water stress exacerbating potentially violent conflict, loss of livelihoods dependent on food systems and nature-based services like pollination, and ever more dramatic floods, sea-level rises and erosion from the degradation of natural flood protection systems like water meadows and coastal mangroves.*

*“Nature loss and climate change are intrinsically interlinked – a failure in one*

*sphere will cascade into the other, and attaining net zero will require mitigatory measures for both levers. If we are unable to limit warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C, the continued impact of natural disasters, temperature and precipitation changes will become the dominant cause of biodiversity loss, in terms of composition and function.*

*“Continued damage to carbon sinks through deforestation and permafrost thaw, for example, and a decline in carbon storage productivity (soils and the ocean) may turn these ecosystems into “natural” sources of carbon and methane emissions. The impending collapse of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets may contribute to sea-level rise and coastal flooding, while the ‘die-off’ of low-latitude coral reefs, the nurseries of marine life, are sure to impact food supplies and broader marine ecosystems.*

*“Pressure on biodiversity will likely be further amplified by continued deforestation for agricultural processes, with an associated demand for additional cleared cropland, especially in subtropical and tropical areas with dense biodiversity such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.*

*“Yet, there is a more existential feedback mechanism to consider: biodiversity contributes to the health and resilience of soil, plants and animals, and its decline puts both food production yields and nutritional value at risk. This could then fuel deforestation, increase food prices, threaten local livelihoods and contribute to diet-related diseases and mortality. It may also lead to Large-scale involuntary migration.*

*“It is clear that both the scale and pace needed to transition to a green economy require new technologies. However, some of these technologies risk impacting natural ecosystems in new ways, with limited opportunity to ‘field-test’ results.”<sup>9</sup>*

*“Global public health is under growing pressure and health systems around the world are at risk of becoming unfit for purpose.*

*“Given current crises, mental health may also be exacerbated by increasing stressors such as violence, poverty and loneliness.*

*“Healthcare systems face worker burn-out and continued shortages at a time when fiscal consolidation risks deflecting attention and resources elsewhere. More frequent and widespread infectious disease outbreaks amidst a background of chronic diseases over the next decade risks pushing*

7. Ibid. “Goeconomic warfare”, p.19.

8. Ibid. “Climate action hiatus”, p.21-22.

9. Ibid. “Natural ecosystems: past the point of no return”, p.31-32.

exhausted healthcare systems to the brink of failure around the world. ...

"Climate change is also expected to exacerbate malnutrition as food insecurity grows. Increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can result in nutrient deficiencies in plants, and even accelerated uptake of heavy minerals, which have been linked to cancer, diabetes, heart disease and impaired growth."<sup>10</sup>

"A reversal of the trend towards demilitarisation will heighten the risk of conflict, on to a potentially more destructive scale. Growing mistrust and suspicion between global and regional powers has already led to the reprioritisation of military expenditures with stagnation on non-proliferation mechanisms. The spread of economic, technological and, therefore, military power to multiple countries and actors is driving the latest round of a global arms race.

"The proliferation of more destructive and new-tech military weaponry may enable newer forms of asymmetric warfare, enabling smaller powers and individuals to have a greater impact at a national and global level."<sup>11</sup>

"The set of emerging demand and supply concerns around natural resources is already becoming an area of growing alarm. The GRPS [Global Risks Perception Survey] respondents identified a strong relationship and reciprocal links between the "natural resource crises" and the other links identified in previous chapters.

"The report describes four potential futures centred around food, water and metals and mineral shortages, all of which could spark a humanitarian as well as an ecological crisis – from water wars and famines to continued over-exploitation of ecological resources and a slowdown in climate mitigation and adaptation."<sup>12</sup>

The conclusion of the report gives us an overall picture of what the world will be like in 2030:

"Global poverty, climate-sensitive livelihood crises, malnutrition and diet-related diseases, state instability and involuntary migration have all risen, elongating and spreading the instability and humanitarian crises [...]"<sup>13</sup>

"Food, energy and water insecurity becomes a driver of social inequality, civil unrest and political instability.

"Overexploitation and pollution – the

tragedy of the global commons – has expanded... *Famine has returned at a scale not seen in the last century. The sheer scale of humanitarian and environmental crises showcases broader paralysis and ineffectiveness of key multilateral mechanisms in addressing crises facing the global order, spiralling downwards into a self-perpetuating and compounding polycrises.*"<sup>14</sup>

The report tries at times to guard its readers against despairing by saying, for example:

"Some of the risks described in this year's report are close to a tipping point. This is the moment to act collectively, decisively and with a long-term lens to shape a pathway to a more positive, inclusive and stable world."<sup>15</sup> But overall, it demonstrates that the means to "act collectively, decisively" are non-existent in the current system.

In the 1990 ICC text we based the development of our analysis on the observation of the emergence or aggravation at the world level of a whole series of deadly or chaotic manifestations of social life. We can recall them here to see to what extent the current situation, as presented above, has intensified and increased these manifestations:

- "the proliferation of famines in 'third world' countries..."
- "the transformation of the 'third world' into a vast slum..."
- "the development of the same phenomenon at the heart of the major cities of the 'advanced' countries..."
- "the recent proliferation in 'accidental' catastrophes..."
- "the increasingly devastating effects on the human, social and economic levels of 'natural' disasters..."
- "the degradation of the environment... (undrinkable water, dead rivers, sewage infested oceans, unbreathable air in the cities, tens of thousands of square kilometers contaminated by radio-activity)... the greenhouse effect..."<sup>16</sup>
- "The incredible and prosperous corruption of the political apparatus..."<sup>17</sup>

We also recognised the threat posed by epidemics: "In the end, it is all the same whether we are wiped out in a rain of thermo-nuclear bombs, or by pollution, radio-activity from nuclear power stations, famine, epidemics..."<sup>18</sup>

The phenomenon of corruption is not

dealt with in the WEF report (afraid to upset the corrupt!). Despite all the "virtuous" programmes aimed at dealing with it, this scourge still thrives, particularly in Third World countries, of course: for example, the victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the advance of jihadist groups in the Sahel owe a great deal to the unbridled corruption of the regimes that were or are in power. In the countries that emerged from the former Soviet Union, like Russia and Ukraine, these are mafia-like governments. But this phenomenon does not spare the most developed countries, with all the shenanigans (which are only the tip of the iceberg) revealed by the "Panama papers" and other bodies. Similarly, "petro-dollars" are flowing to the advanced countries, particularly those in Europe, to buy compliance on the part of "decision-makers" in these countries with absurd and misguided decisions such as the awarding of the World Cup to Qatar or (unbelievable but true) the awarding of the Asian Winter Games to Saudi Arabia! But one of the high points was reached when the vice-president of the European Parliament, an institution that is supposed to fight corruption among other things, was taken by surprise, caught with suitcases full of banknotes from Qatar.

Finally, it is clear that the terrible human toll of the earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria in early February was largely the result of corruption that permitted developers to increase their profits by evading official earthquake zone building regulations.

**"The general tendency for the bourgeoisie to lose control of its own politics".<sup>19</sup>**

We have seen this issue treated very cautiously in the WEF report, especially when it refers to "an existential challenge for political systems worldwide" and "the election of less traditional ('centrist') leaders".

Finally, manifestations of decomposition identified in 1990 are not directly mentioned in the WEF report (usually for "diplomatic" reasons) nor in our October 2022 text because they were secondary to the central theme of this text: the considerable advance taken by decomposition as we enter the 2020s.

**"the constant increase in criminality, insecurity, and urban violence, as well as the fact that more and more children are falling prey to this violence..."<sup>20</sup>**

Two examples (among many) are the continuation of mass killings in the United States and the recent murders of several teenagers by other teenagers in France.

10. Ibid. "Human health: perma-pandemics and chronic capacity challenges", p.35-37.

11. "Human Security: New Weapons, New Conflicts", p.38.

12. Ibid. "Competition for Resources: Four Emerging Futures", p.57-58.

13. Ibid. "Four futures for 2030", p.63..

14. Ibid, p.66.

15. Ibid, "Executive Summary", p.10.

16. Op.Cit., Thesis 7.

17. Ibid, thesis 8.

18. Ibid, thesis 11

19. Ibid, thesis 10.

20. Ibid, thesis 8.



***“the development of nihilism, despair, and suicide amongst young people (expressed for example in the punk slogan ‘no future’) ... and... hatred and xenophobia”***<sup>21</sup>

The rise of racist hatred (often in the name of religion) which is the breeding ground for far-right populism (Nigel Farage in the UK, Trump and his followers in the US, Le Pen in France, Meloni in Italy, etc.).

***“the tidal waves of drug addiction... especially prevalent among young people”***<sup>22</sup> this scourge does not diminish, as illustrated by the power of drug gangs like those in Mexico.

***“the profusion of sects, the renewal of the religious spirit including in the advanced countries”***<sup>23</sup> There are many examples today of the aggravation of this phenomenon with the rise of:

- Salafism, the most obscurantist version of Islam;
- extreme right-wing Christian fanaticism, illustrated by the growing influence of evangelicals, as in the United States and Brazil;
- a bellicose and xenophobic Hinduism in India (the most populated country in the world);
- an extreme right-wing “militant Judaism” in Israel.

Of course, the WEF report carefully avoids mentioning these phenomena: there is a need to be polite to the participants of the Davos Forum who represent governments where religion and religious

fanaticism are a major political instrument of their power.

***“the rejection of rational, coherent thought even amongst certain ‘scientists’”***<sup>24</sup> The recent development of conspiracy theories, particularly at the time of the Covid pandemic, often associated with an extreme right-wing ideology; and there is a counterpart, on the other side of the political spectrum: the growing success of “wokism”, a current originating from American universities, whose “radicality” consists in regrouping in small “activist” factions around totally bourgeois themes that claim to be “fighting the system”.

***“the ‘every man for himself’, marginalisation, the atomisation of the individual’”***<sup>25</sup> A dramatic example during the pandemic, that of the isolation of the elderly, especially those in care homes, before the availability of vaccines. And also the distress caused to the families of the deceased.

All the above passages in bold and in inverted commas are based on the 1990 Theses. They reflect the characteristics that were already present in the world at that time and that provided the basis for our analysis. This simultaneous accumulation of all these catastrophic manifestations, their **quantity**, indicated that a **qualitatively** new period in the history of the decadence of capitalism was beginning. In the Theses, the interaction between a number of these manifestations was already present. However, at that time, we had mainly highlighted the common origin of these manifestations which, in a

way, seemed to develop in parallel without interacting with each other. In particular, we noted that, although the economic crisis of capitalism was fundamentally at the origin of the phenomenon of the decomposition of society, it was not really affected by the different manifestations of this decomposition.

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress, in addition to highlighting the emergence of two new and inter-related manifestations of decomposition, mass immigration and the rise of populism, we pointed out that the economy was beginning to be affected by decomposition (notably through the rise of populism), whereas previously it had been relatively unaffected. Today, this interplay between fundamental aspects of the world situation and its crucial historical importance is growing dramatically. Our October 2022 text, as well as the WEF report, highlights the extent to which these different manifestations are now intertwined.

Thus, with its entry into the 2020s, and particularly in 2022, we witnessed an acceleration of history, a further dramatic aggravation of the decomposition that is leading human society, indeed the human species, to its destruction - with a growing number of people becoming aware of it,

This intensification of the different convulsions on the planet, their increasing interaction, constitutes a confirmation not only of our analysis but also of the marxist method on which it is based, a method that other groups in the proletarian political milieu tend to “forget” when they reject our analysis of decomposition.

## Part II: The marxist method, an dispensable tool for understanding the world today.

The part of the report being published here has been augmented by a series of developments which are part of the marxist method of grasping reality. They were not explicit in the version submitted to the Congress but underlay it. The aim of this addition is to fuel public debate in defence of the marxist conception of materialism against the vulgarised version defended by most of the components of the proletarian political milieu, notably the Damenists and Bordigists.

### History is the history of the class struggle

Generally speaking, the groups of the PPM<sup>26</sup> have understood very little of our

analysis of decomposition. The one that has gone the furthest in refuting this analysis is the Bordigist group that publishes *Le Prolétaire* in France. They have devoted two articles to our analysis of the rise of populism in various countries and its link with the analysis of decomposition (which they call “well-known and controversial” - in French “fameuse et fumeuse”):

*“Révolution Internationale explains the roots of this so-called ‘decomposition’: the present incapacity of the two main and antagonistic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to put forward their own perspective (world war or revolution) has resulted in a situation of ‘temporary blockage’ and the rotting of society on its feet. The proletarians who daily see their*

*conditions of exploitation worsen and their living conditions deteriorate, will be happy to learn that their class is capable of blocking the bourgeoisie and preventing it from putting forward its ‘perspectives’...”*<sup>27</sup>

*“We therefore deny that the bourgeoisie has ‘lost control of its system’ politically and that the policies pursued by the governments of Britain or the United States are the product of a mysterious disease called ‘populism’ caused by ‘society’s sinking into barbarism’.*

*“To put it in very general terms, these developments (to which one could add the progress of the extreme right in Sweden or Germany, with the support of a part of the bourgeois political personnel) have the function of responding to a need for bourgeois domination, whether internally or externally, in a situation of accumulation*

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Proletarian Political Milieu: Those groups which, like the ICC, derive from the Communist Left and the intransigent internationalism of this tradition in the Second World War.

27. *Le Prolétaire* n° 523.



of economic and political uncertainty at the international level - and not something which 'disturbs the political game with the consequence of a growing loss of control of the bourgeois political apparatus on the electoral terrain'.<sup>28</sup>

*Le Proletaire* believes that populism corresponds to a genuinely "realistic" policy under the control of the bourgeoisie. The self-destructive economic policy of Brexit in the UK in recent years should give this group pause for thought.

*Le Proletaire* nevertheless takes the trouble to go to the heart of our analysis: the situation of blockage between the classes that arose as a result of the historical recovery of the world proletariat in 1968 (which it did not recognise like the entirety of the PPM) and the inability of the bourgeoisie to therefore mobilise the working class for the capitalist solution of World War III. In fact, behind this misunderstanding, there is a lack of understanding and rejection of the notion of the historical course, which refers to a disagreement we have with all the groups which came out of the Partito Comunista Internazionale of 1945 in Italy.

Well, this denial of the historical role of the "now hidden, now open", class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, whether it be in 1945, 1968 or 1989, is a major problem for the marxist credentials of all these groups.

Denying the existence of the period of decomposition means in reality refusing to recognise the integral historical role played by the struggle between the classes in the development of the world situation. In other words a major departure from the marxist method. To only recognise the decisive factor of the class struggle in exceptional moments when the proletariat makes its presence felt openly on the world stage, i.e., when the capacities of the working class are obvious to everybody, is an indication of the decline of the epigones of the Italian left and the claims of all its groups to be the vanguard.

The fact that the bourgeoisie always, in every epoch, whether in periods of defeat or retreat or in periods of revolution, has learnt to take into account the disposition of the working class was known to marxism as far back as 1848, after the bloody crushing of the revolutionary insurrection of the French proletariat in June of that year. The *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* of Marx, which Engels always held up as a prime example of the application of the method of historical materialism to world events, shows that, following the events of 1848, the bourgeoisie was obliged, henceforth,

to nevertheless recognise the defeated working class as its historic adversary. This recognition was a significant factor in the alignment of the ruling class behind the coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte of 1852 and the suppression of the republican faction of the bourgeoisie.<sup>29</sup>

But the epigones have forgotten to distinguish as Marx did in the Preface of 1859<sup>30</sup> between "the material transformation of the economic conditions of production" and the "ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out".

### The rise and fall of modes of production in history

Another successor to the Partito of 1945, the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ex-IBRP), which shares the disdain for the decisive role of the class struggle, also proudly displays its ignorance of the historical specificity of the decomposition of world capitalism, the theory of which it describes as non-marxist and idealist:

*"After the collapse of the USSR the ICC suddenly declared that this collapse had created a new situation in which capitalism had reached a new stage, which they called 'decomposition'. In their lack of understanding of the way capitalism works, for the ICC almost everything that is bad – from religious fundamentalism to the numerous wars which have broken out since the collapse of the Eastern Bloc – is simply the expression of Chaos and Decomposition. We think that this is tantamount to the complete abandonment of the terrain of marxism, as these wars, just like the earlier wars of capitalism's decadent phase, are the result of this imperialist order itself... An overproduction of capital and commodities, which is cyclically called forth by the tendential fall of the rate of profit, leads to economic crises and to contradictions which, in their turn, engender imperialist war. As soon as enough capital is devalued and means of production are*

29. "They realized instinctively that although the republic made their political rule complete it simultaneously undermined its social foundation, since they had now to confront the subjugated classes and contend with them without mediation, without being concealed by the Crown, without the possibility of diverting the national attention by their secondary conflicts amongst themselves and with the monarchy. It was a feeling of weakness which caused them to recoil when faced with the pure conditions of their own class rule and to yearn for the return of the previous forms of this rule, which were less complete, less developed and, precisely for that reason, less dangerous." *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. To be consistent the epigones of the Italian left would have to snigger at Marx here, just as they do at the ICC's theory of decomposition.

30. Preface to "A contribution to the critique of political economy" one of the most concise expressions of the marxist method.

*destroyed (through war), then a new cycle of production can begin. Since 1973, we have been in the final phase of such a crisis, and a new cycle of accumulation has not yet begun".*<sup>31</sup>

One wonders whether the comrades in the ICT (who think that it was following the collapse of the Eastern bloc in 1989 that we suddenly pulled our analysis of decomposition out of our hat) have bothered to read our basic text of 1990. In its introduction, we are very clear:

*"Even before the events in the East, the ICC had already highlighted this historical phenomenon (see, for example, International Review n° 57)".*

It is also appallingly superficial to attribute to us the idea that "almost everything that is bad ... is simply the expression of Chaos and Decomposition". And their basic point is to claim something they think we had not thought of: "these wars, just like the earlier wars of capitalism's decadent phase, are the result of this imperialist order itself". What a discovery! We have never said anything else, but the question that is being asked and that they are not asking, is in what general historical context the imperialist order is framed today. For the ICT militants, it is enough to destroy enough constant capital for a new cycle of accumulation to begin. From this point of view, the destruction taking place today in Ukraine is a boon to the health of the world economy. This message must be passed on to the economic leaders of the bourgeoisie who expressed alarm at the recent Davos Forum, at the prospects of the capitalist world and in particular at the negative impact of the war in Ukraine on the world economy. In fact, those who attribute to us a break with the marxist approach would do well to reread (or read) the fundamental texts of Marx and Engels and try to understand the method they employ. If the facts themselves and the evolution of the world situation confirm, day after day, the validity of our analysis, it is largely because it is firmly based on the dialectical method of marxism (even if there is no explicit reference to this method or quotations from Marx or Engels in the 1990 theses).

In its rejection of the analysis of decomposition of world capitalism, the ICT distinguishes itself, or embarrasses itself, depending on your point of view, by also taking its polemical axe, however blunt, to another pillar of the marxist method of historical materialism that is summarised in Marx's *Preface* (repeated, by the way, in the first point of the ICC platform). The

28. *Le Proletaire* n° 530.

31. "Marxism or idealism: our differences with the ICC", available on the ICT website

relations of production in every social formation of human history – relations which determine the interests and actions of the contending classes issuing from them – are always transformed from factors of development of the productive forces in an ascendant historical phase, to negative fetters of these same forces in a later, downward phase, creating the necessity for social revolution. But the period of decomposition, the culmination of a century of capitalism's decadence as a mode of production, simply doesn't exist for the ICT.

While the ICT uses the phrase "capitalism's decadent phase" it hasn't understood what this phase means either for the development of the economic crisis of capitalism or the imperialist wars resulting from it.

In the ascendent epoch of capitalism the cycles of production – commonly known as booms and slumps – were the heart beats of a progressively expanding system. The limited wars of this time could either accelerate this progression through national consolidation – as the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 did for Germany – or gain new markets through colonial conquest. The devastation of two world wars and the imperialist destruction of the decadent period and their aftermath express by contrast the historic ruination of the capitalist system and its dead end as a mode of production.

For the ICT however the healthy 19th century dynamic of capitalist accumulation is everlasting: for them the cycles of production have only increased in size. And this leads them to the absurdity that a new cycle of capitalist production could be fertilised in the ashes of a third world war.<sup>32</sup> Even the bourgeoisie isn't so stupidly optimistic about the perspectives of its system and has more insights into the age of catastrophic bankruptcy that it confronts.

The ICT may be "economically materialist" but not in the marxist sense of analysing the development of the relations of production in changing historical conditions.

32. This qualitative (and not simply quantitative) and fundamental change in the life of capital was highlighted in the 1919 Manifesto of the Communist International: "If the absolute subjection of political power to finance capital led humanity to imperialist slaughter; this slaughter allowed finance capital not only to militarise the state from top to bottom, but also to militarise itself, in such a way that it can no longer fulfil its essential economic functions except by fire and blood (...) The nationalisation of economic life, against which economic liberalism protested so much, is a fait accompli. A return not only to free competition, but to the simple domination of trusts, trade unions and other capitalist octopuses has become impossible". But it would appear that either the comrades of the ICT don't know this document, or they disagree with this basic position of the CI and should say so.

In three fundamental works of the workers' movement, Marx's *Capital*, Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital* and Lenin's *The State and Revolution* we find a historical approach to the questions studied. Marx devotes many pages to explaining how the capitalist mode of production, which already fully dominated the society of his time, developed in the course of history. Rosa Luxemburg examines how the question of accumulation was posed by various earlier writers and Lenin does the same on the question of the state. In this historical approach, the point is to account for the fact that the realities under examination are not static, intangible things that have existed from the beginning of time, but correspond to constantly evolving processes with elements of continuity but also, and above all, of transformation and even rupture. The 1990 Theses try to draw on this approach by presenting the current historical situation within the general history of society, that of capitalism and more particularly the history of the decadence of this system. More concretely, they point out the similarities between the decadence of pre-capitalist societies and that of capitalist society but also, and above all, the differences between them, a question that is at the heart of the occurrence of the phase of decomposition within the latter:

*"whereas in past societies, the new productive relations which were to supersede the old were able to develop alongside the latter, within society – which to a certain extent limited the effects and the degree of social decadence – communist society, which alone can follow capitalism, cannot develop at all within it; the regeneration of society is thus completely impossible without the violent overthrow of the bourgeois class and the eradication of capitalist relations of production."*<sup>33</sup>

By contrast the ahistorical materialism of the ICT can explain every event, every war, in every epoch by incanting the same phrase: "cycles of accumulation". Such oracular materialism, because it explains everything, explains nothing, and for this reason it cannot exorcise the danger of idealism.

On the contrary the gaps created by vulgar materialism need to be filled with an idealist glue. When the real conditions of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat can't be understood or explained an idealist *deus ex-machina* is required to resolve the problem: "the revolutionary party". But this is not the communist party that emerges and is constructed in specific historical conditions but a mythical one that can be inflated in any period by op-

portunist hot air.

## The dialectical component of historical materialism

The epigones of the Italian left,<sup>34</sup> in decrying the existence of a period of decomposition of world capitalism therefore have had to try and remove two major pillars of the marxist method of historical materialism. First, that the history of capitalism, as all previous history, is the history of class struggle, and secondly that the determinant role of economic laws evolves with the historical evolution of a mode of production.

There is a third forgotten requirement implicit in the other two facets of the marxist method: the recognition of the dialectical evolution of all phenomena, including the development of human societies, according to the unity of opposites, which Lenin describes as the essence of dialectics in his work on the question during the First World War. Whereas the epigones only see development in terms of repetition and in increase or decrease, marxism understands that historic necessity – materialist determinism – expresses itself in a contradictory interactive way, so that cause and effect can change places and necessity reveal itself through accidents.

For marxism the superstructure of social formations, that is their political, juridical and ideological organisation, arises on the basis of the given economic infrastructure and is determined by the latter. This much the epigones have understood. However the fact that this superstructure can act as cause – if not the principle one – as well as effect, is lost on them. Engels, towards the end of his life had to insist on this very point in a series of letters in the 1890s addressing the vulgar materialism of the epigones of the time. His correspondence is absolutely essential reading for those who deny today that the decomposition of the capitalist superstructure can have a catastrophic effect on the economic fundamentals of the system.

*"Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc. development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base. It is not that the economic position is the cause and alone active, while everything else only has a passive effect. There is, rather interaction on the basis of the economic necessity, which*

34 For the sake of brevity we will use the term 'epigones' because all the descendants of the Partito of 1945 turned their back on the revolutionary theoretical work of Bilan, the Italian Left in exile, in the 1930s.

33. "Decomposition: final phase of capitalist decadence", Thesis 1. *International Review* n° 62.



*ultimately always asserts itself.*"<sup>35</sup>

In the final phase of capitalist decline, its period of decomposition, the retroactive effect of the rotting superstructure on the economic infrastructure is increasingly accentuated, as the negative economic effect of the Covid pandemic, climate change and imperialist war in Europe have strikingly proved - except to the blinkered disciples of Bordiga and Damen.<sup>36</sup>

Marx did not have the opportunity to explain his method, the one he uses especially in *Capital*, as he had planned. He only mentions this method, very briefly, in the afterword to the German edition of his book. For our part, notably in the face of the often stupid accusations of the PPM (and even more so of the parasites) that our analysis "is not marxist", that it is "idealist", it is up to us to highlight the fidelity of the approach of the 1990 theses with respect to further aspects of the dialectical method of marxism, of which we can recall a few of the elements:

### The transformation of quantity into quality

This is an idea that recurs frequently in the 1990 text. Manifestations of decomposition could exist in capitalism's decadence, but today the accumulation of these manifestations is proof of a "transformational rupture" in the life of society, signaling the entry into a new epoch of capitalist decadence in which decomposition becomes the determining element. This component of the marxist dialectic is not limited to social facts. As Engels points out, especially in the *Anti-Dühring* and *The Dialectic of Nature*, it is a phenomenon that can be found in all fields and which, moreover, has been detected by other thinkers. In the *Anti-Dühring*, for example, Engels quotes Napoleon Bonaparte saying (in summary) "Two Mamelukes were absolutely superior to three Frenchmen; ... 1,000 Frenchmen always knocked down 1,500 Mamelukes" because of the discipline that becomes effective when it involves a large number of combatants. Engels also insists that this law is fully applicable in the field of science.

35. Engels to Borgius, January 25, 1894, *Collected Works*, vol. 50, Lawrence and Wishart 2004. Slight differences in translation..

36. Another letter of Engels on the subject of the marxist method seems perfectly suited to these disciples: "What all these gentlemen lack is dialectics. All they ever see is cause here, effect there. They do not at all see that this is a bare abstraction; that in the real world such metaphysical polar opposites exist only in crises; that the whole great process develops itself in the form of reciprocal action, to be sure of very unequal forces, in which the economic movement is far and away the strongest, most primary and decisive. They do not see here nothing is absolute and everything relative. For them Hegel has never existed." Engels to Conrad Schmidt, October 27 1890. *Collected Works*, vol.49, p.63. Slight differences in translation.

As far as the present historical situation and the multiplication of a whole series of catastrophic facts are concerned, to not rely on this law of the transformation of quantity into quality is to turn one's back on marxist dialectics (which is normal on the part of bourgeois ideology and the majority of academic "specialists"). This is however, the case for the whole of the PPM which tries to apply a specific and isolated cause to each of the catastrophic manifestations of current history.

### The whole is not the simple sum of its parts

Though each has a specificity and though they may even acquire in certain circumstances a relative autonomy, the various components of the life of society are determined inside a totality governed "in the end" (but only in the end, as Engels says in a famous letter to J Bloch, September 21 1890), by the mode and relations of production and their evolution. This is one of the major phenomena of the present situation. The various manifestations of decomposition, which at first might have seemed independent but whose accumulation already indicated that we had entered a new epoch of capitalist decadence, are now increasingly having an impact one upon the other in a kind of "chain reaction", a "whirlwind" which is giving to history the acceleration we (as well as the "experts" in Davos) are witnessing.

### The decisive role of the future

Finally borrowing this essential aspect of movement, of transformation, from the marxist historical dialectic, lies at the heart of the central idea of our analysis of decomposition: "*no mode of production can live, develop, maintain itself on a viable basis and ensure social cohesion, if it is unable to present a perspective for the whole of the society which it dominates. And this is especially true of capitalism, which is the most dynamic mode of production in history.*"<sup>37</sup> And, at the current time, neither of the two main classes, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, offer such a perspective to society.

For those who call us "idealists", it is a real scandal for us to assert that a phenomenon of an ideological order, the absence of a vision for society, can impact in a major way the life of society. In fact, they prove that the materialism they claim to be based on is nothing more than a vulgar materialism already criticised by Marx in his time, notably in the "Theses on Feuerbach". In their vision, the forces of production develop autonomously. And the development of the forces of production alone dictates

37. "Decomposition: final phase of capitalist decadence", Thesis 5. *International Review* n° 62.

the changes in the relations of production and the relations between classes. According to them, institutions and ideologies, i.e. the superstructure, remain in place as long as they legitimise and preserve the existing relations of production. And so elements such as ideas, human morality or even political intervention in the historical process are ruled out.

Historical materialism contains, in addition to economic factors, other factors such as natural wealth and contextual elements. The forces of production include much more than machines or technology. They include knowledge, know-how, experience. In fact everything that makes the work process possible or hinders it. The forms of cooperation and association are themselves productive forces and are also an important element of economic transformation and development.

Those who could be called "anti-dialecticians" deny the distinction between the objective and subjective conditions of revolutionary struggle.<sup>38</sup> They see the strength of the class is derived from the simple defence of its immediate economic interests. They consider that the class interests of the proletariat will create its capacity to realise and defend these interests. They disregard the forces at work to systematically disorganise the working class, divide it, disarm it and obscure the class nature of its struggle.

As Lenin noted, we have to make concrete analyses of a concrete situation. And in the most developed capitalist society, a very important role is given to ideology, to an apparatus which must defend and justify bourgeois interests and give stability to the capitalist system. This is why Marx pointed out that for the communist revolution to take place, its objective and subjective conditions must be met. The first condition is the capacity of the economy to produce in sufficient abundance for the world population. The second condition is a sufficient level of development of class consciousness. This brings us back to our analysis of the question of the "weak link"

38. We should distinguish marxist, objective, dialectics from the empty and subjective dialectics of the various strands of anarchism and modernism which remain at the confused level of only finding contradictions in everything, without discovering their underlying unity. They may well recognise some of the phenomenon of the period of decomposition but characteristically refuse to see the ultimate cause and logical framework of the period in the economic failure of the capitalist system. For them objective historical dialectics is an anathema, since it would deny them their main preoccupation of dogmatically preserving, in the face of historical reality, their individual freedom of opinion. Since they treat the economic factor, if they notice it all, as only one factor among many of equal importance, their dialectics remains subjective, ahistorical and, like the epigones of the Italian left, incapable of grasping the trajectory of events.



and the necessary historical experience expressed in consciousness.

The “mechanical determinists” remove the development of the productive forces from their social context. They tend to deny ANY significance to the ideological superstructure, even if they don’t say this. Workers’ struggles tend to appear as a pure question of reflexes. This is a fundamentally fatalistic view which is well expressed in Bordiga’s idea that “*the revolution is as certain as if it had already taken place*”. Such a view leads to a passive submission, a submission that awaits the automatic effects of economic development. In the end, it leaves no room for class struggle as a fundamental condition for any change, in contradiction with the first sentence of the Communist Manifesto: “*The history of all hitherto society is the history of class struggles.*”

The third thesis on Feuerbach gives us a good understanding of historical materialism and rejects strict determinism:

*“The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, that, therefore changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, one of which towers above society (Robert Owen, for example).*

*“The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can only be conceived and rationally understood as revolutionary practice.”*

### The importance of the future in the life of human societies

It is likely that our detractors will see this as an idealistic view, but we maintain that the marxist dialectic attributes to the future

a fundamental place in the evolution and movement of society. Of the three moments of a historical process, the past, the present and the future, it is the last which constitutes the fundamental factor in its dynamic.

The role of the future is fundamental to human history. The first humans who set out from Africa to conquer the world, the aborigines who set out from Australia to conquer the Pacific, were looking **to the future** for new means of subsistence. It is the preoccupation with the future that drives the desire for procreation as well as most religions. And since our detractors need “good economic” examples, we can cite two in the functioning of capitalism. When a capitalist invests, it is not with an eye to the past, it is to obtain a **future** profit. Similarly, credit, which plays such a fundamental role in the mechanisms of capitalism, is no more than a contract with the future.

The role of the future is omnipresent in the texts of Marx and marxism more generally. This role is well highlighted in this well-known passage from *Capital*:

*“Our starting point is work in a form that belongs exclusively to man. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver; and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will.”*

Obviously, this essential role of the

future in society is even more fundamental for the workers’ movement, whose present struggles only take on real meaning in the perspective of the communist revolution of the future.

*“The social revolution of the 19th century [the proletarian revolution] cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future.”*<sup>39</sup>

*“Trade unions act usefully as centres of resistance to the encroachments of capital. They partly fail in their purpose as soon as they make an unwise use of their power. They entirely miss their goal as soon as they confine themselves to a war of skirmishes against the effects of the existing regime, instead of working at the same time for its transformation and using their organised strength as a lever for the definitive emancipation of the working class, that is to say, for the definitive abolition of wage-labour.”*<sup>40</sup>

*“The final goal, whatever it may be, is nothing, the movement is everything. [according to Bernstein]. The final aim of socialism is the only decisive element distinguishing the socialist movement from bourgeois democracy and bourgeois radicalism, the only element which, rather than giving the workers’ movement the vain task of plastering over the capitalist regime in order to save it, makes it a class struggle against this regime, for the abolition of this regime...”*<sup>41</sup>

*“What is to be done?”*, *“Where to begin?”*<sup>42</sup>

And it is precisely because today’s society is deprived of this fundamental element, the future, the perspective (which is felt by more and more people, especially among the youth), a perspective that only the proletariat can offer, that it is sinking into despair and rotting on its feet.

## Part III: The perspective for the proletariat

The WEF 2023 report convincingly alerts us to the extreme gravity of the current world situation, which will be much worse by the 2030s “*without significant policy change or investment*”. At the same time, it “*showcases broader paralysis and ineffectiveness of key multilateral mechanisms in addressing crises facing the global order*” and notes “*a divergence between what is scientifically necessary and what is politically expedient*”. In other words, the situation is desperate and the current society is definitively incapable of reversing the course of its destruction, which confirms the title of our October 2022 text: “The

acceleration of capitalist decomposition openly poses the question of the destruction of humanity”, as well as fully confirming the prognosis already contained in our 1990 Theses.

At the same time, the report repeatedly refers to the prospect of “*widespread social unrest*” which “*will not be contained to emerging markets*” (meaning that it will also affect the most developed countries) and that “*are posing an existential challenge to political systems around the world.*” Nothing less! For the WEF, and the bourgeoisie in general, this social unrest falls

into the negative category of “risks” and threats to “world order”. But the WEF’s forecasts timidly and unintentionally add fuel to our own analysis by pointing out that the proletariat continues to represent a threat to the bourgeois order. Like the bourgeoisie as a whole, the WEF does not distinguish between different types of social unrest: all this is a factor of “disorder”

39. Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

40. Marx, “Wages, Prices and Profit”.

41. Rosa Luxemburg, *Social Reform or Revolution?*

42. Lenin.

and “chaos”. And it is true that some movements fall into this category, as was the case with the “Arab Spring” for example. But in reality, what frightens the bourgeoisie the most, without it saying so openly or being fully aware of it, is that among these examples of “social unrest” there are some that prefigure the overthrow of its power over society and the capitalist system: the struggles of the proletariat.

Thus, even in this aspect, the WEF illustrates our Theses of 1990 and our text of October 2022. The former text takes up the idea that, despite all the difficulties it has encountered, the proletariat has not lost the game, that “Today, the historical perspective remains completely open.”<sup>43</sup> And it reminds us that “Despite the blow that the Eastern bloc’s collapse has dealt to proletarian consciousness, the class has not suffered any major defeats on the terrain of its struggle. In this sense, its combativity remains virtually intact. Moreover, and this is the element which in the final analysis will determine the outcome of the world situation, the inexorable aggravation of the capitalist crisis constitutes the essential stimulant for the class struggle and the development of consciousness, the precondition for its ability to resist the poison distilled by the social rot. For while there is no basis for the unification of the class in the partial struggles against the effects of decomposition, nonetheless its struggle against the direct effects of the crisis constitutes the basis for the development of its class strength and unity.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition :

“unlike social decomposition which essentially effects the superstructure, the economic crisis directly attacks the foundations on which this superstructure rests; in this sense, it lays bare all the barbarity that is battenning on society, thus allowing the proletariat to become aware of the need to change the system radically, rather than trying to improve certain aspects of it.”<sup>45</sup>

And in fact we can see today that, despite the weight of decomposition (notably the collapse of Stalinism) and the long torpor that affected it, the working class is still present on the stage of history and has the capacity to take up its struggle again, as demonstrated in particular by the struggles in the United Kingdom and in France (the two proletariats that were at the origin of the foundation of the IWA in 1864 (a mere wink ago in historical terms!))

In this sense, if the different manifestations of decomposition act in a negative

way on the struggle of the proletariat and its consciousness (weight of populism, of inter-classism, of democratic illusions), we have today a new confirmation that only the directly economic attacks allow the proletariat to mobilise itself on its class terrain and that these attacks which are being unleashed at the moment, and which are going to worsen even more, create the conditions for a significant development of workers’ struggles on the international scale. Thus, we must underline what is written in the October 2022 text:

“Hence, in this context, the 20s of the 21st century will have a considerable impact on historical development. They will show with even greater clarity than in the past that the perspective of the destruction of humanity is an integral part of capitalist decomposition. At the other pole, the proletariat will begin to take its first steps, like those expressed in the combativity of the struggles in the UK, to defend its living conditions in the face of the multiplication of the attacks of the different bourgeoisies and the blows of the world economic crisis with all its consequences. These first steps will often be hesitant and full of weaknesses, but they are essential if the working class is to be able to reaffirm its historical capacity to impose its communist perspective. Thus, the two alternative poles of the perspective will confront each other globally: the destruction of humanity or the communist revolution, even if this latter alternative is still very far off and faces enormous obstacles.”<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, the path that the proletariat has to accomplish is extremely long and difficult. On the one hand, it will have to face all the traps that the bourgeoisie will put on its way, and this in an ideological atmosphere poisoned by the decomposition of the capitalist society which permanently hinders the fight and the consciousness of the proletariat;

- “Solidarity and collective action are faced with the atomisation of ‘look out for number one’;
- the need for organisation confronts social decomposition, the disintegration of the relationships which form the basis for all social life;
- the proletariat’s confidence in the future and in its own strength is constantly sapped by the all-pervasive despair and nihilism within society;
- consciousness, lucidity, coherent and unified thought, the taste for theory, have a hard time making headway in the midst of the flight into illusions,

drugs, sects, mysticism, the rejection or destruction of thought which are characteristic of our epoch”.<sup>47</sup>

The 1990 Theses insist on these difficulties. In particular, they stress that “it is ... fundamental to understand that the longer the proletariat takes to overthrow capitalism, the greater will be the dangers and the dangerous effects of decomposition.”<sup>48</sup>

“In fact, we have to highlight the fact that today, contrary to the situation in the 1970’s, time is no longer on the side of the working class. As long as society was threatened with destruction by imperialist war alone, the mere fact of the proletarian struggle was sufficient to bar the way to this destruction. But, unlike imperialist war, which depended on the proletariat’s adherence to the bourgeoisie’s ‘ideals’, social decomposition can destroy humanity without controlling the working class. For, while the workers’ struggles can oppose the collapse of the economy, they are powerless, within this system, to hinder decomposition. Thus, while the threat posed by decomposition may seem more far-off than that of world war (were the conditions for it present, which is not the case today), it is by contrast far more insidious. The workers’ resistance to the effects of the crisis is no longer enough: only the communist revolution can put an end to the threat of decomposition.”<sup>49</sup>

The brutal acceleration of decomposition that we are witnessing today, which makes the perspective of the destruction of humanity more and more threatening, even in the eyes of the most lucid sectors of the bourgeoisie, constitutes a confirmation of this analysis. And since only the communist revolution will be able to put an end to the destructive dynamics of decomposition and its increasingly deleterious effects, this can give an idea of the difficulty of the path that leads to the overthrow of capitalism. It is a path in which the tasks that the proletariat must accomplish are considerable. In particular, it will have to fully reappropriate its class identity, which has been strongly affected by the counter-revolution and the various manifestations of decomposition, notably the collapse of the so-called “socialist” regimes. It will also be necessary, and this is also fundamental, to reappropriate its past experience, which is an immense task since this experience has been forgotten by the proletarians. This is a fundamental responsibility of the communist vanguard: to bring a decisive contribution to this reappropriation by the whole class of the

43. “Decomposition: final phase of the decadence of capitalism”, Thesis 17. *International Review* n° 62.

44. Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46. “The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity”, *International Review* n° 169.

47. “Decomposition: final phase of capitalist decadence”, Thesis 13. *International Review* n° 62.

48 Ibid, Thesis 15.

49. Ibid, Thesis 16.



lessons of more than a century and a half of proletarian struggle.

The difficulties that the proletariat will have to face will not disappear with the overthrow of the capitalist state in all countries. Following Marx, we have often insisted on the immensity of the task that awaits the working class during the period of transition from capitalism to communism, a task that is out of all proportion to all the revolutions of the past, since it is a question of passing from the “reign of necessity to the reign of freedom”. And it is clear that the longer it takes for the revolution to be accomplished, the more immense the task will be: day after day capitalism destroys a little more of the planet and, consequently, the material conditions for communism. Moreover, the seizure of power by the proletariat will follow a terrible civil war increasing the devastation of all kinds already caused by the capitalist mode of production even before the revolutionary period. In this sense, the task of rebuilding society that the proletariat will have to accomplish will be incomparably more gigantic than what it would have had to achieve if it had taken power during the revolutionary wave of the first post-war period. Similarly, if the destruction of the Second World War was already considerable, it only affected the countries concerned by the fighting, which allowed a reconstruction of the world economy, especially as the main industrial power, the United States, had been spared by this destruction. But today it is the whole planet that is concerned by the increasing destruction of all kinds caused by dying capitalism. Consequently, it must be clear that the seizure of power by the working class on a global scale will not in itself guarantee that it will be able to accomplish its historic task of establishing communism. Capitalism, by allowing a tremendous development of the productive forces, has created the material conditions for communism, but the decay of this system, and its decomposition, could undermine these conditions, leaving the proletariat with a completely devastated, unsalvageable planet.

It is therefore the responsibility of revolutionaries to point out the difficulties that the proletariat will have to face on the road to communism. Their role is not to provide consolations so as not to cause despair in the working class. The truth is revolutionary, as Marx said however terrible it may be.

That said, if it succeeds in taking power, the proletariat will have a number of assets at its disposal to accomplish its task of rebuilding society.

On the one hand, it will be able to put

at its service the tremendous progress made by science and technology during the 20th century and the two decades of the 21st century. The WEF report refers to these advances as “*dual-use (civilian and military) technologies*”. Once the proletariat has taken power, military use will no longer be necessary, which is a considerable advance since it is clear that today the military sphere accounts for the lion’s share of the benefits of technological progress (alongside many other unproductive expenditures).

More globally, the seizure of power by the proletariat will have to allow an unprecedented liberation of the productive forces imprisoned by the laws of capitalism. Not only will the enormous burden of military and unproductive expenditure be eliminated, but also the monstrous waste represented by the competition between the various economic and national sectors of bourgeois society as well as the phenomenal under-utilisation of the productive forces (programmed obsolescence, mass unemployment, absence or deficiency of the education systems, etc.).

But the main asset of the proletariat in this period of transition-reconstruction will not be technological or strictly economic. It will be fundamentally political. If the proletariat succeeds in taking power, it will mean that it has reached a very high level of consciousness, organisation and solidarity during the period of confrontation with the capitalist state, of the civil war against the bourgeoisie. And these are gains that will be precious for facing the immense challenges that will come its way. Above all, the proletariat will be able to rely on the future, this fundamental element in the life of society, this future whose absence in the present society is at the heart of its rotting on its feet.

In its 2021/2022 Human Development Report, published last October and entitled *Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives*, the UN tells us:

*“A new ‘uncertainty complex’ is emerging, never before seen in human history. Constituting it are three volatile and interacting strands: the destabilizing planetary pressures and inequalities of the Anthropocene, the pursuit of sweeping societal transformations to ease those pressures and the widespread and intensifying polarization...”*

*“Global crises have piled up: the global financial crisis, the ongoing global climate crisis and Covid-19 pandemic, a looming global food crisis. There is a nagging sense that whatever control we have over our lives is slipping away, that the norms and institutions we used to rely on for stabil-*

*ity and prosperity are not up to the task of today’s uncertainty complex.”*<sup>50</sup>

As can be seen, this UN report goes in the same direction as the WEF report. It goes even further in a way, since it considers that the earth has entered a new geological period due to the action of humans, which began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and which it calls the *Anthropocene* and which we call capitalism. Above all, it emphasises the deep despair, the ‘no future’ that increasingly permeates society (which it calls the ‘uncertainty complex’).

Precisely, the fact that the proletarian revolution gives back to human society a future it has lost will be a powerful factor in the ability of the working class to finally reach the “promised land” of communism, not after 40 years, but after well over a century of “wandering in the desert”.

50. “Overview”, p 15-16. United Nations Development Programme.



# Report on the class struggle

Beginning with a horrific pandemic, the 2020s have been a concrete reminder of the only alternative that exists: proletarian revolution or the destruction of humanity. With Covid 19, the conflict in Ukraine and the growth of the war economy everywhere, the economic crisis and its devastating inflation, with global warming and the destruction of nature that increasingly threaten life itself, with the rise of every man for himself, of irrationality and obscurantism, the decomposition of the entire social fabric, the 2020s are not only seeing an addition of deadly scourges; all these scourges converge, combine and feed off each other. The 2020s will be a concatenation of all the worst evils of decadent and rotting capitalism. Capitalism has entered a phase of grave and extreme convulsions, the most threatening and bloody of which is the risk of an increase in military conflicts.

The decadence of capitalism has a history, and since 1914 it has gone through several stages. The one that began in 1989 is *"a new and final phase of its history: the phase where decomposition becomes a decisive, if not the decisive factor in social evolution"*<sup>1</sup>. The main characteristic of this phase of decomposition, its deepest roots, and what undermines the whole society and generates decay, is the absence of perspective. The 2020s prove once again that the bourgeoisie can only offer humanity more misery, war and chaos, a growing and increasingly irrational disorder. But what about the working class? What about its revolutionary perspective, communism? It's obvious that the proletariat has been plunged for decades into immense difficulties; its struggles have been rare and not very massive, its capacity to organise itself is still extremely limited and, above all, it no longer knows that it exists as a class, as a social force capable of leading a revolutionary project. And time is not on the side of the working class.

Nevertheless, if this danger of a slow and finally irreversible erosion of the very bases of communism exists, there is no fatality to this end in total barbarism; on the contrary the historical perspective remains totally open. Indeed, *"despite the blow dealt by the collapse of the Eastern bloc to the proletariat's consciousness, it has not suffered any major defeat on the terrain of its struggle in this sense, its combativity remains practically intact. But moreover, and this is the element which*

*ultimately determines the evolution of the world situation, the same factor which is at the origin of the development of decomposition, the inexorable aggravation of the crisis of capitalism, constitutes the essential stimulus to the struggle and to the awareness of the class, the very condition of its capacity to resist the ideological poison of the rotting of society. Its struggle against the direct effects of the crisis itself constitutes the basis for the development of its strength and its class unity."*<sup>2</sup>

And today, with the terrible worsening of the world economic crisis and the return of inflation, the working class is beginning to react and to find the path of its struggle. All its historical difficulties persist, its capacity to organise its own struggles and even more so to become aware of its revolutionary project are still very far away, but the growing combativity in the face of the brutal blows dealt by the bourgeoisie to living and working conditions is the fertile ground on which the proletariat can rediscover its class identity, become aware again of what it is, of its strength when it struggles, when it shows solidarity and develops its unity. It's a process, a struggle that is resuming after years of passivity, a potential that the current strikes suggest. The strongest sign of this possible dynamic is the return of workers' strikes in the UK. This is an event of historic significance.

The return of workers' combativity in response to the economic crisis can become a focus for the development of consciousness. Until now, each acceleration of decomposition has brought a halt to the embryonic expressions of workers' combativity: the movement in France 2019 suffered from the outbreak of the pandemic; the struggles of winter 2021 stopped in the face of the war in Ukraine, etc. This means an additional and not insignificant difficulty to the development of struggles and the confidence of the proletariat in itself. However, there is no other way than the struggle: the struggle is in itself the first victory. The world proletariat, in a very tortuous process, with many bitter defeats, can gradually start to recover its class identity and launch, in the long run, an international offensive against this moribund system. In other words, the coming years will be decisive for the future of humanity.

During the 1980s, the world was clearly heading either for war or for major class confrontations. The outcome of this decade was as unexpected as it was unprecedented: on the one hand, the impossibility for the

bourgeoisie to go to world war, prevented by the refusal of the working class to accept sacrifices; and on the other hand, this same working class was incapable of politicising its struggles and offering a revolutionary perspective. This engendered a kind of blockage, plunging the whole of society into a situation without a future, and thus gave rise to generalised decomposition. The "years of truth" of the 1980s<sup>3</sup> thus led to the phase of decomposition. Today, the situation is more intense and dramatic:

- On the one hand, the 2020s will show, with even greater acuteness, the possibility of the destruction of humanity contained in capitalist decomposition.
- But on the other hand, the proletariat will start to take the first steps, often hesitant and full of weaknesses, on the path of its struggles, which can lead it to pose the perspective of communism. The proletariat will go through a very hard and difficult apprenticeship.

The two poles of the perspective will arise and clash. During this decade, there will be at the same time an ever-more dramatic aggravation of the effects of decomposition along with workers' reactions that offer another future. The only alternatives, the destruction of humanity or proletarian revolution, will reappear and become more and more palpable. It is therefore a fight, a struggle: the class struggle. And for the outcome to be favourable, the role of revolutionary organisations will be vital. Whether it's the development of class consciousness and organisation in the struggle or the clear understanding of the stakes and the perspective by minorities, our intervention will be decisive. We ourselves must therefore have the clearest and most lucid awareness of the dynamics underway, of its potential, of the strengths and weaknesses of our class, as well as of the ideological attacks and traps set on the path ahead by the historical situation of decomposition and by the bourgeoisie, the most intelligent and Machiavellian ruling class in history.

## 1. In the face of war, the working class has not suffered a decisive defeat...

War is always a decisive moment for the world proletariat. With war, the world working class suffers the massacre of a part of itself, but also a monumental slap

1. "Decomposition, final phase of the decadence of capitalism", pt. 2, *International Review* n° 62,

2. Ibid.

3. "The 1980s: Years of truth", *International Review* n° 20.

in the face from the ruling class. From all points of view, war is the exact opposite of what the working class is, of its international nature symbolised by its rallying cry: "Workers have no homeland. Proletarians of all countries, unite!"

The outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine thus puts the world proletariat to the test. The reaction to this barbarism is a primordial marker for understanding where our class stands, where the balance of power with the bourgeoisie stands. And there is no homogeneity here. On the contrary, there are huge differences between countries, between the periphery and the central regions of capitalism.

In Ukraine, the working class is physically and ideologically crushed. Widely involved in the defence of the fatherland, against the "Russian invader", against "the brutal thug Putin", for the defence of Ukrainian culture and freedoms, for democracy, the workers join the mobilisation in the factories as in the trenches. This situation is obviously the result of the weakness of the international workers' movement but also of the history of the proletariat in Ukraine. If it's a concentrated and educated proletariat, with a long experience, this proletariat has also and above all suffered the full force of the consequences of counter-revolution and Stalinism. The famine organised in the 1930s by the Soviet authorities, the Holodomor, in which 5 million people lost their lives, forms the basis of a hatred against the Russian neighbour and a strong patriotic feeling. More recently, in the early 2010s, a whole section of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie chose to emancipate itself from Russian tutelage and ally itself with the West. In reality, this development reflected increasing US pressure throughout the region. The "Orange Revolution"<sup>4</sup> of 2004, and then the Maidan (or "Revolution of Dignity") of 2014, showed the extent to which a very large part of the population adhered to the defence of "democracy" and Ukrainian independence against Russian influence. Since then, the nationalist propaganda has only increased until the culminating point in February 2022.

The inability of the working class in this country to oppose the war and its mobilisation, an inability which opened the possibility of this imperialist butchery, indicates the extent to which capitalist barbarism and decomposition are gaining ground in ever wider parts of the globe.

4. The "Orange Revolution" belongs to the "colour revolutions" or "flower revolutions" movement, a series of "popular", "peaceful" and pro-Western uprisings, some of which led to changes of government between 2003 and 2006 in Eurasia and the Middle East: the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the Denim Revolution in Belarus and the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon in 2005.

After Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, it is now part of Central Europe that is threatened by the risk of plunging into imperialist chaos; Ukraine has shown that there is, in some satellite countries of the ex-USSR, in Belarus, in Moldavia, in ex-Yugoslavia, a proletariat very weakened by decades of forced exploitation by Stalinism in the name of Communism, decades where it bore the weight of democratic illusions and was gangrened by nationalism. In Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, tensions are indeed rising.

On the other hand, in Russia, the proletariat is not ready to sacrifice its life on a massive scale. Certainly, the working class of Russia is not capable of opposing the war adventure of its own bourgeoisie, certainly it accepts without reacting this barbarism and its 100,000 dead, certainly the reaction of the conscripts not to go to the front is taking the form of desertion or self-mutilation, so many desperate individual acts reflecting the absence of a class reaction; but the fact remains that the Russian bourgeoisie cannot declare a general mobilisation. Because the Russian workers don't sufficiently support the idea of getting slaughtered en masse in the name of the Fatherland.

It is very probably the same in Asia: it would thus be a mistake to deduce too quickly from the weakness of the proletariat in Ukraine that the way is also free to unleash military conflict between China and Taiwan or between the two Koreas. In China, South Korea and Taiwan, the working class has a higher concentration, education and consciousness than in Ukraine and in Russia. The refusal to be turned into cannon fodder is still the most plausible situation in these countries today. Thus, beyond the balance of forces between the imperialist powers involved in this region of the world, first and foremost China and the USA, the presence of a very high concentration of educated workers represents the first brake on the war dynamic.

As for the central countries, unlike in 1990 or 2003, the great democratic powers are not directly involved in the Ukrainian conflict, they are not sending their troops of professional soldiers. Rather they are politically and militarily supporting Ukraine against the Russian invasion, defending the democratic freedom of the Ukrainian people against the dictator Putin, by sending weapons, all labelled "defensive weapons".

In 2003, and even more so in 1991, the effects of the war had been translated into a relative paralysis of combativity but also into a deep, anxious reflection on the historical stakes. This situation within the class had then necessitated the organisation

by the forces of the left of the bourgeoisie of pacifist demonstrations which had flourished everywhere against "US imperialism and its allies". These big mobilisations against the interventions of the Western countries were not the work of the working class; by saying "we are against the policy of our government which participates in the war", they had an impact on the working class, leading it into a dead end and sterilising any effort of consciousness. Nothing like that today: there have been no such pacifist mobilisations. Those who criticise the policies of Western countries and their support for Ukraine are mainly the far-right forces linked to Putin. In the United States, it is the Trumpists or Republicans who are "wavering".

This absence of pacifist mobilisation today does not mean an indifference or even less an adhesion of the proletariat to the war. Yes, the campaign to defend democracy and freedom in Ukraine against the Russian aggressor has demonstrated its full effectiveness in this respect: the working class is trapped by the power of pro-democratic propaganda. But, unlike in 1991, the other side of the coin is that it has no impact on the workers' combativity. It is far from a simple passive non-adherence. Not only is the working class in the central countries still not ready to accept deaths (even of professional soldiers), but it also refuses the sacrifices that war implies, the degradation of their living and working conditions. Thus, in Britain, the European country which is both materially and politically the most involved in the war, the most determined to support Ukraine, is at the same time the one where the workers' combativity is most strongly expressed at the moment. The strikes in the UK are the most advanced part of the international class reaction, of the refusal by the working class of the sacrifices (of overexploitation, of the decrease in the number of workers, of the increase in the pace of work, of the rise in prices, etc.) that the bourgeoisie imposes on the proletariat, and that militarism commands it to impose more and more.

One of the current limits of the efforts of our class is its incapacity to make the link between the degradation of its living conditions and the war. The workers' struggles that are being produced and developed are a response by the workers to the conditions that are imposed on them; they form the only possible response to the policies of the bourgeoisie, but at the same time they do not show themselves capable, for the moment, of taking up and integrating the question of war.

Nevertheless, we have to pay attention to possible developments. For example. In



France, on 19 January there were massive demonstrations after the announcement of a pension reform in the name of a balanced budget and social justice; the next day, 20 January, president Macron made official, with great ceremony, a record military budget of 400 billion euros. The link between the sacrifices being demanded and war expenditure will necessarily, over time, become more lodged in workers' minds.

The intensification of the war economy directly implies a worsening of the economic crisis; the working class does not yet really make the connection, it does not mobilise, globally, against the war economy, but it stands up against its effects, against the economic crisis, first of all against wages being too low in the face of inflation.

This is not a surprise. History shows that the working class does not mobilise directly against the war at the front but against its effects on daily life at the back. Already in 1982, in an article in *International Review* n° 30 which posed the question "*Is the war a favourable condition for the communist revolution?*", we answered in the negative and affirmed that it is above all the economic crisis which constitutes the most fertile ground for the development of struggles and consciousness, adding quite rightly that "*the deepening of the economic crisis breaks down these barriers in the consciousness of a growing number of proletarians through the facts which show that it is a question of the same class struggle*".

## 2. ...on the contrary, it is finding its way back into the struggle against the crisis

The reaction of the working class to the war, if it is very heterogeneous across the world, shows that where the key to the future lies, where there is accumulated historical experience, in the central countries, the proletariat has not suffered a major defeat, that it is not ready to let itself be embroiled and to sacrifice its life. Moreover, its reaction to the effects of the economic crisis indicates a dynamic towards the resumption of workers' combativity in these countries.

By returning to strike action, British workers sent a clear signal to workers around the world: "We must fight". A section of the left-wing press even sometimes headlined: "In the United Kingdom: the great return of the class struggle". The entry into struggle of the British proletariat thus constitutes an event of historical significance.

This strike wave was led by the frac-

tion of the European proletariat that has suffered the most from the general retreat of the class struggle since the end of the 1980s. If in the 1970s, although with a certain delay compared to other countries like France, Italy or Poland, the British workers had developed very important struggles culminating in the wave of strikes of 1979 ("the Winter of Discontent"), during the 1980s, the British working class suffered an effective counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie which culminated in the defeat of the miners' strike of 1985, faced with the government of Margaret Thatcher. This defeat and the retreat of the British proletariat in a way announced the historical retreat of the world proletariat, revealing before its time the result of the incapacity to politicise the struggles and the weight of corporatism. During the 1990s and 2000s, Britain was particularly affected by deindustrialisation and the transfer of industries to China, India or Eastern Europe. In recent years, British workers have suffered the onslaught of populist movements and especially the deafening Brexit campaign, stimulating the division within them between "remainers" and "leavers", and then the Covid crisis which has weighed heavily on the working class. Finally, and most recently, it has been confronted with the call for the necessary sacrifices of the war effort, sacrifices that are "very small" compared to the "heroic Ukrainian people" resisting under the bombs. However, despite all these difficulties and obstacles, a generation of proletarians is appearing today on the social scene, no longer affected, as their elders had been, by the weight of the defeats of the "Thatcher generation", a new generation which is raising its head by showing that the working class is capable of responding to the attacks through struggle. All things considered, we see a phenomenon quite comparable (but not identical) to that which saw the French working class emerge in 1968: the arrival of a young generation less affected than its elders by the weight of the counter-revolution. So, just as the 1985 defeat in the UK heralded the general retreat of the late 1980s, the return of working class combativity and strike action in the British Isles points to a deep dynamic in the guts of the world proletariat. The "summer of anger" (which has continued into autumn, winter... soon into spring) can only be an encouragement for all the workers of the planet for several reasons: it is the working class of the fifth world economic power, and an English-speaking proletariat, whose struggles can only have an important impact in countries like the USA, Canada or even in other regions of the world, like India or South Africa. English being, moreover, the language of world communication, the influence of

these movements necessarily surpasses the possible impact of struggles in France or Germany, for example. In this sense, the British proletariat shows the way not only to the European workers, who will have to be in the vanguard of the rise of the class struggle, but also to the world proletariat, and in particular to the American proletariat. In the perspective of future struggles, the British working class can thus serve as a link between the proletariat of Western Europe and the American proletariat. In the US, as the strikes in many factories in the last few years show, there is a growing combativity of the class and the Occupy movement had already revealed all the reflection at work in its entrails; we must not forget that the proletariat has a great history and experience on that side of the Atlantic. But its weaknesses are also very great: the weight of irrationality, populism and backwardness; the weight of isolation within its own continent; the weight of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideology about freedoms, race, etc. The link with Europe, the link provided by the United Kingdom, is thus all the more crucial.

To understand how the return of the strike movement in the UK is a sign of the possibility of a future development of proletarian struggle and consciousness, we need to go back to what we said in our Resolution on the International Situation adopted at our International Congress in 2021:<sup>5</sup> "*In 2003, on the basis of new struggles in France, Austria and elsewhere, the ICC predicted a renewal of struggles by a new generation of proletarians who had been less influenced by anti-communist campaigns and would be confronted by an increasingly uncertain future. To a large extent, these predictions were confirmed by the events of 2006-07, notably the struggle against the CPE in France, and 2010-11, in particular the Indignados movement in Spain. These movements have shown important advances in intergenerational solidarity, self-organisation through assemblies, the culture of debate, real concerns about the future for the working class and humanity as a whole. In this sense, they showed the potential for a unification of the economic and political dimensions of the class struggle. However, it took us a long time to understand the immense difficulties faced by this new generation, "raised" in the conditions of decomposition, difficulties that would prevent the proletariat from reversing the post-1989 retreat during this period.*". The key element in these difficulties has been the continued erosion of class identity. This is the main reason why the CPE movement of 2006 left no visible trace: in its aftermath, there were no discussion circles, no appearance of small groups, not

5. *International Review* n° 167, point 25.

even books, collections of testimonies etc., to the point of being totally unknown in the ranks of youth today. The precarious students of the time had used the methods of struggle of the proletariat (general assemblies) and the nature of its struggle (solidarity) without even knowing it, which made it impossible to become aware of the nature, strength and historical aims of their own movement. This is the same weakness that hindered the development of the Indignados movement in 2010-2011 and prevented the fruits and lessons from being learned. Indeed, “*despite significant advances in consciousness and organisation, the majority of the Indignados saw themselves as “citizens” rather than members of a class, making them vulnerable to the democratic illusions peddled by groups like Democràcia real Ya! (the future Podemos), and later to the poison of Catalan and Spanish nationalism.*”<sup>6</sup> Due to a lack of anchorage, the movement went adrift. Because it is the recognition of a common class interest, opposed to that of the bourgeoisie, because it involves the “*constitution of the proletariat as a class*” as the *Communist Manifesto* puts it, class identity is inseparable from the development of class consciousness. For example, without class identity, it is impossible to make a conscious link with the history of the class, its battles, its lessons.

In other words, the two greatest moments for the proletariat since the 1980s, the movement against the CPE and the Indignados, have either been sterilised or recuperated primarily because of the absence of the more general development of consciousness, because of the loss of class identity. It is this considerable weakness that the return of strikes in the UK has the possibility of overcoming. Historically, the proletariat in the UK is marked by important weaknesses (union control and corporatism, reformism),<sup>7</sup> but the word “worker” has been less erased there than elsewhere; in the UK the word is not shameful; and these strikes can begin to bring it back into the international mainstream. The workers in the UK are not leading the way at all levels, because their methods of struggle are too marked by their weaknesses, that will be the role of the proletariat elsewhere, but they are sending the most important message today: we are struggling not as citizens or students but as workers. And this step forward is possible thanks to this beginning of a workers’ reaction to the economic crisis.

The reality of this dynamic can be measured by the worried reaction of the bourgeoisie, especially in Western Europe, to the dangers of the extension of the “deteriorating social situation”. This is particularly the case in France, Belgium or Germany where the bourgeoisie, in contrast to the attitude of the British bourgeoisie, has taken measures to cap increases in oil, gas and electricity or to compensate by means of subsidies or tax cuts the impact of inflation and price rises and claims loudly that it wants to protect the “purchasing power” of the workers.

In Germany, in October and November 2022, “warning strikes” were immediately followed by the announcement of “inflation subsidies” (3000 euros in the metal industry, 7000 in the car industry) and promises of wage increases.

But with the real aggravation of the world economic crisis, the national bourgeoisies are still obliged to attack the proletariat in the name of competitiveness and balancing the budget; their measures of “protection” and other “safeguards” are bound to diminish little by little. In Italy, the “2023 finance law” reduces a big part of the “special assistance” and represents a new frontal attack on living and working conditions. In France, the Macron government had to announce its major pension reform at the beginning of January 2023, after months of preparation. Result: massive demonstrations, even bigger than the unions anticipated. Apart from the millions in the street, it was the atmosphere and nature of the discussions on the marches in France which shows very clearly what’s going on in our class:

- the pension reform was seen by many as “the last straw”, it’s the whole situation that has become intolerable and unliveable;
- “at a certain moment, it’s enough”. This idea expressed in the demonstrations hit the headlines of the newspapers. This is a clear echo of the British slogan “enough is enough”. The link with the situation in the UK seemed obvious to the demonstrators that we discussed with while distributing our international leaflet: “You’re right, it’s the same everywhere, in all countries”;
- this is a confirmation of what we had already noticed in the demonstrations of 2019 and during the strikes of Autumn 2022: the feeling of being “all in the same boat”. The scattered strikes which have been going for months in France were seen as a dead-end, the idea that “we must all struggle together” is emerging more and more;
- there is even a certain change in the

ambience of the latest demonstrations compared to the previous ones where there was more of an air of resignation. The idea that “united, we can win” is much more present.

Obviously, this positive dynamic has not yet arrived at the level of self-organisation. The confrontation with the unions is not there for the moment. Our class has not yet reached that point, the question is not being posed right now. And when the workers begin to confront this question, it will be a very long process involving the reconquest of general assemblies and committees, with all the traps laid by the different forms of trade unionism (the union centres, rank and file, co-ordinations, etc). But the fact that the unions, in order to keep up with the concerns of the class and stay at the head of the movement, are compelled to organise big, apparently unified demonstrations whereas they have been avoiding this for months, show that there is a tendency for the workers to express their solidarity in the struggle.

It’s also interesting to follow how the situation in the UK has evolved at this level. After 9 months of repeated strikes, the anger and combativity does not seem to have diminished. At the beginning of January, ambulance workers and teachers joined the round of strikes. And here as well the idea of fighting together is germinating. Thus, the union discourse has had to adapt, putting more stress on words like “unity” and “solidarity” and promises of united rallies. For the first time, the striking sectors have come out on the same day, for example ambulance workers and nurses.

This simultaneity of struggles in several countries has not been seen since the 1980s! The influence of the militancy of the workers of Britain on the proletariat in France needs to be followed more closely, as does the influence of the tradition of street demonstrations in France on the situation in the UK. Nearly 160 years ago, 28 September 1864, the International Workingmen’s Association was formed, mainly on the initiative of the British and French workers. This is more than just a glance back at history. It reveals the depth of what is going on: the most experienced parts of the world proletariat are moving and once again making their voices heard. The class in Germany, still deeply marked by the defeats of the 1920s, its physical and ideological crushing, is still largely absent, but the intensity of the economic crisis beginning to hit it will also oblige it to react.

The deepening of the crisis and the consequences of the war will reach a crescendo, everywhere generating the rise of anger and combativity. And it is

6. Ibid, point 26.

7. “It must be recognised that the German proletariat is the theoretician of the European proletariat, just as the English proletariat is its economist, and the French proletariat its politician” (Marx, in *Vorwärts*, 1844).



very important that the worsening of the world economic crisis now takes the form of inflation because:

- it pushes proletarians to struggle, out of necessity, it leaves them no choice;
- it affects all countries;
- it is not an attack that the bourgeoisie can prepare and then eventually withdraw as a reform;
- it affects the entire working class, in all sectors;
- it is not the fruit of this or that government, this or that boss, but of capitalism, so it implies a more global, more general struggle and reflection.

Periods of inflation in history have thus regularly pushed the proletariat into the streets. The whole of the end of the 19th century was marked at the international level by rising prices, and at the same time a process of mass strikes developed, from Belgium after 1892 to Russia in 1905. The 1980s in Poland had its roots in soaring meat prices. The opposite example is Germany in the 1930s: if galloping inflation did lead to immense anger at that moment too, it participated in the fear, withdrawal and disorientation of the class; but this moment is situated in a very different historical period, that of the counter-revolution, and it is precisely in Germany that the proletariat had already been most crushed ideologically and physically.

Today, (West) Germany is affected by the world economic crisis as it has not been since the 1930s, but this deterioration in living and working conditions, this reappearance of inflation, is taking place in the context of an international revival of workers' combativity. The evolution of the social situation in this country, after decades of relative slumber, therefore demands close study.

Thus, despite the tendency of decomposition to act on the economic crisis, the latter remains the best ally of the proletariat. This is a new confirmation of our Theses on Decomposition: "*the inexorable aggravation of the capitalist crisis constitutes the essential stimulant for the class struggle and development of consciousness, the precondition for its ability to resist the poison distilled by the social rot. For while there is no basis for the unification in the partial struggles against the effects of decomposition, nonetheless its struggle against the direct effects of the crisis constitutes the basis for the development of its class strength and class unity.*"<sup>8</sup> So we were right when, in our last resolution on the international situation, we said, "we

8. "Decomposition, final phase of the decadence of capitalism", point 17, *International Review* n° 62.

*must reject any tendency to downplay the importance of the 'defensive' economic struggles of the class, which is a typical expression of the modernist outlook, which only sees the class as an exploited category and not a historic, revolutionary force.*"<sup>9</sup>

We already defended this cardinal position in our article in *International Review* n° 23 and which belongs to our heritage, "The Struggle of the Proletariat in Decadent Capitalism": "*The proletarian struggle tends to go beyond the strictly economic framework to become social, confronting the state directly, politicising itself and demanding the massive participation of the class*". It's the same idea which is contained in Lenin's formula: "*Behind every strike lurks the hydra of revolution*" (see annex).

The 2006 movement against the CPE was a reaction to an economic attack which immediately raised profound general political questions, in particular that of the organisation in assemblies but also that of solidarity between generations. But, as we saw above, the loss of class identity sterilised all this underlying questioning. In the coming strikes, at the international level, in the face of the deepening economic crisis, there is the possibility that workers, even with all their weaknesses and illusions, will begin to see themselves, to recognise themselves, to understand the strength that lies in collective action, and therefore as a class, and then all those questions that have been on hold since the beginning of the 2000s about the perspective ("Another world is possible"), about the methods of struggle (assemblies and the overcoming of corporatist divisions), about the feeling of being "all in the same boat", about the need for solidarity, will become the soil of unity. It is in this way that the issues of the day will become clearer, that they can finally start to be consciously seen and discussed. In this way, the economic and political dimensions will become intertwined.

The intensification of the war economy and the aggravation of the economic crisis in a global context create a rise of anger and combativity also at the global level. And, as in the face of war, the heterogeneity of the proletariat in different countries generates a heterogeneity of the responses and the potential of each movement. There is a whole range of struggles depending on the situation, the history of the proletariat and its experience.

Many countries are approaching the European situation, with a high concentration of workers and "democratic" governments in power. This is the case in Central and South America. The doctors' and nurses' strike at the end of November

9. Point 30, *International Review* n° 167.

or the "general" strike at the end of December in Argentina confirms this relative similarity, this partly common dynamic. But in these countries, the proletariat has not accumulated the same experience as in Europe and North America. The weight of the intermediate layers and therefore the danger of the interclassist trap are much greater there; the Piqueteros movement of the 1990s in Argentina is still the dominant model of struggle. Above all, the throes of decomposition are rotting the whole social fabric: violence and drug trafficking dominate society in the north of Mexico, in Colombia, in Venezuela, and are beginning to become gangrenous in Peru, Chile... These weaknesses explain, for example, why in this last decade, Venezuela sank into a devastating economic crisis without the proletariat being able to react, even though it is a highly educated industrial proletariat with a strong tradition of struggle.

This reality confirms once again the primary responsibility of the proletariat in Europe. On its shoulders weighs the duty to show the way by developing struggles that put at their heart the methods of the proletariat: workers' general assemblies, unifying demands, solidarity between sectors and generations... and the defence of workers' autonomy, a lesson that dates back to class struggles in France in 1848!

In particular, we need to follow the evolution of the class struggle in China. China has 770 million workers and seems to be experiencing a significant increase in the number of strikes in the face of an economic crisis that is taking the form of huge waves of layoffs. Some analysts suggest that the new generation of workers is not ready to accept the same exploitative conditions as their parents, because with the developing economic crisis the promise of a better future in exchange for current sacrifices no longer holds. The iron fist of the Chinese state, whose authority is based above all on repression, can help to stir up anger and push people to massive struggle. That said, the terrible history of the proletariat in China suggests that the poison of democratic illusions will be very powerful; it is inevitable that the anger and demands will be diverted on bourgeois terrain: against the "Communist" yoke, for rights and freedoms, etc. This is at least what happened when anger broke out against the unbearable restrictions of China's anti-Covid policy in late 2022.

In a whole part of the world, the proletariat is marked by a very great historical weakness and its struggles can only be reduced to impotence and/or sink into bourgeois impasses (call for more democracy, freedom, equality, etc.), or be diluted in interclass movements. This is the main

lesson of the Arab Spring of 2010; even if the workers' mobilisation was real, it was diluted in the "people" and, above all, the demands were directed towards the bourgeois terrain of a change of ruler ("Mubarak out", etc) and the call for more democracy. The huge protest movement in Iran is a perfect new illustration of this. The massive anger of the population is turning to demands for women's rights (the central and now world-famous slogan is "Woman, Life, Freedom"), so although many workers' struggles are still taking place in the country, they can only be drowned out by the popular movement. In recent years, the very radical language of these social movements has led people to believe that there is a certain form of workers' self-organisation: criticism of the unions, calls for soviets, etc. In reality, this marxist terminology is a veneer spread by the radical left that does not correspond to the reality of working class actions in Iran.<sup>10</sup> Many of the leftist militants from Iran trained in Europe in the 1970s/80s, and they took away this vocabulary which they use to defend their own interests, i.e. those of the left wing of capital in Iran.

Moreover, democratic states use these movements, in China as in Iran:

- On the imperialist level, of course, Ukraine has shown how the "defence of democracy" card can be played by the US to increase its influence over a country, or to destabilise it. It's no coincidence that it's in the Kurdish region of Iran that social protest is strongest, where American influence is also most important.
- On the level of ideology too, against their own proletariat, by hammering home the idea that democracy can be defended, that it was won through hard struggle, "over there they are fighting to get it" and that it is as "the people" that we can mobilise.

It appears here that the political weakness of the proletariat in one country is instrumentalised by the bourgeoisie against the whole world proletariat; and conversely, the experience accumulated by the proletariat of the central countries can show the way to all.

Such confusions on the social movements shaking the peripheral countries compels us to recall our own critique of the theory of the weak link, which is part of our patrimony. In the resolution on the international situation of January 1983 we

wrote: *"The other major lesson of these battles and their defeat is that this world-wide generalisation of struggles can only begin from the countries that constitute the economic heart of capitalism. That is, the advanced countries of the west and, among these, those in which the working class has the oldest and most complete experience: Western Europe"*.<sup>11</sup> And, to be even more precise, our resolution from July 1983 says: *"Neither the countries of the Third World, nor of the eastern bloc, nor North America, nor Japan can be the point of departure for the process that leads to revolution:*

- *the countries of the Third World because of the numerical weakness of the proletariat and the weight of nationalist illusions;*
- *Japan and especially the US because they have not so directly been through the counter-revolution and world war, and because of the absence of a deep revolutionary tradition;*
- *the eastern bloc countries because of their relative economic backwardness and the specific form that the world crisis takes there (scarcity) obstructing the development of a direct and global consciousness of the cause of the crisis (i.e. overproduction), and because of the Stalinist counter-revolution which has, in the minds of workers, transformed the idea of socialism into its opposite and has allowed democratic, trade unionist and nationalist illusions to have a new impact."*<sup>12</sup>

While outside the central countries there can be massive struggles which demonstrate the anger, the courage and combativity of the workers in these parts of the world, these movements on their own cannot develop a perspective. This impossibility underlines the historical responsibility of the proletariat in Europe which has the duty to base itself on its experience to spring the most sophisticated traps of the bourgeoisie, beginning with democracy and "free trade unions", and thus show the way forward.

### 3. The action of the bourgeoisie against the maturation of workers' consciousness and the weight of decomposition

What we are seeing in the current strikes and demonstrations, the development of solidarity, of the feeling that we must fight together, that we are all in same boat, indicates a certain subterranean maturation of consciousness. As MC<sup>13</sup> wrote in his text

"On subterranean maturation" in an internal bulletin in 1983, "the work of reflection continues in the minds of the workers and manifests itself in the recrudescence of struggles. There is a collective class memory, and this memory also contributes to the development of consciousness and its extension in the class". But we have to be more precise. Subterranean maturation expresses itself in different ways depending on whether we are talking about the class as a whole, the more combative sectors, or minorities seeking clarity. As we say in our *International Review* n° 43:

- *at the least conscious level, and also in the broadest layers of the class, it takes the form of a growing contradiction between the historic being, the real needs of the class, and the workers' superficial adherence to bourgeois ideas. This clash may for a long time remain largely unadmitted, buried or repressed, or it may begin to surface in the negative form of disillusionment with, and disengagement from, the principal themes of bourgeois ideology;*
- *in a more restricted sector of the class, among workers who fundamentally remain on a proletarian terrain, it takes the form of a reflection on past struggles, more or less formal discussions on the struggles to come, the emergence of combative nuclei in the factories and among the unemployed. In recent times, the most dramatic demonstration of this aspect of the phenomenon of subterranean maturation was provided by the mass strikes in Poland 1980, in which the methods of struggle used by the workers showed that there had been a real assimilation of many of the lessons of the struggles of 1956, 1970 and 1976 (for a fuller analysis of how the events in Poland demonstrate the existence of a collective class memory, see the article on 'Poland and the role of revolutionaries' in *International Review* n° 24);*
- *in a fraction of the class that is even more limited in size, but destined to grow as the struggle advances, it takes the form of an explicit defence of the communist program, and thus of regroupment into the organised marxist vanguard. The emergence of communist organisations, far from being a refutation of the notion of subterranean maturation, is both a product of and an active factor within it".*<sup>14</sup>

So, where is this subterranean maturation in the different levels of our class?

10. On the other hand, some comrades think that this radical language of leftists and grassroots committees corresponds to the need to recuperate the embryonic forms of self-organisation and solidarity that we have seen in the working class in Iran since 2018. So this needs to be debated.

11. *International Review* n° 35.

12. *International Review* n° 37.

13. To find out more about our comrade Marc, read the articles in *International Review* n°s 65 and 66:

"Marc, Part 1: From the Revolution of October 1917 to World War II"; "Marc, Part 2: From World War II to the present day".

14. "Class consciousness (polemic)".



Examining the politics of the bourgeoisie is always absolutely essential, both to best assess where our own class stands and to spot the traps that are being prepared against it. Thus, the energy that the bourgeoisie deploys in the central countries, mainly through its unions, to split up the struggles, to isolate the strikes from each other, to avoid any massive unitary demonstrations, proves that it does not want the workers to gather together to demonstrate for wage increases because it knows that this is the most fertile ground for the reconquest of class identity.

So far, this strategy has worked, but the bourgeoisie knows that the idea of having to fight “all together” will continue to germinate in the heads of the workers, as the crisis worsens everywhere; moreover, there is already a small part of the class which is asking itself this kind of question. That’s why, both to prepare for the future and to capture and sterilise the thinking of the current minorities, some of the unions are increasingly displaying a radical facade, putting forward a class-struggle, fighting unionism.

It is also striking to see in the demonstrations to what extent the extreme left-wing organisations are attracting an increasingly important part of the youth. Part of the Trotskyist groups thus claim to be more and more concerned with the struggle of the revolutionary working class for communism, whereas in the 1990s, on the contrary, they turned towards the defence of democracy, the left fronts, etc. This clear difference is the result of the adaptation of the bourgeoisie to what it feels in the class: not only the return of working class combativity but also a certain maturation of consciousness.

Moreover, this growing radicalism of a part of the left and trade union forces is also visible on the question of war. Many “fighting” unions and parties claiming to be anarchist, Trotskyist or Maoist have produced “internationalist” declarations, i.e. apparently denouncing the two camps present in Ukraine, Russia and the USA, and apparently calling for a united working class struggle. Here again, this activity of the left of capital has a double meaning: to capture the small minorities in search of the class positions which are developing and, in the longer term, to respond to the deep preoccupations of the class.

For all that, we must not underestimate the impact of either imperialist propaganda or the war itself on workers’ consciousness. If the “defence of democracy” cannot suffice today to mobilise workers directly, the fact remains that it pollutes people’s heads, that it maintains illusions and the lie of the protective state. The permanent discourse

on the “people” contributes to attacking class identity even more, to making people forget that society is divided into irreconcilable, antagonistic classes, since the “people” is supposed to be a community of interest grouped by the nation. Last but not least, the war itself amplifies all the fear, the irrationality, the desire to retreat: the incomprehensible aspect of this war, the growing disorder and chaos, the inability to foresee the evolution of the conflict, the threat of extension, the fear of a third world war or the use of nuclear weapons.

More generally, in the last two years, irrationality has surged among the population at the same time as decomposition has deepened: pandemic, war and the destruction of nature have considerably reinforced the feeling of no-future. In fact, everything we wrote in 2019 in our “Report on the Class Struggle for the 23rd International Congress of the ICC” has been verified and amplified:

*“The capitalist world in decomposition necessarily engenders apocalyptic moods. It can offer humanity no future and its potential for destruction on a scale that beggars the imagination has become more and more evident to wide layers of the world’s population...”*

*“Nihilism and despair arise from a sense of powerlessness, in a loss of conviction that there is any possible alternative to the nightmare scenario being prepared by capitalism. It tends to paralyse reflection and the will to action. And if the only social force that could pose this alternative is virtually unaware of its own existence, does this mean that the game is up, that the point of no return has already been reached?”*

*“We certainly recognise that the longer capitalism sinks into decomposition, the more it is sapping the basis for a more human society. Again, this is illustrated most clearly by the destruction of the environment, which is reaching the point where it can accelerate the tendency towards a complete break-down of society, a condition which does not favour the self-organisation and confidence in the future required to make the revolution”.<sup>15</sup>*

The bourgeoisie uses this gangrene shamelessly against the working class, by promoting decomposed petty-bourgeois ideologies. In the US, a whole section of the proletariat is affected by the worst effects of decomposition, such as the rise of xenophobia and racial hatred. In Europe, the working class is showing greater resistance to these ultra-nauseating manifestations, while conspiracy theories and the rejection of rational thought (e.g.

the anti-vaccine current) have also started to spread in this historical heartland. And above all, in all the central countries, the proletariat is increasingly polluted by ecologism and wokism.

We can see a general process here: each aspect of this decadent and decomposed capitalism is isolated, separated from the question of the system and its roots, in order to make it a fragmented struggle in which either a category of the population (blacks, women, etc.) or everyone as a “people” must be involved. All these movements constitute a danger for workers who thus risk being dragged into interclassist or downright bourgeois struggles in which they are drowned in the mass of “citizens”. The workers of the classic and experienced sectors of the class seem less influenced by these ideologies and these forms of “struggle”. But the younger generation, which is both cut off from the tradition of class struggle and particularly outraged at blatant injustices and worried about the bleak future, is largely lost in these “non-mixed” movements (black-only meetings, or women-only meetings, etc.), the ideologies around “gender” (the theory of the absence of biological distinction between the sexes), etc. Instead of the struggle against exploitation, which is the root of the capitalist system, allowing for an increasingly broad movement of emancipation (the question of women, minorities, etc.), as was the case in 1917, ecologist, wokist, indigenist, “Zadiste”<sup>16</sup> ideologies sweep aside the class struggle, deny it or even judge it to be the cause of the current state of society. According to the current which in France refers to itself as “racialist”, class struggle is a white thing that maintains the oppression of blacks; according to wokism, class struggle is a thing of the past marked by macho paternalism and domination; or, according to the theory of intersectionality, workers’ struggle is just one struggle equal to others: feminism, anti-racism, “classism”, etc. are all particular struggles against oppression that can sometimes be found side by side, “converging”. The result is catastrophic: rejection of the working class and its methods of struggle, division by categories which is nothing other than a form of every man for himself, superficial criticism of capitalism which ends up asking for reforms, greater “awareness” by those in power, new laws, etc. The bourgeoisie therefore does not hesitate to give all these movements the maximum echo whenever possible. All democratic states have taken up the slogan “Woman, Life, Freedom”, which has become the symbol of social protest in Iran.

And as these movements are obviously

16. Translator’s note: in France, ZAD stands for “zone à défendre”, an area occupied by protestors.

15. See *International Review* n° 164.

powerless, a part of these young people, the most radical and rebellious, are called on to engage in “stronger”, “direct” actions, sabotage, etc. In recent months we have seen the development of “radical ecology”. The most “left-wing” of these ideologies is “intersectionality”: it claims to be about revolution and class struggle, but it puts the struggle against exploitation and the struggles against racism, machismo, etc. on the same level, in order to better dilute the workers’ struggle and direct it underhandedly towards interclassism.

In other words, all these decomposed ideologies cover the whole spectrum of thinking that germinates within our class, especially its youth, and are thus very effective in sterilising the effort of a proletariat that is seeking how to struggle, how to face this world that is plunging into barbarism and destruction.

A whole section of the parties and organisations of the left and the far left obviously promote these ideologies. It is striking to see how a whole part of Trotskyism puts more and more emphasis on “the people”; and the offshoots of modernism (communisers and others)<sup>17</sup> have here the role of dealing specifically with attracting to them the youth who clearly seek to destroy capitalism, of doing the dirty work of distancing them from the class struggle and hindering any reconquest of class identity.

#### 4. Our role

In the years to come, there will therefore be both a development of the proletariat’s struggle in the face of the aggravation of the economic crisis (strikes, days of action, demonstrations, social movements) and at the same time a sinking of the whole of society into decomposition with all the dangers that this represents for our class (piecemeal struggles, inter-class movements and even bourgeois demands). At the same time, there will be the possibility of a progressive reconquest of class identity and the growing influence of decomposed ideologies.

The ICC will thus have a key role to play in these upcoming battles.

Vis-à-vis the class as a whole, we will have to intervene through our press, in demonstrations, in possible political meetings and general assemblies in order to 1) Exploit the growing feeling of “being all in the same boat” and the rise in combativity to defend all the methods of struggle which, in history, have shown

themselves to be bearers of solidarity and unity, of class identity. 2) To denounce the sabotage and divisive work of the unions. 3) Qualify the nature of each movement, on a case by case basis (working class, interclassist, single issue, bourgeois...). For this last point, our difficulties of the last few years demands vigilance. The war in Ukraine has not and will not trigger a massive reaction in the class, there will be no movement against the war. If we are to raise the torch of internationalism, it would be illusory, or opportunist, to believe that workers’ committees could be formed on this terrain; the totally artificial and hollow nature of the *No War But The Class War* committees kept alive by the sole will of the Internationalist Communist Tendency is a vivid proof of this. It is indeed on the terrain of the struggle against the deterioration of living conditions, particularly in the face of rising prices, that the ground will be most fertile for the future development of struggle and consciousness.

With regard to a whole section of the class that questions the state of society and the perspective, we will have to continue to develop what we have begun to do with our text on the 2020s, namely to express the coherence of our analysis as best we can, as the only one capable of linking the different aspects of the historical situation and bringing out the reality of the dynamics of the historical moment.

More specifically, towards all those young people who want to fight but who are caught up in decomposed ideologies, we will have to develop our critique of wokism, ecologism, etc. and recall the experience of the workers’ movement on all these questions (the question of women, nature, etc.). Just as it is absolutely necessary to answer all the questions that Trotskyism knows how to capture (the distribution of wealth, state capitalism, communism, etc.). Here, the question of perspective and communism, the weak point of our intervention, takes on its full importance.

Finally, with regard to the searching minorities, the concrete denunciation of the various extreme left forces which are developing to destroy this potential, as well as the struggle against all the offshoots of modernism appear absolutely primordial; it is our responsibility for the future and the construction of the organisation. And it is here that our call to the organisations of the Communist Left to unite around an internationalist declaration in the face of the war in Ukraine takes on its full meaning, that of taking up the method of our predecessors, those of Zimmerwald, so that the current minorities can anchor themselves in the history of the workers’ movement and resist the contrary winds

blown by the bourgeoisie and its ideologies of the far left.

### Annex to the report on class struggle

**On the link between economics and politics in the development of struggle and consciousness - extract from Rosa Luxemburg’s pamphlet *The Mass Strike*:**

*“When, however, we have in view the less important strike of the demonstrative kind, instead of the fighting strike as it represents in Russia today the actual vehicle of proletarian action, we see still more clearly that it is impossible to separate the economic factors from one another. Here also the reality deviates from the theoretical scheme, and the pedantic representation in which the pure political mass strike is logically derived from the trade-union general strike as the ripest and highest stage, but at the same time is kept distinct from it, is shown to be absolutely false. This is expressed not merely in the fact that the mass strike from that first great wage struggle of the Petersburg textile workers in 1896–97 to the last great mass strike in December 1905, passed imperceptibly from the economic field to the political, so that it is almost impossible to draw a dividing line between them.*

*“Again, every one of the great mass strikes repeats, so to speak, on a small scale, the entire history of the Russian mass strike, and begins with a pure economic, or at all events, a partial trade-union conflict, and runs through all the stages to the political demonstration. The great thunderstorm of mass strikes in South Russia in 1902 and 1903 originated, as we have seen, in Baku from a conflict arising from the disciplinary punishment of the unemployed, in Rostov from disputes about wages in the railway workshops, in Tiflis from a struggle of the commercial employees for reduction of working hours, in Odessa from a wage dispute in a single small factory. The January mass strike of 1905 developed from an internal conflict in the Putilov works, the October strike from the struggle of the railway workers for a pension fund, and finally the December strike from the struggle of the postal and telegraph employees for the right of combination. The progress of the movement on the whole is not expressed in the circumstances that the economic initial stage is omitted, but much more in the rapidity with which all the stages to the political demonstration are run through and in the extremity of the point to which the strike moves forward.*

17. See our ongoing series on the “communisers”; the first two parts of which were published in *International Review* n° 169.



# Report on imperialist tensions

The ICC has recently held its 25th International Congress, where it adopted a number of reports on the world situation. This is the report on inter-imperialist tensions.

To have a precise analysis of the historical situation and the perspectives that flow from it is one of the major responsibilities of revolutionary organisations, who need to provide a solid framework for their intervention in the class and to propose to the latter precise orientations for understanding the dynamics of capitalism or the actions and manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, the groups of the proletarian political milieu as a whole largely neglect this task, either because they remain stuck in the schemas of the past, applied mechanically without submitting them to criticism even if they no longer fit historical reality (the Bordigist groups), or because their opportunism leads them to prioritise an immediatist and empiricist approach, aiming at an illusory immediate success, rather than making the effort to verify the solidity and the relevance of their analyses (the Internationalist Communist Tendency).<sup>1</sup>

For its part, the ICC, faithful to the tradition of the workers' movement and the marxist method, has always subjected its analytical frameworks to a critical verification to see if they remain valid - or if, on the contrary, they need to be amended or even revised. In line with this approach, this report takes as its starting point the resolution on the international situation from the 24th ICC Congress (2021).<sup>2</sup> This highlighted the significant acceleration of decomposition that was then demonstrated in the ravages of the pandemic and its impact on the economic basis of the system, thus concretising the alternative "socialism or barbarism", put forward by the 3rd International. But, "In contrast to a situation in which the bourgeoisie is able to mobilise society for war, as in the 1930s, the exact rhythm and forms of decomposing capitalism's drive towards the destruction of humanity are harder to predict because they are the product of a convergence of different factors, some of which may be partially hidden from view." (pt. 10). Various observations underlined this acceleration of decomposition in terms of imperialist confrontations:

- An intensification of the development of militarism, which had already become the way of life of capitalism in its decadent phase. Thus, the "massacres of innumerable small wars" are plunging capitalism "into an increasingly irrational imperialist every-man-for-himself" (pt 11), while at the same time we are witnessing a hardening of the conflicts between the world powers. "In

*this chaotic picture, there is no doubt that the growing confrontation between the US and China tends to take centre stage (...)* (pt 12). While the US-China rivalry tends to escalate, the new Biden administration has announced that it will no longer be "taken in" by Russia (pt 11).

- The aggressive policy of the United States, which, faced with its declining hegemony, does not hesitate to use "its capacity to act alone to defend its interests". However, "the pursuit of every man for himself will make it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for the United States to impose its leadership, an illustration of each against all in the acceleration of decomposition" (pt 11).
- "China's extraordinary growth is itself a product of decomposition. (...). The totalitarian control over the whole social body, the repressive hardening of the Stalinist faction of Xi Jinping, is not an expression of strength but a manifestation of the weakness of the state" (pt 9).
- Increased tensions "do not mean that we are heading towards the formation of stable blocs and generalised world war" (pt 12). However, we do not live "in an era of greater security than during the Cold War (...). On the contrary, if the phase of decomposition is marked by an increasing loss of control on the part of the bourgeoisie, this also applies to the vast means of destruction - nuclear, conventional, biological and chemical - that have been accumulated by the ruling class, (...)" (pt 13).

The outbreak of war in Ukraine and the resulting sharpening of imperialist tensions are fully in line with the frame of reference adopted by the 24th International Congress.

However, they undoubtedly represent a qualitative development in society's slide towards barbarism by highlighting the driving role of militarism in the interrelation of the various crises (health, economic, political, ecological, etc.) that are currently affecting capitalism.

## Part 1: Balance sheet of 15 months of war in Ukraine

After two years of pandemic, the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022 was a qualitative step in the sinking of society into barbarism. Since 1989, the US had indeed sought confrontation on several occasions (with Iraq, Iran, North Korea, or Afghanistan), but these confrontations had never involved another major imperialist power or had an impact on the whole planet. This war is a different matter:

- "It is the first military confrontation of this magnitude between states to take place on Europe's doorstep since 1940-45 (...), so that the heart of Europe is now becoming the central theatre of imperialist confrontations;
- "this war directly 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. This Russia-NATO confrontation tends to revive the memory of the opposition between the blocs from the 1950s to the 1980s and the nuclear terror that ensued, (...);
- "the scale of the fighting, the tens of thousands of deaths, the systematic destruction of entire cities, the execution of civilians, the irresponsible bombing of atomic power stations, the considerable economic consequences for the whole planet underline both the barbarity and the growing irrationality of conflicts that can lead to a catastrophe for humanity".<sup>3</sup>

One year after the outbreak of the war and following on from our internal report of May 2022, it is important to establish the main lessons of the conflict in terms of imperialist relations and the framework of reference put forward by the ICC.

### 1. The impact on imperialist relations

The material and human toll of one year of war is terrible: the human losses and mate-

1. The ICT sometimes uses the notion of decadence, but without explaining its implications, while it also fails to reconsider the notion of revolutionary defeatism by taking into account the characteristics of the present context. See our critique of the No War But The Class War committees: "On the history of the No War But The Class War groups", *World Revolution* n° 393; "No War But The Class War, Paris: a committee that leads its participants into a dead end", *World Revolution* n° 395.

2. *International Review* n° 167.

3. "The Significance and Impact of the War in Ukraine", *International Review* n° 168.

rial destruction are gigantic, the displaced populations number in the millions. Tens of billions of euros have been sunk by both sides (45 billion euros by the United States, 52 billion by the EU, 77 billion by Russia, i.e. 25% of its GDP). Russia is now committing about 50% of its state budget to the war, while the hypothetical reconstruction of Ukraine would require more than 700 billion dollars. This war is also having a considerable impact on the intensification of imperialist tensions.

### 1.1 The US imperialist offensive

Faced with the decline of its hegemony, the United States has since the 1990s pursued an aggressive policy aimed at defending its interests, and this is especially true towards Russia, the former leader of the rival bloc. Despite the commitment made after the break-up of the USSR not to enlarge NATO, the Americans have integrated into this alliance all the countries of the former Warsaw Pact, including countries, such as the Baltic States, that were part of the former USSR itself, and were considering doing the same for Georgia and Ukraine in 2008. The "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2014 had replaced the pro-Russian regime with a pro-Western government and widespread protests in Belarus threatened the pro-Russian Lukashenko regime. Faced with this strategy of encirclement, Putin's regime tried to react by employing its military force, the remnant of its past as the head of the bloc (Georgia in 2008, Crimea and Donbass in 2014, etc.). Faced with the upheavals of Russian imperialism, the US began arming Ukraine and training its army in the use of more sophisticated weapons. When Russia deployed its army in Belarus and eastern Ukraine, they tightened the trap by claiming that Putin would invade Ukraine while providing assurances that they themselves would not intervene in the situation.

In short, if the war was indeed initiated by Russia, it is the consequence of the strategy of encirclement and suffocation of the latter by the United States. In this way, the United States has succeeded in intensifying its aggressive policy, which has a much more ambitious objective than simply stopping Russia's ambitions:

- in the immediate aftermath, the fatal trap they set for Russia is leading to the significant weakening of the latter's remaining military power and the radical degradation of its imperialist ambitions. The war also demonstrated the absolute superiority of US military technology, which is the basis for the "miracle" of "little Ukraine" pushing back the "Russian bear";
- then they tightened the screws within

NATO by forcing European countries to come under the Alliance's banner, especially France and Germany, which had tended to develop their own policies towards Russia and ignore NATO, which until a few months ago French President Macron had claimed was 'brain dead';

- beyond the beating handed out to Russia, the primary objective of the Americans was undoubtedly an unequivocal warning to their main challenger, China ("this is what awaits you if you risk trying to invade Taiwan"). For the past decade, the defence of US leadership has focused on the rise of this serious challenger. Under the Trump administration, this desire to confront China took the form mainly of an open trade war, but the Biden administration also stepped up the pressure militarily (the tensions around Taiwan). The war has weakened China's only important ally, which could in particular provide it with military input, and is putting a strain on the New Silk Road project, one axis of which passed through Ukraine.

### 1.2. The stinging defeat of Russian imperialism

Russia's initial objective was to quickly reach Kyiv by means of a bold combined operation of its elite troops to eliminate the Zelensky faction and install a pro-Russian government; and secondly to cut off access to the Black Sea by taking Odessa. By underestimating the capacity for resistance from the Ukrainian army, supported financially and militarily by the USA, but also by overestimating its own military capabilities, it suffered a bitter defeat. The second, more modest objective was the occupation of the north-east of the country, but the Russian army once again suffered heavy losses and had to retreat to Kharkiv and abandon Kherson. Programmes to mobilise new recruits saw hundreds of thousands of young Russians flee abroad and the Russian army forced to rely on the mercenaries of the Wagner group, often common prisoners, to hold the front line. It is now trying by all means to hold the territory linking the Donbass to Crimea. To do this, it is massively bombing all the towns, power stations and bridges, to make Ukraine pay dearly for its victory and to force Zelensky to accept Russian conditions. Moreover, given its precarious military situation, it cannot be ruled out that Russia will end up using tactical nuclear weapons.

Whatever the final outcome, it is already clear that Russia has emerged heavily weakened from this military adventure. It has been bled dry from a military point of view, having lost a hundred thousand

soldiers, in particular among its most experienced elite units, a large quantity of the most modern and efficient tanks, planes and helicopters; it is strongly weakened from the economic point of view because of the enormous costs of the war (25% of its GDP this year), as well as by the collapse of the economy caused by the war effort and the sanctions of the Western countries; finally, its image as an imperialist power has suffered greatly from the events, which have demonstrated the military and economic limits of its power.

### 1.3 European and Chinese imperialism under pressure

The European bourgeoisies, especially France and Germany, had urged Putin not to launch this war, or even to launch an attack limited in scope and time. Boris Johnson's indiscretions revealed that Germany was even considering effectively endorsing a Russian "blitzkrieg" of a few days to eliminate the regime. However, faced with the failure of the Russian forces and the unexpected resistance of the Ukrainian army, Macron and Scholz had to sheepishly join the US-led NATO position. However, they remain on the sidelines in the military involvement with Ukraine and have dragged their feet on cutting all economic ties with Russia. On the other hand, they have sharply increased their military budget for the massive rearmament of their armed forces (a doubling even for Germany, i.e. 107 billion euros). Chancellor Scholz's recent visit to Beijing confirmed Germany's determination not to bow to the US and to maintain important economic relations with China.

As for China, faced with the difficulties of its Russian "ally" and the indirect but insistent threats of the United States, it has taken a very cautious stance with regard to the Ukrainian conflict: it has called for the cessation of hostilities and, while it has not formally adhered to the sanctions against Russia, it has not supplied the latter with either weapons or military equipment. Xi even openly expressed his concern to Putin and invited Russia to seek negotiations. 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 power capable of competing with the US superpower. Today, China has neither the armed forces nor the economic structure to support such global imperialist ambitions. All its economic and commercial expansion is vulnerable to the chaos of war and the pressures of American power. Of course, China is not giving up its imperialist ambitions, in particular the re-conquest of Taiwan, as Xi Jinping reminded the CCP congress, but it can only make progress



in the long term, avoiding giving in to American provocation.

On a more general level, the conflict in Ukraine has not only represented an extremely important qualitative deepening of militarism, but it is also the driving force behind the intensification, on a global level, of economic difficulties (inflation and recession), health problems (the waves of Covid), the influx of refugees and the system's inability to deal with the ecological crisis (the reactivation of nuclear and even coal-fired power stations), which characterise the current plunge into decomposition.

## 2. Testing our theoretical framework

The initial denial by the ICC that a massive invasion of Ukraine was going to happen, despite explicit warnings from the US, was not an expression of an inadequacy of our analytical framework, but a manifestation of a lack of mastery of our analytical framework and more specifically a "forgetting" of the orientations put forward in the text "Militarism and Decomposition" (1990).<sup>4</sup> The ICC therefore adopted a complementary document updating the October 1990 text ("Militarism and Decomposition, May 2022").<sup>5</sup> It points in particular to the following lessons, fully highlighted by a year of war in Ukraine:

### 2.1. The need for a dialectical materialist approach to current events

The question of method is crucial in the apprehension of current events: should dialectical materialism be conceived as a simple economic determinism or rather, as Engels reminds us in 1890 in a letter to Bloch, a dialectical method which takes into account the interactions between the different aspects of reality, in particular the relationship between the economic base and the superstructure, even if "*the determining factor in history is, in the last instance, the production and reproduction of real life*".<sup>6</sup> This approach contradicts all the vulgar materialistic analyses, which are in the majority in the proletarian political milieu, and which explain each war only on the basis of immediate economic interests, without differentiating the situations in the different phases of capitalism. However, as the Gauche Communiste de France clearly understood, "*The decadence of capitalist society finds its striking expression in the fact that from wars with a view to economic development (ascending period), economic activity is essentially restricted to war (decadent period). This does not mean that war has become the goal of capitalist production, the goal always remaining for*

*capitalism the production of surplus value, but it does mean that war, taking on a character of permanence, has become the way of life for decadent capitalism*".<sup>7</sup>

### 2.2. The irrationality of militarism is accentuated in decomposition

In particular, the phase of decomposition accentuates one of the most pernicious aspects of war in decadence: its irrationality. From the opening of this phase, the effects of militarism become ever more unpredictable and disastrous. Our vulgar materialists do not understand this aspect and object that wars always have an economic motivation, and therefore a rationality. They fail to see that today's wars are fundamentally not economically but geostrategically motivated, and even then they no longer achieve their original objectives, but lead to the opposite result:

- the United States fought the two Gulf Wars, as well as the war in Afghanistan, to maintain its leadership on the planet, but both Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in an explosion of chaos and instability, causing a wave of refugees to knock on the doors of industrialised countries;
- 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 flooding into neighbouring countries or fleeing 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 will be a country in ruins (Ukraine), a country ruined economically and militarily (Russia), an even more tense and chaotic imperialist situation from Europe to Central Asia and millions of refugees in Europe.

### 2.3 Increasing chaos and imperialist tensions are largely hindering the course towards bloc formation

The increase in militarism and the irrationality of war implies a terrifying expansion of military barbarity. However, it does not lead to the regrouping of imperialisms into blocs and thus to a generalised war on the whole planet. Various elements support this analysis:

- The war in Ukraine has not shown a strong and stable alignment of imperialisms behind the leaders of the potential blocs: important imperialist powers like India, Brazil and even Saudi Arabia

clearly keep their autonomy from the protagonists; the link between China and Russia has not tightened, on the contrary, and while the US has used the war to impose its views within NATO, member countries like Turkey or Hungary are openly going it alone and Germany and France are trying by all means to develop their own policy.

- A bloc leader must be able to generate trust among the countries of the bloc and guarantee the security of its allies, while China has been very cautious in its support for its Russian ally. As for the United States, Trump's "America First" policy was a cold shower for the "allies" who thought they could count on the United States, and Biden is basically pursuing the same policy: he decided without consulting his allies to withdraw his troops from Kabul and he is making them pay a high price in energy for boycotting the Russian economy, even though the United States is self-sufficient in this area.
- The absence of a defeated proletariat, an indispensable condition for engaging a country in a world war. The recent struggles in various Western countries show that the proletariat is not ready to accept the austerity imposed by the economic crisis, let alone the sacrifices linked to a generalised war. Even in Russia, where the proletariat is weak and subject to a strong nationalist battering, the majority of the population does not support the war. Finally, there is also the lack of a strong ideological weapon, capable of enlisting the proletariat, like fascism and anti-fascism in the 1930s.

The formation of blocs should not be confused with ad hoc alliances, formed for particular objectives. Thus, Turkey, a member of NATO, adopts a policy of neutrality towards Russia in Ukraine, hoping to take advantage of this to ally itself with Russia in Syria against the Kurdish militias supported by the USA. At the same time, it confronts Russia in Libya or in Central Asia, where it militarily supports Azerbaijan against Armenia, a member of the Russian-led alliance.

### 2.4. The polarisation of tensions is a product of the US offensive.

If, since the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, a polarisation of imperialist tensions has become more and more apparent between the United States and China, this should in no way be seen as the beginning of a dynamic towards the constitution of blocs. Contrary to the latter, it is not the product of pressure from the challenger (Germany, the USSR in the past), but rather of a systematic

4. *International Review* n° 64.

5. *International Review* n° 168.

6. Cited in "Militarism and Decomposition 2022".

7. Report to the July 1945 Conference of the Gauche Communiste de France.

policy pursued by the dominant imperialist power, the United States, to try to halt the irreversible decline of its leadership. Initially, it focused on neutralising the aspirations of the former allies of the US bloc, especially Germany. Then, it aimed at polarising the “axis of evil” (Iraq, Iran, North Korea) in an attempt to rally other imperialisms behind the global policeman. More recently, its aim is precisely to prevent any emergence of challengers.

Thirty years of such a policy by the US has not brought any discipline and order to imperialist relations but has instead exacerbated every man for himself, chaos and barbarism. The United States is today a major vehicle for the terrifying expansion of military confrontations.

### 2.5. The war does not facilitate the development of the proletarian struggle

Certainly, on a general level, the war in Ukraine demonstrates the bankruptcy of this system (especially because it is obviously a deliberate action from the ruling class) and can in this sense constitute a source of consciousness of this bankruptcy, even if this is today limited to minorities of the class. Fundamentally, however, it confirms the analysis of the ICC that the war and the feelings of powerlessness and horror that it provokes do not favour the development of working class struggle. On the other hand, it causes a significant aggravation of the economic crisis and the attacks on workers, pushing the latter to oppose them in order to defend their living conditions.<sup>8</sup>

## **Part II: The conflict in Ukraine as a multiplier and intensifier of imperialist contradictions**

In the current period, the war in Ukraine cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon. The entry into the twenties of the 21st century is marked first of all by an accumulation and interaction between different types of crises – health crisis, economic crisis, climate and food crisis, tensions between imperialisms – but above all, they are all impacted by the effects of this conflict, which constitutes a real multiplier and intensifier of barbarism and destructive chaos. This war is the central factor that determines the intensification of the other aspects:

*“With this aggregation of destructive phenomena and its ‘vortex effect’, it is important to stress the driving force of war, as an action deliberately pursued and planned for by capitalist states, having become the most powerful and aggravating factor of*

8. Read the report on the class struggle from the ICC’s 25th Congress, published in this issue of the *International Review*.

*chaos and destruction. In fact, the war in Ukraine has had a multiplier effect on the escalation of barbarism and destruction, involving the following elements:*

- *The risk of bombing nuclear power plants is always present, as can be seen particularly around the Zaporizhzhia site.*
- *The threat from the use of chemical and nuclear weapons.*
- *The violent ramping up of militarism with its consequences for the environment and the climate.*
- *The direct impact of the war on the energy crisis and the food crisis”.*<sup>9</sup>

In short, whatever the scenario in the coming months, the global repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine will manifest themselves through:

- the expansion of areas of imperialist tension in the world, as well as the destabilisation of political structures within many states,
- the exacerbation of confrontations between the main protagonists of the conflict, as well as within the different bourgeoisies of these countries (including the Ukrainian).

### **1. The global impact of growing tensions and chaos**

The consequences of the conflict in Ukraine do not lead to a “rationalisation” of tensions through a “bipolar” alignment of imperialisms behind two dominant “godfathers”, but on the contrary to the explosion of a multiplicity of imperialist ambitions, which are not limited to those of the major imperialisms (to be examined in the next section), or to Eastern Europe and Central Asia, thus accentuating the chaotic and irrational character of the confrontations.

#### 1.1 Increasing points of imperialist confrontation in the world

- In Europe, the emergence in the East of a Ukraine heavily armed by the US will fuel the struggle between US and German imperialism to control it.<sup>10</sup> Its central position will also generate tensions with other Eastern European countries, such as Romania, Hungary (very reluctant in its support for Ukraine) and especially Poland, which have minorities in various parts of Ukraine. In the West, pressure on Germany has caused dissension with France, while conflicts in Bosnia or between Serbs and Kosovans are being rekindled (through

9. “The twenties of the 21st Century. The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity”, *International Review* n° 169.

10. See the plans for its reconstruction.

Russian mercenaries from the Wagner group). Finally, the EU reacted with anger to the Inflation Reduction Act, which was seen as a real declaration of war against European exports to the US.

- In Central Asia, the retreat of Russian power goes hand in hand with a rapid expansion of the presence of other imperialist powers, such as China, Turkey, Iran and, of course, the USA, in the republics of the former Soviet Union. In the Far East, the risks of conflict are emerging between China 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 which the US is fully involved. The specific imperialist position of India deserves to be mentioned: if its relations with China are conflictual on the political, military and economic levels, they are more ambiguous in relation to the United States (member of QUAD but not of AUKUS) or Russia (important military contracts), a striking illustration of every man for himself and the fragility of rapprochement between imperialist powers.
- In the Middle East, the weakening of Russia, the internal destabilisation of important vultures such as Iran (popular revolts, struggles between factions and imperialist pressures) or Turkey (disastrous economic situation) will have a major impact on imperialist relations, even though these three countries tend to come closer together with the aim of carrying out military actions in Syria and Iraq against various Kurdish factions, supported by the US. Finally, the attitude of Saudi Arabia, bogged down in the civil war in Yemen, which opposes the US policy and is moving closer to Russia and China, as well as the formation of an extreme right-wing government in Israel, are also expressions of the worsening of military chaos and every man for himself.
- In Africa, while the energy and food crisis and war tensions are raging in different regions (civil war between the Ethiopian central government and the insurgent province of Tigray, in which Eritrea or Sudan are also involved, civil war in Libya, high tensions between North and South Sudan and also between Algeria and Morocco), the aggressiveness of the imperialist powers stimulates destabilisation and chaos. Between 2016 and 2020 China invested the equivalent of all Western investments for the same period (\$70 billion) and has waived the repayment



of 23 interest-free loans for 17 African countries in 2021. India overtook France as the continent's number three trading partner in 2018 (after China and the US). Turkey's trade with the African continent has risen from \$5 billion to \$25 billion in twenty years. Russia, for its part, is continuing its destabilising activities in Mali and the Central African Republic with the mercenaries of the Wagner group, while remaining a major trading partner in arms and agriculture (cereals and fertilisers) for African countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia and South Africa. France and Britain, which are losing ground, want to regain a market share and are promising investments. As for US imperialism, to counter the influence of Russian and Chinese imperialism in Africa, it organised an important US-African summit on 13 December 2022 in Washington, where they promised 55 billion dollars for Africa over 3 years.

### 1.2 Increasing destabilisation of the political apparatus of the bourgeoisie in many states

The increasing weight of decomposition also tends to accentuate the loss of control of the bourgeois political apparatus, to reinforce the struggle between factions and the pressure of populist tendencies.<sup>11</sup> This increased political instability will have a growing impact on the unpredictability of imperialist positioning, as the Trump presidency illustrated.

The European countries, which are under strong US pressure and tensions within the EU, are confronted with populist tendencies and struggles between factions of the bourgeoisie, which strongly destabilise the political apparatus of the bourgeoisie and can lead to changes in imperialist orientations. This is already the case not only in Britain, but also in Italy where there have been several governments with populist components. This growing destabilisation is also tending to strengthen in France ("Les Républicains" of Ciotti are willing to govern with the populists) and even in Germany.<sup>12</sup> Imperialist turmoil can also exacerbate tensions within the bourgeoisies, as is the case in Russia and China (see next section), and eventually lead to imperialist reorientations. So, in Iran, the confrontations between factions within the Iranian bourgeoisie, fanned by certain foreign interference and exploiting the revolts and expressions of despair of the population, can modify imperialist orientations.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in many states in Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia), Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan) or

Latin America (Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile), the multiplication of popular revolts or inter-ethnic massacres marked the destabilisation of the state structure, and these various situations have accentuated the instability of imperialist relations and the unpredictability of conflicts.

### **2. Destabilisation and turbulence among the main protagonists of the Ukrainian conflict**

A year of war has caused significant turbulence in the orientations of the major imperialisms involved, but also in the tensions within the different bourgeoisies of these countries.

#### 2.1. The US offensive is more than ever a central factor in increasing tensions and chaos

2.1.1. The initial success of the current US offensive is based on a characteristic already highlighted in "Militarism and Decomposition" (1990): the economic and especially military superiority of the USA, which exceeds the forces of potentially competing powers. The US exploits this advantage to the full in its policy of polarisation. This policy has never led to more order and discipline in imperialist relations, but on the contrary has proliferated military confrontations, exacerbated the "every man for himself" attitude, sown barbarism and chaos in many regions (Middle East, Afghanistan, ...), intensified terrorism, provoked huge waves of refugees and exacerbated the ambitions of small and large sharks alike.

The question facing the US in Ukraine today is whether to offer a way out to Russia, which can in any case no longer claim a leading world imperialist role after this war, or whether to aim for total humiliation, which could provoke a desperate and uncontrolled reaction from the Russian bourgeoisie and imply the risk of a disintegration of Russia, worse than in 1990, and thus a destabilisation of the whole of this part of the planet. The dominant factions of the US bourgeoisie (especially the Democrats) are undoubtedly aware of these dangers, even if they are keen to complete their objectives, already largely achieved, in terms of the definitive weakening of Russia, and above all the accentuation of the pressure on China in order to contain it and block its expansion. As a result, the US is carefully measuring the military capabilities of the Ukrainian army, pressuring Zelensky to increase his control over his administration and his army and indicating that "*one way or another this war will have to end around a negotiating table*" (Gen. Milley, Chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff). However, this orientation can be countered by:

- a possible strategy by the Russian leadership to capitalise on Western fatigue by prolonging the war over time, as well as by pressure from the hard-line faction calling for all-out war (see below);
- tensions within the Ukrainian state and military apparatus, with some factions calling for continued offensives until total victory against Russia, including the recapture of the Donbass and Crimea;
- an irrational slip-up, linked to the chaos and barbarity of the environment, such as a missile hitting Poland, Belarus or a nuclear power plant.

Whatever the outcome of the conflict, the current confrontational policy of the Biden administration, far from producing a lull in tensions or imposing discipline among the imperialist vultures, will be a major factor in the future of the region. This policy:

- will further increase economic and military tensions with Chinese imperialism;
- will exacerbate the contradictions between imperialisms, for example in Central Europe where the weakening of Russia and the massive arming of the Ukraine will sharpen the oppositions between Central European countries, such as Poland, Hungary, Romania and of course Germany. In Central Asia, in addition to the United States, Chinese, Turkish and Iranian imperialisms are already jostling to take Russia's place;
- will intensify the oppositions within the various bourgeoisies, in the US, Russia and Ukraine of course, but also in Germany or China, as we will develop in the following points.

Contrary to the rhetoric of its leaders, the offensive and brutal policy of the United States is thus at the forefront of military barbarity and the destruction linked to capitalist decomposition.

2.1.2. The US strategy to counter its decline has also revealed divisions within the US bourgeoisie. While there is a clear consensus on policy toward China, these divisions now concern how to "neutralise" Russia in the context of focusing on the "main enemy", China. The Trump faction tended to envisage an alliance with Russia against China, but this orientation met with opposition from large parts of the US bourgeoisie and resistance from most state structures. The strategy of the dominant factions of the US bourgeoisie, represented today by the Biden administration, aims instead at dealing decisive blows to Russia, so that it can no longer pose a potential threat to the

11 Cf. the recent elections in Brazil.

12. Cf. the "Reichsbürger" plot involving significant parts of the security services.

13. Cf. the rapprochement with Russia.

US: *"We want to weaken Russia in such a way that it can no longer do things like invade the Ukraine"*,<sup>14</sup> while issuing a clear warning to China (*"this is what you get if you decide to invade Taiwan"*).

The mid-term elections confirmed that the fractures are still as deep and exacerbated between Democrats and Republicans, as well as the divisions within each of the two camps,<sup>15</sup> while the weight of populism and the most backward ideologies, marked by the rejection of rational and coherent thinking, far from being stopped by the campaigns aimed at putting Trump aside,<sup>16</sup> has only pressed more and more deeply and durably on American society. These tensions within the American bourgeoisie (which cannot simply be reduced to the irrationality of the individual Trump), accentuated by the tilt of the House of Representatives towards the Republicans and the new presidential candidacy of Trump, who is still favoured by more than 30% of Americans (i.e. almost 2/3 of Republican voters), for the 2024 elections, bring a dose of uncertainty to the American policy of massive support for Ukraine and do not encourage other countries to take the promises of the United States at face value.

This unpredictability of US policy is itself (in addition to its polarisation policy) a factor in intensifying chaos in the future.

## 2.2. Russia's weakening whets the appetite of other imperialisms and exacerbates internal tensions

2.2.1. The failed intervention in Ukraine, already catastrophic, will have even more serious consequences in the months to come. The Russian army has demonstrated its inefficiency and has lost many of its elite soldiers and much of its most modern equipment. Its economy is being hit hard, especially in the hi-tech sectors because of the lack of raw materials due to the boycott and the exodus of large numbers of the technological elite (1 million people are said to have fled abroad). Despite a huge financial effort (50% of the state budget is now devoted to the war effort), the military industry sector, which is crucial for a long-term war effort, cannot keep up and it is typical that Russia has to call on North Korea (ammunition) and Iran (drones) for help to make up for the shortcomings of its own war economy.

But it is above all at the level of imperialist relations that Moscow will suffer more

and more clearly from its defeat. Russia is isolated, and even "friendly" countries like China and Kazakhstan are openly distancing themselves. Moreover, in Central Asia, the various countries, ex-members of the USSR, have refused to allow their citizens living in Russia to be mobilised and are becoming increasingly critical of Russia: Kazakhstan took in 200,000 Russians fleeing the mobilisation order, expressly disapproved of the Russian invasion, and provided material aid to Ukraine; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan openly criticised Russia for being unable to intercede in their internal conflict; Armenia is furious that Russia did not respect the assistance pact that bound them in the war with Azerbaijan; even Lukashenko, the tyrant of Belarus, is desperately trying to avoid getting too involved with Putin. The collapse of Russian influence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia will increase tensions between the different bourgeoisies in these regions and whet the appetites of the big vultures, thus accentuating their destabilisation. And to top it all, Russia will have to accept a Ukraine powerfully armed by the United States 500 km from Moscow.

2.2.2. Internally, tensions are becoming increasingly strong and visible between different factions within the Russian bourgeoisie. Several tendencies appear:

- The pro-democracy faction, which is currently heavily repressed.
- The faction behind Putin which is in turn divided into 3 factions:
  - 1) the "hardline" faction behind the Chechen leader Kadyrov and the Wagner Group;
  - 2) a smaller faction lobbying for Putin to stop the war in Ukraine;
  - 3) a faction behind Putin, who is trying to play these two factions off against each other in order to keep his grip on the Russian state.

Apparently, these divisions run through both the army and the security services, as well as through Putin's entourage.

From Putin's political survival to that of the Russian Federation and the latter's imperialist status, the stakes resulting from the defeat in Ukraine are high: as Russia sinks into problems, settlements of accounts are likely to occur, even bloody clashes between rival factions. Warlords such as Kadyrov or Prigozhin (founder of the Wagner Group) are emerging and increasingly opposing the general staff, even criticising Putin. Similarly, a large proportion of the soldiers killed come specifically from some of the poorer autonomous republics, leading to numerous demonstrations and sabo-

tage in these regions and potentially to the fragmentation of the Russian Federation. These contradictions point to a period of great instability in the world's largest and most armed state, with the risk of loss of control and unpredictable consequences for the world.

## 2.3. The Chinese challenger in turmoil

If some people, on the basis of an empirical approach, could imagine two years ago that China was the big winner of the Covid crisis, recent data confirm on all levels today that it is on the contrary facing all kinds of destabilisation and the prospect of serious turmoil.

In the face of the trap set for the Russian "ally" in Ukraine and the stinging defeat suffered by the latter, China is trying to calm the situation with the United States, whose polarisation policy is fundamentally aimed – via Russia – at China, as shown by the ongoing tensions around Taiwan. However, China's strategy differs fundamentally from Russia's. While Russia's only asset is its military power as the former bloc leader, the Chinese bourgeoisie understands that the development of its strength is linked to an economic build-up that still needs time to develop.

Will it be given this time? Pressured by the development of military chaos and imperialist polarisation, China is at the same time confronted with health, economic and social destabilisation, which places the Chinese bourgeoisie in a particularly uncomfortable situation.

2.3.1. China is highly destabilised in several ways:

- China's inability to control the health crisis, which it has been experiencing since late 2019, has largely crippled its economy and penalised its population. The consequences have been gigantic, including endless lockdowns, such as in November 2022, when as many as 412 million Chinese were locked up under terrible conditions in various parts of China, often for several months.
- The Chinese economy has suffered a severe slowdown due to repeated lockdowns, the property bubble and the blocking of various "Silk Road" routes by armed conflicts (Ukraine) or because of the ambient chaos (Ethiopia).
- GDP growth is not expected to exceed 3% in 2022, the lowest growth since 1976 (apart from the "Covid year" of 2020). Young people are particularly affected by the deteriorating situation, with an estimated 20% unemployment rate among university students looking for a job.

14. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin during his visit to Kyiv on 25.04.22. The Biden faction thus wants to "make Russia pay" for its interference in America's internal affairs, for example its attempts to manipulate the last presidential elections.

15. Cf. the election of the Republican speaker of the House of Representatives.

16. E.g. the threats of various lawsuits.



- The dramatic decline in its demography, which has led to the first decline in China's total population in 60 years and could reduce the population to around 600 million by 2100, is leading to a gradual inversion of the age pyramid and a loss of competitiveness in Chinese industry due to the increased labour costs of a shrinking workforce, as well as pressure on the pension system, which is now almost non-existent, and on the social and health infrastructure for an ageing population.
- Even more distressing for the Chinese bourgeoisie, the economic problems, in conjunction with the health crisis, have led to major social protest movements, even though the Chinese state's policy since 1989 has been to avoid any large-scale social turmoil at all costs. The movements of buyers duped by the difficulties and bankruptcies of the real estate giants, but above all the riots, the strikes, such as that of the 200,000 workers at the huge factory of the Taiwanese giant Foxconn, which assembles Apple's iPhones, and the widespread demonstrations in many Chinese cities, such as Shanghai, with cries of "Xi Jinping resign! CCP resign!" have left Xi and his supporters in a cold sweat.

### 2.3.2. The convulsions of an outdated neo-Stalinist model<sup>17</sup>

Faced with economic and then health difficulties, Xi Jinping's policy from the beginning of his second term (2017) has been to return to the classic recipes of Stalinism:

- on the economic front, since Deng Xiaoping the Chinese bourgeoisie had created a fragile and complex mechanism to maintain an all-powerful single-party framework cohabiting with a private bourgeoisie stimulated directly by the state. "*By the end of 2021, Deng Xiaoping's era of reform and openness was*

17. "The most obvious, and the most widely known, characteristic of the Eastern bloc countries - the one, moreover, which is the basis for the myth of their 'socialist' nature - is the extreme statification of their economies. As we have often pointed out in our press, state capitalism is not limited to those countries. ... While the tendency towards state capitalism is thus a universal historical fact, it does not affect all countries in the same way... In the advanced countries, where there exists an old industrial and financial bourgeoisie, this tendency generally occurs through a progressive meshing of the 'private' and state sectors. This tendency towards state capitalism... takes on its most complete form where capitalism is subjected to the most brutal contradictions, and where the classical bourgeoisie is at its weakest. In this sense, the state's direct control of the main means of production, characteristic of the Eastern bloc (and of much of the Third World), is first and foremost a sign of the economy's backwardness and fragility" ("Theses on the economic and political crisis in the Eastern countries", *International Review* n° 60).

*clearly over, replaced by a new statist economic orthodoxy*".<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the dominant faction behind Xi Jinping has reoriented the Chinese economy towards absolute Stalinist state control;

- on the social level, the "zero Covid" policy has allowed Xi not only to tighten ruthless state control over the population, but also to impose this control on regional and local authorities which had proved unreliable and ineffective at the beginning of the pandemic. As recently as the autumn, he sent central government police units to Shanghai to call to order local authorities that were liberalising state control measures.

But, as the previous point shows, this policy of the Chinese authorities has brought them to a dead end. In fact, faced with an explosive social protest, the regime was forced to back down in great haste at all levels and to abandon in a few days the policy that it had maintained for years against all odds:

- It abruptly abandoned the "zero Covid" policy without proposing the slightest alternative, without having achieved immunity, without effective vaccines or sufficient stocks of drugs, without a policy of vaccinating the weakest, without a hospital system capable of absorbing the shock, and the inevitable catastrophe has indeed taken place: patients are queuing up to get into overcrowded hospitals and corpses are piling up in front of overcrowded crematoria; projections predict that, by the summer, 1.7 million people will have died and tens of millions will be heavily affected by the current wave of the virus. In addition, tens of thousands of workers hired to organise the lockdowns or working in factories producing tests or other anti-Covid materials are being laid off, causing major social upheaval.
- It is reconsidering his policy of absolute state control of the economy by reducing controls on access to credit in the real estate sector and by anti-monopolistic measures in the technology sector. It even promises that foreign banks and investment companies could become full owners of companies in China. But scepticism still prevails among foreign companies and the withdrawal of foreign capital from China remains massive, while economic pressure from the US is intensifying, in particular with the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, which directly target exports of Chinese technology firms (e.g. Huawei) to the US.

18. *Foreign Affairs*, cited in *Courrier International* n° 1674.

This zigzag policy reveals the impasse of a Stalinist-type regime where "*the great rigidity of the institutions, which leaves practically no room for the possibility of the emergence of oppositional bourgeois political forces capable of playing the role of buffers*".<sup>19</sup> While Chinese state capitalism has been able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by its change of bloc, the implosion of the Soviet bloc and the globalisation of the economy advocated by the US and the major Western bloc powers, the congenital weaknesses of its Stalinist-type state structure are now a major handicap in the face of economic, health and social problems. The regime's desperate convulsions reveal the failure of Xi Jinping's policy, re-elected for a third term after backroom dealings between factions within the CCP, and foreshadow factional conflicts within a state apparatus whose inability to overcome political rigidity reveals the heavy legacy of Maoist Stalinism.<sup>20</sup>

2.3.3. An imperialist policy under pressure. Confronted with the economic-military offensive of the United States, from Taiwan to the Ukraine, the Chinese bourgeoisie seems to have learned the lessons on the imperialist level and is orienting its policy for the moment towards a strategy of avoiding the spiral of provocations, military or otherwise:

- the aggressive nationalist "wolf warrior" diplomacy launched by Xi in 2017 has been abandoned and the foreign ministry spokesman who personified it, Zhao Lijian, has been demoted;
- China is trying to counter the strategy aimed at isolating it by seeking new partnerships in all directions: Xi has met 25 foreign heads of state in three months in order to revive its economy and forge diplomatic links (for example with Germany, Saudi Arabia and more widely with Europe);
- it is increasing its involvement on the international scene, as illustrated by its conciliatory attitude at the last G20 in Indonesia and its strong involvement in the Montreal conference on ecological diversity

However, the economic and military aggressiveness of the United States is intensifying through the massive arming of Taiwan, but also by increasing the pressure on China's "partners" such as Iran and Pa-

19. "Theses on the Economic and Political Crisis in the Eastern Countries". *International Review* n° 60.

20. "*a developed national capital, held 'privately' by different sectors of the bourgeoisie, finds parliamentary 'democracy' its most appropriate political apparatus (whereas) to the almost complete statification of the means of production, corresponds the totalitarian power of the single party*" (ibid).

kistan. With the rise of Japanese militarism as well as the increasingly assertive ambitions of India, this accentuated imperialist pressure in the Middle East and the Pacific zone can lead to unforeseen developments. On the other hand, the “whirlwind” of upheavals and destabilisations that are hitting the Chinese bourgeoisie is also putting heavy pressure on its imperialist policy and instilling it with a high degree of unpredictability. And it should be clear that the destabilisation of Chinese capitalism will have unpredictable consequences for world capitalism.

#### 2.4. German imperialism facing increasing destabilisation

Germany is also facing a series of unambiguous signals: its status as a military dwarf has forced it to fall in line as a member of NATO; the blockade imposed on Europeans by the United States with Russian oil and gas is plunging it into great economic difficulties, especially since the “Inflation Reduction Act”, and the “CHIPS and Science Act” are also a direct attack on European, and thus particularly German, imports.

2.4.1. At the time of the implosion of the Soviet bloc, the ICC pointed out that if, in the near future, “(...) *there exists no country capable in the years to come of opposing the military potential of the USA to a point where it could set itself up as a rival bloc leader*”,<sup>21</sup> the only imperialist power potentially capable in the longer term of becoming the central nucleus of a bloc competing with the United States was then, according to our analysis, Germany: “*As for Germany, the only country which could eventually play such a role, as it already has in the past, it will be several decades before it can rival the USA on the military level (it does not even possess atomic weapons!). And as capitalism plunges ever deeper into its decadence, it becomes ever more necessary for a bloc leader to have a crushing military superiority over its vassals in order to maintain its place.*”<sup>22</sup>

However, Germany was at that time in a particularly complex situation: it was faced with the enormous economic, political and social challenge of integrating the former GDR into its industrial fabric, while foreign troops (American but also from other NATO countries) were stationed on its territory. This gigantic financial effort to “unify” the divided country made it impossible to make the substantial investment needed to bring its military forces up to the required level, the division of the country and the dismantling of its military force being of course the consequence of the

1945 defeat.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the German bourgeoisie has developed over the last 20 years a policy of economic and imperialist expansion resolutely turned towards the East, transforming many Eastern countries into subcontractors for its industry while guaranteeing its stable and cheap energy supply through gas and oil agreements with Russia, which also allowed it to take full advantage of the globalisation of the economy. At the same time, by integrating the Eastern European states into the EU, it also secured political pre-eminence within the EU.

2.4.2. The illusory hope of being able to develop its imperialist power without a deployment of militarism and the construction of a consequent military force has been shattered by the war in Ukraine. The German bourgeoisie, however, has done everything to maintain the partnership with Russia despite the conflict:

- it has set up front companies to continue the joint project with Russia for pipelines under the Baltic Sea (North Stream 1 and 2), despite threats of economic sanctions from the US;
- it has developed (like France) an intensive diplomacy towards Putin to try to avoid or limit the conflict;
- it considered endorsing the Russian operation against Ukraine with an idea of a quick victory which would then have only a limited impact on economic relations (according to what Boris Johnson said to CNN).

The intensive war, financed and maintained through massive US arms deliveries, is putting Berlin under particularly intolerable pressure, but this is an extension of the Trump administration’s already clear hostility to German imperialism’s autonomous policy, highlighting its position as a military dwarf and putting its energy supply sources under others’ control.

2.4.3. In the face of this, the German bourgeoisie, caught in the trap, has undertaken all-out actions to strengthen its military position; seek new economic partnerships; and maintain its imperialist presence in Eastern Europe:

- faced with the bitter realisation that it was illusory to assert imperialist ambitions without accompanying them with a consequent military power, it doubled the military budget (8 years will be required to bring the German army up to standard) and took draconian economic and energy measures to guarantee the defence of its industrial fabric;

- it has embarked on a search for new strategic alliances, notably with China, as illustrated by Chancellor Scholz’s surprise solo visit to Xi on 4 November 2022, which involved, among other things, the purchase of 25% of the shares in the port of Hamburg by Beijing: “*This visit to Beijing by the German Chancellor is all the more strange given that last October, at their last summit, the 27 Member States had discussed for three hours what to do with Beijing. The European tone had then become much tougher and the Baltic countries (...), had urged the EU to show the utmost caution in dealing with China*”,<sup>24</sup>

- it announced its readiness to finance a huge Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

2.4.4 These reactions of the German bourgeoisie to the US offensive exacerbate tensions and the “every man for himself” attitude not only towards the US but also within Europe itself. Thus, the German decisions to order fighter jets from the US and to set up an anti-missile shield based on German and ... Israeli technology by freezing sophisticated weapons programmes (planes and tanks) planned with France have caused major rifts between France and Germany, the backbone of the EU.

French imperialism has decided to postpone a Franco-German council and has expressed its refusal to build a gas pipeline linking Spain and Germany to bring gas from Africa. The last joint Franco-German council in January 2023 did not change the situation, despite the rhetorical joint declarations: “*Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz staged a symbolic show on Sunday in Paris for the 60th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty, but did not make any strong proposals on support for Ukraine, European defence or the energy crisis*”.<sup>25</sup> However, it is not in Germany’s interest to detach itself too much from France, which represents the first military power in Europe and constitutes a central pillar to maintain an EU regrouped around Germany.

The German government’s every man for himself approach to economic measures, relations with China or the future of Ukraine is increasing tensions with other countries in the EU more generally, especially with some in Eastern Europe, such as the Baltic States or Poland, which are strongly supportive of US policy.

This policy of Scholz also causes divisions within the German bourgeoisie (some of the Greens in the government were

21. “Militarism and Decomposition”, *International Review* n° 64, 1991.

22. Ibid.

23. The significant reduction of unproductive expenditure during the 1950s and 60s was however the basis of the impressive redevelopment of the German economy.

24. “Olaf Scholz solo in Beijing” P.-A. Donnet, *Asialyst*, 05/11/22

25. “Between France and Germany, a deceptive rapprochement”, *Le Monde*, 23.01.23.



against Scholtz's trip to China for example) and, unlike the SPD, the other parties in the government (FDP and the Greens) are rather in favour of the US policy towards Russia. These differences between factions of the German bourgeoisie are likely to deepen as the economic crisis deepens, with the pressure on the German economy and the country's imperialist position, heralding increasing political instability, with the danger of a stronger impact of populist movements<sup>26</sup> in the face of the deteriorating social situation.

## Conclusion

The explosion of militarism is the illustration par excellence of the qualitative deepening of the period of decomposition, while at the same time heralding an inevitable accentuation of chaos and every man for himself.

- The explosion of military budgets: in addition to the United States, which continues to increase its military budget, which already represents 8.3% of the state budget, the significant increase in military spending was already evident before the war in Ukraine, especially in Asia, in China (5% of the budget), India (which is the third largest country in terms of military spending after the "big two"), Pakistan and South Korea. Since then, as a direct consequence of the invasion of Ukraine, the acceleration has been phenomenal, first of all for the major powers such as Japan, which has committed 320 billion dollars to its armed forces in 5 years, the biggest arms spending since 1945, and above all in Western Europe with Germany, which has also increased its defence budget by 107 billion euros, but also France and Great Britain. Even smaller imperialisms, such as Turkey (already the second largest army in NATO) or Saudi Arabia; and in Europe a country like Poland, which aims to have the most powerful army in Europe, is arming itself to the teeth.
- The extension of militarism to space and a revival of nuclear power: The arms race is increasingly encompassing the conquest of the earth's orbit and space. Here, too, the United States, but also China, is pulling out all the stops and the last expressions of cooperation are tending to disappear. Finally, "All nuclear-weapon states are increasing or modernising their arsenals and most are reinforcing the nuclear rhetoric and the role of nuclear weapons in their military strategy. This is a very worry-

ing trend".<sup>27</sup>

- The reinforcement of the implementation of the war economy: the war in Ukraine clearly poses the questions of the reorientation, within the "think tanks" of the bourgeoisie, of financial investments and especially of the means to ensure the adhesion of the populations:

*"That's why the ability to equip Ukraine with enough weapons to win the war is a growing concern, it's about sort of moving to a peacetime war economy, (...) And Western leaders will have to have a frank discussion with their populations about the future costs of defence and security, it's a whole nation effort, all nations, because it's not just the minister of defence ordering more equipment [from] the industry. It's about having a discussion about how we increase production. The weak links in the arms supply chain are not just about low public spending, but also about social attitudes and the reluctance of financial institutions to invest in arms companies".<sup>28</sup>*

We have pointed out that *"the aggregation and interaction of destructive phenomena leads to a 'vortex effect' which concentrates, catalyses and multiplies each of its partial effects, causing even more destructive devastation"*.<sup>29</sup> In this framework, if the economic crisis is, in the last instance, the basic cause of the tendency to war, this tendency is now transformed into an aggravation of the economic crisis. Indeed, far from being a stimulus for the economy, war and militarism are an aggravation of the crisis. This explosion of expenditure as a consequence of the Ukrainian conflict will aggravate the debts of the states, which also constitute another burden on the economy. It will produce an acceleration of the growth of inflation which is another threat to economic growth; in turn, combating inflation requires a contraction of credit which can only lead to an open recession, which also means an aggravation of the economic crisis. Finally, the war in Ukraine has caused a huge increase in energy costs, which is weighing on all industrial production, as well as a shortage of agricultural products and a slowdown in world trade.

In short, *"The twenties of the twenty-first century will therefore, in this context, have considerable importance for historical*

*development"*<sup>30</sup> insofar as the alternative "socialism or barbarism", put forward by the Communist International in 1919, is increasingly concretised as "socialism or the destruction of humanity".

30. Ibid.

## Continued from page 51

opening up and accelerating.

- The logistics of commodity capitalism are in chaos, there are not enough drivers and products rot or there is a shortage. In health care there are too many vacancies and in education teachers are quickly leaving their jobs. In China, for example, 1 in 5 young people cannot find a "promising" job and prefer not to take it. "Let it rot" (bai lan) is a common Chinese expression used by young people who do not accept work. Behind this situation is obviously an individual and desperate outcome, a "private" reaction to the deterioration of working conditions. The new generations do not want to live at the pace of capitalist production. This phenomenon is at the same time the expression of a lack of class identity, they don't organise themselves to fight and only take an individual position in the face of an eminently social, economic and political problem. The reduction in unemployment benefits, the lack of pensions in many countries, the increase in mental illness and suicides, all this creates unbearable living and working conditions.

It is the crisis and the prospect of global recession that creates the conditions for workers to begin to raise their struggles on their own terrain. *"Unlike social decomposition which essentially effects the superstructure, the economic crisis directly attacks the foundations on which this superstructure rests; in this sense, it lays bare all the barbarity that is battering on society, thus allowing the proletariat to become aware of the need to change the system radically, rather than trying to improve certain aspects of it."*<sup>53</sup>

January 2023

26. cf. the "Reichsbürger" plot.

27. Wilfred Wan, Director of SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme, SIPRI report, 05.12.22.

28. Admiral R. Bauer, head of NATO's military committee, in <https://www.defenseone.com>.

29. "The Acceleration of Capitalist Decomposition Poses the Clear Possibility of the Destruction of Humanity", *International Review* n° 169.

53. "Decomposition, final phase of the decadence of capitalism", *International Review* n° 62.

# Report on the economic crisis

The resolution adopted by the 24th ICC Congress<sup>1</sup> provided a framework to orientate the organisation through the evolving economic crisis. It stated that: *“The scale and importance of the impact of the pandemic, the product of the agony of a system in total decay and which has become completely obsolete, illustrates quite clearly that the phenomenon of capitalist decomposition is now also massively affecting the entire capitalist economy and on a global scale. This irruption of the effects of decomposition in the economic sphere directly affects the evolution of the new phase of crisis that is inaugurating a situation totally unprecedented in the history of capitalism. The effects of decomposition, by profoundly altering the mechanisms of state capitalism put in place to ‘track’ and limit the impact of the crisis until now, add into the situation a factor of instability and fragility, of growing uncertainty.”* (Point 14)

It also recognised the predominant role of “every man for himself” in relations between nations and the “rush of the most ‘responsible’ bourgeois factions towards increasingly irrational and chaotic management of the system, and above all the unprecedented advance of ‘every man for himself’, a tendency, revealing the growing loss of control of its own system by the ruling class” (Point 15). This tendency “By causing increasing chaos in the world economy (with the tendency to the fracturing of supply chains and the splitting up of the world market into regional areas, the strengthening of protectionism and the proliferation of unilateral measures), this totally irrational movement of each nation to save its own economy at the expense of all the others is counterproductive for every national capital and a disaster at the global level, a decisive factor in the decline of the whole world economy.” (Point 15)

It underlined that *“The consequences of the unbridled destruction of the environment by capitalism in decomposition, the phenomena resulting from climate change and the destruction of biodiversity, (...) are increasingly affecting all economies, with the developed countries at the helm, (...) disrupting the production in the industrial sector and also weakening the productive capacity of agriculture. The global climate crisis and the increasing disruption of the world market for agricultural products*

*threaten the food security of many states.”* (Point 17)

On the other hand, if the resolution did not envisage the outbreak of war between nations, it did state that *“we cannot exclude the danger of unilateral military flare-ups or even of terrible accidents which would mark a further acceleration of the slide into barbarism.”* (Point 13)

And it is clear that: *“The crisis that has already been unfolding for decades is going to become the most profound of the entire period of decadence, and its historical significance will exceed even the first crisis of this era, the one that began in 1929. After more than 100 years of capitalist decadence, with an economy ravaged by the military sector, weakened by the impact of environmental destruction, profoundly affected in its mechanisms of reproduction by debt and state intervention, plagued by pandemic, suffering increasingly from all the other effects of decomposition, it is an illusion to think that under these conditions there will be any kind of sustainable recovery of the world economy.”* (Point 19).

So:

- the acceleration of decomposition and the impact of its cumulative effects on the already highly degraded capitalist economy;
- the eruption of war and the world-wide increase of militarism that drastically worsens the situation;
- the growth at all levels of “every man for himself” between nations against the backdrop of increasingly fierce competition between China and the USA for global supremacy;
- the abandonment of a minimum set of rules and cooperation between nations for dealing with the contradictions and convulsions of its system;
- the absence of a locomotive capable of reviving the capitalist economy;
- the perspective of total pauperisation is now on the agenda for the proletariat of the central countries;

all these indicators point to the historical gravity of the current crisis and illustrate the process of “internal disintegration” of world capitalism as proclaimed by the Communist International in 1919.

## I. The concatenation of the factors of decomposition

### A. The consequences of the war

As a major French industrialist summarised it: *“What has been exceptional over the last two years is that crises start but do not stop. There is a real accumulation effect. The Covid crisis started in 2020 but it is still there! Since then, we have been confronted with extreme pressures and disruptions in supply chains, a profoundly changed relationship with work, a war at the borders of Europe, the energy crisis and the return of inflation, and finally the realisation of climate change (...) The shocks are adding up. They are sudden and violent.”*<sup>2</sup> In a historical situation where the various effects of decomposition combine, intertwine and interact in a devastating whirlwind effect, with global warming and the ecological crisis, the war and its repercussions highlight every man for himself in relations between the states and, in general, the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, that it becomes the central aggravating factor of the economic crisis:

- **The destruction of Ukraine:** The size of the economy is reduced to 40% of what it was. According to its Prime Minister, *“the damage was estimated in the autumn at \$350 billion. But these estimates are expected to double by the end of the year, to \$700 billion, due to the massive strikes carried out by Moscow against our infrastructure. (...) The current power cuts are expected to represent a loss of between 3% and 9% of GDP”*.<sup>3</sup> The military effort absorbs 30% of its resources; the shortfall of budget revenues has forced the government to go into debt and to print money.
- **Inflation:** It causes inflation to soar around the world: 7.2% in advanced countries, 9.8% in emerging countries, 13.8% in the Middle East and Central Asia and 14.4% in sub-Saharan Africa. In the EU the average is 10%, although in some of its countries this figure is higher: Latvia and Lithuania are at 22%, the Netherlands at 17%. The US peaked at 9% in mid-2022, falling to 7.1% by the end of 2022.
- **The worsening global food crisis and famines:** In pitting two key producers of

1. International Review n° 167

2. Les Echos 21/22/10.

3. Le Monde 17/12/22.



grain and fertiliser against each other, the war has resulted in “*an unprecedented increase in hunger, far worse than any since the Second World War*”.<sup>4</sup> “*The shock is compounded by other major problems that had already led to higher prices and shortages of goods, including the Covid-19 pandemic, logistical constraints, high energy costs and recent droughts, floods and fires*.”<sup>5</sup> The world’s grain production has fallen: China, following severe flooding in 2021, is facing the worst wheat crop in decades and in India “*the crop yields have been significantly lower this year*” due to unprecedented heat waves. Rising prices and “*threats to food security*” have provoked a “*wave of food protectionism*”, with India banning grain exports or with the introduction of quotas (in Argentina, Kazakhstan, Serbia...) to guarantee domestic supplies. While American winter wheat “*is in bad shape*”, France’s reserves “*are running out*” and “*the world is beginning to face a wheat shortage*”.<sup>6</sup>

- **Capitalist anarchy** is reaching new heights. The organisation of production and supply chains, exposing each national capital to multiple dependencies without any consequences and with world trade and commerce being able to be carried out without any restrictions until now, has been undermined by the pandemic and then the war, which have changed the situation. Lockdowns in China, sanctions against Russia and the effects of the trade war between the USA and China have led to multiple blockages and interruptions in both production and trade, causing chaos and anarchy; shortages are multiplying in many areas:

4. Hunger increased by about 18% during the pandemic and now affects 720 to 811 million people. The reduction of food aid, its reorientation towards the reception of Ukrainian refugees only or the reallocation of its funds to increasing military expenditure have meant that for Afghanistan where famine threatens 23 million inhabitants, Somalia where part of the population is in “imminent danger of death” the necessary funds could not be raised.

5. In Europe, the considerable reduction in fertiliser production (which consumes a lot of natural gas) due to high energy prices is leading to a decrease in fertiliser consumption throughout the world, from Brazil to the United States, which threatens the size of the next harvest. For example: “*Brazil, the world’s largest soybean producer, buys almost half of its phosphate fertilizer from Russia and Belarus. It has only three months of stock left. The Brazilian association of soybean producers (Aprosoja) has asked its members to use less fertilizer this year, if any at all. Brazil’s soybean crop, already diminished by severe drought, is likely to be even smaller as a result. Brazil sells its soybeans mainly to China, which uses much of it for animal feed. Less abundant and more expensive soybeans could force Chinese farmers to reduce the rations they feed their animals. The result: smaller cows, pigs and chickens - and more expensive meat.*”

6. All the quotes in this passage are from *Courrier International*.

e.g. computer chips, medical products, raw materials.

- **The development of militarism and arms production.** One of the main consequences of war is the boost given by all states to staggering levels of arms expenditure. The burden of military spending (a deadweight for capital) on the national economy, the accelerated increase in arms production, the possible conversion of strategic sectors to military industries, the resulting indebtedness and fall in investment in other sectors of the economy will significantly change economies and world trade.

## B. What effects have the sanctions had on the Russian economy?

By aiming to “bleed the world’s 8th largest economy dry”, Western sanctions against Russia have opened a real “black hole” in the world economy with as yet unknown consequences. Even if the Russian economy has not yet collapsed or been divided in two (as Biden promised), the Russian economy is being suffocated and driven to ruin, caught in the trap of the ongoing war and strangled by the retaliatory measures imposed by the US. With GDP falling by 11% and inflation at 22%, the economic sanctions have weakened the Russian war effort<sup>7</sup> and caused crippling shortages within industry. The embargo on semiconductors imposes limits on the production of precision missiles and tanks.<sup>8</sup>

With the withdrawal of foreign manufacturers, the automobile sector has almost completely collapsed by 97%. The sectors of aeronautics (strategic) and air transport (crucial for such a vast country), totally dependent on Western technologies, have been heavily hit.

With hundreds of thousands of Russians fleeing abroad, the Russian economy is suffering a massive loss of labour, particularly in the IT sector with the departure of 100,000 IT specialists.

The assistance offered by China and those who resist Western sanctions (India, Turkey, purchasers of Russian energy) may have provided a temporary respite but it does not compensate for the disappearance of Western markets, far from it. The enforcement from the start of December of the European embargo on Russian oil (a

volume equivalent to these purchases) will destroy this “breath of fresh air”.

While Chinese imports from Russia have risen, exports to Russia have fallen in line with those from the West (due to China’s cautious implementation of most Western sanctions<sup>9</sup>). The resilience of the value of the rouble, and even its rise against the dollar, reflects this massive imbalance between the high volume of oil and gas exports and the parallel collapse of imports as a result of the sanctions, and is by no means a sign of strength. The financial sanctions and the freezing of 40-50% of Russian reserves and the ban on its use of the SWIFT system have increasingly affected its practical ability to make foreign payments as well as the credibility of the Russian state’s creditworthiness.

Despite the apparent resilience, sanctions are a formidable weapon of war and will have a significant medium-term impact on the Russian economy and because of their “delayed” effect, the prolongation of the war will be the means by which the US fulfils its objective of “destroying” the Russian economy.

## C. The destabilising shock of the war on gas

The seismic shock of the war represents an important “epochal change”, not only affecting individual nations, especially the European ones, but also the situation internationally.

The war is a sinkhole with exorbitant economic costs “*(from March to August) Ukraine received 84 billion euros from 40 partner states and EU institutions - the most important allies being the US, EU institutions, the UK, Germany, Canada, Poland, France, Norway, Japan and Italy.*” “*Ukraine could receive up to \$30 billion between September and December 2022.*” The EU plays a central role “*in maintaining Ukraine’s macro-financial stability*” (by providing €10 billion between March

9. “*Indeed, although Beijing refuses to publicly disavow its major strategic partner, Chinese authorities have largely complied with the sanctions imposed by the West against Russia. Chinese companies have followed Western companies in their exodus from the Russian market: the Chinese tech giants - Lenovo, TikTok and Huawei - have blocked all their operations in Russia, while the Chinese builders of the Arctic modules for the Russian gas mega-project Arctic-LNG2 have decided to end their cooperation with Novatek. Finally, despite the assurances of the Kremlin’s official propaganda, UnionPay, one of the world’s major state-controlled payment processors, put its plans to collaborate with Russian banks on hold at the end of April, cutting short their hopes of finding an alternative to American payment giants Visa and Mastercard. This complex pas de deux should, in Beijing’s eyes, protect Chinese interests and minimize the impact of the war on the Chinese economy...*” “*Chine: 2022, l’année de tous les périls*”, *Diplomatie*.

7. “*The dwindling of public revenues due to the Western embargo on the purchase of gold, coal and metals means that pay is only received periodically by certain regiments. This could contribute to refusals to fight, or to even surrender.*” (*Les Echos* 17/09)

8. “*Many factories of the military-industrial complex have had to reduce their production, or even to shut down, such as the Ulyanovsk anti-aircraft missile factory, the Vympel air-to-air missile factory, or the Uralvagonavod tank factory, the country’s main production site.*” (*Les Echos* 17/09).

and September 2022).<sup>10</sup> The economic shockwave of war in the world does not impact in the same way, immediately and in the medium term, the main areas of the planet. European capital is suffering the most brutal effect. It is an unprecedented destabilisation of their “economic model” for these countries.

Due to the economic sanctions imposed by the US on Russia, European firms more involved in Russia than American ones are more directly affected by the severing of economic relations with Russia.

The Russian gas embargo is having a huge impact with knock-on effects in Europe: *“The real bombs are falling in Ukraine, but it is as if the EU’s industrial infrastructure has also been destroyed. The continent will experience a violent industrial crisis. It will be a terrible shock for public finances and for the middle and poor classes in European countries.”*<sup>11</sup> As J. Borrell said: *“The United States took care of our security. China and Russia provided the basis for our prosperity. That world no longer exists (...) Our prosperity was based on energy from Russia, its gas, which was said to be cheap, stable and risk-free. All this was wrong (...) This will lead to a profound restructuring of our economy.”*

Each capital is faced with almost insoluble contradictions and dilemmas, having to make drastic and urgent economic and strategic choices to protect its national sovereignty and safeguard its world ranking.

1. Even though growth was already slowing down, the sharp rise in energy prices (the price of gas has multiplied by a factor of 20 compared to 2010) has already led to a downturn across entire industrial sectors heavily dependent on imported energy where large parts of the business are no longer profitable nor competitive. Some of them have had to reduce production (chemicals, glass, blast furnaces in the steel industry, aluminium, etc.) to offset exorbitant costs, while many bankruptcies are looming because of the dramatic fall in profitability.
2. Faced with the seriousness of the situation, the State intervened massively with the nationalisation of the main energy companies, Uniper in Germany and EDF in France, and the setting up of “financial or tariff

barriers” to protect companies and cushion the blow on companies and individuals.

3. European countries are running a real risk of de-industrialisation and economic downgrading, due to the ongoing difference in energy prices between Europe and the USA and Asia. In this atmosphere of “saving yourself”, there is a tendency for those who can to relocate European activities whose survival is threatened to American or Asian areas where energy prices are lower.
4. With the drying up of Russian gas supplies, there is the fear of having to restrict production in the most exposed sectors such as chemicals, metallurgy, wood-paper, or the plastics and rubber industry, or even to interrupt it during the winter, in France for example. In addition, there is the electricity shock: due to under-investment and the dilapidated state of nuclear power stations, electricity cuts could lead to a reduction or even shutdowns in manufacturing as early as next January and to chaos in sectors such as transport, food processing and telecommunications in the world’s 5th economic power!<sup>12</sup>

#### The undermining of German capital:

It is in Germany in particular where all the contradictions of this unprecedented situation seem concentrated, ready to explode. The end of Russian gas supplies places German capital in a situation of unprecedented strategic and economic fragility: the competitiveness of its entire manufacturing sector is at stake.<sup>13</sup> German capital (and European) runs the risk of having to move from dependence on Russian gas to dependence on American LNG, which the United States is seeking to impose on the European continent, taking over the role that Russia has played until now. The end of multilateralism, from which German capital has benefited more than any other nation (also saving itself from the burden

12. The example of South Africa shows the general nature of the problem: the effects of the drought and the water shortages that the country is experiencing this fall are compounded by an energy crisis of unprecedented magnitude due to the obsolescence and breakdowns of the old coal-fired power plants, which are causing incessant power cuts that prevent the pumping of water in the Drakensberg mountains and its delivery to Johannesburg and Pretoria, which are rationed, while 40% disappears in leaks in the network. But to repair all of its infrastructure would require 3.4 billion euros, which the Water Authority does not have.

13. For example, in the chemical industry (the largest consumer of gas), production has been drastically reduced; 70% of the sector has recorded losses; for BASF, entire parts of its activity are no longer profitable or competitive, which has led to a 30% drop in its results. All of Europe (which absorbs 60% of the exports of this sector) is affected!

of the military expenditures with the “peace dividend” from 1989), is affecting more directly its economic power, which is based on exports. Finally, the pressure exerted by the US to force its “allies” to engage in the economic/strategic war with China and to relinquish markets in China, places Germany in a huge dilemma, as it depends highly on the Chinese market. Because of its leading position in the EU, the wavering of German power has repercussions for the whole of Europe, which is marked, to varying degrees, by the same contradictions and dilemmas.

**China** and the Silk Roads are directly affected. One of the goals of the war alongside the weakening of Russia is to target China. The war thwarts the major objective of the Silk Roads of making Ukraine a gateway into the European market; the chaos cuts China off from one of its major markets. This will mean it having to seek an alternative route via the Middle East.

#### D. The climate crisis

Although the major powers agree that *“climate change is a destabilising, even economically disruptive force”*, the Sharm El Sheikh COP was torn over the question of “who should pay?” Beyond capitalism’s congenital inability to hold back the destruction of nature, what sounds the death knell for the great powers’ commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the return and preparation by all states for “high intensity” warfare. Indeed: *“No war without oil. Without oil, it is impossible to wage war (...) To give up the possibility of obtaining abundant and cheap oil is simply to disarm. Transport technologies (that do not require oil, hydrogen and electricity) are totally unsuitable for armies. Battery-powered electric tanks pose so many technical and logistical problems that they must be considered impossible, as must everything else that runs on land (armoured vehicles, artillery, engineering machinery, light off-road vehicles, lorries). The internal combustion engine and its fuel are so efficient and flexible that it would be suicidal to replace them.”*<sup>14</sup>

Capitalism is condemned to suffer more and more the effects (huge fires, floods, heat waves, droughts, violent weather phenomena...) which affect more and more significantly and penalise more and more heavily the capitalist economy: the climatic factor (already an aspect of the implosion of the Arab countries in the decade of 2010) is in itself instrumental in the collapse of particularly vulnerable countries of the periphery of capitalism. According to UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, in Pakistan *“climate carnage is*

10. *Diplomatie* 118, p33; *“If one adds [to purely military spending] humanitarian, emergency economic and refugee assistance, the EU and member states have provided more aid than the United States, according to the Kiel Institute, at \$52 billion versus \$48 billion for Washington.”* (Les Echos, 3-4/02)

11. IFRI, *Le Point Géopolitique*, Les guerres de l’énergie, p.6.

14. *Conflicts* n° 42.



on an unprecedented scale"; it has caused damage estimated at 2 ½ times its GDP - a catastrophe that is impossible to overcome economically.<sup>15</sup> Above all, the magnitude of the climate shock is now directly impacting the core countries of capitalism and all their economic activity at every level:

- The costs of climate-related damage in the central countries continue to rise: in the United States alone "the total costs of natural disasters amounted to 3 billion dollars per year in the 1980s. This amount rose to more than 20 billion dollars per year from 2000 to 2010 (...) And from 2011 and 2012 (...) these costs started doubling" and reached "300 billion dollars of material damage in 2018 which corresponds to ¼ of the annual cost of servicing the American debt."
- Productive infrastructure (and its distribution) trade is directly affected, undermining and jeopardising the stability of national economies due to climate change: among other examples, the combination of drought and overuse of water in America, Europe and China is disrupting both nuclear and hydroelectric power generation; disrupting and reducing the flow of goods by river; and "posing a major risk to US agricultural capacity (...) A permanent state of water catastrophe, fraught with conflict and internal migration, is taking hold in the American West." China is threatened by "a new food insecurity induced by the climatic, water and biological fragility of agriculture."

The "increasingly rapid and intense" effects of rising sea levels are posing huge challenges to states. Soil salinisation is sterilising arable land (as in Bangladesh). They threaten both coastal megacities (as in the United States on the East and West coasts and many cities in China) and coastal industries (the oil industry around the Gulf of Mexico; the Shenzhen region of China, at the heart of the country's electronics manufactures, where "the Chinese urban authorities are already starting to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people").

In the last two years, the various effects of decomposition that had already begun to impact the capitalist economy have taken on a new quality with unprecedented

15. The floods have almost completely destroyed the crops of this 5th largest cotton producer in the world. It is a colossal loss for the textile industry which represents 10% of the GDP; agriculture in Sindh has been destroyed, the livestock decimated; the rest left to disease: "the food security of the 220 million inhabitants is in danger" (Le Monde 14/09). Add to this the scourges of malaria, dengue fever, cholera and typhoid. As the fourth largest rice producer and supplier to China and sub-Saharan Africa, "any drop in exports will only add to the global food insecurity fuelled by the drop in wheat exports from Ukraine." (Le Monde 14/09).

interaction on a previously unknown scale which has only become stronger in a kind of infernal "whirlpool" where each catastrophe feeds the virulence of the others: the pandemic has disrupted the world economy; this in turn has aggravated the barbaric war and the environmental crisis. The war and environmental crisis will continue to have a huge impact striking at the heart of the major powers and considerably worsening the economic crisis which forms the backdrop to this catastrophic development.

## II. A mode of production weakened and undermined by its contradictions

A capitalist system already weakened as a whole by the convulsions resulting from its contradictions and its decomposition has been impacted further by the war.

### A. Weakened industrial production

The shock wave of the war has hit a very vulnerable economy with certain sectors very weakened since the pandemic: "in 2022, world automobile production will still be lower than in 2019. In China, it will certainly increase by 7%, but in Europe it will remain 25% lower, and in the United States by 11%. The industry has lost volumes and is seeing its costs rise..."<sup>16</sup>

### B. Inflation

"The fundamental causes of inflation are to be found in the specific conditions of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production in its decadent phase. Indeed, empirical observation allows us to see that inflation is fundamentally a phenomenon of this epoch of capitalism, as well as to see that it manifests itself most acutely during periods of war (1914-18, 1939-45, the Korean War, 1957-58, in France during the Algerian War...), i.e. those where unproductive expenditure is highest. Therefore it is logical to consider that it is on the basis of this specific characteristic of decadence, the considerable share of armaments and more generally of unproductive expenditure in the economy, that we should try to explain the phenomenon of inflation."<sup>17</sup>

A consequence of the increase in the weight of unproductive expenditures, the build-up of a debt burden by the states in their various rescue plans dealing with the pandemic and in the development of the war economy and general rearmament of the capitalist nations, inflation will only increase<sup>18</sup> further because of the needs of

each national capital for mounting unproductive expenditures, with:

- the absurd levels of arms spending, subjecting the economy more than ever to the service of war and the unbridled production of the instruments of destruction without any economic rationality;
- the effects of the recourse to printing money to feed the debt to address the contradictions of its system;
- the exorbitant cost of the devastation that decomposition causes to society and the manufacturing infrastructure: pandemics, severe weather events, etc.
- the ageing of the population in all countries (including China), which sharply reduces the proportion of the working age population in the total population.

With inflation at a high and lasting level, which capitalism can no longer control as before (the bourgeoisie rejects a return to 2% as unrealistic), it also marks an important stage in the aggravation of the crisis. It will affect the economy more and more negatively by destabilising world trade and production which it deprives of the needed transparency, when it will be an essential vector of monetary and financial instability.

### C. Financial and monetary tensions

The fragility of the capitalist system is illustrated by "growing risks to financial stability in key parts of financial markets and sovereign debt"<sup>19</sup> and new "cracks" opening up:

- The fragility and tensions around the currencies of the main powers is becoming an increasingly important feature of the situation: the fall of the pound against the dollar to its lowest level in history, it lost 17% of its value; the devaluation of the yen (-21%) to its lowest level since 1990; the fall of the yuan to its lowest level against the dollar for 14 years; the unprecedented fall of the euro to equal parity with the dollar... Already requiring the intervention of the central banks to support their currencies; a growing

insufficient supply. This phenomenon has recently taken on a particular magnitude due to the war in Ukraine, which has affected the supply of a significant volume of different agricultural products, the shortage of which is already a factor of aggravation of misery and hunger in the world. It is a permanent feature of the period of decadence of capitalism that heavily impacts the economy. Like the lack of supply, it is reflected in rising prices, but it is the consequence of the weight of unproductive expenditures in society, the cost of which is passed on to the cost of the goods produced. Finally, another factor of inflation is as a consequence of the devaluation of currencies resulting from the recourse to printing money to accompany the uncontrolled increase of global debt, which is currently approaching 260% of world GDP."

19. K. Georgieva (IMF).

16. Les Echos, 23-24/12.

17. Révolution Internationale n° 6, old series.

18. "Inflation should not be confused with another phenomenon in the life of capitalism, which is the upward trend in the price of certain goods due to the

monetary instability is taking shape.

- The bursting of the crypto-currency financial bubble (with a reduction by 3 in one year of the bitcoin market's stock market valuations) and high-profile bankruptcies in this sector with FTX (the world's second largest crypto-currency player) having the bourgeoisie fearing contagion to other players in traditional finance. The financial instability in this sector is a harbinger of the threat of further crashes, like the one in real estate (50% of global transactions by value), which started in China, and threatens to appear elsewhere.
- Similarly, *"The tech economy is faltering, (...) Over the last ten years or so we have seen the emergence of a financial bubble fed by the abundance of liquidity created by central banks. (...) This bubble has burst since the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the advent of inflation. The valuation of tech on the stock market has collapsed. Amazon became the first company in history to lose \$1,000 billion in stock market value. A \$200 billion loss in six months for Meta. (...) This brutal return to reality has unleashed vast layoff plans, particularly in the United States. It is likely that 130,000 jobs were destroyed in the tech industry in 2022."*<sup>20</sup>

#### D. The continuation of the policy of increasing debt

Although the mass of indebtedness (260% of world GDP) is already weakening the whole system,<sup>21</sup> the evolution of the nature of indebtedness, which is less and less based on surplus value already created and is fed by the printing press and the sovereign debt of the states, the continuation of the debt policy continues; despite the deleterious effects on the increasingly uncertain stability of the capitalist system, it remains an unavoidable necessity for all national capitals. All states depend on it more and more in order to address the contradictions of the capitalist system. It is behind the suspension of the EU Stability Pact, which was only reinstated at the beginning of 2023 after having been heavily modified with the relaxation of its enforcement rules and quite probably to allow the ECB to play the role of lender of last resort.

#### E. Political chaos within the ruling class, a factor in the aggravation of the crisis

The irresponsibility and negligence of the ruling class, which has been manifest in the health crisis as well as in the energy crisis

and in the face of the climatic calamity, is a powerful factor in the aggravation of the crisis.

Added to these factors are the political chaos and the impact of populism within the ruling class. They are having catastrophic effects on the UK economy, on the world's oldest bourgeoisie. Brexit illustrates the economic irrationality of "every man for himself"; *"Instead of the prosperity, sovereignty and international influence, which [the Conservatives] claimed to be bringing by separating from their neighbours, they have only achieved a fall in exports, the depreciation of the pound, the worst growth forecasts of the developed countries except Russia, and diplomatic isolation"*.<sup>22</sup> Following Johnson's departure, the brief period in office of incompetence and cronyism of the government of Liz Truss is explained by its irresponsible decisions, condemned by the rest of the ruling class: the announcement of £45 billion of unfunded tax cuts for the benefit of the wealthiest in society precipitated a fall in the Pound, and a fear for its collapse and a debt crisis!

In Italy, Prime Minister Meloni's pledges to respect European rules (the first time a far-right government has come to power in one of the founding countries of the EU) have momentarily calmed fears about the future of the Italian recovery plan financed by the European monetary fund created by an agreed debt placed on the member countries, but it does not augur well for future stability.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the divisions within the ruling class can only be aggravated by the choices and priorities to be adopted in the defence of the interests of each national capital in this more than uncertain and contradictory context.

22. *Le Monde* 18-19/12. Brexit has led to a stalling of the British economy: "The UK is the only advanced country whose exports fell last year and remain below their pre-Covid level (...) business investment remained 10% below its mid-2016 level." (*Les Echos* 24/09) "With Brexit, the European financial passport that allowed products to be sold throughout the EU has been lost. Some ten thousand bankers have left the London financial centre to move to Dublin, Frankfurt, Paris, Luxembourg or Amsterdam. (...) Another phenomenon: since the end of 2019 the number of jobs in the British financial sector has fallen by 76,000 (out of a current total of 1.06 million) ... Brexit has played a significant role in the decline of the City in connection with the ten thousand or so jobs relocated, but mainly indirectly, because the major international financial institutions have chosen to invest elsewhere." (*Le Monde* 19/11).

23. "This alignment with the European Commission and its doctrine of austerity will not be without problems for a significant part of Mrs. Meloni's electoral support." (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, 12/22)

#### F. The exacerbation of every man for himself at the basis of relations between nations

In the 2020 report, the ICC asked if the development of every man for himself, originating in the impasse of overproduction and the increasing difficulty of capital to realise the expanded accumulation of capital, while subjected to the effects of decomposition, was irreversible. Since the crisis of 2008 (which can be considered as the crisis of globalisation) and up until today, every man for himself in relations between powers has progressively undergone a qualitative change and now is completely triumphant. According to the IMF the war will "fundamentally alter the global economic and geopolitical order." The conflict in Ukraine is bringing the "in-between" period after 2008 to a close and it marks the end of globalisation:

- After 2008, "every man for himself" was first shown in the tendency for China and especially the USA to question the framework of globalisation; the one by sabotaging structures such as the WTO, the other by developing its own alternative Silk Road project.
- It was then brilliantly illustrated during the Covid epidemic, notably through the inability to coordinate a policy for production, distribution and vaccination at a global scale; the gangster-like behaviour of certain countries stealing medical equipment destined for other countries, the tendency to retreat into the national framework, and the desire of each bourgeoisie to save its own economy to the detriment of the others as an irrational tendency could only be disastrous for all countries and for the world economy as a whole.
- The current "war on gas" between nations is proving to be worthy of the mask war:<sup>24</sup> The recent sabotage of the Nord Stream II pipeline, blamed on an as yet unidentified "state agent", illustrates the gangster mentality while *"in the LNG market, (...) all bets are off"*.<sup>25</sup>

24. "Since the early 1980s, the United States under Reagan had a dream of cutting Europe off from Russian gas. They used enormous pressure. They used enormous pressure so that the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline would never see the light of day and did it again years later with Nord Stream 2, going so far as to threaten sanctions against companies that would participate in the project. The war in Ukraine is a gift from heaven for them."

25. "One story made the headlines last spring: an LNG tanker left Freeport, Texas, on March 21, bound for Asia. But after ten days of travel, it abruptly changed its course, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, to divert to Europe (...) the high premiums offered on the Old Continent for this precious cargo of LNG convinced BP, the company that chartered the ship, to change its plans." (*Le Point Géopolitique*, "Les guerres de l'énergie", p.36) "At the beginning of November, some 30 gas tankers loaded with LNG worth \$2 billion

20. Marianne n°1341.

21. "Many defaults are on the horizon. The IMF estimates that two-thirds of low-income countries and one-quarter of emerging countries are facing severe debt-related problems." (*Le Monde* 24/09).



The US is the big winner in the war, including on the economic terrain. In the historical conditions of decomposition, through the war, the ultimate expression of the war of all against all, military power - as the only real means at the disposal of the US to defend its world leadership - the US obtains the momentary strengthening of its national economy to the detriment of the rest of the world at the price of global dislocation and the decisive weakening of the whole capitalist system.<sup>26</sup> This economic strengthening of the US is the direct product of every man for himself; it is not in contradiction with the sinking of the whole system into the spiral of its decomposition (it is a manifestation of it and in no way represents a stabilisation, but on the contrary testifies to its sinking deeper) since it has as its corollary and condition the extreme development of chaos and the weakening of the capitalist system as a whole. *“Washington’s unwavering support for Ukraine has made the US the global winner of the sequence without a single GI having to set foot on Ukrainian soil. Undeniable geostrategic, military and political gains. (...) Against a backdrop of unabashed protectionism and economic nationalism, Biden’s America can now devote itself entirely to the technological war against its one great rival, China. Europe, which had managed to act in solidarity during the Covid crisis, has been weakened and divided, with the Franco-German tandem in tatters.”*<sup>27</sup> In this descent into the abyss by world capitalism, the war changes the situation for all capitals and upsets all global economic relations:

- **The oil and gas war:** in an unprecedented turnaround, Washington is the big winner - while the US did not export LNG 10 years ago, it is now the world’s largest exporter. *“The United States enjoys near-independence in energy, which*

*were circling the waters off the Spanish coast and northern European terminals. When will they unload? ‘The brokers who control the tankers are waiting for prices to rise when the temperature drops during the winter’, says the FT (4/11/2022)” (Le Monde Diplomatique, December 22).*

26. The impact of the crisis on the US economy, the relative erosion of the weight of the US economy in the world, the effects of the decomposition on its political apparatus as well as the historical trend of losing its leadership should not lead to an underestimation of the reality of the power of the United States and its capacity to defend it on all levels: *“The United States exploits a unique panoptic system that allows it to control most of the nerve centres of globalisation. ‘Global’ remains the adjective that best defines its power and strategy. It relies on a surveillance system and on the simultaneous control of “commons spaces”: sea, air, space and digital. The first three correspond to distinct physical environments innervated by the fourth. Thanks to the dollar and the law, guaranteed by their overwhelming military superiority, the United States retains a formidable power of structuring, and therefore of destructuring”.* T. Gomart, *“Invisible Wars,”* 2021, p. 251.

27. *l’Express* n°3725.

*allows it to project itself calmly into a world where hydrocarbons have become geopolitical weapons. America does not need to import gas, it is the world’s leading producer ahead of Russia. As for oil, Washington is also the world’s leading producer and has recently reduced its dependence on foreign crude”.*<sup>28</sup> The product of a vast policy of long term self-sufficiency in the planning of the Obama administration as part of its wish to counter the increasing power of its Chinese challenger, the war in Ukraine allows the US to take full benefit from it to boost its industry,<sup>29</sup> and it also provides the means for it to set itself up as a key player. The US is putting its rivals on the defensive and in an inferior position on this strategic energy front:

Europe is almost reduced to a dependence on Russian gas and American LNG. To escape this deadly strangulation, the Europeans are frantically seeking to diversify their suppliers.

China, which is largely dependent on hydrocarbon imports, is at a disadvantage and has been weakened by the US, which is now in a position to control - to cut off - the land and sea routes of Chinese supplies. (indent these two points without bullets)

- **The strengthening of the military sector:** With 40% of the arms market, *“the undeniable strategic success of the American war machine”* is a boost to the US military industry: *“The arsenal of democracy, as President F D Roosevelt called it, is running at full capacity (...) As a result, the American military sector is faced with considerable production pressures.”*<sup>30</sup>

28. Le Point Géopolitique, Les guerres de l’énergie, p.7. *“Since 2020, its exports have exceeded its imports and its main supplier is a country with which it should maintain good relations in the years to come, since it is Canada (51% of imported oil came from its northern neighbour). An energy insurance that allows it to conduct an offensive diplomacy in Ukraine.”* (ibid).

29. *“In the first half of 2022, LNG exports (all countries) increased by 20% and almost two-thirds went to Europe. America has considerable potential. Firstly, because there is a political consensus to go further in shale gas. Secondly, because they have the most extensive pipeline network of any country. And finally because they are investing heavily in liquefaction terminals. (...) All around the Gulf of Mexico, south of Louisiana, from Texas to Florida, an LNG revolution is being written. America currently has only 8 liquefaction terminals. But five are still under construction, 12 others have already been approved and are awaiting permits, and eight permits are being processed.”* (*l’Express* n°3725).

30. *“Most European countries have placed orders. First and foremost Germany, which has announced its wish to buy up to 35 F35 fighter aircraft from Lockheed Martin. The Royal Navy will invest 300 million euros to increase the capabilities of its Tomahawk missiles. The Netherlands has put a billion euros on the table for Patriot medium-range missile defence systems. This summer, Estonia ordered six Himars systems and a ballistic missile capable of reaching a target nearly*

- **The strong dollar and the increase in interest rates:** The unprecedented scale of the Biden plan to support the US economy with \$1.17 trillion to boost demand and consumption, followed by the beginning of the dismantling of quantitative easing and the gradual increase in interest rates by the FED (from the beginning of 2022) caught all its rivals off guard. Taking advantage of both the central role of the dollar (in the reserves of the world’s central banks, its preponderance in the world economy and trade) and the strong dollar, the size of its economy and its rank as the world’s leading economic power, this policy has the effect of:

a) attracting and channelling capital and investment (in search of a safe haven) into the US economy;

b) making the rest of the world give financial support to its economy,

c) passing the most adverse effects of inflation on to other weaker countries.<sup>31</sup> The US is stabilising and strengthening its own economy at the direct expense of its most immediate competitors.

Clearly, the US is not concerned with the risk of fuelling recession, slowing down international trade and provoking financial crises in the weakest states provided that its own economy profits and it is able to save its own economy and protect its place as the world’s leading power.

- **Increased protectionism:** with the \$370 billion government Inflation Reduction Act for public investment in US industry coupled with strong protectionist measures giving preference to US-produced manufactures over imported products, the EU has experienced a “2nd competitiveness shock” (after the gas shock).

More generally, all the economic, monetary, financial and industrial measures adopted in the USA are designed to attract investments and to draw companies into relocating to the US. The “Eldorado” of low energy prices and subsidies diverts capital and large foreign companies to the USA, to the detriment of Europe in particular. More than sixty German companies (Lufthansa, Siemens, etc.) are planning to invest in the USA. VW has announced that it wants to increase

300 km away. As for Bulgaria, it decided in September to further increase its order for F16 fighter jets for a total of 1.3 billion dollars.” (*l’Express* n°3725).

31. *“Capital is deserting emerging markets, weakening their currencies in the process. (Ghanaian currency -41%, Taiwanese dollar -13%, Mongolian tugrik -16%,) (...) Eleven emerging countries risk a balance of payments crisis due to international monetary tightening (Chile, Pakistan, Hungary, Kenya, Tunisia).”* (*Le Monde* 13/10)

its production of electric vehicles in the USA and plans to invest 7 billion in its US sites. BMW is investing 1.7 billion in its North Carolina plant and is tempted to produce batteries there rather than in European projects. France estimates its potential losses at “10 billion euros of investment” and “10,000 potential jobs” lost.

This “tipping” of the United States “to the wrong side” of protectionism (according to the EU)<sup>32</sup> is being met with the threat of a “Buy European Act”; and “France and Germany have formalised a proposal for a counter-offensive ... and asked Brussels to relax the rules governing public subsidies to companies as well as targeted subsidies and tax credits for strategic sectors.”<sup>33</sup>

- **Agriculture:** “The war in Ukraine has upset the global agricultural equilibrium. Africa and the Maghreb were the first victims. But the old continent has also been affected. Over the past decade, Europe has depended on the Ukraine for its maize supplies<sup>34</sup> (...) Even though a large part of the shipments have been able to leave the Ukraine, the European buyers have not been able to acquire enough and have had to knock on the doors of other suppliers. The United States has a very large maize production capacity (...) This strength has not only enabled it to serve its own domestic market but also to take over from Russia and Ukraine and to export extensively to other countries, and in particular to Europe.”<sup>35</sup>
- **The US offensive against China at the economic level:** From a position of strength, the US is stepping up pressure on China and attacking its economic interests around the world through various initiatives and, in profiting from the weakening and the divisions among the Europeans, is seeking through various means to coerce them to follow in its offensive:<sup>36</sup> “A first”: The meeting of the G7 in June 2022 denounced “non-

transparent and market-distorting interventions by China” and called for “collective approaches, also outside the G7, to address the challenges posed by non-market policies and practices that distort the global economy” using the democratic argument of “eliminating all forms of forced labour from global supply chains, including state-sponsored forced labour, such as in Xinjiang.”

In order to guarantee its decisive technological lead over China, the United States is organising the relocation<sup>37</sup> of the production of the latest generation of semi-conductors on to home soil, as well as controlling the entire sector internationally, from which it intends to exclude China, and is threatening sanctions against any rival that maintains commercial relations with the latter that might violate this “monopoly”.

The vast investment programme of 600 billion dollars between now and 2027 for these developing countries of the Global Partnership for Infrastructures aims to counteract as a priority the huge projects financed by China as part of the Silk Roads, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa but also in Central America and Asia.

The establishment of the Indo-Pacific Economic Partnership<sup>38</sup> to “write the new rules for the 21st century economy” (Biden) and “build strong and resilient supply chains” under Washington’s control was immediately denounced by China as the “formation of cliques intended to keep it at bay”.

**Is the EU in the grip of “every man for himself”?** With Germany’s unilateral release of a \$200 billion support plan for its economy (described as a “middle finger to the rest of Europe”) and with the dispute between France and Germany over leadership, the EU is facing major internal conflicts. “Some countries, like Germany, have the means to massively subsidise their industry. Others, such as Italy, much less so. Greece, Spain and also France are worried about this and are asking for European solidarity measures to correct these differences. ‘The American Inflation Reduction Act is 2% of GDP, we must make a comparable effort’, said President Macron. Conversely, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden remain opposed to a new European

financial package.”<sup>39</sup> The two European powers are not on the same wavelength towards China: “Diplomatic niceties are no longer enough to hide the gap between Washington - which sees Beijing as its main rival - and the German government whose interests lie in maintaining a good trade relationship with China. (...) Though not aligned with the United States, France is closer to Washington than to Berlin. China is only France’s 5th major trading partner (...) When Macron met Xi on the sidelines of the G20 summit, his position was closer to Biden’s than Scholz’s.”<sup>40</sup> So Scholz’s trip to China was responded to by Macron’s trip to the US.

If these tensions worsen, as a consequence of the competing national interests fanned by the American rival, to the point of threatening the break-up of the EU, this would further aggravate the crisis and destabilise the whole capitalist system.

**China’s reaction:** The war in Ukraine shows how the decoupling of the US and Chinese economies initiated by the US makes China vulnerable:

- The sanctions against Russia are a warning to China about “the huge consequences for the Chinese economy of potential Western sanctions against China.”<sup>41</sup> As it has huge foreign exchange reserves in dollars “The war in Ukraine has set off alarm bells (...) Chinese experts note that its dependence on the dollar is an even greater concern than the case of Russia. China is not ready to face possible Western sanctions” and “wants to drastically strengthen the security of its foreign assets so as not to repeat the mistakes of Russia, (...) to change the structure of its foreign investments and reduce dependency on US dollars as soon as possible”<sup>42</sup> to avoid the contradiction of having “no other solution currently for protecting the value of the dollars accruing from its trade surplus than

32. Another drag on international trade is the increase in tariffs by many countries, including the United States. Since 2010, the value of global trade subject to tariffs and other barriers has increased from \$126 billion to \$1.5 trillion, according to the WTO.

33. Faced with “the end of a liberal era of globalisation” (Lemaire), French employers have also changed their doctrine... and are advocating ‘intelligent protectionism’.” (Les Echos 23-24/12).

34. Nearly a quarter of the ears of corn consumed on the continent are grown outside the borders of the EU, particularly in Ukraine, which has become our main supplier over the years. As the fighting has disrupted planting, the country’s production could be cut by 10 to 15 million tons this year.

35. L’Express n°3725.

36. “For Washington, Europe cannot view China as a partner, competitor and rival all at once.” Bloomberg, 11/21.

37. “Joe Biden signed the Chips and Science Act last August, which would inject billions of dollars into the industry, including \$57 billion in loans, grants and other tax measures in an effort to encourage U.S. semiconductor producers to build capacity.” *Asylist*.

38. The member states of this pact are: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Together with the United States, they represent 40% of the world’s GDP.

39. *Le Monde* 17/12.

40. Bloomberg, 21/11.

41. “According to a study conducted by the Chinese State Council last April, the text of which was leaked to Japan, these sanctions would have a ‘dramatic effect on China’, which ‘would return to a planned economy cut off from the world. There would then be a serious risk of a food crisis’, due to the damage that these sanctions would cause with the interruption of imports of essential food products. Stopping imports of soybeans in particular would create a crisis for Chinese food chains that are highly dependent on soybeans, while reducing or stopping exports would have serious consequences in terms of financial revenue, says the Beijing document. China imports 30% of its soybean needs from the United States. It says Chinese soybean production provides for less than 20% of the country’s needs. Soybeans are essential for the production of edible oils as well as for feeding pigs, which account for 60% of the meat consumed by the Chinese.”

42. *Conflicts* n° 41, Sept-Oct 2022.



to lend them continually to the United States.”<sup>43</sup>

- The State's efforts to make the yuan an international currency competing with the dollar have failed, even in a context where many countries could seek to protect themselves from Western sanctions: the yuan has stagnated at 2.88% of foreign exchange reserves (30% of which are held by Russia) compared to 59.5 for the dollar and 19.76 for the euro; and since 2015 at 5th position in global payments with a share of 2.44% compared to 42% for the dollar. The BPC (People's Bank of China) must fight to halt the depreciation of the yuan against the dollar.
- “As a result of measures taken in recent years by the United States” restricting the export of advanced technology (used in high-tech production in the automobile, aeronautics, space exploration, scientific research, computers, transport, medicine, etc.) “China is currently no longer in the race (...) Chinese semiconductor manufacturers do not have the technology to catch up. (...) So much so that some experts doubt that China will be able to catch up in the short and medium term in this field, which is responsible for a large part of future economic growth.” (*Asylist*).
- China is engaged in a competitive struggle to the death for control of certain strategic sectors (such as rare earth and metals); or to guarantee its hydrocarbon supplies, is taking advantage of Russia's weakening to sign contracts with the Central Asian republics and with the every man for himself approach to get closer to Saudi Arabia.
- China's vital economic interests are at stake in the tensions with Taiwan, which like Singapore, acts as an essential platform for China's manufacturing industry and is indispensable to its current economic model.

**The result:** The exclusion of Russia from international trade by the United States, the offensive against China, and its desire to reconfigure global economic relations to its advantage mark a turning point in the vision of free trade that guided American policy for nearly thirty years. This will result in further fragmentation of the global market and in the multiplication of regional agreements such as the one between the United States, Canada and Mexico signed in 2020.<sup>44</sup>

43. T. Gomart, “Invisible wars”, 2021, p. 242.

44. This is evidenced by recent comments from Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen: “During 2022, the Biden Administration promoted an economic plan to strengthen U.S. resilience to supply disruptions by easing bottlenecks at ports, investing heavily

The fact that “signatories would share more common interests”, and that states and companies would favour like-minded partners and no longer trade with just anyone, does not augur well for stability or the formation of exclusive economic relationships under the aegis of major sponsors. On the contrary, because they tend to follow the multiple fault lines of tensions between the powers, it will only result in the further fragmentation of the world market on a global scale and the reinforcement of the every man for himself trade war, national withdrawal and the search for the preservation of national sovereignty on all levels. This will only sharpen, as a matter of survival, the desire to control strategic supply chains essential for national survival and the need to put oneself in a position of strength vis-à-vis other powers using blackmail, etc., or by evading them.<sup>45</sup>

In a nutshell: From now on, not only has the capacity of the main capitalist nations to cooperate in order to delay and lessen the impact of the economic crisis on the whole capitalist system and on themselves slowly disappeared (without any perceptible return), but it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a policy, in particular driven by the first of the great powers, the United States, to safeguard its own position in the world arena at the

in physical infrastructure, and building domestic manufacturing capacity in key 21st century sectors such as semiconductors and renewable energy. (...) Through a ‘friend-sharing’ approach, the Biden administration intends to maintain trade efficiency while promoting the economic resilience of the United States and its partners. (...) The goal of the ‘friend-sharing’ approach is to deepen our economic integration with a large number of trusted trading partners on whom we can rely. (...) Through the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, we are working together to create secure supply chains in the solar, semiconductor, and rare earth magnet sectors. The United States is forging similar partnerships through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and in Latin America through the Economic Prosperity Partnership of the Americas. The countries involved in the IPEF, which account for 40% of global GDP, have committed to coordinating their efforts to diversify supply chains. (...) ‘friend-sharing’ will be implemented progressively. Already, new supply chains are being developed. The EU is working with Intel to facilitate an investment of approximately \$90 billion in the creation of a semiconductor industry. The U.S. is working with its trusted partners to develop a comprehensive semiconductor ecosystem in the United States. We are also working with Australia to build rare earth mining and processing facilities in both our countries.” (*Le Monde* 1-2/01/2023).

45. “The trade war is one of the theatres in which the Sino-American strategic rivalry is played out, with a major consequence for all the players: the transformation of interdependencies into levers of power (...). By abandoning the multilateral system that it had built itself, [the United States] has deliberately destabilised its traditional allies, while indicating its desire to continue to exercise its structuring power. Even if it maintains the forms of multilateralism, the Biden administration will use them to contain China's rise to power as much as possible,” T. Gomart, “Invisible Wars,” 2021, p. 112.

direct expense of the other powers of the same type (and the rest of the world) by attacking their interests and deliberately weakening them.

This situation is a clear break with a substantial part of the rules that were established after the crisis of 1929 and opens up a period, terra incognita, where chaos will unfold on a greater scale, including in and among the central countries, with repercussions that are still difficult to “imagine”, striking at the heart of the capitalist system sinking even deeper into the crisis

### III. Perspectives

#### A. Worsening crisis: the only future under capitalism

The irreversible crisis of capitalism is the backdrop to an acceleration of chaos and barbarism. 50 years of economic crisis that has accelerated since 2018 is openly manifested by galloping inflation with its consequences in misery, hunger and widespread impoverishment.

*“The capitalist crisis affects the very foundations of this society. Inflation, insecurity, unemployment, hellish pace and working conditions that destroy workers’ health, unaffordable housing... all testify to an unstoppable degradation of working class life and, although the bourgeoisie tries to create all imaginable divisions, granting ‘more privileged’ conditions to certain categories of workers, what we see in its entirety is, on the one hand, what is possibly going to be the WORST CRISIS in the history of capitalism, and, on the other hand, the concrete reality of the ABSOLUTE PAUPERISATION of the working class in the central countries, fully confirming the accuracy of the prediction which Marx made concerning the historical perspective of capitalism and which the economists and other ideologues of the bourgeoisie have so much mocked.”*<sup>46</sup>

In contrast to the 1930s, there are now more factors aggravating the crisis. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine stamp a new quality on the situation. The concatenation of the factors of decomposition is at the root of a spiral of degradation and the worsening of the global economic situation. “This crisis is shaping up to be a longer and deeper crisis than that of 1929. This is because the irruption of the effects of decomposition on the economy tends to cause havoc with the functioning of production, creating constant bottlenecks and blockages in a situation of growing unemployment – combined, paradoxical-

46. “Third Manifesto of the ICC. Capitalism leads to the destruction of humanity... Only the world revolution of the proletariat can put an end to it”, *International Review* n° 169.

cally, with labour shortages in some areas. Above all, it is expressed in the outbreak of inflation, following various successive rescue plans hastily deployed by states in the face of the pandemic and the war, and thus caused and fuelled by a headlong rush into debt. The increase in interest rates by central banks in an attempt to curb inflation risks precipitating a very violent recession by shackling both states and companies. The proletariat in the central countries now faces a tsunami of misery and brutal impoverishment.<sup>47</sup> The spectre of “stagflation” hangs over the world. While it was a concept of bourgeois economists in the 1970s to characterise a state of high inflation with economic stagnation, today this danger is becoming evident and the current uncontrolled inflation and economic slowdown will lead to a chain of bankruptcies, even of entire countries (Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc.) as well as financial turbulence and even greater difficulties in the emerging countries.

“Growth in advanced economies is expected to decelerate sharply from 5.1% in 2021 to 2.6% in 2022 (1.2 percentage points lower than projected in January). Growth is expected to moderate further to 2.2% in 2023, largely reflecting the withdrawal of monetary and fiscal policy support provided during the pandemic.”<sup>48</sup> The bourgeoisie has no alternative but to continue to raise interest rates, as the Fed did last November, all states are involved in this dynamic and this will cause contractions in the markets, company closures with massive layoffs as we can see in the technology companies in the USA (GAFAM). The relocation of companies from China to America (Nearshoring) will worsen the unemployment situation in certain regions of the world.

Unlike the 1930s, current debt levels are unprecedented. China, the world's second largest power, owes 2.5 times its GDP! At the same time, it has become a financial backer, primarily to support its Silk Road and to ensure its influence in Africa and Latin America. The United States, whose total debt now exceeds 31 trillion (millions of millions), has printed \$5 billion while the EU, with 750 million euros, has printed 20% more than the US. The prospects for the coming years will be full of convulsions and difficulties for capitalism.

## B. China as a factor destabilising and exacerbating the crisis

**i. The Chinese economy has suffered a sharp slowdown** due to repeated blockages and then the tsunami of infections that caused chaos in the health system, the real estate bubble and the blockage of several “silk road” routes due to armed conflicts (Ukraine) or the chaos that surrounds it (Ethiopia). Growth in the first half of this year was 2.5%, making the 5% target for this year unattainable. For the first time in 30 years, China's economic growth will be lower than that of other Asian countries (Vietnam). Large technology and business companies such as Alibaba, Tencent, JD.com and iQiyi have laid off 10-30% of their workforce. Young people are particularly sensitive to the deteriorating situation, with an estimated 20% unemployment rate among university students looking for work. Expansion plans for the “New Silk Road” are also in trouble due to the deepening economic crisis: almost 60% of the debt owed to China is now owed to countries in financial difficulty, compared to 5% in 2010. In addition, economic pressure from the US is intensifying, including the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, which directly target technology exports from several Chinese technology companies (e.g. Huawei) to the US.

Even more distressing for the Chinese bourgeoisie, the economic problems, coupled with the health crisis, have given rise to major social protests.

**ii. The failure of the neo-Stalinist model of the Chinese bourgeoisie.** Faced with economic and health sector difficulties, Xi Jinping's policy has been to return to the classic recipes of Stalinism:

- Economically, since Deng Xiao Ping, the Chinese bourgeoisie had created a fragile and complex mechanism to maintain an all-powerful single party framework cohabiting with a private bourgeoisie directly stimulated by the state. “By the end of 2021, Deng Xiaoping's era of reform and opening up is clearly over, replaced by a new statist economic orthodoxy”.<sup>49</sup> The dominant faction behind Xi Jinping is reorienting the Chinese economy towards absolute Stalinist-style state control;
- On the social front, with the “Zero Covid” policy, Xi not only ensured ruthless state control over the population, but also imposed this control on regional and local authorities, which had proved unreliable and ineffective at the beginning of the pandemic. By the autumn, he sent

central state police units to Shanghai to rein in local authorities that were liberalising lockdown measures.

“A developed national capital, held ‘privately’ by different sectors of the bourgeoisie, finds parliamentary ‘democracy’ its most appropriate political apparatus; to the almost complete statification of the means of production, corresponds the totalitarian power of the single party”.<sup>50</sup>

The failure of the “Zero Covid” policy has resulted in the re-election for a third term of the man who imposed it, Xi Jinping, at the cost of complex compromises between the factions of the CCP. The Chinese bourgeoisie is thus demonstrating more than ever its congenital inability to overcome the political rigidity of its state apparatus, a heavy legacy of Stalinist Maoism.

**iii. A crisis that spreads inexorably.** The world's second largest power is caught up in the same dynamic as its rivals. This catastrophe is still to come.

- China's role in the 2008 financial crisis was to contain and not stop investing, including focusing on its domestic market and infrastructure (high-speed rail), of course, all on the back of a mountain of debt. However, during the financial crisis of 2008, it remained a “healthy sector of the economy”. Today we cannot say the same, China, after the bankruptcy of Evergrande was followed by that of Shintao (second largest construction company after Evergrande). Evergrande alone represented 350 billion dollars of debt that they cannot pay. Behind this debt are international investors who are demanding their money, among them BlackRock. Regional banks have failed to the point of triggering a Chinese “corralito”.<sup>51</sup> 320 real estate projects are at a standstill and there are 100 million empty homes. Household debt has tripled to \$7 trillion and there is also corporate debt. Drought has severely reduced hydroelectric power production to the point of rationing and partial closure of factories, such as TESLA which ironically produces electric cars! What was the response of the Chinese bourgeoisie to the crisis? Lower interest rates, massive state hiring, state funds for infrastructure and real estate, (nothing new!) and we already know the “effectiveness” of these measures... We can only expect a series of economic

47. “The 20s of the 21st century: The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity”, *International Review* n° 169.

48. World Bank, June 2022.

49. *Foreign Affairs*, in *Courrier International* 1674.

50. “Theses on the economic and political crisis in Eastern Europe”.

51. Unofficial name given to the economic measures taken in Argentina during the economic crisis in 2001 limiting cash withdrawals and prohibiting all remittances to the outside world, in order to put an end to the liquidity race and combat the flight of capital.



shocks in the near future in this part of the world.

- The trade war with the United States and the intentions of not being dependent on China have forced the developed countries, with the United States in the forefront, to diversify their supply chains and look for new maquiladora countries.<sup>52</sup> Thus, countries such as Mexico, but especially Vietnam, which has already surpassed China in terms of economic growth in percentage terms, are emerging as the new “maquiladoras” of capitalism. This year, US orders to Chinese manufacturers have fallen by 40% (CNBC).

**In conclusion**, it now seems that while Chinese state capitalism has been able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the change of bloc, the implosion of the Soviet bloc and the globalisation of the economy advocated by the US and the major Western bloc powers, its congenital weakness in its Stalinist-style state structure is now a major handicap in the face of economic, health and social problems. The situation foreshadows instability and possible upheaval, even for the position of Xi and his supporters within the CCP. A destabilisation of Chinese capitalism would have unpredictable consequences for global capitalism.

### C. The continuation of militarism and the war economy

The year 2021 saw an accelerated explosion in military spending. The US increased its spending by 38% (\$880 million), China by 14% (\$243 million) and Russia by 3% (\$65 million). America's military superiority is reflected in its budget. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in the same year “*the world spent \$2 trillion*” on the military.

The entire Indo-Pacific region has seen its military spending increase for fear of falling victim to Chinese imperialism: Japan has also doubled its military budget and signed a “defence transfer” agreement with Vietnam; Thailand is investing \$125 million in 50 warships to protect its seas; Indonesia is increasing its military investment in the China Sea by 200%; and the Philippines has just received an additional \$64 million from the US to strengthen its military bases in order to contain the Chinese threat. But this region is not the only one caught up in this dynamic; no one is spared.

The world is heading for an explosion in military spending like never before in

history. All this unproductive spending will be loaded onto the backs of working people.

The energy war will mark the future of capitalism: despite the frantic search for clean and renewable energy, it will be impossible under capitalism. The control of energy sources, in particular gas and especially oil, will remain a question of “national security” for every capital. The functioning of business depends on it, and at the imperialist level, the military runs on petrol (US=gasoline). The US currently has control over these resources and the fact that it is now Europe's main supplier becomes a source of future blackmail and pressure on EU countries. Xi's trip to Saudi Arabia and the recent energy deal with Russia confirm this (30 Dec 2022).

The historical acceleration of the influence of war on the economy is worth noting, and was tragically demonstrated by the war in Ukraine. If we make a historical comparison with the Vietnam War, the military burden was on the economy, but today the impact of militarism on the economy is even greater.

### D. The impossible energy transition

Capitalism is the only system in history capable of devastating nature on a massive scale, eliminating entire ecosystems and accelerating the extinction of species that alter the entire natural order. This phenomenon is cumulative and accelerating, leading to the rapid devastation of the planet. The current “clean energy transition” is simply an expression of the struggle between capitalists and their competition to the death. It's all about who will get to the market first and take customers away from their rivals. All the talk about their “concern” for the environment is demagoguery. The worsening “ecological crisis” is accelerating and causing unacceptable devastation. The United States, whose former president Trump denied the existence of “climate change”, is facing the effects of this ecological crisis and the world's leading power is far from being “spared” from “natural disasters” and even holds the dubious world record for the destruction of biodiversity. In fact, capitalism cannot be a competitive system and be “ecological” at the same time, because:

- its objective is profit, not the preservation of nature, which will always be considered by capitalism as a source of free resources whose depredation and the consequences do not concern it;
- the “every man for himself” and the anarchy of production mean that the bourgeoisie has no control over the “new technologies”, it is a sorcerer's apprentice!

- technological advances are one-sided; they never care about the global implications. If the extraction of lithium for car batteries is polluting and its recyclability is reduced to 5%, it does not matter. The main thing is to sell “green” cars;
- the separation between man and nature becomes extreme under capitalism, to the point of considering man as “outside” his natural environment.

On the other hand, the return to coal, even if companies pay an extra tax to cover environmental damage, which is just a smokescreen, does not eliminate the enormous failure of capitalism to eliminate carbon emissions. If the Europeans had decided to abandon nuclear power, they are now trying to reintroduce it to offset their dependence on Russia and the US. This is yet another example of the failures of capitalism, which pushes us to revive old glories, even if they are polluting. Each country only looks out for itself and the others suffer!

A transition to “green energy” under capitalism is equivalent to the illusion of a capitalism without wars.

### E. Towards the absolute impoverishment of the working class in the central countries

The unproductive spending of capital will not stop, militarism and the maintenance of the state will take its toll on the working class. This phenomenon of the impoverishment of the working class in the central countries has its history, but since the pandemic and the war in Ukraine it has accelerated. Inflation drastically reduces the purchasing power of workers and, unlike the 1970s, today the bourgeoisie does not resort to wage indexation. For example, the bourgeoisie in the UK has taken a hard line on demands for wage increases to compensate for inflation, the British Prime Minister has said “no negotiation is possible”.

- The slogan of the British strikes “Heating or eating” reveals the seriousness of the situation. For many working families, it is more expensive to pay for energy than for a mortgage: increasingly miserable wages, rising costs of living, ever-increasing prices, mass redundancies, cuts in social security, attacks on pensions, etc. All this points to a future of misery to which the proletariat will have to respond by following its class brothers and sisters in Britain, Europe and even the USA. A future of pauperisation of the proletariat is

52. Factories benefiting from exemptions from customs duties in order to produce goods at a lower cost.

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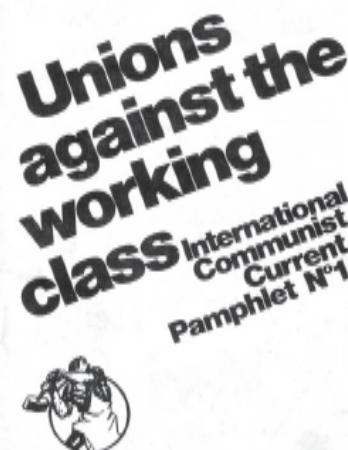
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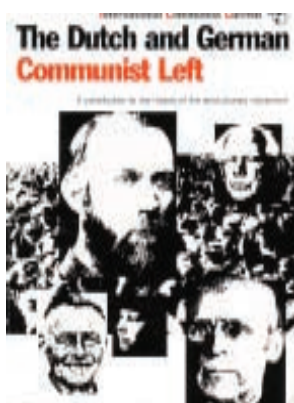
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## ICC Publication



Why trade unions can no longer be used as the organisational form for working class struggle. How the unions consistently sabotage independent class action.



The Dutch communist left is one of the major components of the revolutionary current which broke away from the degenerating Communist International in the 1920s. Well before Trotsky's Left Opposition, and in a more profound way, the communist left had been able

to expose the opportunist dangers which threatened the International and its parties and which eventually led to their demise. In the struggle for the intransigent defence of revolutionary principles, this current, represented in particular by the KAPD in Germany, the KAPN in Holland, and the left of the Communist Party of Italy animated by Bordiga, came out against the International's policies on questions like participation in elections and trade unions, the formation of 'united fronts' with social democracy, and support for national liberation struggles. It was against the positions of the communist left that Lenin wrote his pamphlet *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, and this text drew a response in *Reply to Lenin*, written by one of the main figures of the Dutch left, Herman Gorter.

In fact, the Dutch left, like the Italian left, had been formed well before the first world war, as part of the same struggle waged by Luxemburg and Lenin against the opportunism and reformism which was gaining hold of the parties of the Second International. It was no accident that Lenin himself, before reverting to centrist positions at the head of the Communist International, had, in his book *State and Revolution*, leaned heavily on the analyses of Anton Pannekoek, who was the main theoretician of the Dutch left. This document is an indispensable complement to *The Italian Communist Left*, already published by the ICC, for all those who want to know the real history of the communist movement behind all the falsifications which Stalinism and Trotskyism have erected around it.



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# BASIC POSITIONS OF THE ICC

**The International Communist Current** defends the following political positions:

\* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.

\* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.

\* The statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

\* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

\* All the nationalist ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

\* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. 'Democracy', a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

\* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally

reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

\* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

\* In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

\* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

\* The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

\* The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

\* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to 'organise the working class' nor to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political

goals of the proletariat's combat.

## OUR ACTIVITY

Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.

Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

## OUR ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League* of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen's Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1889-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian Lefts*.

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