



world revolution

Against the attacks of the ruling class, we need a massive, united struggle!

Against the attacks of the ruling class, we need a massive, united struggle! In all countries, in all sectors, the working class is facing an unbearable degradation of its living and working conditions. All governments, whether of the right or the left, traditional or populist, are imposing one attack after the other as the world economic crisis goes from bad to worse.

Despite the fear generated by an oppressive health crisis, the working class is beginning to react. In recent months, in the USA, in Iran, in Italy, in Korea, in Spain, France and Britain, struggles have broken out. These are not massive movements: the strikes and demonstrations are still weak and dispersed. Even so, the ruling class is keeping a wary eye on them, conscious of the widespread, rumbling anger. How are we to face up to the attacks of the ruling class? Are we to remain isolated and divided, everyone in 'their own' firm or sector? That's a guarantee of powerlessness. So how can we develop a united, massive struggle?

Towards a brutal degradation of living and working conditions

Prices are soaring, particularly for basic necessities: food, energy, transport... In 2021 inflation was already higher than after the financial crisis of 2008. In the USA, it has reached 6.8%, the highest in 40 years. In Europe, in recent months, energy costs have jumped by 26%! Behind these figures, the concrete reality is more and more people struggling to feed themselves, to find accommodation, to keep warm, to travel. World-wide, food prices have risen by 28%, directly threatening more than a billion people with malnutrition in the poorest countries, above all in Africa and Asia.

The deepening economic crisis leads to increasingly bitter competition between states. To maintain profits, the answer is always the same, everywhere, in all sectors, private as well as public: reduce staff, impose speed ups, cut budgets, including spending on workers' health and safety. In January, in France, masses of teachers came out onto the streets to protest against shocking working conditions. They are living in a daily capitalist hell because of a lack of staff and material. In the demonstrations a profoundly justified slogan was on their banners: "What's happening to us goes back to way before Covid!"

What's being inflicted on health workers shows this very clearly. The pandemic has merely shone a light on a lack of medicines, care workers, nurses, beds, masks, protective clothing, oxygen... everything! The chaos and exhaustion reigning in the hospitals since the beginning of the pandemic is nothing less than the result of the vicious cuts made by all governments, in all countries, for decades. To the point where the World Health Or-

ganisation was obliged, in its latest report, to ring the alarm bells: "Over half of needs are not being met. Across the world there is a lack of 900, 000 midwives and 6 million nurses... this already existing scarcity has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the pressures on overworked staff". In many poor countries, a large part of the population has not been able to access the vaccines for the simple reason that capitalism is based on the hunt for profit.

The working class is not just made up of industrial workers: it includes all the wage labourers, part time and precarious workers, unemployed, many students, retired workers...

So, yes, "What's happening to us goes back to way before Covid!". The pandemic is the product of a dying capitalism whose insurmountable crisis it is making worse. Not only is this system showing its powerlessness and disorganisation in the face of a pandemic which has already claimed 10 million lives, especially among the exploited and the poor, but it will continue to degrade our living and working conditions, it will continue to increase redundancies and precarious jobs, to pressure and impoverish workers. Under the weight of its contradictions, it will continue to be caught up in endless imperialist wars, to provoke new ecological catastrophes – all of which will provoke further chaos, conflicts, and even worse pandemics. This system of exploitation has nothing to offer humanity but suffering and poverty.

Only the struggle of the working class is

the bearer of another perspective, that of communism: a society without class, without nations, without wars, where all forms of oppression will be abolished. The only perspective is the world communist revolution!

A growing anger and militancy

In 2020, all around the world, a lead curtain came down: repeated lock-downs, emergency hospitalisations and millions of deaths. After the revival of workers' militancy that we saw in several countries during 2019, particularly with the fight against the pension 'reforms' in France, workers' struggles came to a brutal halt. But today, once again, anger is rising and a fighting spirit is gaining ground:

- In the USA, a series of strikes hit industrial groups like Kellogg's, John Deere, PepsiCo, but also the health sector and private clinics, as in New York;

- In Iran, this summer, workers from more than 70 sites in the oil sector came out on strike against low wages and the high cost of living. Something not seen for 42 years!

- In South Korea, the unions had to organise a general strike for more social benefits, against precarious jobs and unequal wages;

- In Italy, there have been a number of days of action against lay-offs and the suppression of the minimum wage;

- In Germany, the public services union felt obliged, faced with a growing mobilisation, to brandish the threat of strikes to obtain wage increases;

- In Spain, in Cadiz, the metal workers mobilised against an average wage cut of 200 euros a month. Public employees in Catalonia demonstrated against the intolerable resort to temporary work (over 300,000 state employees have precarious jobs). Struggles took place in the railways in Majorca, at Vestas, Unicaja, among the metal workers of Alicante, in different hospitals, all of them against redundancies;

- In France, the same kind of discontent has been expressed by strikes or demonstrations in transport, recycling, education;

- The same in Britain where we have seen strikes and other actions in the universities, by recycling workers, in public transport, health and other sectors.

Prepare the struggles ahead

All these struggles are important because they show that the working class is not ready to accept all the sacrifices which the bourgeoisie is trying to impose on it. But we also have to recognise the weaknesses of our class. All these actions have been controlled by the unions who everywhere divide and isolate workers with sectional demands, containing and sabotaging the struggles. In Cadiz, the unions tried to trap the workers in localism, in a "citizens movement" to "save Cadiz", as if the interests of the working class lie in the defence of regional or national concerns and not in linking

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Russia-Ukraine crisis: war is capitalism's way of life

The current military stand-off around the Ukrainian border is the expression of growing conflicts between predatory imperialist powers in the context of capitalist decomposition, with its growing tendency of every man for himself. The working class, whether in Russia or Ukraine Europe or the US, has no interest in supporting either side and can only defend its international class interests against all capitalist states. **P.3**

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Tory divisions highlight the fragmentation of the ruling class

While the rest of Britain was subject to the strictest of lockdown restrictions, the Prime Minister and those close to him were partying behind closed doors or in the garden at 10 Downing Street. Johnson has apologised for or excused the hypocrisy over the parties - including an unprecedented apology to the Queen for parties held the night before her husband's funeral - but the media frenzy has continued. Several Tory MPs and many leading Scottish Conservatives have called for Johnson's resignation on the grounds that he is not "fit for office". Internationally, the evidence of corruption and dishonesty within the political apparatus is a further humiliation for the British bourgeoisie. While deception and scandals are normal in bourgeois politics, in the most developed countries, only in the US, where divisions are notably violent, is there a greater loss of control of the political game.

Initially it was not clear what would be the result of the appointment of Sue Grey from the Cabinet Office to look into the circumstances of the parties. Would there be a cover-up or would her report conclude that rules had been broken and the ministerial code had been flouted, and heads would have to roll? Publication of the expected report was delayed because the Metropolitan Police had been called in to see if any offences had been committed. The undertaking of a criminal investigation is a clear escalation in the seriousness of the situation. Part of the bourgeois state is obviously concerned about something that is more than just a conflict between political factions. The fact that the police then asked for the Sue Grey report not to include references to anything that they were investigating only adds to the mess. At the time of writing the Grey report had still not appeared and is the subject of much speculation on what it will mean for Johnson.

Despite the evidence of problems faced by the bourgeoisie, the ruling class has still been able to use the scandal against the working class. In continuity with the perpetual campaign over the benefits of capitalist democracy, the contrast is made between the so-called 'great traditions' of parliamentary functioning and the lies and manoeuvres of a corrupt regime. Being drawn into this false choice between bourgeois political models is an obstacle to workers understanding that the existing state, whatever its form, can only serve the interests of capitalist exploitation.

The predictable consequences of Johnson's election

After the 2019 general election, in *WR* 385, we showed that Johnson might have delivered Brexit, but the way was open for further and greater problems ahead. *"The British bourgeoisie has been reduced to relying upon a political chancer who shamelessly mobilised populist sentiments in order to further his rise to power. There was no other politician who had the necessary lack of scruples to wage the bitter factional struggle within the Conservative Party and then during the election campaign. [...] The strains and tensions within the political apparatus show that the problems for the bourgeoisie in controlling the situation have not diminished. The current British Prime Minister is an unpredictable chancer whose line of march can't be easily gauged ... Britain has plenty of political problems ahead."*

Johnson managed to hold the Tory party together for a certain period, but at the cost of generating new tensions and divisions further down the line. What would happen on his departure is a leap into the unknown. In the battle between the different factions there have been threats to MPs who gained seats in previously Labour areas in 2019. They have been forcefully reminded they owe their place in Parliament to Johnson's victory. If he goes, they are told, then they are also on the way out. Lacking any principles, they cling on to Johnson regardless of any considerations of policy.

In the eyes of political commentators, accustomed to putting everything in personalised terms, the continuing storms in parliamentary politics are all down to the personality of the Prime Minister. He was sacked by *The Times* for making up a quote, he was sacked by Tory leader Michael

Howard for lying about an extramarital affair: lying is his standard response to any difficult situation. In reality, the difficulties that the bourgeoisie has in controlling its political apparatus are not due to particular personalities but are problems that typify the phase of capitalism's social decomposition. The British bourgeoisie, one of the most experienced in the world, used to have a reputation for stability in its political life and its ability to cope with potential political upsets. In recent years, from the referendum over EU membership in 2016, through the troubled premiership of Theresa May, to the elevation of Johnson and the farce of negotiations with the EU, there has been a wealth of evidence of the bourgeoisie's increasing loss of control of its political life.

When under attack over 'partygate' it was not surprising that Johnson introduced a number of populist policies in an attempt to appeal to potentially wavering Tory MPs. The police, crime, sentencing and courts bill was already underway, giving the police a significant extension to their powers to stop or constrain protest. In addition to this was an announcement that armed forces would take charge of deterring migrant boat crossings in the English Channel. Then there was the announcement that the BBC licence fee would be frozen for two years, and probably abolished in 2027 - sparking a false debate round the BBC as a service 'admired around the world'. The Levelling Up department continues to receive publicity, but it will have no new funds to implement any new proposals.

The most important announcement to please the populist wing of the Tory party concerned the end of most Covid restrictions introduced to combat the Omicron variant. Mask-wearing on public transport, in shops and schools, will no longer be compulsory, working from home is no longer

advised, vaccine certificates will be dropped, and self-isolation for people with coronavirus will stop in March (or possibly earlier). All this comes at a time when the infection rate is still high and deaths are currently rising. Overall, since the beginning of the pandemic, Britain has had the greatest number of infections in Europe, and (with the exception of Russia) the greatest number of deaths. The possibility of a future Covid wave counts for nothing when there's a need to firm up support for Johnson within the Tory Party.

The possible break-up of the UK

The splits within the main political parties (which includes the divisions in the Labour Party) are not the only expressions of the bourgeoisie losing control. The UK might be out of the EU, but the impasse over Northern Ireland's trading arrangements still remains unresolved. The EU is trying to achieve a solution by the end of February because that's when campaigning will start before elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Meanwhile Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has indicated that the UK is ready to take unilateral action that would suspend the customs checks on goods moving to the six counties. On top of this, the latest opinion polls show that Sinn Féin are on course to become the largest party in Northern Ireland, which means they would have the post of First Minister; but neither of the two main unionist parties has confirmed whether they would be prepared to be in a coalition with SF. Without a coalition there can't be an Executive. Whether struggling with the EU or trying to deal with the parties in Northern Ireland, the British government is facing forces threatening the unity of the state. When you add in the continuing pressures coming from Scotland, which now look like including the Scottish Conservatives, you can see

that the forces of fragmentation are intensifying.

One element that was put forward by Boris Johnson as part of a 'solution' to the possible break-up of the United Kingdom was a bridge or tunnel between Scotland and Northern Ireland, which Johnson thought could be done for "about £15bn". The results of a feasibility study (itself costing nearly £900,000) estimated that a bridge would cost £335bn and a tunnel around £209bn, taking nearly 30 years from planning to completion. The report concluded that it would be "impossible to justify" as "the benefits could not possibly outweigh the costs".

While the cracks in the political apparatus of the ruling class get wider, the material situation facing workers continues to deteriorate. Inflation is growing and reaching levels not seen in 30 years, and this is on top of more than a decade of austerity since 2008.

The working class needs to be aware that no faction of the bourgeoisie, whether populist or not, will defend anything except the interests of the ruling capitalist class. Whether Johnson is removed from office or not, the divisions within the Tory Party, and throughout the bourgeoisie will continue. Its mounting political disorganisation will remain a factor in the situation, but workers will gain nothing by being persuaded to take sides in the battle between factions of the bourgeoisie. While living standards decline Britain has the highest defence expenditure in Europe and, in the confrontation between Ukraine and Russia, the Tories have placed themselves firmly on the side of the US and NATO and are supported in that by the Labour Party. This is a class that can only offer the degradation of living conditions and the risk of imperialist war. **Car, 29.1.22**

The working class is beginning to respond to the attacks

After a serious setback in the struggle during the first year of the Covid pandemic, workers in Europe, the US and elsewhere¹, are beginning to react to the attacks on wages and working conditions. While the pandemic is peaking at new heights with the appearance of the Omicron variant, workers are facing even more severe attacks on their living standards through rising inflation and increasing energy costs.

In the UK, we have seen outbreaks of small but significant strikes during the autumn. Beginning in September with strikes of Uber delivery workers, strikes have continued in different sectors: health workers in nursing homes of SAGE, refuse workers in Glasgow, university staff on a national level. And strikes are continuing: distribution workers, tube workers in London, transport workers in the North West and Yorkshire, workers in the car industry, in supermarkets, food production and distribution.

Today all sectors of the working class in the UK - from traditional sectors like car workers to civil servants and university employees - are facing the same attacks on their living standards. As we have pointed out in our Resolution of the International Situation from last summer: *"The working class is paying a heavy tribute to the crisis. First because it is most directly exposed to the pandemic and is the principal victim of the spread of infection, and secondly because the downward dive in the economy is unleashing the most serious attacks since the Great Depression, at all levels of working and living conditions, although not all will be affected in the same way."*²

The pandemic has, both directly and indirectly, created an apparently paradoxical situation: un-

1. See: Struggles in the United States, in Iran, in Italy, in Korea... Neither the pandemic nor the economic crisis have broken the combativity of the proletariat!, ICCOnline.

2. Resolution on the international situation adopted by the 24th ICC Congress

employment in some sectors together with a shortage of labour in others, combined with increased poverty because of rising prices. The result of two years of rescue packages, of "helicopter money" spread by all national bourgeoisies, desperately trying to save the economy from the worst effects of the pandemic - mainly through printing money - has led to a drastic rise in inflation throughout the world, and to higher costs for basic needs such as food and electricity. Moreover workers face a continuous lowering in their income, through restructuring and increasing precariousness.

The first new expressions of working class combativity, as we have seen in various parts of the world, are clearly illustrated by what is happening in the UK. In a growing number of sectors, workers' discontent is being fuelled by pay cuts and worsening living conditions. It shows that the class is beginning to assert itself on its own terrain, not being immersed in the general chaos of the pandemic, the increasingly erratic behaviour of the ruling class, and the bourgeois terrain of "peoples" protests against lockdown measures.

Unions will only lead the struggles to defeat

Unions have systematically sabotaged protests and other workers' actions, either by dispersing them in time, or by concluding agreements with the bosses even before strikes were due to take place. They have consistently forced striking workers to go back to work with cuts in wages and worse working conditions.

We saw this already in April 2021 when unions ended a six-week long strike at British Gas, where workers had to accept a wage cut of 15% or get sacked. In May, an eleven-week strike in Manchester bus garages was ended by the unions after a deal that meant unpaid meal breaks and reduced sick-pay. Workers at Douwe Egberts in Oxford had to accept an annual wage cut of £9,000 after the unions declared that this would prevent the

factory being moved to another country. At British Telecom in July, the Communication Workers Union agreed to a cut of 13,000 jobs.

Over the autumn, the Unison union called for strikes to defend the state funded health sector, the NHS - instead of fighting for workers' demands. Unions have been quick to stop potential strikes and walk-outs by concluding agreements that mean downright pay cuts. In public transport, twenty different disputes all over Britain at Stagecoach have been settled by the Unite union, leading to wage deals that were not enough to compensate for inflation. The same with distribution workers before Christmas, where the unions blocked strike action from thousands of workers at the big distribution centres for the large supermarket chains, to settle a payment deal below the inflation rate. For the moment, the RMT union, organising London tube workers, is the only example where the union has reached a deal which is matching the expected inflation - after threatening chaos in the London Underground in December.

The increase in trade union activity, whose role is to exhaust the workers' combativity through separate and isolated actions, is a sign that the ruling class is taking into account the rise in working class militancy, knowing that the attacks today are only the harbinger of unprecedented attacks in the years to come. Up to now the bourgeoisie in the main countries has not launched massive austerity programmes, but it will certainly have to.

The unions are the watchdogs of the ruling class in the proletariat and have been so since the beginning of the last century. The true nature of the unions is shown both through their attempts to divide the class and through their attempts to stop the strikes and actions through quick deals with the bosses. This is their basic function, and all the various leftist arguments that blame this or that treacherous union leader are nothing but a way to strengthen union ideology, a real trap for the

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Russia-Ukraine crisis: war is capitalism's way of life

Putin justifies the military build-up on the border with Ukraine by denouncing the “aggressive” intentions of NATO and western powers. The political and media mouthpieces in the western “democracies” call for standing firm against Russia’s “aggressive” threats to the sovereignty of the Ukraine, pointing to the intervention of Russian special forces to help “restore order” in Kazakhstan as further proof of Putin’s “empire building” (or rebuilding) ambitions.

These are the mutual accusation of capitalist, imperialist powers, and the position of our class, of the workers who “have no fatherland”, is to refuse to enter into these quarrels, still less to make any sacrifice, economic or physical, on behalf of their exploiters, whether American, European, Russian or Ukrainian.

But in order to expose the propaganda being poured out on both sides, the task of revolutionaries is not only to denounce all the lies they spew forth, but also to provide a coherent analysis, to dig down to the roots of this sharpening of inter-imperialist tensions.

Fall of the empires

Prior to 1989, Moscow stood at the head of the second world power, the leader of an entire imperialist bloc. Ukraine and many of the other “independent” republics that surround the Russian Federation were part of the USSR, the so-called “Soviet Union”. But in 1989-91, the culmination of a long economic and political crisis whose origins we have analysed elsewhere¹, the eastern bloc collapsed and the USSR itself was swept away in the tsunami.

One of the foremost means of this unprecedented victory for the US-led bloc was the policy of encircling the USSR, by forging an alliance with China, using Turkey as a missile base, seeking a “Pax Americana” throughout the Middle East. This was accompanied by an intense arms race which accelerated the bankruptcy of the USSR. The increasingly beleaguered Russian bloc tried to break the circle, notably by invading Afghanistan in 1979, but this move towards access to the “warm seas” backfired as Russian troops got bogged down in an unwinnable war against Islamist forces supported by the US and its allies. And at more or less the same time, the mass strikes of the working class in Poland showed the USSR’s rulers how little they could count on the workers in their own bloc in any further military adventures, above all in Europe itself.

The USA thus emerged as the one and only “superpower” and Bush Senior proclaimed the advent of a “New World Order” of peace, prosperity, and democracy, while US military strategists planned for “Full Spectrum Dominance” and the “New American Century”. But within a few

1. See for example Theses on the economic and political crisis in the eastern countries, International Communist Current (internationalism.org)

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proletariat. They attempt to radicalise this union ideology through criticising the union leadership or calling on the workers to form rank and file committees, a classic strategy of mobilising radicalised workers behind union banners, deployed since the 1980s.

Rising inflation can be a unifying factor in the working class

“Even before the pandemic struck, British workers had suffered the worst decade for real wage growth since the Napoleonic wars. While 2022 will stand out for a particularly sharp hit to living standards, the Institute for Fiscal Studies reckons incomes will barely budge up until 2026. This means an unprecedented hit to earnings spanning two decades, and will leave household incomes 42% lower than would have been the case if wages had risen at pre-2008 financial crisis rates.”³

The *Observer* (8/1/22), cited a university employee who took part in the three-day action in the beginning of December, saying that “there hasn’t

3. Free market, tax-cutting economics will not ease the UK’s cost of living squeeze, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2022.

years, the USA’s triumph proved to be hollow. With the common enemy to the East laid low, the western bloc itself began to splinter, and the principle of “every man for himself” more and more replaced the old bloc discipline – an expression, in international relations, of the dawn of a new and terminal phase in the long decline of the capitalist system. This process was graphically illustrated by the Balkans war in the early 90s, where the USA’s most “loyal” allies found themselves at odds, even supporting different factions in the bloody massacres that accompanied the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The American response to this threat to its hegemony was to try to reassert its authority by calling on its overwhelming military superiority – with some success in the first Gulf War of 1991, but with much more negative results from the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Now it was the turn of the US to get its feet stuck in unwinnable conflicts with Islamist gangs. Instead of blocking the tendency towards every man for himself, these adventures accelerated the centrifugal tendencies throughout the strategically vital Middle East region. In particular the USA’s main enemy in the region – Iran – profited from the mess in neighbouring Iraq, advancing its pawns in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere.

At the same time, this new world disorder created a space for China – which had already been benefitting from the massive western economic investments aimed at finding a way out of the economic recessions of the 70s and 80s – to emerge as a real imperialist rival to the US.

Russia’ imperialist revival

After a short period – the Yeltsin years – in which Russia seemed ready to sell itself to the highest bidder, Russian imperialism, steered by the ex-KGB man Putin, began to reassert itself, counting on its only real assets: the huge military machine inherited from the Cold War period, and its considerable energy reserves, especially in natural gas, which could be used to blackmail more energy-dependent countries. And even if could not directly confront its imperialist rivals, it could do its best to worsen divisions among them, notably through the judicious use of cyber warfare and black propaganda. An obvious example was its efforts to weaken the EU through supporting populist forces in the Brexit referendum, in France, Eastern Europe and so on. In the US its social media trolls supported the Trump candidacy, and as president Trump proved to be, to say the least, soft on Russian ambitions and actions – partly because Trump’s financial and possibly sexual escapades had opened himself up to Russian pressure, but also because there was a sizeable faction of the US bourgeoisie which was in favour of wooing Russia as a counter-weight to China.

Russia’s imperialist revival passed through a number of stages – domestically, by ending the

been a pay award above inflation since Gordon Brown was Prime Minister.” This is the reality, for more than a decade, for all sectors of the working class.

At 5.4% the official level of inflation in the UK is at its highest level in almost 30 years. The Bank of England expects it to rise to 6% by April, with some analysts predicting 7% if billions aren’t poured in to the energy sector to cap rocketing heating costs. The Retail Price Index is already running at 7.5%.

The article in *The Observer* also cites an economist: “Until a few weeks ago, the incomes expert Ken Mulkearn was convinced a spike in inflation would pass without much reaction from Britain’s 32 million-strong workforce. (...) ‘Now I’m not so sure. There are signs rising prices are having an impact.’” The representatives of the ruling class have also noticed the rising discontent in the working class. They know the effects of rising inflation on the social powder keg.

Workers must fight against isolation

The more prominent actions of the unions are a clear sign that the ruling class is aware of the

Yeltsin sell-off and imposing a much tighter control over the national economy, but above all through military actions: in Chechnya, which from 1999 through the 2000s was pounded to rubble as a warning against future attempts to secede from the Russian Federation; in Georgia in 2008, where Russian forces intervened in support of the secession of South Ossetia and to stymie Georgia’s move towards NATO; the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the culmination of a Russian reaction to the “Orange Revolution” in the Ukraine and the emergence of a pro-western government which sought membership of NATO; and in Syria, where Russian arms and forces have been decisive in preventing the fall of Assad and the possible loss of Russia’s naval base in Tartus. In the 1970s and 80s, the US had largely succeeded in driving Russian influence out of the Middle East (eg in Egypt, Afghanistan...). Now Russia has returned and it is the USA which has been pulling out. In many of these military actions Russia has enjoyed the open or tacit support of China – not because there are no imperialist divisions between the two countries, but because China has seen the benefit of policies which weaken the hold of the US.

America’s imperialist offensive has not gone away

However, despite Russia’s recovery and the many set-backs for the US, the latter has not given up all the gains it has made in the countries bordering Russia; in many ways the old policy of encirclement continues. The expansion of NATO has been the spearhead of this policy, drawing in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Slovenia – the majority of which were formerly part of the Russian bloc. All of this has taken place over the last two decades. So it’s hardly surprising that the Russian state feels threatened by the efforts to pull Georgia and the Ukraine into NATO. One of Putin’s key demands to “defuse” the Ukrainian crisis includes a promise that Ukraine will never join NATO and that foreign troops or weapons be removed from countries that joined NATO since 1997.

In addition to which, the US has also given maximum backing to various “colour revolutions”, notably in the Ukraine, seeking to channel protests against economic misery and despotic pro-Russian rulers into support for pro-EU and pro-US political forces.

Russia thus remains essentially on the defensive in this situation. However, Moscow also knows that the US is facing major difficulties itself, preoccupied by the rise of China and anxious not to be engaged on too many fronts at the same time, as sharply illustrated by the humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan. It is thus a “good” moment for Putin to rattle the sabres and, as ever, this can help to reinforce his strong-man image at home,

potential danger of working class struggle. The unions are present everywhere to prevent struggles from developing and extending to other workers. The actual task of the unions is focussed on the isolation and derailment of the struggles into dead-ends.

But the struggles must not remain isolated, sector by sector! All parts of the working class are under attack, and this demands a unified response! The struggle that took place in Cadiz in Spain is an important example for all workers: an attempt to spread their strike to other sectors and industries⁴. The only way for the working class to struggle on its own terrain is to fight isolation, which the unions are enforcing.

Despite the fact that the unions still have a tight control of the situation, the recent struggles in the UK are a sign that the working class still maintains reserves of combativity. As in other parts of the world, its defensive struggle of to-day contains the seeds of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism of to-morrow. **Edvin, 25/1/22**

4. See: Metalworkers’ strike in Cadiz: our strength is to fight as a class, ICOnline.

especially when his popularity has been waning in the wake of corruption scandals, increasingly repressive policies against opposition politicians and journalists, and the country’s mounting economic difficulties.

None of this means that Ukraine is an “innocent party” in this military build-up. Ukraine holds yearly joint military exercises with NATO allies and is one of 26 countries participating in NATO’s Defender-Europe 2021, the US Army-led military operations “to build readiness and interoperability between U.S., NATO and partner militaries” across Europe (See: “Defender-Europe 21 Fact Sheet”).

Kiev has taken steps to upgrade its military assets and equipment to meet NATO membership criteria. In June 2020, Ukraine even became a NATO “enhanced opportunity partner,” deepening cooperation with the military alliance.

In the beginning of 2021 Ukraine’s Foreign Minister announced that the National Security and Defence Council has approved a strategy aimed at retaking and reintegrating Crimea into the country. Zelensky’s administration sought “full Ukrainian sovereignty” over not just Crimea but that of the port city of Sevastopol as well.

War is capitalism’s way of life

Are we heading towards a direct conflict between Russia and the US over the Ukraine, even a third world war, as some of the more alarmist reports suggest?²

Neither the US or Russia are part of a stable military bloc which has the discipline to mobilise for a global war. And neither has an interest in an immediate, direct military clash. Despite the Ukraine’s considerable agricultural and industrial assets³, invading and annexing the Ukraine has been compared to a python swallowing a cow: invading it might be one thing, holding onto it quite another. And as we have said, America has more pressing concerns on the imperialist front, hence Biden’s rather ineffectual warning that bad things will happen if Russia invades, and his commitment to high level diplomatic talks.

We should not forget, however, that a low-intensity conflict with Russian separatist forces in the east of the Ukraine has continued despite various cease-fire attempts. Even if Russia stops short of an outright invasion it may be pushed to step up its backing for such separatist forces, or nibbling away at Ukraine’s integrity as a state on other fronts. And even if the last thing the “west” wants is boots on the ground of Ukraine, it is not entirely powerless. It can continue to provide arms and training to the Ukrainian military, and it can also respond with some damaging economic measures against Russia, such as a full blocking of major Russian state banks and investment agencies, and new sanctions to include mining, metals, shipping and insurance⁴.

The phase of decomposition which world capitalism entered thirty years ago is marked by chaotic military conflicts and a growing loss of control by the ruling class. Prior to this, during the Cold War, the major planetary powers suspended the nuclear sword of Damocles over humanity’s head. It is still hanging there in a world which no longer obeys the dictates of coherent blocs, and where more countries than ever before are armed with weapons of mass destruction. In short, whatever the “rational” calculations of the players on the imperialist chess-board, we cannot rule out sudden outbreaks, escalations, or dives into irrational destructiveness. War remains the way of life of this decadent system, and the fact that the powers-that-be are ready to gamble with the life of humanity and the planet itself is already a reason for condemning this system and fighting for a global human community which has consigned national states and borders to the museum of antiquities. **Amos, January 2022**

2. The British right wing paper *The Daily Express* specialises in this kind of alarmism: World War 3 warning: Russia invasion to spark devastating global conflict – urgent alert | World | News | Express.co.uk

3. See for example the study by one of the Bordigist groups <https://www.international-communist-party.org/CommLeft/CL36.htm#UkraineLeaf>

4. The West must stand firm to combat Russia’s threats to Ukraine | View | Euronews

Workers' struggles drowned in bourgeois faction fights

At the beginning of January, Kazakhstan was the scene of violent demonstrations and riots following the removal of restrictions on the price of gas, a major resource for the economic life of the country and the daily lives of the population. The increase in the price of gas was added to the increase in the price of food and many basic commodities, generating immense anger.

A working class under attack but very fragile

Faced with this considerable deterioration in living conditions, the working class was initially in the forefront. In many industrial, mining and gas workers' centres, strikes broke out to demand wage increases. The social response spread like wildfire throughout the country, with massive demonstrations that immediately confronted the forces of repression, seeing a number of police agents switch sides and join the demonstrators.

The reality of working class discontent in Kazakhstan is not new: already in 2011, in Zhanaozen, a region rich in oil resources, fourteen workers were killed during the repression of a demonstration during a strike against working conditions and low wages. The movement then spread to the large city of Aktau, on the Caspian Sea, before spreading to the rest of the country.

In recent weeks, the repression has been even more ferocious. Dozens, if not hundreds, of demonstrators have been shot by the forces of order. The Kazakh government, headed by President Tokayev, has not been too fussy about calling in the Russian army to quell the 'terrorist' rebellion, openly announcing that he had "given the order to shoot to kill without warning".

Workers are therefore present in this deteriorating social situation. But have they been able, in this confrontation with the authorities, to develop their struggle on a real class terrain, as an autonomous force? Is the violence in the street the expression of the struggle of the working class or that of a popular violence, of a general discontent of the population in which the working class is diluted?

Very quickly, the initial demands against inflation were diverted towards democratic demands, against corruption, against the regime in power, with anti-Tokayev riots in most of the country's big cities. This popular revolt, in which the workers were mixed up with the petty-bourgeoisie (businesses choking with inflation, anti-Tokayev self-employed, etc.), was very easily used in a conflict between Kazakh bourgeois cliques; in other words, they were used by the clan around former president Nazarbayev.

In spite of the very real workers' strikes, the proletariat of this country has no major experience of autonomous struggle. It is permanently subjected to a dictatorial iron fist and strong democratic, nationalist and sometimes religious illusions. It has easily allowed itself to be dragged onto a bourgeois terrain where it cannot defend its own class interests, its own demands; where it can only be drowned, used, subjected to bourgeois interests which are totally foreign to it.

Bourgeois rivalries at the heart of the chaos

In Kazakhstan, the denunciation by the authorities of international "terrorists" or "bandits" ready to commit all kinds of acts of violence during the demonstrations did not hide the internal rivalries raging within the bourgeoisie and which the proletariat is still paying for with its blood today. Former president Nazarbayev, who resigned in 2019 but still effectively kept control, particularly of its repressive forces such as the National Security Committee (NSC), clearly used and manipulated the demonstrations to react to the ambitions of the new president Tokayev, who wants to increase his influence in the country and to emancipate himself from the Nazarbayev clan that had installed him in power.

Nazarbayev mobilised his supporters within the police and the army, his 'private army', to undermine Tokayev's power. This is how police officers were ordered to allow chaos to develop, to the point that some of them even joined the ranks of the demonstrators in an attempt to weaken the opposing camp, which also explains the assaults

on government buildings or the Almaty airport. President Tokayev's clique obviously reacted: the director of the NSC was sacked, arrested and imprisoned, and Karim Massimov, who was very close to Nazarbayev, a former prime minister and former head of the intelligence services, was arrested on suspicion of high treason. This is the clear confirmation of an internal battle within the bourgeoisie where all tricks are allowed, where the workers serve as cannon fodder for the opposing cliques.

In concrete terms, we are far from a situation where the forces of bourgeois repression are about to collapse, opening the way for the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist state! On the contrary, it is nothing more or less than the ambitions of one bourgeois clan against another! Today, even if the Tokayev clan has been able to regain control of the situation on a heap of corpses, summary executions, thousands of wounded and multiple arrests, nothing has been substantially settled, neither in Kazakhstan nor in the whole region where imperialist tensions are multiple and growing.

Kazakhstan remains an imperialist concern

In this situation of political decomposition, Tokayev had no other choice than to ask for help from outside, particularly from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)¹, a cover for Russian imperialism, which is aiming to renew its former domination and which reacted immediately by sending equipment and a contingent of 3,000 men to support the repression. The CSTO, for its part, sent only a hundred men, an expression of the mistrust of the other states towards this "partnership" with Moscow. By intervening directly, and moreover at the request of Tokayev, Russian imperialism is not hiding its will to defend its influence over the areas that used to be part of the USSR, whereas since the fall of the USSR most of these zones have been, as in Kazakhstan, the object of a "strategic partnership" with the United States. They are also strongly coveted by Turkey (a member of NATO), and above all, more recently, by China.

China welcomed this repression and the restoration of Kazakh order! Beijing needs the Kazakh regime as an important link in its international investment programme in the "New Silk Road", and therefore needs social calm, even if it means being on the same wavelength as Moscow for the moment. Beijing also needs the Kazakh regime's support, at least implicitly, for its repressive policy towards the Muslim Uyghurs of Xinjiang.

As for the European Union (EU) and the United States, supposedly "very bruised by the fact that there have been so many victims", they each call for a "peaceful resolution" of this crisis, condemning the violence in a token and hypocritical manner. The reason why the major "democratic" powers are reacting so platonically is that Kazakhstan does not appear to be a priority target of US imperialist ambitions. Moreover, within the EU there are major divisions over the attitude to be adopted towards Russia.

In the end, rival imperialist interests are in the DNA of this rotting capitalism, the priority for all these barbaric sharks, all preparing their weapons for the next episodes of confrontation: they all have their share of responsibility for the massacres and are directly the major source of the ongoing chaos.

The working class has nothing to gain from the conflict between bourgeois gangs

If the working class in Kazakhstan has tried to express its anger, because of the weakness of its consciousness, its lack of experience, it has not been able to resist, let alone represent an obstacle to the struggles for influence and the confrontations between rival cliques within the Kazakh bourgeoisie, as well as to the rivalries between all the imperialist sharks, be they Russian, Turkish, Chinese, European or American. Despite the savage repression and bloodshed, workers' anger has obviously not disappeared and new episodes

1. This 'partnership' involves Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia

of protest in the face of the crisis and repression are to be expected.

But in the current state of things, despite the important strike movements, these moments of direct confrontation with the forces of repression are not a springboard for the development of autonomous struggle and the defence of working class interests. On the contrary, it has everything to lose in such a quagmire where its economic demands are sterilised by the democratic, nationalist demands used by bourgeois factions who are prepared to do whatever is necessary to look after their interests. These democratic illusions are, moreover, a trap that will not go away, given that the national opposition forces with a "democratic" face are still in the process of formation and are seeking vis-

ibility and credibility for the future, as is the case in Belarus.

The Kazakh working class alone is, unfortunately, very exposed and vulnerable to this kind of ideological pressure. Even if it doesn't have the strength at the moment, the proletariat of the central countries, that has a proven experience of such nationalist and democratic mystifications, can show the way towards workers fighting on a terrain favourable to calling capitalist exploitation into question, and to rejecting slogans that have no other logic than the conservation of social order. The future of the workers' struggles, which are again beginning to appear all over the world, depends on the vital impulse of the class struggle in the central countries. **Stopio, 20/1/22**

Continued from page 1

Against the attacks of the ruling class, we need a massive, united struggle!

up with their class brothers and sisters across sectors and frontiers! The workers have also found it hard to organise themselves, to take control of the struggles, to come together in sovereign general assemblies and fight against the divisions imposed by the unions.

A further danger facing the working class is giving up the defence of class demands by joining up with movements that have nothing to do with its own interests and methods of struggle. We saw this with the "Yellow Vests" in France or, more recently, in China, when the collapse of the housing giant Evergrande (a spectacular symbol of China's massive indebtedness), which mainly provoked protests by ruined small property owners. In Kazakhstan, massive strikes in the energy sector were in the end derailed into a "people's" revolt without any perspective and quickly got caught up in conflicts between bourgeois cliques vying for power. Each time that workers dilute themselves in the "people" as "citizens" demanding that the capitalist state "changes things", they condemn themselves to powerlessness.

the working class, and which, at certain moments in history, have shaken the bourgeoisie and its system:

- The search for support and solidarity beyond "my" sector, town, region or country;
- The widest possible discussion about the needs of the struggle, in no matter what firm, sector or country;
- The autonomous organisation of the struggle, above all through general assemblies that don't leave control in the hands of the unions or other organs of bourgeois containment.

Prepare for the united and autonomous struggles of tomorrow!

International Communist Current, January 2022

We are giving out this leaflet in all the countries where our militant forces are present. On the first weekend of March we are organising online public meetings in English where we will discuss the crisis of the system, the class struggle and the role of revolutionaries (see page 7). If you want to join in the discussion, write to us at uk@internationalism.org or follow our website at www.internationalism.org.

The movement against the CPE: an inspiration for future struggles

In 2006, in France, the bourgeoisie was forced to withdraw its attack in the face of a massive struggle which threatened to extend to other sectors

At the time, the students, many of them part-time workers, rose up against a 'reform' known as the Contrat Première Embauche (First Employment Contract) or CPE, opening the door to underpaid and superexploited jobs. They rejected isolation, division, sectional demands.

Against the unions, they opened up their general assemblies to all categories of workers and the retired. They understood that the fight against precarious jobs for the young was a symbol of the struggle against job insecurity for everyone.

Gaining solidarity between sectors and generations, this movement, demonstration after demonstration, grew in breadth. It was this dynamic towards unity which scared the bourgeoisie and forced it to withdraw the CPE.



In order to prepare the struggle, we must, wherever we can, get together to discuss and draw the lessons of past struggles. It is vital to put forward methods of struggle which express the strength of

USA: the struggle of the workers' movement against slavery and racism, part 4

Communists and the "race" question

The third article of the series on the struggle of the workers' movement against slavery and racism in the USA was concluded with the words: "*The Communist Left was able to clarify the national question in general and therefore it was strongly opposed to any struggle for national liberation. But none of the Left Communist currents in the 1930s were able to develop a clear position on the 'Negro Question' in the US.*" Despite all the efforts in the previous forty years, "*At the time of the Second World War the workers' movement still had no unambiguous and clear-cut position on how to intervene towards the resistance of black people against particular oppression and structural prejudice.*"

The political organisations of the working class were thus not very well prepared to face the protests in the framework of the Civil Rights Movement between 1955 and 1963 or the extremely violent urban riots in the second half of the 1960s.

The first steps towards desegregation

Before World War II not much had changed with regard to racial discrimination at the local and state levels. African-Americans were still barred from classrooms and bathrooms, from theatres and train cars, from juries and legislatures in many parts of the USA.

But before the involvement of the US in World War II Roosevelt signed an order in which he reaffirmed the policy "*that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defence industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin*"¹. In the army segregation was still maintained. But as a result of a massive loss of soldiers the US army was forced to integrate African-Americans to fight alongside its regular units. Black soldiers were thus offered equal opportunities for sacrifice in World War II!

After the war this situation could not be reversed. Hence, President Truman ordered the complete desegregation of the US army in 1948. These decisions by Roosevelt and Truman - prompted by the needs of the war economy - also set in motion a push to end segregation in American society as a whole.

In the Northern States, at least, colour lines began to crumble

- in the world of entertainment: *On the Town*, a Broadway production created by Leonard Bernstein and Jerome Robbins of 1944, had an integrated cast with white, black and Asian players;
- in public transport: in 1946 Irene Morgan, riding on a Greyhound bus that had set out from Virginia, refused to give her seat up to a white passenger. Her case went all the way to the US Supreme Court, which ruled in her favour;
- in professional sports: in 1947 the Brooklyn Dodgers added the first black basketball player to its white team, which was the signal for African-Americans to participate in the major professional sports;
- in education: Gregory Swanson became the first black student to attend the Virginia Law School in 1950. His case laid the foundation for desegregation at the University of Virginia.

The Civil Rights Movement

How did the existing political organisations of the proletariat respond to these developments? The Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) had betrayed proletarian internationalism by siding with the USSR and the Allies during World War II and thus had become a clear enemy of the working class. Together with the Workers' Socialist Party (WSP)² the Workers' Party (WP) of Shachtman, which included the Johnson-Forest Tendency (C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya), was the only organisation who remained loyal to the cause of the proletariat by denouncing both imperialist camps, which it considered as deadly enemies of the proletariat.

After World War II the Johnson-Forest tendency,

1. "Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry, 1941".
2. This Party, which was created in 1916, had already defended an internationalist position during World War I under the name of Socialist Party of the United States (SPUS). It was aligned to the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

having left the WP and after a second short stay in the SWP, in 1951 started the Correspondence Publishing Committee (CPC) with a newspaper known as *Correspondence*. In the meantime (in 1949) the WP had changed its name to the Independent Socialist League (ISL), but continued the publication of *The New Internationalist*. And, as their new names indicate, both tendencies had started to downplay (relativise) their role as a vanguard of the proletarian struggle.

In 1955 Raya Dunayevskaya broke with the CPC and with C.L.R. James and founded the News and Letters Committees (N&L) with *News & Letters* as their publication. Because of the incomplete break with Trotskyism N&L "*brought with them considerable political baggage: a bourgeois position on the national question (support for self-determination and national liberation); a bourgeois position on the union question; workerist confusions on membership and organization; a confusion on the class nature of 'mass' movements; a penchant for tailing after the 'masses' in struggle.*" ("*News & Letters, A sad story of degeneration*", *Internationalism* 35, 1982)

N&L were created exactly six months before the protest that was considered as the start of the so-called Civil Rights Movement (CRM): the famous Bus Boycott in Montgomery Alabama.

During this first **large-scale protest against segregated seating in Montgomery, African-Americans** refused to ride city buses. The protest started at 5 December and the black leaders organised in the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), with Martin Luther King as its president, decided to continue the boycott until the city had met its demands. After a whole year of the boycott, on 20 December 1956 the demands were finally met.

A second important moment in this phase of the CRM was the organisation of so-called "sit-ins" in 1960 and the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The "sit-in campaigns" of 1960 consisted of black people occupying segregated restaurants until one was served. It started in Greensboro, North Carolina, when some 300 students joined the protest, sparking a movement of similar "sit-ins" by thousands of students at segregated establishments all over the country.

A third and last important moment of protest of the CRM was the "Walk to Freedom" March in Detroit on 23 June and the "Jobs and Freedom" March on Washington on 28 August 1963. Both marches, the greatest mobilisations against black segregation and deprivation ever in the history of the US, drew in a quarter of a million participants. The demonstration in Washington took place just one day after the death of W.E.B. DuBois.

After these massive demonstrations in 1963 the protests against the structural subordination of the black people took on a different turn, with a current influenced by a form of Islam (Nation of Islam), riots in several cities (Detroit, Watts, Newark), and black groups organised in armed units (Black Panthers).

News & Letters Committees

All the protests of the CRM were wholeheartedly supported by N&L. "*NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES have participated in every phase of activity and struggle from the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the March on Washington. (...) The massiveness of the resistance, the many sidedness of the demands for the Freedom NOW movement, the tremendous surge, courage and reason of this movement as against the barbarism of the Bull Connors³ with their hounds, hoses and murders have totally changed the objective situation in the United States*"⁴.

Did N&L support these protests without any reserves and any critique? No! N&L tried to encourage and defend the self-activity of the masses against the attempts of the leaders to contain it. They systematically denounced not only the leadership of the unions but also the black leaders for their cooperation with the establishment - the government and the management - and of being on 3. Eugene "Bull" Connors was the Director of Public Safety of Birmingham Alabama, the most segregated city in the country.
4. "The Freedom Now Movement", *News & Letters*, August-September 1963.



Raya Dunayevska with Charles Denby (part of the News and Letters group) and Etehl Dunbar, who contributed to Denby's book *Indignant Heart*. There are extracts from the book on libcom Testimony of a black worker - Charles Denby (libcom.org)

the side of the status quo and not on the side of radical change.

In an article of January 1956 they pointed to the widening gap between the black leaders and the lower ranks of the movement. On the leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) they wrote for instance that they are "*lawyers, politicians, politically inclined ministers and professional organizational men. Their passion of the leadership of the NAACP for human justice has been dulled by political ambition for election and appointments. The so-called Negro leaders are [therefore] trying to stifle any direct action on the part of the Negro masses*"⁵.

In a statement of September 1963 the National Editorial Board of N&L concluded that the labour leaders "*have neither helped upgrade Negro workers nor accorded them leading union posts commensurate with numbers or skill, nor have they done anything to enable the white rank-and-file to participate in the Negro struggle as an integral part of their common continuing struggle against management.*" In its turn "*The Negro leadership is listening more to Kennedy's civil rights measures than to the full aspirations of the mass movement*"⁶.

For N&L the CRM, or in any case its Freedom Now offspring, had the potential to be revolutionary, to challenge capitalist rule and to become "*central to the global struggle for a new society*"⁷. But the movement did not fulfil its promises, for it "*combined reason and activity only to the extent of the immediate demands of desegregation, and not to the ultimate of total freedom from class society*"⁸, a flaw that N&L attributed to the "conservative" policy of the union and black leaders. In other words N&L criticised the CRM for remaining within the confines of the capitalist system, while all conditions were supposedly there to go beyond them.

N&L would have been able to take a much clearer position if they had paid more attention to the lessons of the revolutionary wave of 1917-1923 and other working class uprisings, such as the one in Hungary 1956. In the case of the latter uprising they had already written that "*the Hungarian soldiers have joined the workers who form the leading core of the revolution*"⁹. In other words: "*the decisive force of the revolution remained*" not youth as such, not women in general, not any other layer in society, but the working class organised in "*the Workers' Councils*"¹⁰.

While the workers' councils were key to the mass uprising in Hungary, such workers' councils were completely absent from the struggle against the oppression and segregation of black people in the USA: and yet N&L talked without any reluctance 5. "Gap Between Leaders and Ranks Widens as Southern Tension Mounts", *News & Letters*, January 1956.
6. "The Freedom Now Movement", *News & Letters*, August-September 1963.
7. "The Freedom Now Movement".
8. "The Freedom Now Movement".
9. "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary", *News & Letters*, 13 November 1956.
10. Raya Dunayevskaya, "Spontaneity of action and organization of thought: In memoriam of the Hungarian Revolution", *Weekly Political Letter*, 17 September 1961.

about the "*ever-expanding Negro revolution*" that was now facing a "*White counter-revolution*"¹¹.

All in all the position of N&L was radical in words, but did not go to the roots, because it did not seriously consider what it means that the working class is the only revolutionary class in capitalist society. N&L paid lip service to the working class as the agent of social revolution, but in practice they were acting to fragment the working class into a series of social categories which were by their very nature composed of different and even antagonistic social classes. This is the reason for their slide towards the view that the grassroots protests of black people (not even the black workers!) was a potentially revolutionary struggle, appealing to the Freedom Now movement to "*be expanded and deepened so that it leads to the total reconstruction of society on new human beginnings*"¹².

In fact N&L's position was dangerous for the proletarian struggle, because in their attempt to contribute to the lifting of the colour line, they blurred the class line, the fundamental contradiction between the working class and the ruling class. In 1848 Marx had already emphasised the importance of the working class fighting for its autonomy as a class; even in a period when it was still possible to support the bourgeois revolution against feudalism, it was still vital for the workers to avoid being submerged in the demands and organisations of other classes and strata.

The struggle for equal or civil rights takes place entirely on the terrain of bourgeois democracy. This is not the terrain of the working class, and in the epoch of capitalist decadence it has lost all progressive content. Participation in such bourgeois mobilisations not only undermines the proletariat's consciousness of itself as a class but also weakens its capacity to organise itself as an autonomous force, and ultimately to fight for a fundamental change of the existing mode of production which can lay the foundations of another society that is really free of oppression and segregation. And N&L have never been able to understand this¹³.

In the next article we intend to explain our position on the riots against police violence that took place in the second half of the 1960s. These riots were the most serious and widespread in the history of the USA: in more than 750 riots, 228 people were killed and more than 10,000 injured. The aim of the article is to respond to the views put forward by the Bordigist groups about these riots and to Bordiga's thesis that "*this sudden tearing away of the veil of legal fictions and democratic hypocrisy [is] a harbinger of victory*"¹⁴. **Dennis, 27.12.21**

11. "A Long Way To Go On Civil Rights", *News & Letters*, November 1963.

12. "The Freedom Now Movement".

13. The incapacity to understand that participation in such bourgeois mobilisations undermines the conditions for the autonomous struggle of the proletariat derives to a large extent from the counter-revolutionary heritage of Trotskyism, which has made it too difficult for the comrades of N&L to evolve in a positive sense. The deformations of the parent organisations (SWP and WP) have proved too strong.

14. "Black" anger shakes the rotten pillars of bourgeois and democratic "civilization", Programa Comunista, (www.pciint.org/07_TP/012/012_ab-black-anger.htm).

ACG and identity politics: a very inadequate break

“Capitalist society, in the final phase of decline, is giving birth to a whole variety of ‘identity crises’. The atomisation inherent in the system of generalised commodity production is reaching new levels, and this applies both to social life as a whole and to the reactions against the increasing misery and oppression spawned by the system. On the one hand, groups and individuals suffering from particular oppressions are encouraged to mobilise as particular groups to fight their oppressions – as women, as gays, as transgender people, as ethnic minorities and so on – and not infrequently compete with each other directly, as with the current confrontation between transgender activists and certain branches of feminism. These manifestations of ‘identity politics’ are at the same time co-opted by the left wing of the bourgeoisie, all the way up to its most distinguished academics and most powerful political echelons (as with the Democratic Party in the USA).

Meanwhile, the right wing of the bourgeoisie, while superficially decrying the rise of identity politics, rises up in defence of its own form of identity-seeking: the search for the Real Men threatened by the spectre of feminism, the nostalgia for the glories of the White Race facing displacement by foreign hordes.

The quest for these partial, and sometimes entirely fictitious identities and communities, is a measure of mankind’s self-estrangement in a historic epoch in which a universal human community is both possible and necessary for the survival of the species. And above all, like other manifestations of social decomposition, it is the product of the loss of the one identity whose affirmation can lead to the creation of such a community, also known as communism: the class identity of the proletariat”.

Four years ago, the sterile competition between different identities claiming the prize of being the most oppressed category led to a crisis in the anarchist milieu in the UK. A clash between transgender activists and a particular brand of feminism at the London Anarchist Bookfair was the last straw for the group that had been organising these large gatherings for some years: they announced that they would not be organising any more bookfairs and this once annual event has never really recovered. At the same time, there was a polarisation between those sections of the anarchist milieu more favourable to various forms of identity politics and those who call themselves “class struggle anarchists”. The main anarchist grouping in the UK, the Anarchist Federation, went through a split and the “class struggle” wing set up the Anarchist Communist Group, which seems to have grown and become more active than the AF².

Thus, the ACG was born out of reaction against the increasing drift towards identity politics among anarchists, and it is therefore appropriate that among a number of pamphlets produced by the group, they have now published *The Politics of Division: an Engagement with Identity Politics*³.

The attempt to affirm a class perspective runs counter to the dominant atmosphere of social decomposition in which the proletariat is suffering directly from the numerous divisions imposed on it by bourgeois society. And this process of fragmentation is being accelerated by the growth of identity politics. In this sense, the ACG’s pamphlet provides some evidence of a proletarian current within the great sea of confusion that characterises the anarchist milieu, which has always included petty bourgeois and openly capitalist political tendencies as well as some healthier proletarian and internationalist elements⁴.

In particular, the pamphlet argues that identity politics obscures the search for the root cause of all particular oppressions and thus obstructs the development of a movement which calls capitalism itself into question:

“Identity politics is more than fighting one’s own oppression. It can be defined as moving from experiencing the often horrendous consequences of social difference to then identifying with that oppressed group and giving that group essential characteristics that then differentiate from other groups who are equally exploited and oppressed. Instead of seeing the oppression as part of a wider system – capitalism – the focus is on the discrimination and oppression experienced by one group” (p6-7)

Against this focus on different identities and oppressions, the pamphlet insists that only a class analysis can cut through all the divisions in society, divisions which are used by the ruling class to prevent the working class from grasping its real position in society:

“Class is the fundamental division in our society, not because it is more important in terms of affecting people’s lives than oppressions such as racism or sexism, but because it is the one thing that united us into a potential revolutionary movement for an anarchist communist society. The vast majority of people are in the working class – they do not own the means of production and are forced to sell their labour to survive. We need to abolish the ruling class – whatever their gender, ethnicity, age sexuality” (p14)

This passage is followed shortly afterwards by a section headed “Identity politics leads to cross-class alliances” and points out that “if people feel they have more in common with others ‘like them’ – in other words, Black, women, trans, disabled etc, than with other members of the working class then you end up with alliances across class and co-option of the struggle by the ruling class.” (p15)

There are also valid points made about the censoriousness of “woke” culture as a means of suppressing real debate, and how “hierarchies of privilege” – competing claims about who is the most oppressed, or the most privileged – further reinforce divisions and play on feelings of guilt, even verging on a kind of biological determinism in which some groups – white males in particular – are incapable of ever understanding the real experience of other “identities”. The example is given of “white people who paraded their shame at their privilege at BLM demonstrations in the summer of 2020, lining up to cry on podiums in parks across the world.” (p19). This focus on guilt and personal responsibility is rightly rejected as a barrier to discovering the real possibilities of uniting against a common, historic oppressor – capital.

Out through the door, in through the window

But alongside the above-mentioned points, with which we agree, the pamphlet contains certain key weaknesses, which show that the ACG’s break with identity politics is only partial⁵, and even acts as a ‘left’ cover for it.

In the section “Alternatives: fighting capitalism and oppressions”, where the ACG seeks to elaborate their positive perspectives, they suddenly pull a rabbit out of the hat in the form of “the self-organisation of oppressed groups into autonomous groups, that still have a link to the general working class movement. Others in the working class can show practical solidarity, furthering the self-activity and empowerment of these groups. This is an alternative to identity politics as well as to a class reductionist approach.” (p22). In response to the criticism (by “many left organisations”⁶...) that the separate autonomous organisation of specific groups “is diversionary and contrary to a class politics analysis”, they claim that “we are clear there is a difference between identity politics on the one hand and autonomous organisation on the other. The first focuses on the oppression of the group; the latter recognises that there is no anti-

5. The ACG’s failure to complete the break from identity politics is an expression of a more general dynamic of the group which we think is negative. But we will come back to this more general assessment in a future article.

6. This simple phrase hides a multitude of ambiguities. The ACG has sometimes said that it does not see itself as part of the “left”, but it has never provided a clear class definition of the “left”.

capitalist perspective that may see other workers as the enemy”.

But this argument is anything but clear, and it is not helped by the absence of any concrete example of such autonomous groups who, while being composed of one particular gender or ethnicity or other identity, adopt a class-based, genuinely anti-capitalist perspective and are not part of a “cross-class alliance” campaigning for legal or other changes.

It’s perfectly true that there can be proletarian struggles which are initially composed of, say, women or black people – but precisely because such a struggle is on a class terrain it must seek to widen towards and include all workers. Two examples: the February revolution in Russia which began with women demonstrating against bread shortages rapidly developed into a mass strike involving the majority of the working class. More recently, the textile workers’ strike in Mahalla, Egypt, in 2007, began with women workers marching through the plant calling on their male co-workers to join their struggle, and this action made it possible to call into question the traditional gender hierarchies of Egyptian society.

What other kinds of groups could the ACG be referring to? Political discussion circles, or groups of combative workers who get together to draw lessons of the past struggles and prepare for future conflicts? Again, such groups may begin with workers from a particular gender or ethnicity, just as they may originate in a particular trade or sector. They may initiate discussions about racism and sexism at the workplace or in society in general, but if they are part of a proletarian dynamic, they will conclude that the only way to fight sexual, racial or other divisions and prejudices within the class is for all workers to unite around their common interests. Freezing such expressions along gender, racial or other lines would become a new barrier to this perspective. Being really “anti-capitalist” means from the very beginning aiming

to go beyond all divisions in the class, however difficult that may be.

And if they are talking about political organisations, we see no role whatsoever for having separate groups for women, trans, black people... This was already an issue posed in the Russian social democracy where Lenin and others argued against an “autonomous” organisation for Jewish revolutionaries (the Bund). It remains a basic principle for any communist organisation that membership is based solely on agreement with its platform and organisational rules, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, sexuality or other division.

The ACG want to avoid “class reductionism”, but first we have to recognise that this term is already an ideological weapon of the theorists of intersectionality and identity politics, who, while arguing that that you can’t reduce everything to class (which is true, but banal) then seek to portray class as just one oppression among many, and workers as just one identity among others. Defending the position that class is the most fundamental division in this society involves:

- a thorough-going theoretical critique of all these ideas, which have become the official ideology of large parts of academia. Although the ACG’s pamphlet pose a few general questions about identity in a broader human perspective, we are convinced that anarchism does not provide us with the analytical tools needed for this work, and that the marxist historical method is the only one that can really clarify the origins of all the various oppressions and divisions that have hampered the human species for millennia;

- a clear denunciation of the practical consequence of identity politics: the division of the working class in the service of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, for communists, the task is not an “engagement”, even veiled, with identity politics, but an open combat against it. **Amos January 2022**

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The Covid crisis shows the dead end of capitalism

But when children completed their first week of school after the summer holidays, in Utrecht 10 to 15 classes were sent home every day because of positive tests while in The Hague and the surrounding area, 34 primary school classes came under quarantine and were sent home in that first week.

A mishmash of travel restrictions in Europe. In Europe travellers are faced with each country imposing measures on its own. Each country has its own safety and quarantine measures for travellers. In some countries the European vaccination certificate is sufficient to enter the country, while other countries apply additional restrictions, such as quarantines or PCR tests. Moreover, only people entering the country by plane or train are strictly controlled.

Distrust of the government, the vaccines and the science

Since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic we have witnessed an increase in distrust of governments, of vaccines, accompanied by a surge in disinformation and conspiracy theories:

- a distrust of governments in Russia, Bulgaria, but also in different EU countries such as Poland, Netherlands, Greece which, in turn, has been reinforced by irrational claims and blatant lies by governments to cover up their negligence and impotence.

- This widespread distrust and fear of vaccines, which is often very strong in immigrant communities in the Western countries, is nurtured by populist and conspiracy campaigns⁵, with a particular strong impact in the US, leading to an extreme polarisation between the pro- and anti-vaxxers.

Bulgaria is one of the countries where the extent

5. See also: Marxism & Conspiracy Theories

of misinformation and distrust of the vaccines has a real impact on the vaccination rate, which has only reached 20%. The country was approaching another peak in infections late October 2021, with more than 5,000 Covid-19 cases and 100 deaths a day; 95% of those who died had not been vaccinated. While the death toll mounted, the health-care system became overstrained, and intensive care units were filled to overflowing. But most Bulgarians still refuse Covid-19 vaccines.

The same can be said for Russia. For more than a year, Russian propaganda agencies and internet trolls have been engaged in a systematic and aggressive disinformation campaign, aimed at fostering doubts and misgivings about Covid-19 vaccines in the West. This disinformation campaign has strongly nurtured the vaccine scepticism which is, together with the mistrust in the government, responsible for the high level of vaccine hesitancy among Russians. With less than 45% of the population being fully vaccinated, the virus has spread at its most rapid pace in the recent months.

This polarisation in the US in particular has caused a chain reaction of total irrationality, which has spread to European countries, Australia and South Africa. By taking their information from dubious websites that spread dodgy or fake reports, the real concern about the virus or the vaccine is very easily confused with far-fetched theories and a totally irrational distrust of science. One of the conspiracy theories concerns the origin of the pandemic: the theory that the emergence of the virus is due to 5G technology, which has been designed to remotely control human minds. This “theory”, which says that the WHO is part of the plot, has provoked attacks on 5G signal towers.

Continued on page 7

1. Report on the class struggle : Formation, loss and re-conquest of proletarian class identity, International Communist Current (internationalism.org)

2. Reflections on the split in the Anarchist Federation (internationalism.org)

3. Available from londonacg@gmail.com, £3 including postage

4. Left communism and internationalist anarchism (internationalism.org)

ICC public meetings: contribute to the debate!

On the weekend of March 5/6 2022, the ICC will be organising online public meetings around the theme:

Faced with deepening capitalist barbarism and the return of workers' struggles, what is the role of revolutionaries?

The meetings will be held on the morning (UK time) of Saturday 5th March, to make it easier for comrades in Asia to take part, and the early evening of Sunday the 6th, so that comrades in the US can attend. For further details, write to us at uk@internationalism.org.

In autumn 2021 the ICC organised public meetings worldwide on the theme "The worsening dissolution of capitalism: its dangers for humanity and the responsibility of the proletariat". In the introduction to the discussion the following points were raised: the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Covid pandemic and the consequences of the changing climate.

The online articles below are a first response to some of the issues and disagreements raised by the discussion at these meetings:

Why does the ICC defend the validity of the concept of decomposition of capitalism?

Polêmica sobre a realidade da fase atual de decomposição do capitalismo

Continued from page 6

Covid-19 has created a health environment ripe for aggression and violence⁶. During the pandemic's first six months, 611 incidents of Covid-19-related physical or verbal assaults, threats, or discrimination were directed toward health care workers, patients, and medical facilities in more than 40 countries, according to the Red Cross (ICRC). Supporters of the conspiracy theories have been guilty of verbal and even physical assaults on health care workers in countries such as Slovakia and the US. On top of that we also have witnessed several attacks on the workers of the mainstream media.

Vaccine imperialism

Politicians repeatedly declare "never again" and that "we must learn the lessons of history," but far from making the capitalist states see reason and work together, the ruling class, by its very nature is incapable of changing the rules of declining capitalism, in which fierce competition over the shrinking markets is the rule and any form of cooperation more than ever the exception. In the past 100 years, in decadent capitalism, the world has not only become an arena of competition between capitalist enterprises, but in particular a battlefield between capitalist states.

Competition is the engine that keeps capitalism running, but it is also the source of most of its problems. The pandemic has starkly underlined this: for years governments have been cutting health budgets to increase overall capacity to compete, with the result that numerous health systems have been overwhelmed by Covid-related hospitalisations. Of course, everyone says they agree that preventing zoonoses (transmission of disease from animals to humans) by curbing the massive and chaotic intrusion into nature will be much cheaper than paying for the consequences - but preferably in such a way that another state acts first or bears the consequences. Because of international competition none of the states concerned is prepared to restrict the destruction of forests and other wild areas at the expense of its own national economy. No rational thinking is strong enough to alter the situation.

The national framework is the highest expression of the unity that bourgeois rule can attain, and faced with the pandemic, which demands a unified global approach, it is not able to go beyond this framework. In previous health crises, like the Ebola outbreak for instance, the bourgeoisie succeeded at least in keeping up appearances by implementing a certain (and often cynical) inter-

6. See: Navigating Attacks Against Health Care Workers in the Covid-19 Era; 21 April 2021.

national coordination (with the WHO, in particular, on the medical level) to defend the general interests of capitalism even in the context of the decadence of the system. But in this phase of decomposition, the tendency towards every man for himself has grown to such an extent that the ruling class is no longer even able to achieve the minimum cooperation to defend the general interests of its own system by bringing the pandemic under control. Instead, every state seeks to save itself in the face of the ongoing catastrophe.

The Covid pandemic has only intensified the imperialist race for influence over regions and markets, and the distribution of vaccines is itself being instrumentalised for imperialist purposes. The US and Europe, but also Russia, China or India, use the distribution of vaccines in a "soft imperialist" strategy to strengthen their imperialist positions in the world.

- China's support to the Covax-program of the WHO and the "Health Silk Road" are part of its "diplomatic offensive" to push for global health leadership. In the meantime, China has delivered vaccines to nearly 100 countries in the world.

- The Kremlin launched its "Sputnik V diplomatic offensive", and is currently registered and certified in 71 countries. Its offensive also puts the unity of the EU at the test. Some EU member states started to use the vaccine while Italy agreed to manufacture the non-approved Russia's Sputnik V.

- India is the greatest exporter of produced vaccines in the world. Under the slogan "Neighbourhood First" it has deals with 94 countries for the export of 66 million doses. India's own vaccine, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, will become part of the export programme in 2022.

Instead of protecting their own population these states thus use the vaccines for imperialist purposes. India, where only 35% of the population is fully vaccinated, has exported three times as many doses as it has administered to its own people.

The world-wide and deadly Covid crisis also leads to growing divisions, an intensification of tensions between factions of the national bourgeoisie, further increasing the bourgeoisie's loss of control over the evolution of the pandemic. Important political factions of the bourgeoisie in Europe, such as the *Freiheits Partei Österreich*, *Alternative Für Deutschland*, *Rassemblement National* in France, but also the *Republican Party* in the US etc. vehemently stoke up the discontent in society about mandatory vaccinations, the health pass, the lockdowns. They are more and more involved in demonstrations for "freedom" which

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Resolution on the international situation

The pandemic and the development of decomposition

Report on the international class struggle

Report on the economic crisis

Report on imperialist tensions

often result in violent clashes with the forces of repression.

Only the abolition of capitalism offers a perspective

The pandemic has spread to the entire world and radically changed it in a matter of months. This makes it the most important single phenomenon since the entry of capitalism into the phase of decomposition and confirms our thesis that "the magnitude of the impact of the Covid-19 crisis can be explained not only by this accumulation but also by the interaction of the ecological, health, social, political, economic and ideological expressions of decomposition in a kind of spiral never seen before, which has led to a tendency to lose control of more and more aspects of society"⁷. It clearly shows the decomposing superstructure of capitalist society and its effects on the economic foundations that gave rise to it.

And at the same time, it is not only the pandemic that illustrates the significant aggravation of the effects of decomposition. It's also the multiplication of "natural" disasters like wildfires, floods and tornados, all kinds of structural violence, increasingly irrational military conflicts and the resulting migration of millions looking for a place to survive. The interaction of all these aspects is an expression of the accelerated putrefaction of the very foundations of the capitalist mode of production. It is a dire manifestation of the contrast between the enormous potential of the productive forces and the atrocious misery that is spreading throughout the world.

Capitalism had outlived its usefulness; it is a dead man walking, and can no longer offer a perspective to human beings on the planet. But in its death throes it is still able of taking the whole world to the brink of abyss. The working class has the capacity and the responsibility to prevent the annihilation of humanity. Therefore, it needs to develop its struggle on its own terrain against the effects of the economic crisis, such as inflation, unemployment, precariousness. The present workers' struggles⁸, however timid they are, bear the seeds of overcoming this daily barbarism, and of creating a society free from the many scourges raging through capitalism in the 21st century.
Dennis, 18.12.21

7. Report on the pandemic and the development of decomposition; *International Review 167*.

8. Struggles in the United States, in Iran, in Italy, in Korea... Neither the pandemic nor the economic crisis have broken the combativity of the proletariat!;

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The Covid crisis shows the dead end of capitalism

Last summer the bourgeoisie was mounting a huge campaign around the theme “we no longer need to worry, we have the vaccines”. US President Biden stated that he wasn’t worried about the Delta variant causing another major nationwide outbreak of Covid-19 (2 July 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) Executive Director Mike Ryan declared that the very worst of the Covid crisis has come and gone (12 July 2021). They were supported by Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK, who said: “almost all the scientists are agreed on this - the worst of the pandemic is behind us” (15 July 2021)¹.

All the data on daily deaths and daily new cases over the last months contradicted these statements and confirmed that the pandemic is not at all behind us. The daily measures and recommendations by the bourgeoisie show that the pandemic still has a huge impact on society and the economy: health sectors flooded with new Covid patients, coercive measures against those who refuse to be vaccinated, new lockdowns with the closure of commercial activities, schools and entertainment.

For the majority of the world population the health crisis is far from over. It is still severely threatened by the effects of the virus at all levels; in particular those who have received only one dose of the Covid vaccine or none at all, as is also the case in Japan and Australia. In some of the major Asian countries in particular, the relatively successful policies for containing the Coronavirus in 2020 in these countries created the illusion that the virus was more or less under control, as a result of which the vaccination rate remained rather low there.

The frenzied and chaotic fight for the vaccines

Scientists agree that vaccination is the main bulwark against the spread of the virus. But the bourgeoisie is incapable of developing a unified policy to vaccinate the world population and to globally control the pandemic. There is no consultation at the international level that would allow the necessary scale-up of Covid-19 vaccine production. Instead, all countries have embarked on a vaccine race, with the richer countries hoarding a surplus, in an attempt to be the first to achieve group immunity.

Data from the WHO of November revealed that

1. Boris Johnson says it’s ‘highly probable’ that worst of pandemic is behind us, 15 July 2021.

G20 countries received more than 80% of Covid-19 vaccines while low-income countries only received 0.6%². In response to this trend UN Secretary-General António Guterres already issued a warning against “vaccine nationalism and hoarding [which] are putting us all at risk. This means more deaths. More shattered health systems. More economic misery”³.

Each state adopts its own strategy and only the most powerful states have the means to deal with the pandemic. In seeking to guarantee the vaccination of the respective populations, a number of them gained priority in signing agreements with pharmaceutical companies or even shelled out cash to pre-order promising vaccine candidates. This policy has led to huge disparities in the distribution of vaccines, even within the EU. Some EU countries had to take refuge to the less effective Russian Sputnik V (Hungary, Slovakia) or the Chinese Sinopharm (Hungary) vaccine.

Most rich nations are guilty of an unscrupulous accumulation of vaccines. Airfinity, a London-based analytics company, projects that by year’s end the surplus of Covid-19 vaccines will have reached 1.2 billion doses. If 600 million of these excess doses is to be donated to other countries, that leaves another 600 million doses sitting unused in stockpiles, with nearly half of that in the U.S. and the rest in the other wealthy countries⁴. This hoarding policy has already resulted in a waste of millions of vaccines.

Hoarding is one reason for the disparities in the distribution, but another big problem is the enormous cost of vaccines for the poor countries. Pharmaceutical producers do not charge standard prices but vary their prices depending on the quantity purchased, and charge higher prices when there is a lower quantity. For example, while the US paid \$15 million for 1 million doses of Moderna’s vaccine, Botswana had to pay nearly two times more: \$28.88.

The unequal distribution of the vaccines, and of the consequent delay in inoculation at the global level, compromises each vaccination strategy. A policy that favours vaccinations in the rich countries and does not prevent the spread of the

2. See: EU mulls mandatory vaccination, while urging booster for all; 2 December 2021.

3. Video message to the World Health Summit, Berlin 24 to 26 October 2021.

4. See: Why low income countries are so short on Covid vaccines. Hint: It’s not boosters; 10 November 2021.



Vaccine imperialism: India has exported three times as many doses as it has administered to its own people

pandemic in the poor countries runs the risk of a return of the virus to the most powerful countries, even with the possibility of the emergence of vaccine-resistant variants. The “everyman for himself” at the global level is a powerful accelerator of the spread of the Delta and Omicron variants and all new variants to come.

The patchwork of inconsistent and contradictory measures

In its fight against the Corona virus each bourgeoisie is constantly forced to give priority to the economy while maintaining a minimum of social cohesion, deliberately taking the risk of workers falling ill for a longer time or even dying because of the virus. This situation leads to a patchwork of inconsistent and contradictory recommendations and measures throughout the world and even between regions within one country. Some examples:

- No consensus between health organisations. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US announced on 13 May 2021 that fully vaccinated people, who are two weeks out from their last shot, can now roam maskless in outdoor and most indoor settings. But the World Health Organization issued different guidelines, urging everyone in the US, even those who are vaccinated, to keep wearing masks because of the threat of the highly transmissible Delta variant, which had been detected in all 50 U.S. states.

- No coordination between neighbouring regions. On Friday 17 September the Consultation Committee in Belgium suggested that wearing a mask is no longer compulsory in shops and catering from 1 October 2021. But Flanders said yes, Brussels said no and Wallonia would decide later... Each region wanted to decide according to the situation. The different regional governments took the power of decision each in its own region (as if the virus stops at regional or linguistic borders).

- Directives issued one month are repealed the next month. In July the UK government announced that all social-distancing rules would be removed, and national mask-mandates repealed from 19 July onwards. But the supermarkets immediately announced the retention of masks, while metropolitan mayors mandated mask wearing on the public transport services they control. After a long delay the British government gave in and announced the wearing of face masks in shops and on public transport as mandatory from Monday 29 November onwards.

- “Reopening” followed by even more quarantines. With vaccinations rising and cases dropping in late June 2021, the Dutch government pushed ahead with a “reopening”. Face masks were abandoned in almost all places and young people were encouraged to go out again.

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*.