

Imperialist conflict in Ukraine

Capitalism is war,

war on capitalism!

Europe has entered into war. It is not the first time since the second world butchery of 1939-45. At the beginning of the 1990s, war ravaged the former Yugoslavia, causing 140,000 deaths, with huge mass massacres of civilians, in the name of “ethnic cleansing” as in Srebrenica, in July 1995, where 8,000 men and teenagers were murdered in cold blood. The war that has just broken out with the offensive of the Russian armies against Ukraine is not as deadly for the moment, but no one knows yet how many victims it will ultimately claim. As of now, it is much larger in scale than the war in ex-Yugoslavia. Today, it is not militias or small states that are fighting each other. The current war is between the two largest states in Europe, with populations of 150 million and 45 million respectively, and with huge armies being deployed: 700,000 troops in Russia and over 250,000 in Ukraine.

Moreover, if the great powers had already been involved in the confrontations in the former Yugoslavia, it was in an indirect way, or by participating in “intervention forces”, under the aegis of the United Nations. Today, it is not only Ukraine that Russia is confronting, but all the Western countries grouped in NATO which, although they are not directly involved in the fighting, have taken significant economic sanctions against this country at the same time as they have begun to send arms to Ukraine.

Thus, the war that has just begun is a dramatic event of the utmost importance, first and foremost for Europe, but also for the whole world. It has already claimed thousands of lives among soldiers on both sides and among civilians. It has thrown hundreds of thousands of refugees onto the roads. It will cause further increases in the price of energy and cereals, which will lead to increased cold and hunger, while in most countries of the world, the exploited, the poorest, have already seen their living conditions collapse in the face of inflation. As always, it is the class that produces most of the social wealth, the working class, that will pay the highest price for the warlike actions of the masters of the world.

This war, this tragedy, cannot be separated from the whole world situation of the last two years: the pandemic, the worsening of the economic crisis, the multiplication of ecological catastrophes. It is a clear manifestation of a world sinking into barbarism.

The lies of war propaganda

Every war is accompanied by massive campaigns of lies. In order to make the population, and particularly the exploited class, accept the terrible sacrifices that are asked of them, the sacrifice of their lives for those who are sent to the front, the mourning of their mothers, their partners, their children, the terror of the civilian population, the deprivations and the worsening of exploitation, it is necessary to fill their heads with the ideology of the ruling class.

Putin’s lies are crude, and mirror those of the Soviet regime in which he began his career as an officer in the KGB, the political police and spy organisation. He claims to be conducting a “special military operation” to help the people of Donbass who are victims of “genocide” and he forbids the media, on pain of sanctions, to use the word “war”. According to him, he wants to free Ukraine from the “Nazi regime” that rules it. It is true that the Russian-speaking populations of the East are being persecuted by Ukrainian nationalist militias, often nostalgic for the Nazi regime, but there is no genocide.

The lies of Western governments and media are usually more subtle. Not always: the United States and its allies, including the very “democratic” United Kingdom, Spain, Italy and... Ukraine (!) sold us the 2003 intervention in Iraq in the name of the - totally invented - threat of “weapons of mass destruction” in the hands of Saddam Hussein. An intervention that resulted in several hundred thousand deaths and two million refugees among the Iraqi population, and several tens of thousands killed among the coalition soldiers.

Today, the “democratic” leaders and the Western media are feeding us the fable of the fight between the “evil ogre” Putin and the “good little boy” Zelensky. We have known for a long time that Putin is a cynical criminal. Besides, he has the looks to match. Zelensky benefits from not having such a criminal record as Putin and from having been, before entering politics, a popular comic actor (with a large fortune in tax havens as a result). But his comedic talents have now allowed him to enter his new role of warlord with brio, a role which includes forbidding men between 18 and 60 from accompanying their families

trying to take refuge abroad, and calling on Ukrainians to be killed for ‘the Fatherland’, i.e. for the interests of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie and oligarchs. Because whatever the colour of the governing parties, whatever the tone of their speeches, all the national states are above all defenders of the interests of the exploiting class, of the national bourgeoisie, both against the exploited and against competition from other national bourgeoisies.

In all war propaganda, each state presents itself as the ‘victim of aggression’ that must defend itself against the ‘aggressor’. But since all states are in reality brigands, it is pointless to ask which brigand fired first in a settlement of accounts. Today, Putin and Russia have fired first, but in the past, NATO, under US tutelage, has integrated into its ranks many countries which, before the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union, were dominated by Russia. By initiating the war, the brigand Putin aims to recover some of his country’s past power, notably by preventing Ukraine from joining NATO.

In reality, since the beginning of the 20th century, permanent war, with all the terrible suffering it engenders, has become inseparable from the capitalist system, a system based on competition between companies and between states, where commercial warfare leads to armed warfare, where the worsening of its economic contradictions, of its crisis, stirs up ever more warlike conflicts. A system based on profit and the fierce exploitation of the producers, in which the workers are forced to pay in blood as well as in sweat.

Since 2015, global military spending has been rising sharply. This war has just brutally accelerated this process. As a symbol of this deadly spiral: Germany has started to deliver arms to Ukraine, a historic first since the Second World War; for the first time, the European Union is also financing the purchase and delivery of arms to Ukraine; and Russian President Vladimir Putin has openly threatened to use nuclear weapons to prove his determination and destructive capabilities.

How can we end war?

No one can predict exactly how the current war will develop, even though Russia has a much stronger army than Ukraine. Today, there are many demonstrations around the world, and in Russia itself, against Russia’s intervention. But it is not these demonstrations that will put an end to the hostilities. History has shown that the only force that can put an end to capitalist war is the exploited class, the proletariat, the direct enemy of the bourgeois class. This was the case when the workers of Russia overthrew the bourgeois state in October 1917 and the workers and soldiers of Germany revolted in November 1918, forcing their government to sign the armistice. If Putin was able to send hundreds of thousands of soldiers to be killed against Ukraine, if many Ukrainians today are ready to give their lives for the ‘defence of the Fatherland’, it is

largely because in this part of the world the working class is particularly weak. The collapse in 1989 of the regimes that claimed to be ‘socialist’ or ‘working class’ dealt a very brutal blow to the world working class. This blow affected the workers who had fought hard from 1968 onwards and during the 1970s in countries like France, Italy and the United Kingdom, but even more so those in the so-called ‘socialist’ countries, like those in Poland who fought massively and with great determination in August 1980, forcing the government to renounce repression and meet their demands.

It is not by demonstrating ‘for peace’, it is not by choosing to support one country against another that we can bring real solidarity to the victims of war, the civilian populations and the soldiers of both sides, proletarians in uniform transformed into cannon fodder. The only solidarity consists in denouncing ALL the capitalist states, ALL the parties that call for rallying behind this or that national flag, ALL those who lure us with the illusion of peace and ‘good relations’ between peoples. And the only solidarity that can have a real impact is the development of massive and conscious workers’ struggles everywhere in the world. And in particular, these struggles must become conscious of the fact that they constitute a preparation for the overthrow of the system responsible for the wars and all the barbarity that increasingly threatens humanity: the capitalist system.

Today, the old slogans of the workers’ movement, which appeared in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, are more than ever on the agenda: **Workers have no fatherland! Workers of all countries, unite!**

For the development of the class struggle of the international proletariat!

International Communist Current, 28.2.22

www.internationalism.org

email: uk@internationalism.org

Public meetings

Come and discuss the ideas in this leaflet at one of the online public meetings the ICC will be holding over the next two weeks. In English: March 5 at 11am and on March 6 at 6pm (UK times). Write to our email for details.