



world revolution

War in Ukraine, pandemic, environmental disaster, economic crisis...

Only the proletariat can offer a future to humanity

For more than four months now, war has been raging at the gates of Europe. Four months of this macabre spectacle with its thousands of victims, its millions of exiles, its scenes of destruction and desolation. Four months, then, since carnage and devastation made their grand return to Europe, accelerating the spiral of war into which capitalism is sinking. This odious manifestation of capitalism's plunge into chaos and barbarism is accompanied by the resurgence of the Covid pandemic, where a "seventh wave" is currently sweeping across Europe without the slightest sanitary measure being envisaged by the different states, with the bourgeoisie leaving the populations to their own fate. Similarly, the chain of heat waves, such as the one that hit India and Pakistan last March and April, are a reminder that the cataclysms linked to climate change are increasingly threatening humanity. The most extreme effects (heat waves, droughts, floods, tsunamis, etc.) are even becoming the norm and will soon make human life impossible in entire regions.

We could add many other aspects to this accumulation and the simultaneity of disasters which demonstrate only one thing: the accentuation of the putrefaction of capitalist society and the to-

tal incapacity of the ruling class to counteract this historical trend. These three major illustrations are enough to affirm that capitalism has become an obsolete mode of production, incapable of guaranteeing a future for humanity other than that of its own destruction.

Capitalism is war

Since the beginning of the 20th century, war has been inseparable from capitalist society. It is the precise result of the historic crisis of this mode of production, as the Gauche Communiste de France pointed out in the wake of the Second World War: "having historically exhausted all the possibilities of development, and finding in modern warfare, imperialist warfare, the expression of this collapse which [...] engulfs the productive forces in an abyss and accumulates ruin upon ruin at an accelerated pace". But unlike climate disasters or the emergence of the pandemic, militarism and the proliferation of wars are the product of the deliberate action of the bourgeoisie, which is incapable of settling its imperialist rivalries other than by the resort to arms and spilling the blood of the exploited.

The war in Ukraine is no exception to this totally irrational logic¹ and even constitutes a deepening of militarism and its barbaric consequences, as shown by the scale of the fighting, the tens of thousands of deaths, the systematic destruction of entire cities, the execution of civilians, the irresponsible bombing of nuclear power stations and the considerable economic consequences for the entire planet. The explosion of the military budgets of all the states, and the adhesion of Sweden and Finland to the basket of crabs that is NATO, are in no way marks of the famous "If you want peace, prepare for war" so hypocritically peddled by the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, the swelling of military arsenals and, more generally, the accentuation of the war economy in all directions will only increase tensions between states and are already laying the foundations for future conflicts.

1. For further developments on the subject of the irrationality of the war see, for example "Orientation text: Militarism and decomposition", *International Review* No. 64 (October 1990). In *International Review* 168 we will publish "Militarism and Decomposition, May 2022" which brings the subject up to date.

A considerable worsening of the economic crisis

While the world has been suffering for nearly three years from one of the most deadly pandemics in history, and while the economic crisis and the environmental disaster are worsening, all states are spending vast amounts on arms. More than ever, the economy is at the service of war, at the service of the unbridled production of tools of destruction without the slightest economic consistency. For a gun, a missile or a fighter plane does not generate any additional value and is a pure waste, a dead loss from the point of view of capital on a global scale. Therefore, the increase in arms production, the possible conversion of strategic sectors to the military industry, the indebtedness that all this will provoke and the decrease in investments in other sectors of the economy, will considerably alter world trade and further aggravate the economic and social conditions suffered by the exploited.

In addition, the direct effects of the war itself are already being felt by a large part of the world's population: exorbitant inflation, the total disorganisation of production and supply chains, measures of economic retaliation between rival states. All these consequences of the imperialist war are hitting the exploited all over the world hard, not least with the shortage of many essential goods. Faced with this catastrophic situation, the bourgeoisie has no other proposal than the endless ideology of sacrifice, like the European governments which, faced with Russian gas cuts, exhort the population to tighten their belts by practising

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Strikes in Britain

Workers are ready for a fight – and the ruling class is preparing to sabotage it

Despite Covid, despite the war in Ukraine, despite the toxic divisions stirred up by Brexit, the working class in Britain, as in many other parts of the world, is still ready to fight in defence of its living standards. And, in the long run, this is the only road leading away from capitalism's headlong rush towards self-destruction.

The "cost of living crisis" has become an active factor in workers' resistance. The world economic crisis didn't begin with Covid or the war in Ukraine. It has been building up for decades (remember the "oil crisis" of the 70s and the "financial crash" of 2008?). But these more recent expressions of the slide into barbarism have certainly accelerated global economic instability, and within that, Britain's specific economic decline – and they have only partly hidden the additional

and increasingly disastrous impact of Brexit at this level. The surge in inflation - now officially running at 9.1% and expected to rise to 11% later this year - is having a direct impact on the ability of "ordinary working families" (i.e. the working class) to heat their homes, drive to work, and put food on the table.

For many workers, spiralling prices and pay offers well below the rate of inflation have been the last straw after years of attacks on wages, jobs and social benefits, and there has been a whole series of strikes in important sectors, most notably on the railways. 40,000 rail workers - signallers, maintenance and train staff - belonging to the RMT (Rail, Maritime and Transport union) held three strikes in June and plan further strikes on 27 July, 18 and 20 August – the first nationwide strike in

Britain on the railways for about 25 years.

5,500 train drivers belonging to a different union, ASLEF will also strike on 27 and 30 July at eight rail companies. There will be smaller strikes at other companies before that.

There are also planned strikes in the communications sector. 40,000 British Telecom workers will strike on 29 July and 1 August. Royal Mail workers are to strike between 20 and 22 July. This could involve 115,000 workers.

Following unions' rejection of employers' pay offers in the airlines, this summer could see widespread stoppages at airports both in Britain and other European countries.

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Imperialist and criminal propoganda!

In all wars, the classic and unavoidable weapons of states are those of mass propoganda, manipulation and disinformation. Since the First World War, the great democratic powers have been a veritable crucible for mind control, a laboratory for imposing the sacred National Unity, for persuading the population, in particular the proletariat, to support the war and consent to the sacrifices that go with it. Manipulating opinion remains the central objective of the ruling class to hide its crimes and prepare new ones.

The imperialist war in Ukraine is no exception to these ignoble enterprises of manipulation and propoganda. The democratic powers, especially in Western Europe, are the ones who have to provide the most subtle and elaborate propoganda in order to try to legitimise their bloody projects to a proletariat which has the greatest experience of struggle and one of the highest levels of education in the world¹.

Manipulation and propoganda around the conflict in Ukraine

On the eve of the conflict in Ukraine, as always, heads of state and governments vowed, hand on heart, to do everything to “preserve peace”. As Russian troops massed on Ukraine’s border, Putin claimed to have no warlike intentions and spoke of mere “military manoeuvres”. He had also committed to a partial withdrawal of his troops before his meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who said he was “delighted” with the news. Even after the start of the invasion, Putin has never spoken of a “war”, a word that is totally prohibited in Russia, but of a “special operation”.

As for Joe Biden, who announced Putin’s plans in advance, specifying that the United States would not intervene in the event of a conflict, thus giving the green light to the master of the Kremlin to throw his troops and his country into a trap, he appeared to the world as a man of peace, wishing, in his words, to “give diplomacy every chance”.

Zelensky was also a champion of peace, a “peaceful victim”, courageous, determined and “full of heroism”. For example, in his speech to the French National Assembly on 23 March, he spoke to a crowd of members of parliament who had been won over and seduced in advance: “[...] *How can we stop this war? How can we bring peace to Ukraine? [...] We must act together, put pressure on Russia together to seek peace.*”

Behind the speeches about peace, the image of a small country as the victim of the invaders stirred emotions and the will to fight the unspeakable Putin. The trap of a “defensive war” was set from the start. Zelensky could then forcibly mobilise cannon fodder on Ukrainian soil, men aged 18 to 60, to “defend the homeland”, constantly begging “arms for Ukraine” to prove Western “solidarity”, shamelessly exploiting the distress of the refugees for purely political and warlike ends.

In 1914, similar ideological tricks had already been used by the Entente bloc against the Triple Alliance powers.

Germany was then considered as the only one “responsible” for the war because of its invasion of little Belgium, a country taken over by the “Krauts”, by a “barbarian horde”.

French President Poincaré, who had been frantically preparing for war behind the scenes with Russia and his British ally, was at the same time a champion of peace, as shown in his speech of 14 July 1915, in which, in the middle of the war, he said: “*For many years our hard-working democracy had enjoyed the work of peace. It would have considered as a criminal, or as a fool, any man who would have dared to nourish bellicose projects.*” The height of cynicism and hypocrisy! A few days later, on 19 July, in a speech in the Reichstag, the German Chancellor said practically the same thing: “*We did not desire war; [...] it was peace that made us prosperous.*” His misfortune had been to attack first!

1. **Contrary to the proletariat in Ukraine which has** been defeated and conscripted, and to the proletariat in Russia, which is extremely fragile and vulnerable, the proletariat in Western Europe, although unable, at the moment, to put an end to the conflict, is not ready to accept the sacrifice of thousands of victims every day.

Like a remake, in September 1939, the invasion of Poland was presented once again as the attack by a “wolf” against an “innocent lamb” and not as the result of a logic specific to capitalism and imperialism. The “wish for peace and “victimhood” are classics!

Even Hitler declared himself in favour of peace! In 1938 in Berlin, he declared to the French ambassador his desire that Franco-German relations should be “peaceful and good”. And the diplomat Von Ribentrop often repeated that “the Führer does not want war”². It was also in the name of “peace” and ‘anti-fascism’ that the proletariat was drawn into the war.

Since no one “wants war”, even though it is the way of life of decadent capitalism, each side must present it as the fault of the opponent. Thus, for Putin, the fault lies with the Ukrainian regime, made up of “Nazis”, “persecutors of Russian-speaking minorities” who are fighting “against freedom and democracy”. Of course, he castigates another “responsible” party, the NATO forces that have surrounded him for decades and that seek to “weaken Russia”.

The propoganda of Zelensky, and the Western governments who support him militarily, makes things all the more pernicious and dangerous for the populations and the proletariat of the West, since the “peaceful Ukraine” appears well and truly as the one “strangled by the Russian ogre”. Indeed, among all the imperialist gangsters involved in this conflict, Putin is the one who drew first.

As soon as the war started, he went from being a persona non grata to a “bloodthirsty madman”. Demonisation (facilitated here by Putin’s personality and his Stalinist background) is also a great classic of propoganda!³

During the First World War, the German army and its soldiers were also presented as monsters, accused of raping, torturing and coldly slitting the throats of children⁴.

The current war and its images, the exploitation of corpses lying on the ground, the pictures of devastated cities, the multiplication of international investigations into “war crimes”⁵ committed by the Russian army, the almost total silence on the exactions of the Ukrainian army on the Western side, the accumulation of crude montages on the Russian side, all this accompanied by all the cyber-propoganda that fills the mind with smoke, testify to an intense and daily information war.

As a result, even if this war is considered worrying by the Western populations, a majority is insidiously led to support the sending of “weapons for Ukraine” in order to “teach the invader a lesson”. In other words: fuel the war and the massacres in the name of a “legitimate” and “defensive” response!

All states are imperialist

In this absurd, tragic, and barbaric adventure that has brutally struck Europe, the great Western democratic powers now play the beautiful role of prosecutor. They appear to be the “peace-lovers”, confronted with a sort of fait accompli that does not depend on their own will, but on that of one man, the cold, cynical, suicidal dictator Putin.

In reality, as Rosa Luxemburg already pointed out, all states, big or small, are real brigands who only act to defend their sordid imperialist interests, as our international leaflet also reminds us: “*since the beginning of the 20th century, permanent war, with all the terrible suffering it engenders, has become inseparable from the capitalist system, a system based on competition between companies and between states, where commercial warfare leads to armed warfare, where the worsening of its economic contradictions, of its crisis, stirs up ever more warlike conflicts. A system based on profit and the fierce exploitation of the producers,*

2. **Anne Morelli**, *Principes élémentaires de la propogande de guerre* (2001).

3. **This was the case, to take a few examples, with** Saddam Hussein, who was transformed overnight into the “Butcher of Baghdad”, with Milosevic in Serbia during the War in ex-Yugoslavia, and now with Putin.

4. *International Review* 155, “The birth of totalitarian democracy”.

5. **A legal concept that legitimises “ordinary” barbaric** warfare by making us forget that war itself is a real crime of capitalism.

in which the workers are forced to pay in blood as well as in sweat”⁶.

Obviously, if the responsibility of Putin’s rivals is more difficult to perceive behind the smokescreen of Western propoganda, it is no less present. The action of these imperialist powers within NATO, supplying arms to Ukraine in large quantities, fuelling a war that is becoming entrenched, amply demonstrates their responsibility in the irrational logic of militarism, and the massive planning of destruction. At the forefront of these gangsters, actors in the acceleration of disorder and chaos, the imperialist state led by Biden has moved in a very clever way. By trapping Russia and the Western European allies with his statements, implicitly giving Putin a green light, he expressed the Machiavellianism of his strategy.

The act of pushing the adversary to initiate hostilities himself is a classic ploy. This was already shown in Alfred Rosmer’s comment on the First World War, when he quoted a former senator, Jacques Bardoux, on the provocations that led Germany to attack in 1914: “*When is a war offensive or defensive? Epithets are open to a thousand interpretations. They are the expression of shifting and changing opinions. When a diplomat is clever, the war he provokes is never offensive. He seems to be defending himself when he really attacks.*”⁷

Through the *cordon sanitaire* that NATO has built around Russia since the collapse of the USSR, through the desire to bring new countries like Finland and Sweden into the Alliance, the Biden administration, like its ad hoc and forced Western European allies, has the “appearance of defending itself when it really attacks”. That is its strength. But at the same time, this criminal enterprise is an expression of a more fundamental historical weakness, since the dynamics of militarism bring chaos, irrationality and destruction.

In fact, all the leaders of the imperialist powers who cry out in horror at Putin’s abuses themselves have blood on their hands and end up further accelerating the deadly dynamics of world disorder. When the Second World War broke out, these same allied powers were by no means the “knights of freedom” they claimed to be, but barbaric actors of imperialism defending their own sordid interests: “*the West did not intervene to destroy Nazism or to avert the threat of a totalitarian regime. It was the European balance that was at stake*”⁸. In reality, this “European balance” was nothing more than the balance of power between imperialist gangsters.

Today, Europe is threatened with greater chaos in this vast scramble. Whatever they say, it is the great world powers that are at the forefront of all this. The same ones who in the past committed the worst exactions, always in the name of “good”. Think of the “strategic bombings” of 1943, when the Allies dropped carpets of incendiary bombs on the working-class districts of Dresden and Hamburg, killing at least 250,000 people. More recently, let’s not forget that American forces razed entire cities like Falluja in Iraq in 2004.

Today, the atomic threat and the terrifying hype about nuclear weapons should not make us forget that those who first used them in Japan were appealing to the same values of “peace”, “freedom” and “democracy”. While they were in no way militarily cornered, these same thugs had seriously considered in the 1950s vitrifying Korea with nuclear weapons.

There is no room for illusions: decaying capitalism can only bring war and chaos, destruction, crisis, epidemics and ecological disaster. The proletariat must not forget the brainwashing it has undergone during all the wars of the past. Today, it must absolutely reject the siren songs of all the belligerents. If we let ourselves be tempted by their war-mongering propoganda, we may think that the arms supplies to Ukraine are a “solution”,

6. See our international leaflet: “**Capitalism is war, war on capitalism!**”

7. **Alfred Rosmer**, *Le mouvement ouvrier pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. It should also be pointed out that the “defencist” argument was used by all the social democratic traitors in 1914 in order to disarm the proletariat and enlist it in the war.*

8. **Philippe Masson**, *Une guerre totale* (1990)

even if unsatisfactory, because the proletariat is not able to stop the war immediately. However, far from sparing suffering, this option can only fuel the destructive forces for which both sides are responsible. But by drawing the lessons of the past, revolutionaries arm themselves to denounce the lies of the bourgeoisie in order to assist the proletariat to avoid being caught up in the lies of the ruling class and to develop its own class resistance against this murderous system. **WH, 11 June 2022**

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“energy sobriety”, all in the name of a pseudo-solidarity with the Ukrainian people. This despicable propoganda relayed by the big energy companies shows all the perfidy and cynicism of the ruling class, which never gives up trying to make the working class pay for its crisis. But the lies of the ruling class pale in comparison with the harsh reality that billions of people suffer in their flesh on a daily basis. The proof is that the world has never been so hungry. Today, capitalism and its horrors are plunging more than 2 billion people into a food crisis and almost 400,000 million people are on the brink of starvation.

The future is in the hands of the proletariat

As we have affirmed on several occasions over the last few months, the proletariat, deprived of its class consciousness, is for the moment incapable of recognising itself as a social force that can oppose war and put forward a revolutionary perspective. Faced with inflation and shortages, revolts have thus broken out on a terrain of struggle totally alien to the methods and objectives of the proletariat, as in Sri Lanka where the anger of the population has been instrumentalised to oust the president in office, thus serving as a mass to be manoeuvred in the confrontations between bourgeois cliques. In Ecuador, thousands of “indigenous” people, grouped on ethnic bases and cut off from the struggle of the working class, have also set themselves the objective of overthrowing the ruling power... for the benefit of another bourgeois clique.

However, in recent weeks, the first glimmers of workers’ reactions to the increasing exploitation in the workplace and the deterioration of living conditions, as a result of soaring prices, have been expressed in the heart of global capitalism. At the end of June, more than 50,000 railway workers in Britain were on strike to demand higher wages. In Germany, Spain and France, strikes also broke out in the air industry and railways, based on the same demands. If these defensive struggles remain for the moment very embryonic, isolated from each other and contained by the unions, who are deploying their arsenal of sabotage through division between different sectors, the fact remains that they illustrate a great deal of anger in the ranks of the workers as well as a potential for the development of combativity in the period to come.

But above all, these movements fully demonstrate that the economic crisis remains the best ally of the proletariat, the most favourable terrain on which it can develop its solidarity and its international unity, and gradually recover its identity and the consciousness of its revolutionary potential. It is only through these long and tortuous struggles that it will be able to extricate humanity from capitalism’s spiral of destruction and thus show the way to communism.

More than ever the future belongs to the working class!

Vincent, 8 July 2022.

A barbaric war intensifies

While Russia is continuously pouring carpets of bombs on Ukrainian cities, at the end of the G7 meeting, organised in the bucolic setting of the Bavarian Alps, on 28 June, the representatives of the great “democratic” powers chanted the words of Macron in chorus: “Russia cannot and must not win!”, eager to express their fake indignation about the horror of the fighting, the tens of thousands of deaths and millions of refugees, the systematic destruction of entire cities, the execution of civilians, the irresponsible bombing of nuclear power stations, and the considerable economic consequences for the entire planet. By feigning fear, this band of cynics also sought to conceal the very real responsibility of the West in this massacre, in particular the destabilising action of the United States which, in its attempts to counter the decline of its world leadership, did not hesitate to stir up chaos and barbarism at the gates of the historic centre of capitalism.

The Ukraine trap set by US imperialism for Russian imperialism

Today the US and the other powers in the West present themselves as champions of peace, of democracy, and of poor innocent Ukraine faced with a shameful attack by the Russian ogre. If the horrors committed by Russian imperialism are more difficult to hide, neither the US nor Ukraine can be seen as “white knights”. On the contrary, they have played an active role in the unleashing and perpetuation of the massacre.

The Ukrainian bourgeoisie, corrupt to the bone, had already sabotaged the Minsk agreement of 1914, which implied, among other things a certain autonomy for the Donbass and the protection of the Russian language in Ukraine. Today it is acting in a particularly intransigent ‘fight to the end’ manner in the face of Russia; certain factions even envisage the reconquest of Crimea.

But US policy is far more hypocritical and calculating. In the early 1990s, the United States had “informally” promised Moscow that it would not take advantage of the implosion of the Eastern bloc to extend its influence to Russia’s borders. However, it did not hesitate to integrate the former Eastern Bloc countries into its sphere of influence one by one, just as it did not hesitate to massively arm Taiwan and to support its attempts to distance itself from Beijing after promising to respect the ‘one China’ principle. The US policy towards Ukraine has nothing to do with the defence of the widow and the orphan or of democracy, nor with beautiful humanitarian principles that no country hesitates to smear in blood and mud for the defence of its sordid imperialist interests.

By challenging Putin to invade Ukraine (and pushing him to do so by making it clear that it would not intervene), by dragging him into a full-scale war, the US has, in a Machiavellian manoeuvre, momentarily scored important points in the imperialist arena, as the US strategy is above all aimed at countering the irretrievable decline of its world leadership.

The US bourgeoisie was thus able to restore NATO’s control over the European imperialisms. While this organisation seemed to be in perdition, “brain dead” according to Macron, the war in Ukraine allowed a return to the forefront of this instrument of subordination of European imperialisms to US interests. Washington exploited the Russian invasion to call the protesting European “allies” to order: Germany, France and Italy were forced to break off their trade links with Russia and to hastily launch the military investments that the United States had been demanding for 20 years.

Similarly, the US is dealing decisive blows to Russia’s military power. But behind Russia, the US is basically targeting China and putting it under pressure. The basic objective of the USA’s Machiavellian manoeuvre is to continue the containment of China, which began in the Pacific, by weakening the Russian-Chinese relationship. Russia’s failures faced with US military aid to the Ukrainian army is a clear warning to Beijing. China has reacted in an embarrassed manner to the Russian invasion: while disapproving of the sanctions, Beijing avoids crossing the red line that would lead to American sanctions against China. Moreover, the Ukrainian conflict makes it possible to block a large area, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, which is indispensable for the deployment of the “New Silk Road”, and this is undoubtedly a significant objective of the American manoeuvre.

US policy leads to intensified chaos and militarism

Regardless of which faction of the bourgeoisie is in government, since the beginning of the period of decomposition, the US, in its desire to defend its declining supremacy, has been the main force for the spread of chaos and warlike barbarism through its interventions and manoeuvres: it has created chaos in Afghanistan and Iraq and fostered the rise of both Al Qaeda and Daesh (Islamic State).

In the autumn of 2021, they consciously stirred up tensions with China over Taiwan in order to rally the other Asian powers behind them. Their policy in Ukraine is no different today, although their Machiavellian strategy allows them to present themselves as a peaceful nation opposing Russian aggression. With its overwhelming military supremacy, the US is fomenting warlike chaos as the most effective barrier against the challenge of China. But far from stabilising the world situation, this policy intensifies the barbarity of war and exacerbates imperialist confrontations on all sides, in a chaotic, unpredictable and particularly dangerous context.

By putting Russia on the ropes, Washington is intensifying the threat of chaos and war in Europe. The war in Ukraine is leading to increasingly calamitous losses for Russia. However, Putin cannot stop the hostilities at this stage because he needs trophies at all costs to justify the operation domestically and save what can be left of Russia’s military prestige, without giving up on removing this highly strategic territory from American influence. On the other hand, the longer the war goes on, the more Russia’s military power and economy will be eroded. The United States has no interest in encouraging a cessation of hostilities, even if it means cynically sacrificing the population in Ukraine. Under the present conditions, the carnage can only continue and the barbarity expand, probably for months or even years, and this in particularly bloody and dangerous forms, such as the threat posed by “tactical” nuclear weapons.

By restoring the yoke of NATO, the US is also exacerbating the imperialist ambitions and militarism of the European bourgeoisies. If the European countries were able to nourish the illusion after 1989 that they could conduct their imperialist policy based essentially on their economic assets, with the Trump presidency, and even more clearly with



Maternity and children’s hospital in Mariopol, Ukraine. While the horrors inflicted by Russian imperialism are difficult to hide, the USA and Ukraine have played an active role in unleashing and perpetuating the massacre.

the aggressive policy of the Biden administration, based on the military superiority of the United States, which is now taking shape in Ukraine, they are becoming increasingly aware of their military dependence and therefore of the urgency of reinforcing their armament policy, even if, at first, they cannot distance themselves too clearly from NATO. Germany’s decision to massively rearm, doubling its military budget, is a major imperialist development in the medium term because, since the Second World War, Germany had maintained only modest armed forces.

The dissensions within NATO are already appearing between an “intransigent” pole that wants to “bring Putin to his knees” (USA, Great Britain and Poland, Baltic countries) and a more “conciliatory” pole (“all this must end in negotiations”, “we must avoid humiliating Russia”). By increasing the pressure on China, the US bourgeoisie is also increasing the risk of new military confrontations. The Ukrainian crisis has dangerously destabilising consequences for the imperialist position of the main challenger to the US.

Beijing continues to pursue a policy of formal support for Putin without any compromising commitments, but the war is having a heavy impact on its “New Silk Road” and on contacts with the Central European countries that China had managed to seduce. This is happening at a time when the slowdown of its economy is becoming more and more apparent, with growth currently estimated at 4.5% of GDP. While the United States does not hesitate to accentuate these difficulties and to exploit them in its confrontation with Beijing, the situation exacerbates tensions within the Chinese bourgeoisie and accentuates the risk of an acceleration of confrontations on the economic and even military level.

The incalculable consequences of the war in Ukraine

The absence of any economic motivation for wars was obvious from the beginning of the decadence of capitalism: “War was the indispensable means by which capital opened up the possibilities for its further development, at a time when such possibilities existed and could only be opened up through violence. In the same way, the capitalist world, having historically exhausted all possibility of development, finds in modern imperialist war the expression of its collapse. War today can only engulf the productive forces in an abyss, and accumulate ruin upon ruin, in an ever-accelerating rhythm, without opening up any possibility for the external development of production.”¹ The conflict in Ukraine is a vivid example of how war has not only lost its economic function, but how the rush to military chaos is increasingly reducing the strategic benefits of war. For example, Russia has embarked on a war in the name of defending Russian speakers, but it is massacring tens of thousands of civilians in predominantly Russian-speaking regions, while turning these cities and regions into ruins and suffering consider-

1. Report to the conference of July 1945 of the Gauche Communiste de France, cited in 50 years ago: The real causes of the Second World War, *International Review* 59

able material and infrastructural losses itself. If, at the end of this war, it captures the Donbass and South-East Ukraine, it will have conquered a field of ruins (the price of reconstruction is currently estimated at 750 billion euros) and a population that hates it. It will have suffered a significant strategic setback in terms of its great power ambitions. As for the United States, in its policy of containment of China, it is being led to encourage a cynical “scorched earth” policy, leading to an immeasurable explosion of economic, political and military chaos. The irrationality of war has never been more apparent.

This tendency towards the increasing irrationality of military conflicts goes hand in hand with the increasing irresponsibility of the ruling factions coming to power, as illustrated by the adventure of Bush Junior and the “Neo-Cons” in Iraq in 2003, the policies of Trump from 2018 to 2021 or the faction around Putin in Russia. They express the exacerbation of militarism and the loss of control of the bourgeoisie over its political apparatus, which can lead to an adventurism that is fatal, in the long run, for these factions but, above all, perilous for humanity.

At the same time, the consequences of the war for the economic situation of many countries are dramatic. Russia is a major supplier of fertiliser and energy, Brazil depends on fertiliser for its crops. Ukraine is a major exporter of agricultural products, and prices of commodities such as wheat are likely to rise. States such as Egypt, Turkey, Tanzania or Mauritania are 100% dependent on Russian or Ukrainian wheat and are on the verge of a food crisis. Sri Lanka and Madagascar, already over-indebted, are bankrupt. According to the UN Secretary General, the Ukrainian crisis risks “pushing up to 1.7 billion people (more than one fifth of humanity) into poverty, destitution and hunger”. The economic and social consequences will be global and incalculable: impoverishment, misery, hunger...

The same is true of the ecological threats to the planet. The fighting in Ukraine, a country with Europe’s third-largest nuclear fleet, in a region with an ageing industry, a legacy of the “Soviet” era, presents enormous risks of ecological and nuclear disasters. But more generally in Europe and in the world, while officially ‘clean, green energy transition’ remains the priority, the need to get rid of dependence on Russian fuels and to respond to soaring energy prices are already pushing the major economies to seek to revive the production of coal, oil, gas and nuclear energy. Germany, the Netherlands and France have already announced measures in this direction.

The unpredictability of the present confrontations, the possibilities of their sliding out of control, which are stronger than during the Cold War, mark the current phase of decomposition and constitute one of the particularly worrying dimensions of this acceleration of militarism. More than ever, the current war highlights the only alternative: “socialism or the destruction of humanity”. Instead of death and capitalist barbarism: socialism! R. Havannais, 4 July 2022



A balance sheet of the public meetings about the Joint Statement by groups of the Communist Left on the war in Ukraine

Following the publication of the Joint Declaration by groups of the Communist Left (International Communist Current, Internationalist Voice, and Istituto Onorato Damen)¹, two public online meetings were held by these groups, one in Italian and one in English, to discuss and clarify the need for the Joint Declaration and the tasks of revolutionaries in the face of imperialist war and new world conditions. The meetings were held in a serious and cordial atmosphere; differences of opinion did not prevent a camaraderie or lively discussion. The significance of the Joint Declaration is that it follows the spirit of the Zimmerwald Conference of 1915, where revolutionaries were able to issue a joint internationalist declaration in the face of World War I. In the 1930s, on the other hand, Italian and Dutch left-wing communists opposed the Spanish War but were unable to issue a joint declaration. Similarly, during the Sino-Japanese War, World War II and the Korean War, internationalist communists failed to issue a joint statement. It is undeniable that today communist left groups do not have the influence that revolutionaries had in 1915. However, a common voice is necessary, not for its immediate consequences, but for the perspective of future battles. It is not possible to reflect the discussions of both sessions in a short article, but we want to give a summary of the topics discussed.

Italian-language meeting

In the Italian-language meeting, all participants, without exception, assessed the nature of war as imperialist and stressed the need to defend internationalism, that is, not to support any of the imperialist camps. Rejecting any pacifist illusions, they saw the working class and the class struggle as the only force capable of opposing the war. The participants, without exception, stressed the importance of the Joint Declaration. The participants believed that although the situation today is not comparable to that of 1915 and the revolutionaries do not have the influence they had on the working class in 1915, the spirit of the Zimmerwald conference, like a compass, is still valid today. The Zimmerwald conference is a reference for revolutionaries, to which they refer in their struggle against the imperialist war. Only one participant declared the reference to the Zimmerwald conference invalid, arguing that the currents that signed the joint declaration do not have the influence of Lenin or Luxemburg on the working class. Others responded that the importance of a joint declaration lies in a common voice of positions internationalists that the currents of the communist left had previously been unable to express in the face of the war.

The fact that other groups of the Communist Left refused to sign the joint declaration reflects the weakness of the proletarian political milieu. The majority of participants deplored the refusal of other left communist groups to refer to Lenin on the need for a common response, despite theoretical differences. In Zimmerwald, participants had differences of opinion and analysis, but this did not prevent them from making a statement in unison. The majority of participants disagreed with the reasons given by the Internationalist Communist Tendency² for not signing the joint statement. While some of the participants talked about continuing the discussion with ICT to encourage them to sign the joint statement or, at least, to develop joint action with them, others stressed that we should avoid getting into controversial discussions and move on without paying attention to others. In any case, all participants in the meeting shared the view that the No War But the Class War proposal drafted by the ICT represents a huge step backward from their own political tradition, effectively delegating to the working class in general the functions that the revolutionary vanguards should be performing instead.

The participants stressed that it is not possible to fight the war without fighting capitalism. After the war, inflation increased not only in the periphery

of capitalism, but also in the metropolitan centers, and thus the cost of living for the proletariat increased, which means that the standard of living of the working class decreased. The living and working conditions of the working class, with the outbreak of the ongoing imperialist war, are bound to worsen, and may induce, in the more or less near future, the proletariat to retaliate against the continuous attacks launched by capital.

Another point of discussion stressed that the struggle of the proletariat can develop in a revolutionary direction only if it is based on the historical continuity of the positions of the Communist Left. Of course, this does not mean that only left communist groups can support these positions, but that they must serve as a point of reference to show the way forward. It was agreed during the discussion that it is the task of revolutionaries to work to build the future international and internationalist party of the proletariat, without which all eventual struggles of the working class will inevitably be doomed to defeat. And this is perspective of the declaration against imperialist war signed by the various adhering groups.

Meeting in English

In the English-language session (in which the comrades of the IOD could not participate), as in the Italian-language session, participants unequivocally assessed the nature of the war as imperialist and, rejecting any peaceful illusions, they saw the working class and the class struggle as the only force that could counter the war. At the meeting, except for the ICT/CWO delegate, participants stressed the importance of the Joint Statement. One participant stated that although he did not fully agree with the Joint Statement, he still support-

ed it. As in the Italian meeting, the participants, with the exception of the ICT/CWO delegate, also put forward that, although the situation today was not comparable to that of 1915 and that revolutionaries did not have the influence they had in the working class in 1915, the spirit of the Zimmerwald Conference has to act as a compass, which is still valid today, a reference point revolutionaries in the struggle against imperialist war.

At the meeting, the ICT (CWO) delegate had the opportunity to state their reasons for refusing to sign the joint statement. He put forward their reasons but their arguments not only did not convince the audience but also fuelled further discussions. The ICT/CWO representative stated that not signing the statement was not a matter of principle, but the ICT/CWO considered the criteria for those who should sign was too narrow. According to the comrade, they want to bring together those who agree with the No War but the Class War initiative. By signing the Joint Statement the ICT would be implicitly endorsing the ICC's views on parasitism. They work with Controverses and the International Group of the Communist Left, and the ICC does not; the ICC has labelled comrades who have been fighting for years as parasites. Maybe the ICT can pull them back into the Communist Left through the NWBCW.

Several participants who were former members of the ICC rejected the ICT/CWO representative's statement that every militant who leaves the ICC is labelled as a parasite, stating that they have never been deprived of any activity and that comrades of the ICC are always very open to discussion and solidarity. They emphasised that the problem of parasitism is related to behaviour that was not proletarian.

Some participants intervened with criticisms of the NWBCW initiative; however the presidium asked participants to postpone the discussion about NWBCW to the next public meeting. In the discussions, it was argued that the internationalists could not issue a joint statement in the face of the Spanish War, World War II, the Korean War, etc. Today the adoption of the Joint Statement was a blow to sectarianism in the proletarian political milieu and a step forward. At the beginning of the meeting, some comrades who had given credit to the ICT for refusing to sign the Joint Statement became convinced by the discussion of the necessity of the latter. A comrade said in the conclusions that he believed that the discussion was constructive, even if the differences between the ICC and the ICT were significant. These differences need to be articulated more and developed in common discussions. Another participant stated that although he disagreed with some of the CWO's positions, he was convinced that the Communist Left would not be able to carry out its historic tasks without the participation of groups such as the Bordigists or the ICT. According to him it is a pity that they did not understand the importance of this action on the Ukraine war.

The prevailing view at the meeting was that although only a minority of all the groups of the Communist Left signed the Joint Statement, the latter would still become a point of reference in the left communist tradition, to which other groups and militants could refer.

Internationalist Voice
Istituto Onorato Damen
International Communist Current
June 15, 2022

Statement by KRAS-IWA

Solidarity with internationalists in Russia

ICC introduction

In March 2022 we published an initial statement on the war in Ukraine by the anarcho-syndicalist group KRAS in Russia, a courageous expression of internationalism opposed to both sides of this imperialist war¹. We have also published an article on the incoherence of the anarchist response to the war, which includes genuine internationalist positions like those of KRAS, but also openly bourgeois statements in favour of the military defence of Ukraine, and even direct participation in the Ukrainian war effort by anarchist 'militias'². The Black Flag group in Ukraine, for example, has established its own platoon within the territorial defence forces set up by the Ukrainian state. And while talking about anarcho-communism in the future, it cannot hide its support for the nation right now: "thanks for support and for the fight for freedom in some Ukrainian battalions. Truth wins, so Ukraine will win"³. And within Russia itself, there are anarchists like the Anarchist Fighter group which claims to be against the Putin regime and even calls for the defeat of Russian imperialism in this war, but which also argues that "As for Ukraine, its victory will also pave the way for the strengthening of grassroots democracy—after all, if it is achieved, it will be only through popular self-organization, mutual assistance, and collective resistance"⁴. This is a shameless distortion of the slogan of "revolutionary defeatism" raised by Lenin in the First World War: when Lenin insisted on the need for class struggle against the Tsarist regime, even if it meant the military defeat of Russia, this never meant supporting the opposing camp led by German imperialism. Whereas the support for Ukrainian victory offered by these anarchists can only mean support for the NATO war machine.

The present statement by KRAS makes it clear that the "defencists" are wholly on the side of capitalist order. This includes some anarchists in Ukraine who equate the internationalism of the KRAS, its opposition to the nationalism of both camps, with support for the Putin regime and its brutal war. In reality, these elements, by publishing the names and addresses of KRAS militants, have directly exposed them to repression by the Russian security forces. We publish this new statement of KRAS as an elementary statement of solidarity with these comrades.

1. 'An internationalist statement from inside Russia', internationalism.org
2. 'Between internationalism and the "defence of the nation"', ICC website
3. 'Ukrainian anarchists take part in relieve to population of the massacred Kyiv suburbs', libcom.org
4. On nl.crimethinc.com website

"Anarchists" who forget the principles

Statement by KRAS-IWA, June 8, 2022

The section of the International Workers' Association in the region of Russia calls for a boycott of provocateurs and informers who hide behind the name of "anarchists" and denounce the activists of our organization.

Our position against the war waged by the capitalist oligarchies for the repartition of the "post-Soviet space" is met with understanding and sup-

port from anarchist internationalists in Ukraine, Moldova and Lithuania, with whom we maintain contacts.

But from the very beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the so-called "anarchists", who abandoned the traditional anarchist internationalist position of defeating all states and nations and who support one of the warring parties, launched a campaign of slander against our organization.

For example, former anarchists Anatoly Dubovik

and Oleksandr Kolchenko living in Ukraine have published the names and addresses of our activists on the open Internet. The first of them wrote the corresponding text, and the second gave him his Facebook account for publication and approved it. The pretext was that our organization takes a consistent internationalist position and condemns both the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Ukrainian nationalism and the expansionist policy of the NATO bloc.

Messrs. Dubovik and Kolchenko tried shamelessly and impudently to slander our IWA section, without any reason trying to attribute to us a position in defence of the Kremlin. Besides, they admit that we are calling for both Ukrainian and Russian soldiers to refuse to fight.

The latter means that these fake anarchists, by publishing the addresses of anti-war activists located in Russia, are directly inciting Russian secret services and nationalist thugs against them, as opponents of the war, in order to deal with them with their hands! In the conditions of ongoing harassment, dismissals, threats and physical reprisals against anti-military-minded people in Russia, such actions are tantamount to a real denunciation with a direct indication of whom the repressive forces should turn their attention to.

Once again, the nationalists on both sides of the front line, following the logic of "who is not with us is against us", are ready to jointly destroy their main opponents, internationalists who refuse to make a choice between warring state and bourgeois cliques between plague and cholera.

Anarchists all over the world should be aware of the shameful deeds of provocateurs-informers and once and for all refuse to have anything to do with them, forever throwing them out of the anarchist environment and sending them to their patrons and masters from the secret services and the secret police!

The statement was approved at a referendum of the members of the KRAS-IWA

1. See the joint statement on the websites of the ICC, en.internationalism.org, IV, and IOD, <http://www.istitutoonoratodamen.it>

2. See their website leftcom.org/en

On the history of the No War but the Class War groups

In response to the murderous war in Ukraine, the ICC has repeatedly stressed the need for a common response by the most coherent expression of proletarian internationalism – the communist left – in order to create a clear pole of reference for all those seeking to oppose imperialist war on a class basis.

Although the appeal for a joint statement, and the text that came out of it, was received positively by three groups¹, the Bordigist groups more or less ignored our call, while the Internationalist Communist Tendency, while stating that they were in principle in favour of such joint statements by internationalists, have rejected our appeal for reasons that in our view remain unclear: disagreements in analysis were mentioned earlier on, then divergent views on what constitutes the authentic communist left and a rejection of our conception of parasitism seemed to come to the fore. We will take up these arguments elsewhere; here we aim to focus on the ICT's alternative proposal, which is to push for the formation of local/national "No War but the Class War" groups, which they see as the starting point for an internationalist action against the war on a much wider scale than a common statement signed by the groups of the communist left.

When we examine the text of the first appeal to set up No War but the Class War groups in response to the Ukraine war², published by Liverpool NWCW, we can say that it is clearly internationalist, opposing both imperialist camps, rejecting pacifist illusions, and insisting that capitalism's descent into military barbarism can only be halted by the revolutionary struggle of the working class. We think however that there is a definite element of immediatism in the text, in the following paragraph: "*The scattered anti-war actions that have been reported so far – protests in Russia, soldiers disobeying their orders in Ukraine, refusals to handle shipments by dockers in the UK and Italy, sabotage by railway workers in Belarus – need to take on the working class perspective to be truly anti-war, lest they get instrumentalised by one side or the other. Support for Russia or Ukraine in this conflict means support for war. The only way to end this nightmare is for workers to fraternise across borders and bring down the war machine*".

The statement is correct to point out that isolated protests against the war can be recuperated by various bourgeois factions or ideologies. But the impression is given that the working class, in its present situation, whether in the war zone or in the more central capitalist countries, might be able to develop a revolutionary perspective in the short term and "bring down the war machine" to end this *present* war. And behind this lies another ambiguity: that the formation of NWCW groups could be a moment towards this sudden leap from the present state of disorientation in the working class to a full-blown reaction against capital. If we examine the history of the Communist Workers' Organisation, the UK affiliate of the ICT, in their involvement with previous NWCW projects, there is clear evidence that such illusions do exist among these comrades.

We will soon be publishing a more developed analysis of the perspectives of the class struggle in this phase of accelerating barbarism, explaining why we don't think that a mass movement of the working class directly against this war is a realistic possibility. The ICT might respond by saying that the NWCW appeal is mainly aimed at regrouping all those *minorities* who defend internationalist positions and not at sparking off any kind of mass movement. But even at this level, a real understanding of the nature of the NWCW project is required in order to avoid errors of an opportunist character, in which the unique coherence of the communist left is lost in a labyrinth of confusion strongly influenced by anarchist or even leftist ideas.

The aim of this present article is therefore to critically examine the history of the NWCW idea in order to draw the clearest possible lessons for

our current intervention. This dimension is entirely lacking from the ICT's proposal. In 2018, when the CWO made a similar appeal and set up a series of meetings under the NWCW banner with the Anarchist Communist Group and one or two other anarchist formations, we explained at one of these meetings why we could not accept their invitation to "join" this group. The principal reason was that this new formation had been brought together without any attempt to understand the mainly negative lessons of previous efforts to set up NWCW groups. This failure to carry out a critical examination of the experience was repeated when the group simply disappeared without any public explanation by the CWO or the ACG.

Regarding the ICT's most recent foray into this project, we have specifically invited the comrades to participate in our most recent public meetings on the war in Ukraine and to provide their assessment of the evolution of the NWCW project so far. Unfortunately, the comrades did not attend these meetings and an opportunity to take the debate forward was lost. Nevertheless, we offer this examination of the background and history of the NWCW idea as our own contribution to advancing the debate.

No War but the Class War groups: a brief history

The idea of creating NWCW groups first emerged from the anarchist milieu in Britain. To our knowledge the first attempt to set up such a group was in response to the first Gulf War in 1991. But it was with the formation of new NWCW groups in response to the war in ex-Yugoslavia and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 that we were able to gain a direct experience of the composition and dynamics of this initiative.

Our decision to participate in the meetings organised by these groups, mainly in London, was based on our recognition of the 'swamp-like' nature of anarchism, which comprises a series of tendencies going from outright bourgeois leftism to genuine internationalism. In our view, these new NWCW groups, while indeed being extremely heterogeneous, did contain elements who were seeking a proletarian alternative to the "Stop the War" mobilisations organised by the left of capital.

Our intervention towards these groups was based on the following objectives:

- Clarifying the principles of proletarian internationalism and the need for a sharp demarcation from the left of capital and pacifism
- Focusing on political debate and clarification against activist tendencies which, in practice, meant dissolving into the Stop the War demonstrations
- Despite accusations that our approach, emphasising the primacy of political discussion, was purely "monastic" or "inactivist", that we were only interested in discussion for discussion's sake, we made some definite proposals for action, in particular the possibility of calling an "internationalist meeting" in Trafalgar Square at the end of the big Stop the War march in November 2001. This would be in direct opposition to the leftist speeches coming from the STW platform. This proposal was partly acted on – not by NWCW as such, but by the ICC and the CWO...³. We will return to the significance of this later.

The CWO gets involved

In 2002, the CWO also intervened in this process, particularly in Sheffield where it played a central role in the formation of a new NWCW group – one which took up positions close to and even indistinguishable from those of the communist left. In our article "Revolutionary Intervention and the Iraq war" in *WR* 264, which aimed to draw a balance sheet of our intervention towards NWCW, we welcomed this fact, but we also criticised the CWO's overestimation of the potential for the NWCW network, particularly its main group in London, to act as a kind of organising centre for proletarian opposition to the war, linking up with some of small expressions of class struggle that were tak-

ing place in parallel to the "anti-war" movement⁴.

Against this idea, our article made it clear that "*we never thought that NWCW was a harbinger of a resurgence of class struggle or a definite class political movement that we had 'joined'*". It could at most be a reference point for a very small minority that were asking questions about capitalist militarism and the elitist and pacifist frauds that accompany it. And this was why we defended its – albeit limited – class positions against the reactionary attacks of leftists like *Workers Power* (in *WR* 250) and insisted from the beginning on the importance of the group as a forum for discussion and warned against the tendencies to 'direct action' and to closing the group to revolutionary organisations".

For the same reasons, in another article "In defence of discussion groups" in *WR* 250, we explained our differences with the CWO on the question of "intermediaries" between the class and the revolutionary organisation. We had always opposed the idea, developed by the Partito Comunista Internazionale (today the ICT's Italian affiliate) and later taken up by the CWO, of "factory groups", defined as "instruments of the party" for gaining an implantation of in the class and even for "organising" its struggles. We saw this as a regression to the notion of factory cells as the basis for the political organisation, advocated by the Communist Internationalism in the phase of "Bolshevisation" in the 1920s and strongly opposed by the communist left in Italy. The later evolution of the factory group idea into the call for territorial groups and then anti-war groups changed the form but not really the content. The CWO's idea that NWCW could become an organising centre for class resistance against the war betrayed a similar misunderstanding of how class consciousness develops in the period of capitalist decadence. Certainly, alongside the political organisation per se there is a tendency towards the formation of more informal groups, whether merging out of workplace struggles or opposition to capitalist war, but such groups – which are not part of the communist political organisation – remain expressions of a minority seeking to clarify itself and spread this clarity within the class, and cannot substitute itself for or claim to be the organiser of more general movements in the class, a point on which, in our view, the ICT remains ambiguous⁵.

Manoeuvres against the communist left

Although there were a number of fruitful discussions in the early phases of the NWCW groups, it became clear that, as an expression of anarchism, NWCW was subject to all sorts of contradictory pressures – a real search for internationalist positions and practices, but also the influence of leftism and of what we call parasitism, groups and elements motivated essentially by the will to isolate and even destroy authentic revolutionary currents. Such elements had a growing weight in both phases of the NWCW groupings. In 1999 the ICC was excluded (albeit by a narrow margin) from participating in the group on the grounds that we were Leninist, dogmatic, dominated meetings etc⁶; and the main elements pushing for this exclusion were those such as Juan McIver and "Luther Blisset" who have, produced two extremely slanderous pamphlets denouncing the ICC as a paranoid Stalinist cult, as small-time burglars, etc.

In 2002, we saw another round of manoeuvres against the communist left, this time spearheaded by K, an element close to Luther Blisset. In *RP* 27 the CWO itself talks about the irresponsible role of K and his "circle of friends" within NWCW, after K had done his best to exclude both the Sheffield group and the ICC from NWCW meetings. This time the mechanism eventually used was not

4. See for example "Communism against the war drive: intervention or monasticism?" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 27

5. See *International Review* 21, "The organisation of the proletariat outside periods of open struggle (workers' groups, nuclei, circles, committees)" | International Communist Current (internationalism.org); also *World Revolution* 26, "Factory Groups and ICC intervention"

6. See *World Revolution* 228, "Political parasitism sabotages the discussion"

1. Joint statement of groups of the international communist left about the war in Ukraine | International Communist Current (internationalism.org)

2. No War but the Class War - A Call for Action | Leftcom

3. See "Communists work together at 'anti-war' demo, *WR* 250

a "democratic" vote as in 1999 but a behind the scenes decision to hold closed meetings, with the venues and times being withheld from the ICC and the Sheffield group.

What does this show? That in an environment dominated by anarchism the groups of the communist left have to wage a hard battle against the destructive and even bourgeois tendencies that will inevitably be present and will always push in a negative direction. It should be an elementary response of the groups of the communist left to stand together against the manoeuvres of those who seek to exclude them from participating in the temporary, heterogeneous formations produced by the attempt to fight against the dominant ideology. The CWO's own experience in 2002 should remind them that such dangers are real. We should add that groups who claim to be part of the communist left but who act in a similarly destructive way deserve the label of "political parasitism" and should not be given the freedom of the city by the genuine groups of the communist left.

The charge that the ICC's attitude towards intervention during these episodes was "monastic" was made by the CWO in their article in *RP* 27, referring to a demonstration that took place in September 2002. But prior to a previous big demonstration which was to take place in November 2001, the CWO had written to us supporting our proposal for a distinct internationalist meeting in Trafalgar Square, and at the march itself there actually was a fruitful cooperation between the two groups. As our article in *WR* 264 said, we had overestimated the potential of the NWCW group to organise a large-scale oppositional meeting in Trafalgar Square, since most (though not all) of its participants preferred marching with an "Anti-Capitalist Bloc" which had little if anything to distinguish itself from the Stop the War organisers. But if there was a small meeting at the end it was mainly due to the initiative of the ICC and the CWO, supported by a few members of NWCW, to hand over our megaphones to those willing to advocate an internationalist alternative to the leftists on the main platform. Further evidence that the best way to assist those outside the communist left to approach a clear internationalist position and practice is for the groups of the communist left to act together.

Returning to the current NWCW project, in a recent article on a NWCW meeting in Glasgow, the ICT claims that the project is meeting with considerable success: "*The first group was formed in Liverpool a few weeks ago and since then their message has been picked up by comrades across the world going from Korea, via Turkey, Brazil, Sweden, Belgium, Holland, France, Germany, Italy, Canada to the United States as well as other places*".

We are not in a position to evaluate the real substance of these groups and initiatives. The impression we get from the groups which we know something about is that they are mainly "duplicates" of the ICT or its affiliates. In this sense, they are hardly an advance on the groups that appeared in the 1990s and 2000s, which for all their confusions, at least expressed a certain movement coming from elements seeking an internationalist alternative to leftism and pacifism. But we will have to return to this question in a future article, and we continue to call on the ICT to make a contribution to the discussion. **Amos, July 2022**

British imperialism faces deep contradictions

The turmoil around the fall of Johnson is in stark contrast to the unity of the British ruling class in its policy towards the war in Ukraine. The main political parties are united behind the government's belligerent support for US imperialism's proxy war. You cannot get a cigarette paper between them when it comes to sending arms, acting as the US's most loyal ally, and making German and French imperialism look weak in their support for the Ukrainian war effort. Johnson's fronting of the state's efforts to strengthen ties with the US, to increase British influence in Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries, is the one thing he has not been criticised for. The new Tory leader will continue with the same policy. They all understand that British imperialism must use the war to try to overcome the loss of international standing it has suffered due to Brexit and the fiascos around its role in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Johnson and his Foreign Secretary Liz Truss believed they were the inheritors of Thatcher's role as the USA's loyal lieutenant. Johnson boasted that Brexit allowed Britain to take up its 'natural and historical' role as a leader of free trade and democracy. Britain's partnership with the US in preparing and perpetuating the war have appeared to confirm this.

The idea of British imperialism as the second-in-command of a new Western Bloc is an underlying theme in the media. But today's historic conditions are very different from those of the Cold War. The collapse of the bloc system in 1989 marked the exhaustion of the conditions that sustained the two blocs. The USSR's fall led to the disintegration of the Western bloc. The absence of the Russian bear opened up an imperialist free-for-all. This is something the more intelligent mouthpieces of British imperialism understood very well. In early 1990 Charles Powell, Margaret Thatcher's Private Secretary, wrote to her: "We shall have won the Cold War. But instead of being the dawn of a new, peaceful era, we shall find the next decade altogether more complex, with a multiplicity of dangers and threats" (*Margaret Thatcher: the Authorized Biography*, vol 3, Charles Moore, page 508). Thatcher firmly agreed with this assessment.

The re-unification of German imperialism was a great concern for the UK given the historical rivalry between Britain and Germany. Thatcher's public airing of these concerns was openly rebuked by President Bush, who insisted that the UK supported German unification ('keep your friends close but your enemies closer' as the Mafia say). The British ruling class learnt a bitter lesson: the US no longer viewed it as all that 'special.' From now on the UK had to defend its own interests by using its position in the EU to act as a bridge for the US, but also by playing off the EU against the US, which meant much more subtle manoeuvring against Germany. Thatcher could not do this, so she was cast aside.

The pros and cons of being close to US imperialism

Implementing the necessary strategy suffered many set-backs. The Blair government's backing for America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was disastrous for its reputation. A standing further undermined by the close relations between the May and Johnson governments with President Trump. The UK's rapid flight from Afghanistan showed that standing too close to the US weakened the position of the UK. At the same time its ability to confront its rivals from within the EU has disappeared. The political turmoil around Brexit and its consequences has seriously damaged British imperialism's reputation.

On the other hand, Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a potential opportunity for the British ruling class. The US and Britain's carefully choreographed build-up of pressure on Russia, deliberately exposing its plans to invade Ukraine, showed a partial renewal of the old alliance and the strength of their intelligence services. Britain's prominent role in sending arms, in intelligence sharing, and its general hard line towards Russia has been contrasted to the hesitations in the EU, especially France and Germany.

The British bourgeoisie has signed up to the

USA's containment of China. On a global level China is the US's main rival and an important competitor to the UK. The war in Ukraine has severed the close links between German imperialism and Moscow, as well as blocking the expansion of China's Silk Road into Europe, which would have increased the EU's access to the Chinese market. British imperialism can only benefit if Germany's important links with China have been weakened. The EU, particularly France and Germany, is its main rival, so USA's weakening of them through the war is to Britain's benefit.

German imperialism's rapid rearmament in the short-term puts pressure on Russia, but in the long-term a rearmed Germany is a challenge to British imperialism. The UK's signing of defence agreements with Sweden and Finland, along with its increased military presence in Eastern European states, is aimed at Russia, but also has the longer term aim of containing Germany on its Northern and Eastern flanks. Britain also hopes that its support for the Eastern European states will weaken their willingness to back the EU in its opposition to Britain's efforts to tear up the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The cynicism of the bourgeoisie's ideological use of the barbarity unfolding in Ukraine to further its own sordid imperialist ambitions is matched by its efforts to bury its own recent bloody past. The reduction of Iraq and Afghanistan to 'failed' states, the death of tens of thousands in both wars, the destruction of Mosul, Falluja, Raqqa, the use of torture (Abu Ghraib, etc), renditions, assassinations, Guantanamo Bay – none of this is being mentioned today. Nor is the fact that the UK has passed a law limiting the ability of the International Criminal Court to prosecute British troops for war crimes.

Britain as the oligarchs' financial haven

With the same cynicism over the past 30 years, the British state has done all it can to encourage those who it now hypocritically condemns to pour money into the British economy. British imperialism's main think tank (Chatham House) has warned about the reputational danger of this: "it should not be forgotten that the contradictions of the past decade are glaring, and that the role of London as the centre of global money - and reputation-laundering - particularly helping Russians who are close to Vladimir Putin - should be a source of shame."

Chatham House's recent kleptocracy report highlights the extent to which UK politicians - especially the ruling Conservatives - have benefited from Russian money, and how strenuous efforts were made to delay then play down two critical parliamentary reports on 'Londongrad'. And despite several high-profile poisonings on British soil and repeated cyberattacks, not a single figure close to Putin was sanctioned by the UK until after the Ukraine invasion. ("UK's Strong Ukraine Support Hides a Less Glorious Past". Chatham-house.org)

The Northern Ireland conundrum

British imperialism, for all its posturing, is confronted with a profound problem: Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Protocol, the product of the Brexit negotiations, not only established a border between the mainland and the North running down the Irish Sea, but above all showed Britain's historic weakness. The only way it could get a deal was via the humiliation of leaving itself exposed to the influence of the EU and the US. Break the protocol and the EU could walk away from any form of deal. Jettisoning the Protocol will also undermine the Good Friday Agreement, and thus the US-brokered peace. The war makes the situation even more difficult because the last thing the US wants is its most loyal ally breaking international law when the US claims to be defending it; and a political crisis between the UK and EU would shatter the illusion of anti-Russian unity. If the US cannot stop its main ally provoking others in the "alliance for democracy", why would those states submit to the US?

The UK hopes that its support for America's policy on the Ukraine war will soften US ire if it

rips up the Protocol. The fact that the government has placed the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill before parliament in the middle of the war shows the fundamental contradiction of its position: it cannot break free from the hold its EU rivals have over it through the Protocol without breaking international law and thus endangering its influence with the US:

"...the frictions associated with exiting the European Single Market and Customs Union will only come fully into play in 2022, and these could reawaken political tensions between the UK and the EU at a time when the Russia-Ukraine crisis demands close collaboration amongst European allies."

A first priority, therefore, should be to leverage the shared determination to confront Russian aggression in order to rebuild UK-EU relations... The UK could link its thinking on plans to upgrade NATO Strategic Concept with the EU's new commitments to strengthen Europe's defence capabilities. This would lessen the risks of the UK being sidelined by closer US-EU cooperation across a range of transatlantic priorities, including digital trade and technology governance ("Global Britain in a Divided World." Chathamhouse.org).

Britain does have better military collaboration with European powers through NATO, but these are not sufficient to counter the tensions generated by Brexit, which are having an impact on its ability to be a regional power.

The fact that the US's main ally is a source of instability highlights the fragility of the US's control of the situation. Its means of imposing itself on its 'allies' is to create a vortex of chaos on their borders. At the same time, its 'right hand man' is threatening to deliberately generate even more chaos in the 'alliance', provoking greater political tensions by picking a fight with precisely those countries the US wants to bring into line! This could have the result of not only destabilising part of its own territory (Northern Ireland) but also spreading this instability into Eire, an important US ally in the EU. This is a situation the US has said it will not allow.

Johnson epitomised the profound instability of the situation of British imperialism. He may be on the way out, but the insoluble historical contradictions behind this instability remain and will worsen. Phil 18/7/22

Continued from page 8

Anarchists and the war in Ukraine

but the logical conclusion of their anarchism, conforming to their essential political positions.

Thus, in 1914, it was in the name of anti-authoritarianism, because it was unthinkable 'that one country could be violated by another' (*Letter to J. Grave*), that Kropotkin justified his chauvinist position in favour of France. By basing their internationalism on "self-determination" and 'the absolute right of any individual, any association, any commune, province, region, nation to decide themselves, to associate or not associate, to link up with whom they wanted and break their alliances'" (Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism*, Gallimard p.80) the anarchists merely reflected the divisions that capitalism imposed on the proletariat. This chauvinist position has its roots in the federalism that is found at the very basis of all anarchist conceptions. In arguing that the nation is a natural phenomenon, in defending the right of all nations to existence and to their free development, anarchism judges the sole danger in the existence of nations to be their propensity to give way to the 'nationalism' instilled by the dominant class in order to separate the people one from the other. It is naturally led, in any imperialist war, to operate a distinction between aggressors/aggressed, oppressors/oppressed, etc, and thus to opt for the defence of the weakest, of rights that have been flouted, etc. This attempt to base the refusal to go to war on something other than the class positions of the proletariat leaves all sorts of latitude to justify support for one or the other belligerent

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- German Social Democracy 1872 – 1914: the fight against organisational opportunism, Part 1
- German Social Democracy 1872 – 1914: the fight against organisational opportunism, Part 2

parties. Concretely, that's to say, to choose one imperialist camp against another"⁹.

Today, the anarchist "family" is being torn apart by the fundamental contradiction between internationalism and support for imperialist war. Today, more than ever, the communist left must assume its responsibilities and act as a pole of reference and clarity against all this confusion. For the communist left, as part of the marxist tradition, proletarian internationalism is not based on abstract ideals such as liberty for individuals, regions or nations but on the real conditions of proletarian existence: "Internationalism is based on universal conditions imposed on the working class by capitalism at the world level - on the exploitation of its labour power, in every country and on every continent. It was in the name of such internationalism that the First International and the two Internationals that followed were born. Internationalism is based on the essential fact that the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat are international: beyond frontiers and military fronts, beyond ethnic origins and particular cultures, the proletariat finds its unity in the common struggle against its conditions of exploitation and for the abolition of wage labour, for communism" (*ibid*). Edwin

9. "Anarchism and imperialist war, part 1: Anarchists faced with the First World War", *World Revolution* 325

Continued from page 1

Strikes in Britain

Workers are ready for a fight – and the ruling class is preparing to sabotage it

In education, there has been a number of struggles in the universities and FE colleges, while the National Education Union and the National Union of Teachers are calling for “industrial action” in the Autumn if negotiations fail. And following a government pay offer of around 5% (or under) for health workers, teachers and other public sector workers, “*health unions angrily denounced the NHS pay rises as a ‘betrayal’ and ‘a kick in the teeth’, and warned stoppages could be on the horizon*”¹.

These disputes are part of a more general rise in workers’ militancy. The GMB union, which has a strong presence among local council employees, reported that the number of disputes from October 2021 to March 2022 was seven times the level in the same period in 2019-20; the Unite union, one of the main public sector unions, claimed a four-fold rise in disputes.

The significance of these strikes

These struggles are not a direct working class response to the capitalist war in Ukraine. But having been told that “we are all in together” in the fight against Covid and that we must all be ready to make sacrifices to defend Ukraine and the West from Russian aggression, it is of no small significance that workers are not ready to give up the defence of their own class interests in the name of national unity. And if we look beyond Britain, we can see that the combativity of the working class has been straining at the leash in numerous countries. In 2019, just before the pandemic hit, there were important strike movements in France, and even during the lock-downs – especially at the beginning – workers in numerous sectors, including the “heroes” of the health services – took collective action against being forced to work without any real means of protection against the virus. As the lockdowns came to an end, there were more outbreaks of class struggle in the US, Iran, Italy, Turkey and elsewhere, prompting us to publish an article entitled “*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!*”²

If we compare these movements against intensified exploitation to the situation of the working class in Ukraine, which has been almost entirely subjugated to the national war effort, we can see them as evidence that, while the workers of Ukraine are experiencing a real defeat, this does not apply to the working class globally, and in particular to its most experienced fractions in western Europe, who are not willing to sacrifice their material class needs to the idol of the national interest, still less to be marched off to war on behalf of the capitalist class.

It may be objected that all these struggles are limited to the economic level and that they are not leading the working class, in the short term at least, to develop a political alternative to the historic dead-end reached by capitalist society. But in a situation where, for reasons we have analysed elsewhere³, the working class has largely lost any sense of itself as a distinct social force, struggles in response to the economic crisis and its accompanying attacks provide an indispensable starting point for the working class to recover its own identity, above all when large numbers of workers in different sectors are striking for essentially the same economic demands. And the recovery of class identity necessarily contains a vital political dimension⁴ as it tends to highlight the scenario

1. “Strikes threat as UK public sector staff given below-inflation pay rise”, theguardian.com

2. “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!” on our website.

3. See for example ‘Report on the class struggle: Formation, loss and reconquest of proletarian class identity’, *International Review* 164

4. What we wrote in our pamphlet *Trade Unions against the Working Class* in the 1970s remains true throughout the decadent period of capitalism: “*What the proletariat must abandon is not the economic nature of its struggle (an impossibility in any case if it is to fight as a class), but all its illusions in*

predicted by the Communist Manifesto in 1848: “*Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat*”.

The response of the ruling class and their trade unions

The formation of the working class into a unified force confronting the bourgeoisie is, of course, a long way off, and we have no intention of downplaying the immense obstacles which stand in the way of such an outcome – above all because the accelerating decomposition of bourgeois society itself threatens to drag the working class in its wake, to inflict this dying system’s own hatreds and divisions (national, racial, sexual, religious, etc) on the body of the proletariat. At the same time, even though the bourgeoisie itself is more and more divided, increasingly losing control of its own system, and its political machinery in particular, it is still capable of developing strategies and manoeuvres to prevent the unification of its mortal enemy, the working class.

In response to the strikes in Britain, the populist Tory government, which has claimed to be the “real party of the workers”(!), is for the moment not launching a frontal attack against the strikes but mainly adopting a more conciliatory, wait and see posture, even if the Transport minister Grant Schapps has said the rail strikers’ demands are unreasonable. It admits there is a “cost of living crisis” which it portrays as temporary, needing hard choices in order to be overcome. It is also offering token support to the poorest workers of a few hundred pounds in July and in the Autumn. More recently it has offered to increase the 2% public sector pay rise to 5%, i.e., it is offering a wage cut of approximately 5% instead of 8%.

The more serious vehicles of the bourgeois media, notably papers like the *Guardian* and *Observer*, but also the BBC, have talked a lot about the “strike wave”, even exaggerating it and predicting a “summer of discontent”, a return to the class struggle of the 70s. Numerous articles have been published showing the legitimacy of the rail strikers’ demands, in particular heaping praise on RMT leader Mick Lynch for his intelligent and articulate defence of these demands faced with hostile questioning from other parts of the media⁵. There have also been a number of surveys published showing that the rail strikes have enjoyed a considerable level of public support. This is in marked contrast to previous transport strikes where the media have focused largely on the “misery” inflicted on commuters by the “selfish demands” of the unions. True, a tabloid like *The Sun* can still proclaim that “*This week’s rail strikes are what happens when Marxist thugs high on ‘class war’ fantasies try to weaponize the public’s economic woes to bring down an elected Government they despise*” (20.6.22), but such inflammatory rhetoric also serves to radicalise the image of the unions.

Since in the past the bourgeoisie has always been careful to hide news of escalating movements that have developed outside of official control, this constant and often favourable publicity for the strikes points to an attempt by the ruling class to anticipate and thus dissipate a more dangerous development of the class movement. And an early

the future possibilities of successfully defending its interests, even its most immediate ones, without leaving the strictly economic framework of struggles and without consciously adopting a political, global and revolutionary understanding of its struggle. Faced with the inevitable short-term failure of its defensive struggles under decadent capitalism, the class must conclude that it isn’t that these struggles are useless, but that the only way of making them useful to the proletarian cause is to understand them and consciously transform them into moments of learning and preparation for struggles which are more generalised, more organised, and more conscious of the inevitability of the proletariat’s final confrontation with the system of exploitation.”

5. See for example “Enemy within? Hardly... most people see why we need unions prepared to strike”, Kenan Malik, theguardian.com.

Out soon

International Review 168

The war in Ukraine:
A giant step into barbarism

Report on imperialist tensions (May 2022):
The significance and impact of the war in Ukraine

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

International leaflet:
Capitalism is war, war on capitalism!

How can the proletariat overthrow capitalism?

Militarism and decomposition:
update of the 1990 orientation text

History of the revolutionary movement:
100 years after the foundation of the Communist International: what lessons can we draw for future combats? (Part 4)

Communism is on the agenda of history:
Marc Chirik and the state in the period of transition

sign that the unions were playing their part in this division of labour, that they are doing their job of keeping the class struggle under control, was the calling of a big TUC demonstration “against the cost of living crisis” in London on June 18th.

In addition,
- the unions have ensured that the strikes strictly obey the very tight legal restrictions in place today

- The list of strikes above shows that despite the fact that it touches important sectors of the working class, only parts of these sectors are actually striking.

- the strikes are spread out over different days
- care seems to have been taken to ensure that the strikes of different sectors occur on different days of the calendar.

- the strikes, according to the unions, are ultimately directed against the Tory Government, not against the ruling class as a whole. The final goal is the election of a Labour Government.

- This “anti-Tory” mystification is reinforced by “far left” groups like the Socialist Workers Party. While the leftists criticise Keir Starmer for not supporting the strikes and for disciplining Labour MPs for making an appearance on picket lines, their propaganda is constantly aimed at the need to “kick out the Tories” and install a Labour government with a more radical leadership (like Corbyn, for example). And if they call for the unification of strikes, this is to take place through the trade unions acting together. In sum, the leftists’ role is to prevent the working class from breaking out of the grip of the Labour party and the unions.

What we are seeing today in Britain is only a hint of what the working class needs to do if it is to forge itself into a unified and conscious power capable of confronting and overthrowing the rule of capital. It also reminds us of the cynicism and cunning of a ruling apparatus which is not restricted to the Tories but includes the whole “Labour movement” - from Starmer to the unions and the far left. But identifying the obstacles to the class struggle, exposing its real enemies, is a necessary part of releasing the immense potential revealed by the immediate resistance of the exploited class.

Amos 21/7/22

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Between internationalism and the “defence of the nation”

The diverse nature of the response of the anarchist organisations to the imperialist slaughter in Ukraine is quite predictable. From its inception, anarchism was marked by a profound revolt against capitalist exploitation, by a resistance to the proletarianisation of the artisan layers. Subsequently, leaving aside its role within the radical petty bourgeoisie, anarchism had an influence on parts of the proletariat, bringing with it a vision which tended to oscillate permanently between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Anarchism has thus always been divided into a whole series of tendencies, ranging from those who have become part of the left wing of capital, like those who joined the Republican government during the 1936-39 war in Spain, to those who clearly defended internationalist positions against imperialist war, such as Emma Goldman during World War One. Regarding the war in Ukraine, the response from anarchism is extremely dispersed – from open war mongers to calls for international solidarity and united action against the war. In crucial moments of history, notably revolutions and imperialist wars, authentically proletarian elements within anarchism have demarcated themselves from those who have been sucked into the « Sacred Union » and nationalism. Only the genuinely proletarian elements within anarchism have been capable of adopting an internationalist line and should be supported in their effort to defend it. As left communists, we clearly denounce the leftist or bourgeois positions, put forward by various anarchists, but at the same time we support the attempts of groups such as KRAS in Russia (whose statement we have already published on our website¹), Anarcho-syndicalist Initiative in Serbia² and the Anarchist Communist Group in Britain³ to intervene in the situation with a clear internationalist position.

From internationalism...

The ACG (Anarchist Communist Group) took a basically internationalist stance from the beginning of the war (ACG website the 27th of February, “*Take the side of the working class,*

1. “An internationalist statement from inside Russia”, ICC online, May 2022. KRAS is affiliated to the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers Association (IWA/AIT)

2. “Let’s turn capitalist wars into a workers’ revolution” on the site of the IWA (www.iwa-ait.org)

3. “Take the side of the working class, not competing imperialist states”, on the website of the ACG

not competing imperialist interests”). At the same time this statement contains a number of confused demands, such as the “*disbandment of NATO*”, and the “*the mass occupying of Russian oligarchs’ property in Britain and their immediate conversion to social housing*”. (What about the properties of Ukrainian oligarchs?) You could see the same immediatist vision in the statement of the ASI group in Belgrade, who, despite a certain clarity on the nature of what “peace” means in capitalism, declares: “*Let’s turn capitalist wars into a workers’ revolution!*” This call for revolutionary action is totally unrealistic given the low level of class struggle today. But these confusions do not cancel out the internationalist basics of these groups’ responses to the war.

A joint internationalist statement had already been published, signed by 17 groups around the Anarkismo Coordination, on the 25th of February, including the ACG. Here it states clearly, that “... *our revolutionary and class duty dictates the organisation and strengthening of the international, anti-war and anti-imperialist movement of the working class. The logic of more aggressive or more progressive imperialism is a logic that leads to the defeat of the working class. There can be no pro-people’s imperialist road. The interests of the working class cannot be identified with those of the capitalists and the imperialist powers.*”⁴ On the ACG website there is also a strong denunciation of anarchist groups and publications defending nationalism, such as the Freedom group in London⁵.

... to openly bourgeois positions

But the statements of the different anarchist currents have to be read carefully and critically. For example, the French-speaking section of the International Anarchist Federation, in a leaflet published the 24th of February, proclaimed: “*We also call, all over the world, to fight against capitalism, nationalism and imperialism as well as the army which always push towards new wars*”⁶

At the same time, in the same International of Anarchist Federations, we can see an open call for

4. “Against militarism and war - for self-organised struggle”, on the ACG site

5. “Identity, nationalism and xenophobia at Freedom” on the ACG website

6. “International Solidarity against Russian invasion! Stop the War!” on the website i-f-a.org The rest of this appeal is a hypocritical contortion between pacifism and the defence of Ukraine.



Picture from ‘War Diary of a Belarusian Anarchist Fighting in Ukraine’ brought to you by the Anarchist Federation

participation in the war: a call of support for the Resistance Committees in Ukraine, fighting for the “liberation” of the country. Different anarchist groups in uniform and armed football firms are presented as “freedom fighters” – often with reference to the Black Army of Makhno during the Civil War in Russia. So, there is a clear “gradient” in the anarchist milieu today: calls for internationalism, and at the same time a call for participation in this escalating conflict, as adjuncts of the Ukrainian army under the banner of the Resistance Committees⁷. Also, anarchists from Belarus living in Ukraine are joining the forces of the Ukrainian state – another sign of the defeat and disorientation of the working class in the area.

Another, quite obvious, example of completely bourgeois positions is the statement of Russian anarchists in the group Anarchist Fighter: “... what is happening now in Ukraine goes beyond this simple formula, and the principle that *every anarchist should fight for the defeat of their country in war*” (our emphasis). They also argue that “*The defeat of Russia, in the current situation, will increase the likelihood of people waking up, the same way that occurred in 1905 [when Russia’s military defeat by Japan led to an uprising in Russia], or in 1917 [when Russia’s problems in the First World War led to the Russian Revolution]—opening their eyes to what is happening in the country.*”

As for Ukraine, its victory will also pave the way for the strengthening of grassroots democracy—

7. “Ukrainian anarchists mobilise for armed defence. Draw solidarity from abroad as Russia invades” on the site Militant Wire

after all, if it is achieved, it will be only through popular self-organization, mutual assistance, and collective resistance. These should be the answer to the challenges that war throws at society.”⁸

In the war of 1914-18 and subsequently, authentic internationalists like Lenin used the term “revolutionary defeatism” to insist that the class struggle must continue even if it meant the military defeat of your “own” country, but it went together with a clear denunciation of both rival camps. In the hands of the left wing of capital, whether it calls itself “Leninist” or anarchist, the call for the defeat of one country goes together with support for their imperialist rival, as is evidently the case with the Anarchist Fighter group. This has nothing whatsoever in common with proletarian internationalism.

Significant sectors of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, at the same time as referring to its strong antimilitarist tradition, have once again expressed their support for nationalist war – just as they did, together with Social Democracy at the beginning of the WWI. But the difference was, that while the Social Democrats betrayed their internationalist principles, the anarchists were following a certain logic, as we pointed out in our article on “Anarchism and Imperialist War” in 2009:

“The rallying to imperialist war and the bourgeoisie in 1914 by the majority of anarchists internationally was, on the contrary, not a false move

8. “Russian anarchists on the invasion of Ukraine” on the Crimethinc website

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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*.