



# world revolution

**War, crisis, conflicts between bourgeois gangs...**

## Capitalist barbarism is let loose! There's only one way out: class struggle!



generalised conflagration.

The bourgeoisie can do nothing about the deadly dynamics of its system. The chronic economic crisis, ecological disasters and wars are the ugly face of the decomposition of capitalism, the rotting on its feet of a society based on an obsolete mode of production, shaped by the exploitation of labour power, competition between all against all and war, and which now has nothing to offer but terror, suffering and death. More and more parts of the world are becoming unliveable for their popu-

lations, like Haiti in the grip of chaos, abandoned to criminal gangs, or like many states in Africa and Latin America, opened up to widespread corruption, warlords, mafias, and drug traffickers.

### US elections, a source of increased instability

The epicentre of this downward spiral lies at the very heart of capitalism, first and foremost in the world's leading power, the United States. After escalating the chaos of recent decades by trying to

impose its role as the world's policeman (in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular), the US is using every means to counter its irreversible decline, and is not hesitating to trample underfoot its former "allies", now rivals.

The implementation of this policy is also exacerbating tensions within the American bourgeoisie itself, as can be seen from the clashes that are

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## The working class is still fighting!

The state is raining down attacks on the working class. Big cuts are being made to state benefits, such as for the unemployed and pensioners, and unemployment is on the rise. Public and private sector are lacking the necessary resources. Public services are totally failing with a shortage of medicines and even food. Millions of working class families, even those still "lucky" enough to have jobs, are struggling to make ends meet. Many have to go hungry because of the increased cost of food, heating, rents, mortgages and petrol for cars. Gas and electricity bills are soaring too. More and more people have to rely on Food Banks. And what image could be more damning than that of homeless children forced to sleep on the streets of Europe's major capitals and across the major towns and cities of the world's most developed countries, some even freezing to death.

In the last four years, we have witnessed a succession of dramatic events: the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the massacres in Gaza, the climate catastrophe... This whirlwind of catastrophes has deepened the capitalist crisis and fueled chaos on a global scale<sup>1</sup>. The future that capitalism has in store for us could not be clearer: the worsening economic crisis will only accelerate the threat to humanity. But the economic crisis can provide some benefits too, since it provides the platform and stimulus for working class to take the struggle forward.

1. "International revolution or the destruction of humanity: the crucial responsibility of revolutionary organisations", *International Review* 170 - 2023

### The proletariat will not succumb to the attacks on its living standards

Faced with such high stakes and with the inexorable and terrifying collapse of bourgeois society, the working class is not resigned to accept a future of pauperisation. For almost two years now, despite the wars and the war-mongering, the struggles of the working class have been widespread and on a massive scale. In many countries, these struggles have often been considered to be "historic" in terms of the number of strikers and demonstrators, but also in terms of the determination of workers to fight for their dignity and living conditions. This is a real turn around after decades of passivity and resignation<sup>2</sup>. In the summer of 2022, the proletariat in Britain began its fightback against the crisis. Month after month, workers went on strike and demonstrated in the streets, demanding better wages and more dignified working conditions, something not seen for three decades! At the beginning of 2023, with strikes spreading in different corners of the world, the proletariat in France mobilised *en masse* against the government's proposed pension reform. Millions of people, across all sectors and generations, took to the streets determined to fight back together. Then, in the autumn, workers in the United States embarked on one of the most large-scale waves of strikes in that country's history, notably in the automobile sector, which was followed by a public sector movement in Quebec,

2. "After the rupture in the class struggle, the necessity for politicisation" *International Review* 171 - 2023

also described as historic.

More recently, in a country presented as a "social model", the workers at the Tesla factories in Sweden went on strike, followed by actions of solidarity by postal workers who blocked all mail bound for the workshops of the company run by billionaire clown Elon Musk. Dockers in turn blocked four ports and electricians refused to carry out maintenance work on electric vehicle charging points.

In Northern Ireland in January, the largest workers' strike in the region's history also brought together hundreds of thousands of workers, particu-

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# “Guaranteeing peace by preparing for war”

Since the outbreak of the barbaric conflict in Ukraine and its deterioration into a terrible war of attrition, the massacres in Israel and Gaza and the threats of conflagration in the Middle East through a direct conflict between Israel and Iran, the tensions around Taiwan, the uncontrollable appetites of capitalist nations are leading bourgeois politicians to the “discovery” that the capitalist world is an appalling nest of vipers. At the start of the conflict in Ukraine, their speeches immediately tried to convince us that we had to break with “naivety” and agree to prepare for “high-intensity warfare”: to make sacrifices in order to fuel new mass murders and destruction! Of course, in the name of “peace” and the “defence of democracy”...

## An ideological offensive to justify armament and prepare for war

In a context of accelerating imperialist tensions where every man for himself is the rule, the Western bourgeoisies, in Europe and the United States, are redoubling their efforts to propagate the worst warmongering campaigns in the media. In a totally cavalier move, President Macron, supported by the heads of state of seven European countries, has taken the lead in asserting that the possibility of sending Western troops to Ukraine “*should not be ruled out*”. In Great Britain, General Patrick Sanders advocated “*doubling the size of the British army*” and called for people to be prepared to enroll in a “*citizen army*”. He was joined by the head of NATO’s military committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, who said in a speech: “*The responsibility for freedom does not rest solely on the shoulders of those who wear the uniform [...]. [...] We need a*

*change of mentality in the public and private sectors from a time when everything was plannable, predictable, controllable, efficiency-driven... to a time when anything can happen at any time*”. In short, they want to be able to mobilise the population for the “war effort” and prepare troops for combat.

While such statements were widespread and controversial, they were immediately contradicted by the divisions and tensions between the various bourgeois factions. But they all agree on one thing: that we should support one side in the war, in this case Ukraine. All the speeches are unanimous in asserting that “Ukraine is fighting for us” and that “if we lose, the Russian army will be on our doorstep”. It was against this backdrop that NATO’s seventy-fifth anniversary took on special significance, celebrated with great pomp and circumstance while emphasising that Putin’s stalemate in Ukraine did not make him any less dangerous. And while Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg made it clear that there were “*no plans to send NATO troops to Ukraine*”, he was keen to point out that “*NATO allies are providing unprecedented support to Ukraine*”.

This is all about preparing people’s minds to accept the principle of war and its sacrifices. This is all the more important because, as Rosa Luxemburg pointed out at the time of the First World War, “*war is methodical, organised, gigantic murder. In order to bring about systematic murder in normally constituted men, it is necessary [...] to produce an appropriate intoxication. This has always been the usual method of belligerents. The bestiality of thought and feeling must correspond*

*to the bestiality of practice; it must prepare and accompany it*”<sup>17</sup>.

Naturally, from this point of view, the primary aim of all the warmongering today is to justify the dizzying rise in military budgets everywhere. In this respect, the impressive increases in arms spending in the Scandinavian countries (20% in Norway, for example) and in the Baltic states are highly symbolic of this new frenetic arms race. In fact, all European countries are making major efforts. Poland, for example, is aiming for a record 4% of its GDP (the highest rate within NATO); Germany, with this year’s budget (€68 billion), will reach 2.1% of its GDP for the first time in over thirty years; and France is planning to spend a whopping €413.3 billion over seven years.

Today, the involvement and efforts to be made in terms of arms spending are taking on a new quality. However, since the end of the First World War, “peace” has in reality been nothing more than a mystification, with so many corpses piling up. Following the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the new “multipolar world” has only generated chaos, increasingly involving the armies of the great imperialist powers in costly conflicts, first and foremost the armed forces of the United States. But the gigantic sums of money now being planned are being spent in a context of accelerating decomposition and a dramatic deepening of the economic crisis which followed the brutal shock caused by the Covid epidemic.

<sup>17</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, *The Crisis of Social Democracy* (Junius Pamphlet), 1915

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## Capitalist barbarism is let loose! There’s only one way out: class struggle!

already marking the campaign leading up to November’s presidential election. These tensions are fuelling the instability of the American political apparatus, which is becoming increasingly fragmented and polarised, not only by the divisions between Republicans and Democrats, but also and above all by the growing rifts within each of the two rival camps. For the moment, the populist Trump is emerging as the favourite, despite all the attempts to incapacitate him. In fact, the groundswell of populism remains deeply entrenched in American politics, as is also clearly evident in several European countries.

This situation plunges not only the American bourgeoisie into uncertainty but also those in high places throughout the world, as they cannot determine in advance what Washington’s position will be on the burning issues affecting world geopolitics. These clashes between factions within the American bourgeoisie (from Trump’s inflammatory statements to the political deadlock in Congress over military support for Ukraine) are a major accelerator of imperialist instability.

### Bloody deepening of imperialist each against all

Domestic disorder is undermining the credibility and authority of the United States itself, which is also increasingly undermined by a chaotic international situation. This instability is encouraging its major rivals and secondary powers even more: it is bolstering Putin’s irrational claims and galvanising Zelensky’s deadly logic of war to the end, and stimulating the war fever of Netanyahu, Iran and its terrorist affiliates. And while China is avoiding any immediate response to Washington’s provocations and pressure, it is stepping up its own pressure on Taiwan and the Philippines and looking more openly at the longer-term possibility of strengthening its status as a challenger to Uncle Sam.

The growing aggressiveness of the imperialist sharks, large and small, who are trying to ex-

ploit the clashes between bourgeois cliques in the United States, in no way means that they will be spared internal tensions. Putin is caught between the butchery in the Donbass and the terrorist campaigns of Islamic State, whose forces are infiltrating from the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, a threat that the ruling clan and its secret services had failed to neutralise despite warnings from various foreign secret services. In China, Xi is faced with a stagnant economy, the destabilisation of the “Silk Roads” project due to the prevailing chaos, and internal tensions within the apparatus of the Chinese Communist Party. Israel’s headlong rush is the product of fierce confrontations between the hardline nationalist cliques in power and other factions of the bourgeoisie, as well as the struggle for political survival of Netanyahu, who has been on trial since 2020.

The current instability of US policy is also worrying European bourgeoisies and is tending to accentuate the divisions within the EU itself over the policy to adopt in the face of pressure from NATO and the United States. As a result, the quarrels within the “Franco-German couple”, already constrained in a “forced marriage”, are intensifying.

### The future of humanity does not lie in the ballot box

Faced with the sinking of society into barbarism, the proletariat can expect nothing from the forthcoming presidential elections in America, or indeed from any of the other elections to come. Whatever the outcome of the Presidential election in the United States, it will in no way reverse the trend towards chaos, war and the fragmentation of the world, and the working class will suffer more than ever the consequences of capitalist exploitation. Elections are only important to spread the illusion among the working class that it can influence the course of events by making the “right choice”, whereas the electoral circus is nothing more than conflict between bourgeois cliques

which are competing ever more sharply for power. Contrary to the lies spread by the Democrats, and in particular by leftist groups, comparing a “progressive” or “lesser evil” camp of Biden to the “absolute evil” of Trump, the proletariat will have to counter the “democratic” discourse, refuse the electoral trap and wage its autonomous class struggle.

As for the bourgeois factions in the US, they are only fighting over the most effective and least costly strategy for perpetuating the American supremacy that they all agree they want to maintain by any means, whatever the consequences for humanity and the planet. Attack Iran militarily or weaken it through an economic blockade? Increase the pressure on Russia to the point of it imploding, or feed the war of attrition? Or threaten the security of its European “allies”? Whatever the answers, they will always be part of the logic of war, and its financing will always demand new sacrifices from workers. In short, whichever faction wins the elections, the result will be further instability, new massacres and a scorched earth policy.

### The proletariat must continue its class struggle

In the face of this unspeakable barbarity, in the face of the promise of widespread chaos, the proletariat represents the only possible alternative to save the human race from a destruction determined by the murderous dynamic of a decadent capitalist system. The working class has returned to its struggle, and its revolutionary potential remains intact. It is still able, in the long term, to affirm its perspective and its communist project.

It is for this struggle that we must fight as a class, rejecting from now on the logic of war and sacrifice. The bourgeois rhetoric that presents war as a “necessity” in the name of preserving peace is a disgusting lie! The real culprit is the capitalist system! **EKA, 18 April 2024**

### The need for class struggle

The current situation is marked by stagnating industrial growth, and even signs of recession, while debts continue to grow and inflation continues to erode wages. It is in this worsening situation that the bourgeoisie needs to attack the workers even more in order to strengthen its military resources. To put it plainly, the bourgeoisie has no other choice, given the spiral into which it is being dragged by the bankruptcy of its system than to coldly plan attacks with a view to preparing for war and imposing austerity in order to drag us further into its logic of destruction.

Such madness, and the new economic attacks that it entails, can only favour the conditions for a continuation of the class struggle. In reality, the ideological campaigns on war paradoxically reveal that the bourgeoisie is walking on eggshells in its attempt to impose austerity. All its concerns are confirmed by the resumption of workers’ struggles at international level, particularly in Western Europe and North America. Such resistance, despite its great weaknesses, testifies to the fact that the working class in these countries is not prepared to “die for the fatherland”.

**WH, 10 April 2024**

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## Obsolete theoretical framework

trivialise the historical gravity and impact of the war in Gaza<sup>17</sup>. On the one hand the positions of *Le Prolétaire-Programme Communiste* hold the view that the present conditions still enable the Palestinian proletariat to fight for its own interests against the Israeli and Palestinian bourgeoisie. On the other hand, *Il Partito Comunista-The Communist Party* has set its sight on the world war, which is “*an ineluctable economic necessity*”, since capitalism “*can only survive by destroying. That’s why it needs the general war*”<sup>18</sup>.

What we have actually seen in the past three years is not a build up towards a world war, but a situation that has accelerated worldwide through an accumulation of crises: pandemic, ecological, food, refugee, and economic crises. Even if some of these groups have acknowledged this accumulation of crises, none of them understands that these crises are not separated cases, but part of the same process of the decomposition of the capitalist world, each one reinforcing each other’s effects. In this process of putrefaction, the war has become the central factor, the real catalyst, aggravating all other crises. It aggravates the global economic crisis, plunges whole sections of the world population into barbarism; it leads to unemployment and social misery in the strongest capitalist countries, and increases the destructive effects of the ecological peril. Therefore, it is mistaken to consider the present war in Gaza as an umpteenth massacre in the Middle East which can be followed again by a period of calm or reconstruction in whatever form<sup>19</sup>.

In the face of this war the various ICPs show their complete incapacity to understand the stakes of the present imperialist confrontations. The absence of an adequate framework, that of the decadence and decomposition of capitalism, leads all the Bordigist organisations to cling to an outdated concept, incapable of explaining all the dynamics of the current situation and opening the door to serious opportunistic slidings. **D&R 22.2.24**

<sup>17</sup> The ICP/ *Il Programma Comunista-Cahiers Communistes* has republished an article about the war in Gaza in 2009, a choice that was justified by this group with the words that “*essentially nothing has changed, except the exponential increase in firepower unleashed in the Gaza Strip*” by the state of Israel.

<sup>18</sup> A May Day against War To Workers of all Countries, *Il Partito Comunista*

<sup>19</sup> The underestimation is also expressed for instance by the few public activities of these groups at the beginning of this war: the ICP/ *Le Prolétaire-Programme Communiste* has published only two articles, the ICP/ *Il Partito Comunista-The Communist Party* two articles and one public meeting, the ICP/ *Il Programma Comunista-Cahiers communistes* two articles and one public meeting.

# The obsolete theoretical framework of the Bordigist groups

Organised violence in the Middle East has given rise to profound indignation throughout the whole world. First the terrorist attack of Hamas on 7 October, killing 1200 and injuring 2700 Israeli citizens, and then the ongoing, massive slaughter of the population in the Gaza strip by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Revolutionary organisations have the duty to denounce this imperialist barbarism as they have done throughout the history of the workers' movement, starting with the "Manifesto to the Workmen of all Nations" by the Paris members of the International: "War for a question of preponderance or a dynasty can, in the eyes of workmen, be nothing but a criminal absurdity"<sup>1</sup>.

In accordance with this responsibility, groups like the Internationalist Communist Tendency, Internationalist Voice, or Internationalist Communist Perspective in Korea, met this minimum requirement as they have in their articles defended a clear internationalist position on the war in the Middle East.

- "The working class must refuse to be recruited into the wars of the ruling class and fight against the exploiters on both sides. There is only one way for the Israeli and Palestinian working class (...) the struggle beyond nations and borders for common working-class interests. Only an international class struggle to overthrow the capitalist system can end the carnage and wars"<sup>2</sup>.

- "Only the class struggle of the workers can offer an alternative to the brutality of capitalism, because the proletariat does not have a country to defend, and its fight must cross national borders and develop on an international scale"<sup>3</sup>.

- "All capitalists are equally mortal enemies of the working class, who should not shed one drop of blood for those who exploit them, much less for their national-imperialist objectives. (...) The fundamental argument of class unity by all sectors of the working class - against the bourgeoisie, its states, its imperialist alignments - regardless of the 'national' origin of its constituent parts, is even more valid"<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of the different Bordigist groups, the situation is more nuanced. As part of the revolutionary milieu, their position is fundamentally internationalist insofar as they denounce the imperialist massacre and reject any support for either of the opposing camps. However, despite loud proclamations of their internationalist commitment, their concrete defence of internationalism is not unequivocal. For some, by supporting the fight against the "national oppression" of the proletarians and the Palestinian masses, for others, by defending the idea that these massacres will generate a development of workers' struggles in the region and throughout the world, these groups reveal dangerous ambiguities regarding how to promote and defend proletarian internationalism in the current period of decomposing capitalism.

## Ambiguities leaving the door ajar to opportunist slidings

Behind its declaration of solidarity with the Palestinian proletarians, the ICP/ *Le Proletaire-Programme Communiste* hides a call for struggle against the national oppression of Palestinians: "Palestine: a proletariat and a people condemned to be massacred. Israel: a state born out of the oppression of the Palestinian people and a Jewish proletariat as prisoner of the immediate benefits of that oppression and accomplice of it"<sup>5</sup>. Thus, while internationalist revolutionaries should denounce the spiral of imperialist clashes between bourgeoisies, into which the different fractions of the proletariat of the Middle East are drawn, and promote the rejection by the workers of any "national liberation" movement because "the pro-

letarians have no homeland", the ICP/ *Le Proletaire-Programme Communiste* tends to call, first of all, for a struggle to put an end to "Israel's oppression of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank", which secondly excludes any solidarity with the working class in Israel which "is prisoner of the immediate benefits of that oppression and accomplice of it".

"these groups reveal dangerous ambiguities on how to promote and defend proletarian internationalism in the current period of decomposing capitalism"

Another group, the ICP/ *Il Partito Comunista-The Communist Party*, seems to defend convincing internationalist positions when it writes: "We must tell the Palestinian proletarians not to be deceived by their bourgeoisie (...) to immolate themselves as cannon fodder in wars contrary to their interests". But in the next sentence, it adds: "We must tell the Israeli Jewish proletarians to fight against their bourgeoisie and against the national oppression of their Palestinian class brothers"<sup>6</sup>. So, it doesn't call here for the international solidarity of all proletarians against the imperialist war, but it urges Israeli proletarians to support the Palestinian workers' struggle against national oppression.

Finally, the ICP/ *Il Programma Comunista-Cahiers Communistes* recognises the exhaustion of the anti-colonial "national revolutionary" movements and thus puts forward the perspective that "in this terrible situation, the Middle Eastern proletariat (...) will be able to find the strength to escape the bonds of opportunism which imprison it. We hope that, as in the great battles of the past, it will be able to field the best fighters for its cause, that it will be able to turn today's unavoidable defeat into the starting point for a future rich in victories"<sup>7</sup>. In other words, they propagate the false perspective according to which the proletariat of the Middle East, on its own, mobilised as it is behind religious and nationalist mystifications and crushed by imperialist massacres, will be able to learn the lessons of defeats and be at the basis of the resurgence of struggles which are renewing "with the great battles of the past" (one wonders which ones; perhaps the so called "national-revolutionary movements" of the 1960s and 1970s where the working class of the Middle East was mobilised behind various national bourgeois factions?)

Even if these organisations do not openly support an imperialist camp – neither the Palestinian bourgeoisie in the West Bank nor that in the Gaza Strip – they leave the door ajar for supporting the struggle of the Palestinian "masses" and "people" against their "national oppression", which could only exacerbate the gulf between the working class in Israel and the Arab countries. These slidings towards so called "nationalist-revolutionary" perspectives constitute a threat to the internationalist stance of these organisations.

Proletarian internationalism is a class frontier which, in the face of imperialist war, separates the working class from the bourgeoisie. It is a principle that we must defend with tooth and nail at every moment of our activities: in interventions in worker's struggles, in public meetings, in correspondence, and in our press. In this sense we endorse the words of Lenin that "there is one, and only one, kind of real internationalism, and that is – working whole-heartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting (by propaganda, sympathy, and material aid) this struggle, this, and only this, line, in every country without exception. Everything else is deception..."<sup>8</sup>. The Bolsheviks often stood alone in their

criticism of opportunist positions on the question of war, but this was an indispensable part of their work to construct the world party. Such a theoretical fight was and is essential to deepen all the consequences of an internationalist position and demarcate revolutionaries from the enemies of the working class, particularly the social chauvinists.

## Obsolete theoretical framework leads to opportunist slidings

In the period of the decadence of capitalism, a period where the relations of production established by the capitalist mode of production have been transformed into an increasingly heavy obstacle to the development of the productive forces, the bourgeoisie no longer has a progressive role to play in the development of society. Today, the creation of a new nation, the legal constitution of a new country, does not allow any real step forward in a development that the oldest and most powerful countries are themselves incapable of assuming. In a world dominated by imperialist confrontations, any struggle for "national liberation", far from constituting any progressive dynamic, constitutes in reality a moment in imperialist confrontations, in which the proletarians and peasants enrolled, voluntarily or by force, only participate, as cannon fodder.

The "national liberation" movements, which marked the 1960s and 1970s in particular, clearly demonstrated that the replacement of the colonisers by a national bourgeoisie in no way represented a progress for the proletariat, but on the contrary led it into countless conflicts between imperialist interests, in which workers and peasants were massacred. But the obsolete framework of the Bordigist groups prevents them from understanding the real stakes the international proletariat, and its sections in Israel/ Palestine, is confronted with in the imperialist inferno of Gaza.

The group *Le Proletaire-Programme Communiste* continues to analyse the Palestinian question in the framework of "the spirit and the 'national-revolutionary' independence drive which characterised the struggles against national oppression in Algeria, Congo and, later, Angola and Mozambique, and which had long characterised the spontaneous revolt of the Palestinian proletariat"<sup>9</sup>. The drama and the challenge of the Palestinian "liberation movement" is, for *Le Proletaire-Programme Communiste*, that "the gigantic class potential represented by the Palestinian proletariat and proletarian masses, while manifesting itself through their armed and indomitable struggle in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, did not express an autonomous, class-based political programme capable of guiding the national movement"<sup>10</sup>. Thus, this group still calls for a Palestinian "liberation movement", while revolutionaries on the contrary must defend the position that today all states, all bourgeoisies are imperialist and that proletarians should in no way support movements against national oppression.

*Il Partito Comunista-The Communist Party* fundamentally shares the same framework, as it formulates the critique that this war is not a true "national liberation struggle" by the Palestinians, because such a struggle "would not have exposed the people of Gaza with such cynicism to Israel's appalling vengeance"<sup>11</sup>. Whereas revolutionaries must call for a rejection of every support for nationalist aims, this group insists on winning support for the struggle against national oppression among the Israeli working class and cynically regrets that the massacre by Hamas made it impossible: "Moreover, the struggle against the odious national oppression imposed on the Palestinians might have won support even among Israelis, primarily among the working class, if it had not been placed on the plane of the massacre of civilians, in compliance with the deliberate program of killing Jews wherever they are, carried out by the obscurantist Hamas"<sup>12</sup>.

For its part, *Il Programma Comunista-Cahiers*

9 *Prise de position du PCI/ Le prolétaire* 4/1/24

10 *Ibid.*

11 The Gazan Proletariat Crushed in a war between world imperialisms, *The Communist Party* 56, - Feb-March 2024

12 *Ibid.*

*Communistes* recognises the exhaustion of the anti-colonial movements since the mid-1970s and emphasises that "the unresolved 'national questions' [have] turned into counter-revolutionary cancers"<sup>13</sup>. However, the impossibility of national revolutionary movements today leads this group to argue that this context of total imperialist destruction and barbaric chaos constitutes a fertile ground for the development of a broad proletarian movement: "What will cause governments most alarm, if the bloodbath continues, will be the massive declarations of solidarity from the Arab capitals (...) and from the many capitalist strongholds (where the Arab and in particular Palestinian proletariat has lived for decades)". Certainly, the local bourgeoisie in alliance with the various religious and nationalist leaders will exploit religious and nationalist divisions "to avoid class contagion. Bourgeois governments will do all they can to break the instinctive bond with far-off proletarians massacred by such powerful forces: this bond, too, has its material role in the struggle, while the storm of 'cast lead' strikes at homes and bodies. And so, we trust that this instinctive bond with the immigrant proletarian masses in the imperialist cities will manage to find the path towards unrelenting class warfare"<sup>14</sup>. In short, as the title of their article already suggests<sup>15</sup>, their perspective is that the proletarian reaction will depart from the bloodbaths of the imperialist confrontations and from the very parts of the world proletariat that are trapped in the "counter-revolutionary cancers" of national liberation and massacred by the different imperialisms in the Middle East. But, in contrast to what happened during the First World War, in the present period of decomposing capitalism, it is the extension of the struggle of the world proletariat against attacks provoked by the economic crisis and the expansion of militarism that will offer a perspective to the proletarians in the Middle East.

Since the First World War, a "national-revolutionary" struggle has never constituted a perspective for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat that could constitute the starting point for a genuine proletarian reaction. The obsolete framework of these Bordigist groups prevents them from understanding the current stakes in the Middle East and leads them to develop ambiguous positions, opening the doors to opportunist slidings.

## This obsolete framework also leads to the trivialisation of war

The war in Gaza is not, as *Il Programma Comunista-Cahiers Communistes* states, "the umpteenth wave of slaughter", presumably followed by a new period of stability and peace. On the contrary, this war represents a significant new step in the acceleration of chaos in the region and beyond. "The sheer scale of the killings indicates that the barbarity has reached a new level. (...) Both sides are wallowing in the most appalling and irrational murderous fury!"<sup>16</sup>. We are faced with the utmost expression of barbarism, a bloody fight until nothing else is left but ruins in a region that has become completely uninhabitable. The war in Ukraine was already a new stage in the aggravation of imperialist confrontations. The war in Gaza takes it one step further. Even if this won't lead to the outbreak of a world war, the cumulation and combined effects of all these wars may have a similar or even worse consequences for life on the planet. But the Bordigist groups express a strong tendency to underestimate the stakes of the present situation, leading to erroneous conclusions and orientations. Their inability to understand the real dangers contained in the present situation is clearly shown in the fact that these organisations

13 Israel and Palestine: State terrorism and proletarian defeatism, *The Internationalist*, 29.12.2023

14 Israel and Palestine: State terrorism and proletarian defeatism, *The Internationalist*, 29.12.2023

15 Israel and Palestine: State terrorism and proletarian defeatism. Concerning the inapplicability of the perspective of revolutionary defeatism in today's situation, read "Militarism and decomposition (May 2022), *International Review* 168.

16 Neither Israel nor Palestine! Workers have no fatherland!, ICC

1 Réveil of July 12 1870, cited in *The Civil war in France*, K. Marx.

2 Against the carnage in the Middle East, beyond nationalism to class war against the ruling class!; *Internationalist Communist Perspective in Korea*

3 The Propaganda War, The War of Propaganda, *Internationalist Voice*

4 The Latest Butchery in the Middle East is Part of the March to Generalised War, *Internationalist Communist Tendency*

5 Today's terrorist acts by Hamas, like yesterday's acts by Fatah ... *Le Proletaire*

6 War in Gaza, *Il Partito Comunista*

7 Israel and Palestine: State terrorism and proletarian defeatism, *The Internationalist*, 29.12.2023

8 Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*, Chapter 10

# Workers will pay the cost of the economic crisis

The whirlwind of serious shocks to the global economy over the last two years, initially as a result of the corona-virus pandemic and the devastating environmental destruction, and now increasingly as a result of the wars, has put the German economy under severe pressure. While it was possible to keep the economy afloat during the pandemic, mainly thanks to gigantic rescue packages, the war in Ukraine and the associated global offensive by the USA have had a major impact at an economic level.

## The impact of the war on energy supplies, growth and competitiveness

The sanctions imposed on Russia as a result of the war have forced German capital to make major cuts to its energy supply and at the same time have caused huge and lasting price increases across the board, especially in the energy and food sectors. A gigantic programme of renewal and conversion of the energy supply has begun ... and shortly after its adoption, it has already encountered obstacles and difficulties getting the necessary funding.

The switch to new technologies (heat pumps) and the widespread provision of charging stations for electric vehicles, etc. is inconceivable without massive financial subsidies from the state. After initial promises of widespread subsidies, these and other subsidies have now been cut back considerably. Owing to inflation and the accompanying rise in interest rates, the banks are in a difficult position. The situation in the construction industry is most critical and there has already been a reported 30% drop in orders with many construction sites having to shut down.

While the defence industry is booming with a record numbers of new orders, production is collapsing in other parts of the economy, with the result that Germany is registering the lowest growth in Europe and has even slipped into recession. At the same time, inflation has weakened competitiveness, particularly in the energy market, as the price of gas and electricity in Germany is up to five times higher than that in the USA.

## The increased vulnerability of supplies

Furthermore, the Covid pandemic had already exposed some vulnerability due to the heavy dependency on suppliers of medical products from China and India. In an attempt to wrestle Russia to the floor economically, the entire energy sector has been turned on its head, and the new dependencies taking place only create exposure to the likelihood of blackmail and threaten to weaken competitiveness even more. The war in the Middle East and the spread of the conflict across the region has now created new bottlenecks in the supply chains on the Red Sea/Djibouti Strait as a result of the Houthi missile attacks (with ships resorting to longer and more expensive detours around the coast of southern Africa).

## Germany's opposition to the US strategy against China and the intensification of US pressure

In addition to the sanctions package against Russia and the attempt to bleed Russia dry economically, the US has also strengthened its package of sanctions against China, both directly and indirectly, targeting all companies operating in China. At the same time, the USA has introduced the Inflation Reduction Act, which is intended to incentivise investment in the USA. This poses the threat of de-industrialisation in Europe. Also, US companies that invest in Europe are being hit by punitive measures from the US government (Ford, for example, has decided to cut back investment at its plant in Cologne, switching it to the USA, with 1700 redundancies). German capital knows that if Trump becomes president again, not only will the tone become harsher, but it also means that conflict between Germany and the US will intensify across many sectors.

## The US-China trade war

While the USA wants to bring China to its knees, Germany is simultaneously being squeezed by China. From the global Silk Road project to the acquisition of companies and plants, Chinese competition is pushing further and further ahead.

After Germany had gained a considerable share of the Chinese car market, with several German car manufacturers generating around 40% of their sales in China at peak times, China has for some time now been on the offensive in the e-car sector. Alongside Tesla, Chinese competition is the most dangerous for the German automobile sector.

On the one hand, the US threat means that German companies will withdraw from China, either completely or in certain areas, and some German car plants will be converted into (seemingly) independent units in China so it can maintain a local presence.

Should the West's economic war against China escalate, VW China, for example, has plans to separate itself from the parent company at some cost. *"Consequently, German investment in China has recently increased sharply, raising the German investment portfolio there to record levels. Economists admit that this effect of the Western economic war is paradoxical and not actually intended"*(1).

In the event of an escalation, production "in China for China" should be able to continue by decoupling and taking advantage of lower Chinese wages. The plan of retaining production in Germany would only lead to dramatic job losses in Germany. This is why the most serious cuts in the automobile industry, which has long been a mainstay of the German economy, are now imminent.

In short, the intensified military offensive against China by the USA, together with the economic sanctions packages, is already putting German capital in a difficult situation. And with China's dramatic rise over the years, it provided a large market and a workshop for the world, from which Germany was able to benefit for a long time. But this is all now rebounding detrimentally on Germany.

Even though Germany certainly has a common interest in working with the USA to weaken China, it does not want to be marginalised in the process. There will inevitably be more conflicts between the USA and Germany and between Germany and China - and also within the German bourgeoisie in dealing with this problem (it is already a major bone of contention between the SPD and the Greens in the coalition government).

## The boomerang: From benefiting from globalisation to a period of growing instability

With the opening to the East and the gradual integration of many East European countries into the EU, Germany gained many advantages: e.g. access to cheap labour. There would be no building site, no craft business, no delivery of goods without lorry drivers from Eastern Europe and no retirement home or hospital, no agricultural business without low-wage workers, especially from Eastern Europe. In this respect, the downward pressure on wages increased and maintained competitiveness alongside the well-known market expansion into Eastern Europe through the common market. The worldwide surge in globalisation, which had occurred with the integration of China and other parts of the periphery, and which then declined worldwide with the Covid pandemic, the Ukraine war and the attempt to contain China, is now noticeably impacting Eastern Europe. The Ukraine war has destabilised the whole region (for example, with the Poland-Hungary border blockades). The consequences of the war, the renewed dominance of national interests and the strong presence of populist forces throughout Europe, are generating more areas of conflict and uncertainty in the economy.

## The mountain of debt becomes an avalanche

The brutal intensification of competition and the global competition for investment opportunities is forcing every state to sink into spiraling debt, using massive subsidies to attract capital. Competition without gigantic subsidies, using taxpayers' money, is unthinkable. No project of modernisation and/or renewal or repair of infrastructure facilities can take place without injections of state money (billions of euros of support for investments in semiconductor production facilities is one example). This combination of subsidies, state reconstruction measures and rescue packages had already been systematically introduced after 1989 following reunification, with

1. From Information on German Foreign Policy

the result that an astronomically high level of debt has now been reached. As long as interest rates were low or even zero, the cost remained "low". But with the rise in interest rates fueled by the war in Ukraine, a turning point has now been reached.

## Unleashing a wave of attacks with the "budget crisis"

The latest "budget crisis" is only the start of the debt frenzy. The latest parliamentary-judicial fiasco has forced the government, or rather it has taken advantage of it, to implement a series of brutal price increases and cuts that will cost every family dearly. Gone are the phases of "temporary relief" and "cushioning the blow" after corona-virus and the "concealment" and cover-up of the costs of the war. A brutal downturn is now imminent. Even if Germany still has the most resources in the EU for the distribution of state subsidies due to its continuing economic superiority, the benefit is getting smaller and smaller for capital, forcing it to go on to the attack.

The initial consequences of the price increases for gas had already led to redundancies and relocations at the major chemical companies, as well as job cuts. Due to the "green" transition, massive job cuts are imminent in the automobile industry, while many department stores and shops are closing in the retail sector. The watchword everywhere is "cut labour costs"! The resulting shortage of housing and the collapse of investment in the construction sector will mean that tenants will have to spend an even higher proportion of their income on rent<sup>2</sup>.

## Labour shortage - a new feature of capitalist decadence in the phase of decomposition

Several factors are coming together:

- the demographic problem. As in many industrialised countries, the "native" population is shrinking (we will not go into the reasons here);
- as a result of years of merciless staff cuts and worsening working conditions (especially in healthcare, geriatric care, education and transport), many employees are worn out and suffering from burnout;
- at the same time, as elsewhere (from China to the USA), the motivation to work hard is decreasing, which is driving many to quit their jobs;

2. After the crash landing in the construction sector, 30% of all construction sites are at a standstill, with a shortage of more than 700,000 homes already. Many tenants spend 30-40% of their income on rent. The numbers employed in the construction industry has already fallen by 30,000.

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## The working class is still fighting!

lary in the public sector, demanding payment of the wages they were owed.

### An unbroken fighting spirit

Even today, while war is still raging in Ukraine and Gaza, workers' strikes and demonstrations are continuing to spread around the world, particularly in Europe.

In Germany, Europe's largest economy, railway workers launched a massive historic week-long strike at the end of January. This is the latest in a long series of strikes against extended working hours and for higher wages. In the coming months, the rail network could be affected by indefinite strikes. In the country renowned for "social dialogue", strikes have been unfolding for months in many sectors: strikes in the steel industry, the civil service, transport, health, refuse collection, etc. On January 30, a national rally of 5,000 doctors took place in Hanover. On February 1st, eleven of the country's airports were affected by a strike by security staff, while 90,000 bus, tram and metro drivers also stopped work. 10,000 retail workers were also on strike in mid-February and Lufthansa ground staff were called out on strike on 20 February...

This strike movement, in terms of its broad scale and duration, is also unprecedented in a country renowned for the enormous administrative obstacles erected in the face of every social movement, and the cordon of steel imposed by trade unions that has long enabled the bourgeoisie to impose

- recent studies show that the level of education has fallen in many areas;

- a lack of unqualified and, above all, qualified personnel (in the semiconductor industry alone, the shortage of skilled workers has risen from 62,000 to over 80,000). In other words, production is being held back due to labour shortages, while a lot of employees in other sectors are losing their jobs.

The crisis no longer has just one face - mass redundancies - it has several faces: redundancies and labour shortages.

At the same time, German capital is handicapped by political incompetence, xenophobia and populism, which is hindering the influx of qualified labour. Finally, the unbelievable inertia of German bureaucracy should be mentioned. There is no effective management of immigration. All this restricts competitiveness, while at the same time a whole campaign against illegal immigration is underway and stricter deportation measures have been announced.

## What lies in store for us?

As a result of the mounting costs of the wars, the costs of environmental destruction, inflation, the energy crisis, the costs of competition, the costs of debt and the price of decades of neglect - or the deliberate dismantling and decay of infrastructure - the cuts in the education system, the simultaneous incessant rise in costs for the accommodation and maintenance of the unstoppable number of refugees, German capital will have to resort to even more brutal action.

It will also have to avoid pressure from the USA and China. How will the situation in the USA affect the Ukraine war and its financing in particular? What will be the consequences of the worldwide unraveling of globalisation? Will Germany continue to reach joint agreements with the EU, especially with France? So far, the tendencies of every-man-for-himself have also increased here. Generally speaking, even in the Covid era, there was initially a dominant tendency to go it alone and corresponding chaos in dealing with vaccines and masks. No matter how the German bourgeoisie reacts, everything boils down to stepping up the attacks against the working class.

The situation and dynamics of the crisis in Germany are an expression of a global situation in which the entire burden is falling on the shoulders of the working class. We must not accept this and must unite to defend our living conditions at an international level. We will discuss what this means in another article. **TW 19.02.2024**

austerity plans and "reforms" without the working class really reacting. Despite the difficulties in breaking free from the corporatist straitjacket and mobilising "all together", the struggles in Germany are of immense importance and symbolic significance. They are taking place in the heart of a major industrial geographical region, in the country that was the epicentre of the revolutionary wave of the 1920s and the tragic theatre of a long period of counter-revolution. The current movement is clearly part of the international revival of the class struggle.

However, this workers' combativity is not confined to Germany. In Finland, a country with little tradition of industrial strike action, a "historic strike" took place for 48 hours at the beginning of February. Even more recently, dockers paralysed port activity in this country for four days between February 18 and 21. Up to 300,000 people were on strike to oppose the law to "reform workers' rights". In Turkey, tens of thousands of steelworkers mobilised for months to demand pay rises at a time of rocketing prices. In Belgium, it was the non-commercial sector that went on strike and demonstrated in Brussels on January 31. In Spain, the United Kingdom, France and Greece, strikes continue in many sectors. The bourgeoisie is maintaining a deafening media blackout on these struggles, because it is well aware of the growing discontent among workers and the danger posed by broadcasting reports of such mobilisations.

**Continued on page 5**

# The working class has finally recovered from the defeat

This year marks 40 years since the start of miners' strike. On 6 March 1984 the miners of 20 collieries in the Yorkshire coalfield spontaneously started a strike after the announcement of the planned pit closures. They were followed by tens of thousands of other miners elsewhere in the country. Among them were many who were not immediately affected, but joined the strike in solidarity with the 20,000 miners who were threatened by lay-offs. More than 100,000 workers in a key sector of the working class braved the measures of the Thatcher government and the National Coal Board.

The strike was not an isolated event. It was part of a wave of struggles that had begun with the strike of the public sector workers in Belgium in the late summer of 1983, in response to the lowering of wages. A few weeks later, the same scenario unfolded in the Netherlands, where the government had also decided to cut incomes by 3.5 per cent.

These attacks on the conditions of the working class were an expression of the conditions of the 1980s, the 'years of truth', when the bourgeoisie could no longer delay its economic attacks, since the effects of the Keynesian economic policy were as good as exhausted. This time the attack was "not improvised, but has been prepared over several years now by the ruling class at the international level"<sup>1</sup>.

In the central countries of capitalism the bourgeoisie had developed "a clear political strategy for confronting the class with the 'left in opposition', whereby the left fractions were removed from the government teams so that they could pose as opponents of the austerity measures. This was complemented with the deployment of rank and file unionism, using radical rhetoric against the union leaderships' 'betrayals'"<sup>2</sup>.

Since the beginning of 1984, the French bourgeoisie had launched an attack on the working class in France's major industrial centres. The policy of "restructurings" and "modernisations" targeted mainly shipbuilding, mines, metal, steel, and even the chemical and telephone sectors. When 12,000 to 17,000 redundancies were announced in Lorraine's steel industry, the lid flew off the social kettle. But the unions managed to keep Lorraine's steel workers carefully isolated

<sup>1</sup> "International class struggle: The simultaneity of workers strikes: what are the perspectives?" *International Review* 38.

<sup>2</sup> "After 20 years: Lessons of the miners' strike are still relevant", *World Revolution* 273.

from the rest of the working class, who were also hit by massive layoffs. The unions were able to give the demonstration in Paris a regional flavour, with a large Lorraine cross and majorettes in traditional costume at the front.

Along the lines of the policy of the bourgeoisie in other countries, the British ruling class was determined to inflict a defeat on the working class to prevent it from thwarting the measures of the government. The miners were a very suitable object, since a defeat of the miners, as a key sector of the working class, would certainly have a demoralising impact on the whole class and significantly affect its combativity.

The purpose was not just to close a number of pits, but to inflict a major defeat on the miners in order to put an end to any further class resistance in the UK. Therefore the British bourgeoisie had devised a highly developed strategy, which had been worked out long before (the Ridley Plan of 1977). Its key components were:

- \* to close the country's unprofitable coal mines, but not all of them at the same time, in order to provoke a possible situation in which parts of the miners went on strike and others continued to work;

- \* the appointment of a radical union member - belonging to Labour's left wing - as leader of the NUM.

- \* to stockpile enough coal in case the extraction of coal could no longer be guaranteed due to a complete shut down in the coal industry;

- \* the introduction of three new laws to make every strike, organised by the union, subject to stricter rules. For instance the Employment Act 1982 effectively outlawed secondary, or "sympathy" strike action;

- \* deals with unions in other sectors (transport, steel, energy, etc.) to prevent the outbreak of strikes in these sectors, even if that meant meeting the demands of the workers.

The situation unfolded more or less as the bourgeoisie had expected. On the basis of the division between the miners who were on strike and those who kept on working, the bourgeoisie, with the help of the NUM and other unions, were able to imprison the workers in the corporatism of the coal industry and to exhaust them in a year long strike. After a year's struggle the miners had to admit that they were defeated, with tens of thousands of miners being effectively laid off, doomed to years of unemployment.



The fact that it remained isolated does not mean that the strike did not have the strength and the potential to break with the corporatist confines, imposed by the union, and to extend to other sectors of the class. In particular, the opportunity presented itself on two occasions: during the two strikes of the dock workers in the summer and during the strike of the car workers in November. But all the unions, in close consultation with the government and with each other, succeeded in keeping the strikes separated from each other - for example, though the dockers' union insisting that they were engaged in an "industrial, not a political dispute" so that it had no direct connection to the miners' strike. Despite their huge reserves of combativity, the miners allowed themselves to be manipulated by the unions, including the NUM

The working class had lost a battle, but this was not the end of the class war or even of the strike wave. Several more strikes took place around the world and even in the UK, although they no longer had the same dynamic as at the beginning of the wave in 1983, when it was characterised by:

- \* a tendency towards a broad simultaneity of struggles nationally and internationally;

- \* a tendency towards spontaneous struggles, with the capacity for initially bypassing the unions;

- \* a growth in confidence in the proletariat's capacity to defend itself against the attacks<sup>3</sup>.

## An international strategy of the ruling class

"It was the British bourgeoisie (the most intelligent in the world), with the policies of the 'Iron Lady' Margaret Thatcher, which sounded the keynote for the strategy of the ruling class in other central countries, aimed at stopping the dynamic of the class struggle (...) notably in France, the country in Europe where the proletariat had traditionally been very combative"<sup>4</sup>.

For instance, after the miners' strike had ended on 3 March 1985 "the French bourgeoisie (...) set out to lock up the workers in corporatism, taking full advantage of the tendency towards 'each for themselves' (which was one of the first phenomena of the decomposition of capitalism)"<sup>5</sup>. This first expression of decomposition, working in a more underhand manner, slowly gained more impact in the second half of the 1980s, giving the anti-proletarian policy of the ruling class a powerful boost in breaking the momentum of the workers' struggle on all fronts.

The final blow to the strike movement in the 1980s was inflicted by the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the countries of "really existing socialism" (ie the Stalinist variety of capitalism) which ushered in a deafening campaign about the death of communism and the disappearance of the working class. This campaign had a very negative impact on the consciousness and the combativity in the class. The ensuing reflux in struggle was accompanied by a loss of self-confidence and a deep confusion in the proletariat about its identity as a class, which was reinforced by the break-up of many traditionally combative industrial sectors (mines, shipyards, steel, etc) and the policy of "re-

locations" to countries where labour power was much cheaper. But despite this historic setback in its struggle, the working class had not been decisively defeated, and contrary to the campaign of the bourgeoisie, it had not disappeared.

Expressions of proletarian unrest continued (for example the students' movement in France in 2006, and the Indignados movement in Spain in 2011), but nowhere did the working class manage to set the tone and to put forward a clear proletarian perspective. Strikes remained strongly controlled by the official unions, by rank and file bodies or "coordinations", and generally isolated from each other. Or, in the case of the Indignados, the participants had a great difficulty in seeing themselves as part of the working class - a testimony to the serious loss of class identity that developed during the 90s and 2000s. Above all, pointing to the defeat of the miners, the bourgeoisie succeeded in pushing the message that "struggle doesn't pay".

Despite the huge obstacles, the ICC never lost faith in the ability of the working class to take up the struggle again at a later date against the effects of the economic crisis, which continued to fester and deepen. At the same time we were aware that any revival of the struggle would not take place quickly and without a great effort. The fundamental change in the overall conditions facing the class, the opening of the phase of decomposition, required a considerable reorientation in the class about the objectives of the struggle. The reality of a system descending into barbarism through war, ecological destruction and social dislocation made it more necessary than ever for workers to integrate the political dimension into their defensive struggles.

In 2022, more than 30 years later, the confidence in the working class finally materialised in a break with the years of passivity and resignation. It was the working class in the United Kingdom that first declared that "enough is enough" and, for more than a year, numerous sectors took up the struggle against the effects of the "cost of living crisis". And it did not stop there: the struggle of British workers was followed by workers in France and then by those in various other countries.

In recent years, a new generation of workers has emerged, not weighed down by the defeat of the 1980s and subsequent campaign on the death of communism. "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"<sup>6</sup>.

Since the summer of 2022, through these massive and simultaneous mobilisations, the working class has picked up where the struggle had ended in the late 1980s. The proletariat is again beginning to recognise itself again as a social force and to rediscover its identity as a class. In this sense, today's struggles are in continuity with those of 35 years ago. Like in the 1980s, the workers are again responding to and fighting against the attacks of the bourgeoisie, no longer as a more or less amorphous mass with no clear class identity, but as a part of the class whose interests are fundamentally opposed to those of the bourgeoisie and its state.

Dennis

<sup>6</sup> Resolution on the International Situation, 25th ICC Congress, *International Review* 170

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## The old mole is still burrowing

But the breakthrough we are witnessing is not only linked to the massive and simultaneous nature of the mobilisations. The proletariat is beginning to recognise itself again as a social force and to rediscover its identity. Despite all the illusions and confusion, on placards and in discussions, statements that "we are workers" and "we are all in the same boat" could be seen being expressed..... These were by no means empty words! Because behind these words, solidarity is very real: solidarity between generations, first of all, as we saw very clearly in France when pensioners took to the streets en masse to support "the young"; then between sectors, as in the United States with the honking car horns outside the striking factories or in Scandinavia in defence of Tesla workers.

There were even embryonic expressions of international solidarity. The Mobilier National in France went on strike in solidarity with the cultural workers on strike in Great Britain. Refineries in Belgium went on strike in support of the mobilisation in France, while small demonstrations multiplied around the world to denounce the ferocious repression of the French state. In Italy, while many sectors have been mobilising for several months, bus, tram and metro drivers went on strike on 24 January: in the wake of the movement against pension reform in France, the workers said they wanted to carry out mobilisations "just like in France", demonstrating the links that workers are beginning to recognise across borders and the desire to learn the lessons of previous movements.

The proletariat is also starting to reappropriate its experience of struggles. In Britain, the so-called "summer of discontent" explicitly referred to the major strikes of the "winter of discontent" in 1978-1979. In the French demonstrations, references to May '68 and the fight against the CPE in 2006 featured on placards at the same time as the beginnings of a reflection on these movements. And all this at a time when the state is imposing restrictions and continuing to legitimise and justify the war.

Of course, we are still a long way from a massive and profound return of class consciousness. Of course, all these expressions of solidarity and reflection are still riddled with confusion and illusions, easily subverted by the bourgeoisie's complementary bodies, the unions and the left-wing parties. But is that a reason for revolutionaries not to appreciate the shift<sup>3</sup> that is taking place compared to previous decades, decades of silence, resignation, rejection of the very idea of the working class and complete obliviousness of that experience?

The rest of this article can be read on the website under the subtitle: "The bourgeoisie is still able to take advantage of the immense weaknesses of the working class".

<sup>3</sup> See for example "The ICT's ambiguities about the historical significance of the strike wave in the UK" *ICConline* - 2023

<sup>3</sup> See: "Theses on the present upsurge in class struggle", *International Review* no. 36.

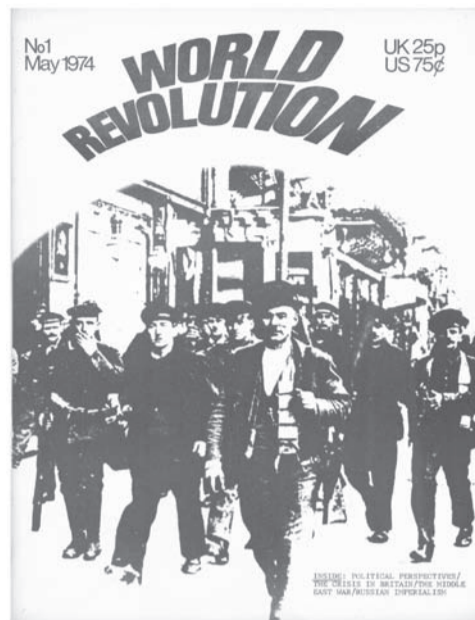
<sup>4</sup> "Resolution on the balance of forces between the classes" (2019), *International Review* 164.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

# WR 400: Fifty years of intervention in the working class

With this issue, the ICC has now published four hundred issues of *World Revolution*. The first issue came out in May 1974, so the publication has been going for fifty years. Today, in the era of the internet, “fake news” and constant noise from “social media”, a printed paper may seem obsolete. On the contrary; the printed press is still, together with our articles published on our website, the backbone of the ICC’s intervention and will continue to be. The sales of the paper press are still a vital part of our activities, important in the sense that it gives an opportunity for face-to-face discussion, at meetings, demonstrations, picket lines and other places where we intervene. Today, when social media and flashy sites are the norm, and anyone can proclaim to be an organisation, our paper press, together with constantly updated articles on our website, represents not only continuity with traditions and our own past practice but also the existence of a real organisation and not merely a personal blog.

Already in 2006, when WR published its 300th issue, we wrote: “Right from the start we tried to put the publication on a historical basis, drawing on the contributions of the Italian, German and Dutch Left. We were also part of an international tendency that formed the ICC in 1975. We warned of the danger of expecting immediate results from intervention and falling into activism. The



disappearance internationally of so many printed papers and journals shows how far our warnings were ignored”.

As the backbone of the organisation’s intervention the press tries to answer the questions being posed by the class struggle. As we said in 1978, in

the series ‘The Present Tasks of Revolutionaries’ (WR 17-19):

“Intervention is first and foremost a question of elaborating and disseminating ideas”. In practice this means “the stimulation of reflection in the class, especially amongst those elements who are moving towards communist ideas, is the central aim of the organisation’s publications. These publications must be composed both of basic programmatic texts and of analyses which apply these basic class positions to the various issues which arise out of the general situation, so that the organisation can assist these elements to understand what’s happening on the world. As an instrument for understanding social reality, the publications must bring theoretical clarification to the general problems confronting the class; as an instrument of combat, they must also contain polemical texts directed against confused or counter-revolutionary positions and the groups which defend them”.

Today, with the continuing acceleration of decomposition since the beginning of the 2020s, with bloody wars and conflicts ravaging Europe and the Middle East, at the same time as the working class is taking up its struggle on an international scale, this understanding of the role of our press remains entirely valid. Through our press, whether it is our paper press or our publication on

the internet, we can maintain our role as a reference pole in the working class and in the milieu of politicised elements.

As we wrote in 2006: “In all this we want to show the debates taking place in the international milieu. We want to make a contribution as a living organisation to a process of clarification that is already underway. Sometimes this will mean producing articles on general questions such as the perspective of communism, the nature of the working class, what imperialism is or how to understand the decadence and decomposition of capitalism. We want to show how capitalism’s economic crisis is unfolding, what’s going on in imperialist conflicts, how the bourgeoisie arranges its forces, and how the class struggle is developing.

We are also committed to defending the basic principles of behaviour within the working class movement against all their detractors. Fundamentally we want WR, as one of the publications of the ICC, to act as a reference point for all those who are challenging the ideas of the ruling class, or want to participate in the struggle of the working class, or see communism as a necessity for humanity, or are searching for a coherent understanding of what’s going on in the world.”

**World Revolution, May 2024**

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## Critique of Saito’s “Degrowth Communism”

in the imperialist drive of the major powers, Marx saw that the sooner the proletarian revolution broke out in the industrialised centres, the less pain and misery would be inflicted in the peripheries of the system. Marx did not live to see all the consequences of imperialism’s conquest of the planet, but others who took up his method, such as Lenin and Luxemburg, were able to recognise, in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that capitalism as a whole was entering its epoch of decline, thus posing the possibility – and the necessity – for a world-wide proletarian revolution.



The same concern informed the “late” Marx’s burgeoning interest in the ecological question. Stimulated by his readings of scientists such as Liebig and Fraas, who had become aware of the destructive side of capitalist agriculture (Liebig termed it “robbery agriculture”), which in its hunger for immediate profit was exhausting the fertility of the soil and wantonly destroying the forests (which Marx already noted was having a deleterious effect on the climate). If the development of capitalism was already undermining the natural basis for the production of life’s necessities, then perhaps its “progressive mission” was drawing to a close – but this didn’t invalidate the method which had been able to recognise the positive role played by the bourgeoisie in overcoming the bar-

riers of feudalism. Furthermore – and Saito is well aware of this, having shown it in his earlier works – Marx’s preoccupation with capitalism’s impact on the relationship between humanity and nature did not come from nowhere: its roots can be found in the notion of man’s alienation from his “inorganic body” in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, a notion further elaborated in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, notably in the idea of the “metabolic rift” in the latter work. By the same token, the recognition that communist society would have to overcome the rigid separation between town and country can be found both in the early writings of Marx and Engels, and in the period of Marx’s inquiry into agricultural science, when it was seen as a precondition for restoring the soil’s natural fertility. Elaboration, development, criticism of outmoded ideas – but no “epistemological break”.

### Only the class struggle leads towards communism

There is much more that we could say about Saito’s actual vision of communism. In particular, it relies heavily on the notion of the “the commons”, implying that precapitalist communal forms still have a substantial existence in present-day capitalism, and could even serve as a kind of nucleus for the communist transformation. In fact, it had already become apparent in Lenin’s day that imperialist capital was fast completing the work carried out in the period of “primitive accumulation” – the destruction of communal ties and the separation of the producer from the soil. A century or more later this is even more evident. The vast slums that surround the mega-cities in the peripheries of the system testify both to the devastation of old communal forms and decadent capitalism’s inability to integrate vast number of the dispossessed into the “modern” network of production.

This idea that the new society could be built in the shell of the old reveals what is perhaps the most fundamental distortion of marxism in Saito’s book. To be sure, Saito criticises the “Green New Deal” – both because of its reliance on “top down” measures imposed by the state, and because it does not address the problem of capitalism’s need for endless “growth”, which is incompatible with maintaining a healthy natural environment. Against this, Saito insists that the new society can

only come out of a social movement “from below”. For Marx, communism was the real movement of the working class, beginning from the defence of its class interests and leading towards the overthrow the existing order. For Saito, the social movement is a conglomeration of different class forces – alongside attempts to set up small expressions of “the commons” in the neighbourhoods of today’s cities, such as Detroit, he refers to interclassist protests like the Yellow Vests in France, protest groups which from the very start are situated on a bourgeois terrain, like Extinction Rebellion, a sprinkling of workers’ strikes, the “citizens’ assemblies” set up under the aegis of Macron in response to the Yellow Vest protests. In short, not the class struggle, not the struggle of the exploited to break free of the capitalist organs which keep them under control (such as the trade unions and left parties), not the emergence of communist consciousness as expressed in the formation of revolutionary minorities.

One of the clearest proofs that Saito is not talking about the class struggle as the lever of communism is his attitude to the Indignados movement which appeared in Spain in 2011. This was a movement based on a proletarian form of organising – the mass assemblies – even if the majority of its protagonists saw themselves as “citizens” rather than proletarians. Within the assemblies, there was a battle between those organisations like “Democracy Now” who wanted the assemblies to revitalise the already existing “democratic” system, and a proletarian wing which defended the autonomy of the assemblies from all expressions of the state, including its local, municipal tentacles. Saito on the other fully supports the channelling of the assembly movement towards the formation of a municipal political party, Barcelona en Comu, and the election of a radical mayor, Ada Colau, whose administration has put forward a series of “democratising” measures and ecological declarations. Furthermore, the Barcelona experiment has given rise to the “Fearless Cities” movement, which aims to apply the same model in a number of other cities around the world.

This is not the international extension of the workers’ struggle – a precondition for the communist revolution – but a structure for the recuperation of authentic class combat. And it is based on the rejection of another fundamental element of

the communist project: the lesson that Marx, Engels, Pannekoek and Lenin drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871: that the task of the proletariat, the first step in its revolution, is to dismantle the existing state machine, not just its armies, its police and its central government apparatus, but also its municipal councils and other forms of localised control. For Saito on the other hand “it would be foolish to reject the state as a means of getting things done, such as the creation of infrastructure or the transformation of production” (*Slow Down*, p 232) What this boils down to is a “Green New Deal” from below, not the revolutionary overthrow of existing conditions.

### The proletarian revolution and the end of capital accumulation

This is not the place to go into immense challenges that will face the working class once it has taken power into its hands and has begun the transition to communism. Clearly the ecological question will be at the centre of its concerns, and this will require a series of measures aimed at the suppression of the drive to accumulate and its replacement by production for use – not merely on a local scale but across the entire planet. It will also demand the dismantling of the gigantic apparatus of waste production which feeds into the climate disaster: the arms industry, advertising, finance, and so on. As we have shown elsewhere<sup>9</sup>, previous marxists from Bebel to Bordiga have also talked about overcoming the mad rush fuelled by the accumulation process, of “slowing down” the hectic pace of life under capital. But we don’t describe this as “degrowth” for two reasons: first, because communism is the basis for a true “development of the productive forces” with an entirely new quality, compatible with the needs of humanity and its metabolism with nature. And secondly, because talking about degrowth in the framework of the existing system – and Saito’s “communism” does not escape this – can easily be used as a justification for austerity administered by the bourgeois state, as a reason for the working class to cease its “selfish” struggles and get used to reducing its consumption even more. **Amos**

9. “Bordiga and the Big City”, *International Review* 166

# The ACG takes another step towards supporting the nationalist war campaign

The intransigent defence of internationalism faced with imperialist war is a fundamental duty of a communist organisation. Revolutionaries have to be able to navigate against the stream of bourgeois propaganda aimed at dragging the proletariat behind one imperialist gang or another. This is particularly the case faced with the orgy of nationalist and militarist hysteria surrounding the war in the Middle East.

In the previous issue of *WR*, we warned of the danger of the Anarchist Communist Group's concessions towards lining up behind the Palestinian bourgeoisie. Initially, we had welcomed the fact that the ACG defended an internationalist position by denouncing both sides in this war<sup>1</sup>. But subsequently, we pointed to its concessions to the idea of the "liberation" of Palestinian workers: "*the position defended by the ACG in this article is very dangerous because, at first glance, it seems indeed to be based on proletarian internationalism. But that is only in appearance. Because if you read it carefully, the opposite is the case. The article does not straightforwardly and openly defend Palestinian nationalism, but its logic, its whole reasoning points in that direction. It is a very sophisticated exposition of the national liberation ideology*"<sup>2</sup>.

This 'sophisticated' defence of nationalism has now become less subtle. In a recent article<sup>3</sup>, unlike the previous article, the ACG makes no clear denunciation of the war as imperialist, of the links between the Palestinian "resistance" groups and various imperialist powers. Instead, the article presents the Israeli state as the only perpetrator of this war. The ACG does say that it is: "*the already dispossessed and those who are always the greatest victims of inter-imperialist wars, of colonialism and exploitation: the working class*". But without a clear statement of the imperialist nature of both sides this statement remains at best ambiguous. It certainly does not warn the working class about the danger of lining up behind either side.

Hamas deliberately provoked Israeli imperialism through its massacre in southern Israel on the 7th October, in a suicidal scorched earth strategy to undermine the developing relations between the Israeli state and some other Middle East states. Hamas knew full well the bloodbath its attack would unleash. However, for the ACG (in this article at least), as with the left of capital, the Israeli state is the enemy. Hamas is silently relieved of its terrorist role in this nightmare!

There is no explanation of the contradiction between this article and the previous one.

This apparent abandoning of internationalism leads the radical anti-state, anti-authoritarian, anti-imperialist ACG to making the bizarre demand that other imperialist states should ally themselves with 'ordinary peoples' anger "... *Israel is able to do this (to wage war) because, for all the anger and opposition its genocidal actions are creating amongst ordinary people, there are not, so far, any allies amongst the nation states of the world, notwithstanding South Africa's filing a case of genocide against Israel at the International Court of Justice, that might intervene meaningfully on their behalf*". What intervention does the ACG think these nation states should make?

A hint is given in the following sentence: "*Iran and their Hezbollah allies have refrained from any full-blooded commitment, despite provocation from Israel, because they know the consequences of an escalation*". Does the ACG think that these two imperialist gangs should make a "full-blooded commitment" to war against Israel? What would such a commitment entail if not a military intervention ie the slaughter of workers in Israel, whether or not conscripted into the IDF? The comrades of the ACG really need to clarify what they mean.

The ACG appear to believe that the working class should look to "nation states" -ie imperialist states- as allies. Maybe the proletariat should

support US imperialism, which has been trying to restrain Israel's murderous offensive in Gaza?

In order to pursue its support for the liberation of the Palestinian proletariat from the Israeli oppression, the ACG also advocates workers participating in the campaign by the openly pro-Palestinian, leftist Workers' for a Free Palestine, that calls for: "*an end to arms sales to Israel and for the UK government to support a permanent ceasefire*". Does this mean that the capitalist state and its democratic facade is no longer the enemy of the proletariat? Should the proletariat fall on its knees and beg British imperialism to support a peace agreement? One can only assume the ACG is celebrating British imperialism's current support for a ceasefire. A support determined of course by what British imperialism believes is in its best national interest.

## Nationalist campaigns against the revival of class struggle

Another part of the national interest of the British state is to undermine the proletariat's growing renewed confidence in itself. In 2022, in the midst of the war in Ukraine, the proletariat in Britain placed its class interests first by raising its class demands in a wave of strikes. This placed the class back on the social terrain, after decades of being mired in demoralisation, a loss of vision of itself as a class with the strength to defend its own interests. The ruling class had wanted to further demoralise the proletariat through making it feel helpless faced with the Ukraine war. This did not happen. The acceleration of the economic crisis, partially due to the war, brought a deep well of discontent bubbling to the surface.

The British bourgeoisie, along with the rest of the world ruling class, however, has used the Gaza war to generate important divisions in the class. Week after week the bourgeoisie has done all it can to promote and enable the pro-Palestinian nationalist demonstrations which mobilised hundreds of thousands. The constant media attacks about the anti-Semitism, pro-Hamas nature of these demonstrations have further served to increase the divisions in the class.

Instead of warning the proletariat of the danger of these nationalist parades, the ACG presents them as something positive: "*The demonstrations across the world continue with hundreds of thousands on the streets every weekend in cities and towns, big and small. They have, in many places, become angrier, more desperate as Israel's armed forces continue to murder with immunity*".

Reading this article, one is left wondering whether the ACG still defends its own Aims and Principles, which include a rejection of nationalism: "*We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated*".

The workers have no country - but the ACG sees something positive in demonstrations against Israeli state terrorism and thus in favour of a "Free Palestine". If the ACG was serious about the elimination of national boundaries it would oppose this slogan with all its might.

The ICC takes no pleasure in seeing its warnings about the ACG's concessions to national liberation and leftism so starkly confirmed. This is precisely why we have sought to expose these concessions and warn the comrades of the ACG, and those influenced by it, of the dangers they face.

The ACG is at a crossroads. Either it begins to resist the growing influence of leftism on it, which means addressing its underlying source - its rejection of marxism and its contemporary vanguard, the tradition of the Communist Left. The alternative is to be increasingly swept up into leftism. **Phil**

## Discussion with the ICC

The ICC holds public meetings online and in person for discussion on subjects of importance to the working class. Recent meetings have discussed the development of imperialist conflict, as in the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and on the struggle of the working class, the opposite pole to the capitalist whirlwind of crisis, chaos and decomposition.

See our website: [en.internationalism.org](http://en.internationalism.org) for notices about meetings in English.

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1. "Internationalist positions against the war", *World Revolution* 398

2. "The ambiguities of anarchist internationalism", *World Revolution* 399

3. Jackdaw no. 16

# Critique of Saito's "Degrowth Communism"

In the past few decades it has become clear that bourgeois civilisation is posing a grave threat to the natural conditions which provide the basis for human existence on the planet. It has also become more and more evident that the main factions of the ruling class are obliged to recognise the severity of the ecological crisis, and even its connection to the other main expressions of a society in decline, above all the flight into militarism and war<sup>1</sup>. This recently acquired "understanding" is not at all cancelled out by the fact that other parts of this same ruling class are retreating into an openly irrational and suicidal denialism regarding the danger posed by climate change and the pollution of air, soil and water. But neither recognition nor denial can hide the fact that the bourgeoisie is proving itself incapable of slowing down, let alone halting the juggernaut of ecological destruction. We can point in particular to the obvious and repeated failure of the spectacular COP conferences of the last few years.

This exposure of the powerlessness of the ruling class has generated the need for a kind of ideological compensation, notably on the part of the left wing of the bourgeoisie. Hence the rise of a kind of "Green Keynesianism", the notion of a "Green New Deal", in which the state, by penalising the worst polluters and investing in "sustainable" technologies, can not only prevent climate change from getting out of control, but can create green jobs and green growth – in short, a healthy green capitalism.

But there are also more radical voices who are quick to point out the shortcomings of this kind of greenwashed capitalism. Foremost among them are the proponents of "degrowth". Writers like Jason Hickel<sup>2</sup> can easily show that capitalism is driven by the constant need to expand, to accumulate value, and that it must treat nature as a "free gift" to be exploited to the maximum as it seeks to subsume every last region of the planet to the laws of the market. Hickel therefore talks about the need for a transition to a post-capitalist economy<sup>3</sup>. Other

1. See our "Update of the Theses on Decomposition" (2023), *International Review* 170

2. *Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World*, 2020

3. However, Hickel's critique of the Green New Deal doesn't go very far: for him the 1930s New Deal encouraged growth "in order to improve people's livelihoods and achieve progressive social outcomes... early progressive governments treated growth as a use-value" (p94). In reality, the aim of the New Deal was to

save capitalism and prepare for war....

ers, like John Bellamy Foster go further and more explicitly refer to Karl Marx's growing interest in ecological questions in the later stages of his life, to what they call Marx's "Eco-Socialism"<sup>4</sup>. But most recently, the books of the Japanese writer Kohei Saito, who is deeply versed in Marx's later writings as a result of his engagement with the new edition of Marx and Engels's complete works (the MEGA project) have attracted enormous interest and considerable sales, in particular, his most recent work, entitled *Slow Down: How Degrowth Communism Can Save the Earth* (2024). Whereas Saito's previous books<sup>5</sup> were written in a rather academic style, this is a much more popularising effort which presents not only his key argument that Marx himself became a "Degrowth Communist", but also outlines the steps which could lead to the adoption of Degrowth Communism today. And indeed, at first sight, he does indeed appear to be talking about communism as understood by the real, historical communist movement – a society of freely associated producers, where wage labour no longer exists. The fact that he aims to go beyond the term "Eco-socialism" (which implies that there can be and indeed have been forms of socialism which were not ecological, which were no less ecologically destructive than capitalism) and now talks about communism, is a response to a growing search for solutions which go to the very roots of today's civilisational crisis. But a closer and more critical investigation of Saito's argument shows that this is a response which can only lead to more false solutions.

## Marx did not reject the materialist conception of history

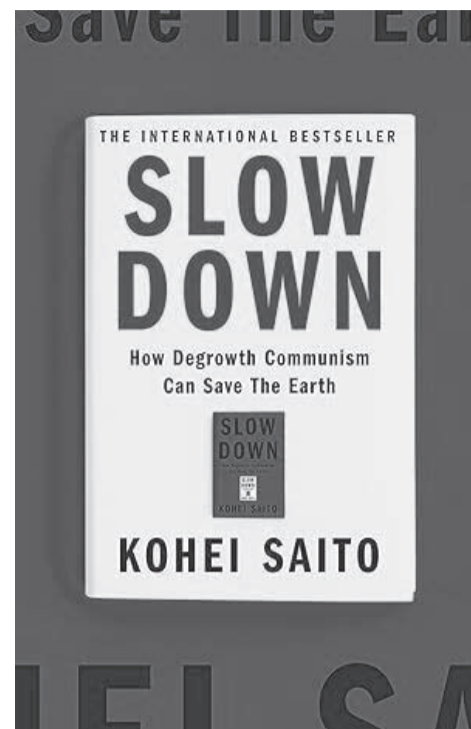
As we have said, Saito is not the first to point out that the "late Marx" developed a strong interest both in ecological questions and in the communal social forms that preceded the emergence of class society and that continued to leave traces even after the rise of capital. What is specific to Saito is the idea that the study of these questions led Marx to an "epistemological break"<sup>6</sup>, with

save capitalism and prepare for war....

4. For example *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, 2000

5. *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capital, Nature and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* 2017; *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism*, 2022

6. Saito borrows this term from Althusser, who applied it to what he saw as the shift from the youthful,



what he calls the "linear, progressive view" of history, marked by "productivism" and "Eurocentrism", and towards a new vision of communism. In short, Marx abandoned historical materialism in favour of "degrowth communism". But Marx never adhered to a "linear, progressive view" of history. Rather, his conception was dialectical: different modes of production have gone through periods of ascent, where their social relations allowed for a real development of production and culture, but also periods of stagnation, decline, and even regression, which could lead either to their disappearance pure and simple, or to a period of social revolution which could usher in a higher mode of production. By extension, while a generally progressive movement can be discerned in this historical process, all progress has hitherto come at a cost: hence, for example, the idea expressed by Marx and Engels that the replacement of primitive communism by class society and the idealistic Marx of the 1844 manuscripts to the hard-nosed scientist of *Capital*. We have argued against this here: "The study of Capital and the foundations of Communism", *International Review* no.75. If there was such a rupture, it took place when Marx broke with radical democracy and identified with the proletariat as the bearer of communism, around 1843-4

state was both a fall and an advance, and that the communism of the future would be a kind of "return at a higher level" to the archaic social form.

With regard to capitalism, the Marx of the *Communist Manifesto* pointed to the enormous development of productive capacities made possible by the rise of bourgeois society. Again, these advances came at the cost of the ruthless exploitation of the proletariat, but the struggle of the latter against this exploitation laid the foundations of a communist revolution which could place the new productive forces at the service of humanity. And even at this early stage in the life of capital, Marx was impatient to see such a revolution, identifying the crises of overproduction as signs that capitalist social relations had already grown too narrow for the powers of production they had unleashed. The defeat of the 1848 wave of revolutions led him to revise this view and to recognise that capitalism still had a considerable career ahead of it before a proletarian revolution would become possible. But this did not mean that every country and every region of the world was condemned to go through the exact same process of development. Thus, when the Russian populist Vera Zasulich wrote to him in 1881 to ask his view about the possibility that the Russian *mir* or agricultural commune could play a role in the transition to communism, Marx posed the problem in the following terms: while capitalism was still in its early stages in large parts of the world, "the capitalist system is past its prime in the West, approaching the time when it will be no more than a regressive social regime"<sup>7</sup>. This meant that the objective conditions for a proletarian revolution were fast maturing in the centres of the system, and that if it came about, "then present Russian communal land ownership can serve as a point of departure for a communist development"<sup>8</sup>.

This hypothesis did not entail an abandonment of the method of historical materialism. On the contrary, it was an attempt to apply this method in a contradictory period where capitalism was simultaneously showing signs of historic decline while still disposing of a very large "hinterland" whose development could temporarily stave off its growing inner contradictions. And, far from advocating or supporting this development, already expressed

7. See "The Mature Marx - Past and Future Communism", *International Review* 81

8. *ibid*

Continued on page 6

## Political positions of the ICC

**World Revolution** is the section in Britain of the **International Communist Current** which 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 stratified 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*, 1884-1914, 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*.