



world revolution

Faced with the acceleration of capitalist barbarism, there is only one answer: class struggle!

For the last three years, we have been witnessing a simultaneity and an aggravation of the different crises and catastrophes which are accelerating the decay of capitalist society: war, economic crisis, ecological crisis, pandemic... This has reached the point where the threat of the annihilation of the human species has become more serious and concrete than ever.

The Covid-19 pandemic, the eighth wave of which is currently underway, constituted, from early 2020, a new stage in the sinking of society into the final phase of its decadence, that of its decomposition. It crystallises, in fact, a whole series of factors of chaos which until then seemed to have no link between them¹. The negligence of the ruling class was more clearly revealed everywhere with the collapse of health systems (lack of masks, beds and carers) being crucially responsible for the global death toll, which reached between 15 and 20 million. The pandemic even had a lasting impact on global production chains, increasing shortages and inflation. It also revealed the increased difficulties of the bourgeoisie in organising a coordinated response to both the pandemic and the crisis.

The war in Ukraine is already festering like a cancer at the gates of Europe and is a further step in the accelerated decay of society, above all through the exacerbation of militarism on a global scale. The profound disorder in the East and the Caucasus, the air strikes threatening to damage the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant, the repeated threats to use nuclear weapons², the disastrous leakage of Nord Stream gas pipelines into the Baltic as a result of probable acts of war, Putin's adventurist "partial" mobilisation turning into a fiasco, the terrifying risks of escalation by

1. Report on the Covid-19 pandemic and the period of capitalist decomposition, *International Review* 165

2. The use of nuclear weapons is not just a matter of the will of a "mad dictator", as the bourgeoisie asserts in order to frighten the population into making "necessary sacrifices". It requires a certain consensus within the national bourgeoisie. But although such a use would amount to a voluntary suicide of the Russian bourgeoisie, the level of irrationality and unpredictability into which capitalism is sinking does not make its use completely impossible. Moreover, the ageing Ukrainian power stations, a veritable financial sinkhole, remain frightening time bombs several decades after the Chernobyl disaster.

a desperate Russian regime, all point to an apocalyptic capitalist future across the globe. Now, the bottomless pit of military spending that preceded and further accompanies the war in Ukraine and the tensions in the Pacific, as well as the abysmal indebtedness of states crumbling under the weight of the war economy, are accelerating the plunge into global economic crisis.

The crisis, combined with catastrophic global warming, is already plunging millions of people into malnutrition, not only in Ukraine but in many parts of the world; shortages are multiplying and inflation is condemning a large part of the working class to poverty. The "sacrifices" demanded by the bourgeoisie already presage much worse to come. The militarism that is growing wildly before our eyes embodies the irrationality of a capitalism that can only lead to ruin and bloody chaos. This is highlighted above all by the United States, whose desire to preserve its rank as the world's leading power requires the continuous reinforcement of its military superiority; but this project can only be realised at the cost of ever more chaos and destabilisation. Myriad disasters of all kinds, increasingly frequent, interact and feed off each other more intensely, forming a veritable destructive spiral. The last few months have considerably reinforced this apocalyptic trajectory, both through the intensification of war and its devastation and through the spectacular evolution of the manifestations of climate change³. In addition to the destruction, the scorched earth policies and the massacres, the forced exoduses of millions, agricultural production is being curtailed on a global scale, access to water is becoming scarce, shortages and famines are multiplying, and large parts of the world are becoming uninhabitable as the result of all kinds of pollution. The resources that are being depleted tend to be transformed almost exclusively and unscrupulously into strategic weapons, such as gas or wheat, and are given over to a veritable plundering and unbridled haggling, the outcome of which is still military confrontation and human suffering.

This tragedy did not happen by chance. It is

3. Fires on an unprecedented scale hit the planet during the summer, droughts and record heat peaks reaching 50°C (as in India) coupled with terrible floods, such as the one that almost drowned Pakistan's cultivated areas



the product of the irremediable bankruptcy of the capitalist mode of production and the blind action of a bourgeoisie which has no future to offer. A mode of production that has been undermined for more than a hundred years by its contradictions and historical limits, and that for the last thirty years has been wallowing in its own decomposition. The world is now plunging even more rapidly into a process of accelerating fragmentation and destruction, into an immense chaos. The bourgeoisie is powerless to offer a viable perspective, increasingly divided, unable to cooperate at a minimum level as it did even a decade ago at its global anti-crisis summits. It remains uninspired, trapped by its own blinkers and greed, undermined by the centrifugal forces of a growing every man for himself. The victory in Italy of Georgia Meloni's "post-fascist" far-right party is a further example of a worsening tendency for the bourgeoisie to lose control over its political apparatus. Increasingly, the ruling class finds itself governed by cliques of unscrupulous thugs, more dangerous and irresponsible than ever.

The only answer is the class struggle of the proletariat

The bourgeoisie remains determined to accentuate exploitation, to make the proletariat pay for its insoluble crisis and its wars. However, it will now have to take more account of the class struggle. While the acceleration of decomposition with

the pandemic had been a brake on the development of the combativity that was expressed, for example, in France in the winter of 2019-2020, and although struggles were greatly reduced after the invasion of Ukraine, they never totally disappeared. Last winter, strikes broke out in Spain and the US. This very summer, Germany also experienced walkouts. But above all, in the face of the crisis, unemployment and the return of inflation, the scale of workers' mobilisation in the United Kingdom constitutes a real break with the previous social situation in Britain, a return of combativity at the international level. It has initiated a

Continued on page 2

Inside this issue

"Summer of anger" in Britain: The return of the combativity of the world proletariat	2
Workers fight for their own side in the class war	3
Capitalist destruction of nature heats up the need for communism	4
American imperialism, a major factor in capitalist chaos	5
The world economy hit by the acceleration of decomposition	6
<i>Life of the ICC</i>	7
The "Tory crisis" expresses the impasse of the whole ruling class	8

Australia A\$2.25, Canada C\$1.50, Europe €1.3, India 10 rupees, Japan ¥300 USA 90¢

The return of the combativity of the world proletariat

Some events have a significance that is not limited to the local or immediate level, but is international in scope. Because of the number of sectors affected, the combativity of the workers involved in the struggle and the widespread support for action among the working population, the wave of strikes which has spread throughout Britain this summer is an event of undeniable importance on the domestic level. But we also need to understand that the historical significance of these struggles goes far beyond their local dimension or even their one-off occurrence.

For decades, the working class in the European states has been under the suffocating pressure of capitalism’s decomposition. More concretely, since 2020, it has suffered a number of waves of Covid and then the horror of barbaric war in Europe with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although these events affected workers’ combativity, they did not make it disappear, as struggles in the United States, Spain, Italy, France, Korea and Iran at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 still underlined.

However, the wave of strikes in Britain in response to the attacks on their living standards caused by the deepening economic crisis, accentuated by the consequences of the health crisis and, above all, by the war in Ukraine, is on a different scale. In difficult circumstances, the British workers are sending a clear signal to workers all over the world: we must fight, even if we have suffered attacks and accepted sacrifices without being able to react; but today “enough is enough”: we are no longer accepting this, we must fight. This is the message sent to workers in other countries.

In this context, the entry into struggle of the British proletariat constitutes an event of historical significance on a number of levels.

1. The proletariat in Britain regains its combativity

This wave of struggle is led by a fraction of the European proletariat which has suffered more than most from the general retreat of the class struggle since 1990. Indeed, if in the 1970s, although with a certain delay compared to other countries like France, Italy or Poland, British workers developed very important struggles, culminating in the wave of strikes of 1979 (“the Winter of Discontent”), the UK was the European country where the decline of combativity has been the most marked over the last 40 years.

Continued from page 1

Faced with capitalist barbarism there is one answer: class struggle

real change of mindset. These strikes constitute a new event of historical dimensions. Indeed, after almost forty years of virtual stagnation in Britain, highly symbolic strikes multiplied there from June onwards, setting in motion new generations of workers ready to raise their heads and fight for their dignity, serving as an encouragement for other future movements. Despite the international ideological campaign that accompanied the royal funeral, the Liverpool dockers, who had been defeated in the 1990s, announced new mobilisations. The unions are already taking the lead and becoming more radical, playing their role as saboteurs and dividers. Even if this movement will necessarily experience a decline, it is already a victory because of its exemplary nature. Of course there is a long road ahead for the international struggle before the proletariat can recover its class identity and defend its own revolutionary perspective in a determined way. Its path is strewn with pitfalls. The risks of deviating from its own class terrain by diluting itself in cross-class struggles with the beleaguered petty-bourgeoisie, in petty-bourgeois or bourgeois movements, such as those around feminism or anti-racism, are not without serious dangers, especially in the countries of the periphery. Thus, in Iran, an immense upsurge of anger against the regime of the Mullahs following the murder of Mahsa Amini has been driven onto the bourgeois terrain of democratic demands, where the working class is being diluted into the “Iranian people” rather than fighting for its own class demands. In Russia, despite the multiplication of demonstrations crying “No to war!”, and the expressions of anger among conscripts being sent to the front without arms or food, the situation remains confused, with opposition to the military mobilisation taking a more individual than collective form. Negative proof that it is only the working class that can provide a perspective to all the oppressed - and that, in the absence of a class response, the bourgeoisie will be able to occupy the social terrain But in a more global way, the conditions for a development of international class struggles in the face of the coming attacks, notably because of the development of inflation, unemployment and extreme precariousness, open the possibility of creating the conditions necessary for the affirmation of the communist perspective, in particular in the central countries of capitalism, where the proletariat is the most experienced and has long come up against the most sophisticated traps of the bourgeoisie. The new decade leaves open the possibility of such a historical affirmation of the proletariat, even if time is no longer on its side in view of the devastation generated by capitalism. This decade, which began with both workers’ struggles and the acceleration of barbarism and chaos, will most likely convince the working class more deeply that the only historical alternative remains: communist revolution or destruction of humanity! **WH, 28 September 2022**

During the 1980s, the British working class suffered an effective counter-offensive from the bourgeoisie which culminated in the defeat of the 1985 miners’ strike by Thatcher, the “Iron Lady” of the British bourgeoisie. Moreover, Britain has been particularly affected by de-industrialisation and the transfer of industries to China, India or Eastern Europe. So when the working class suffered a generalised worldwide decline in 1989, it was particularly marked in Great Britain.

In addition, in recent years, British workers have suffered the onslaught of populist movements and above all the deafening Brexit campaign, stimulating the division in their midst between “remainers” and “leavers”, and then the Covid crisis which has weighed heavily on the working class, especially in Britain. Finally, and most recently, it has been confronted with intense pro-Ukrainian democratic hype and particularly abject war-mongering around the war in Ukraine.

The “Thatcher generation” suffered a major defeat, but today, a new generation of proletarians is appearing on the social scene, which is no longer affected as much as their elders by the weight of these defeats and are raising their heads, showing that the working class is capable of responding through struggle to these major attacks. While keeping a sense of proportion, we are witnessing a phenomenon quite comparable (but not identical) to the one that saw the French working class emerge in 1968: the arrival of a young generation less affected than their elders by the weight of the counter-revolution.

2. The international importance of the British working class

The “summer of anger” can only be an encouragement for all the workers of the planet and this for several reasons: it is the working class of the fifth world economic power, and an English-speaking proletariat, whose struggles can have an important impact in countries like the United States, Canada or in other regions of the world, like India or South Africa. English being the language of world communication, the influence of these movements necessarily surpasses that of struggles in France or Germany for example. In this sense, the English proletariat shows the way not only to the European workers, who will have to be in the vanguard of the rise of the class struggle, but also to the world proletariat, and in particular to the American proletariat. In the perspec-

tive of future struggles, the British working class can thus serve as a link between the proletariat of Western Europe and the American proletariat.

This importance can also be measured by the concerned reaction of the bourgeoisie, especially in Western Europe, to the danger of the extension of the “deterioration of the social situation”. This is particularly the case in France, Belgium or Germany where the bourgeoisie, in contrast to the attitude of the British bourgeoisie, has taken firmer measures to put a ceiling on oil, gas and electricity increases or to compensate for the impact of inflation and price rises by means of subsidies or tax cuts, while loudly proclaiming that it wants to protect the purchasing power of workers. On the other hand, the extensive media coverage of the death of Queen Elizabeth and the funeral ceremonies was intended to counteract the images of class struggle and instead show a picture of a united British population enveloped in a nationalist fervour and respectful of bourgeois constitutional order. Since then, the bourgeois media has applied a wide blackout on the continuation of the strike movements.

The bourgeoisie knows perfectly well that the deepening of the crisis and the consequences of the war will go on and on. However, the fact that a massive movement is already developing in the face of the first attacks, which are similar for all the detachments of the proletariat, not only in England but in Europe and even in the world, attacks which the bourgeoisie is obliged to impose in the present context, can only deeply worry the bourgeoisie.

3. A break in the dynamics of the international class struggle

Even though the West European proletariat has not been defeated during the last forty years, unlike before the two world wars, the decline in its class consciousness after 1989 (underlined by the campaign on the “death of communism”) has nevertheless been extremely important. Secondly, the deepening of decomposition from the 1990s onwards had increasingly affected its class identity, and this trend could not be reversed by certain movements of struggle or expressions of reflection among minorities of the class in the first two decades of the 21st century, such as the struggle against the *Contrat Premier Emploi* (CPE) in France in 2006, the ‘Indignados’ movement in Spain in 2011, the struggles at SNCF and Air France in 2014 and the movement against pension reform in 2019 in France or the ‘Striketober’ in the US in 2021.

Moreover, throughout the first two decades of the 21st century, the global working class has been confronted in its struggles with the danger of interclassist movements, as in France with the actions of the “Gilet Jaunes”, the weight of populist mobilisations, such as the MAGA (“Make America Great Again”) movement in the United States, or bourgeois campaigns such as the “marches for the climate “ or the “Black Lives Matter” movement and mobilisations in favour of abortion rights in the US and elsewhere. More recently, in the face of the first consequences of the crisis, numerous popular revolts have erupted in various Latin American countries against the rise in the price of fuel and other basic commodities. All these movements constitute a danger for workers insofar as they drag them onto an interclassist terrain, where they are drowned out by the mass of “citizens” or dragged onto a terrain which is completely bourgeois.

But only the proletariat offers an alternative to the disasters that mark our society. And precisely, unlike these movements which lead the workers onto false grounds, the fundamental contribution of the wave of strikes of the British workers is the affirmation that the struggle against capitalist exploitation must be situated on a clear class ground and put forward clear workers’ demands against the attacks on the workers’ standard of living: *“Moreover, and this is the element which in the final analysis will determine the outcome of the world situation, the inexorable aggravation of the capitalist crisis constitutes the essential stimulant for the class’ struggle and development of consciousness, the precondition for its ability*

to resist the poison distilled by the social rot. For while there is no basis for the unification of the class in the partial struggles against the effects of decomposition, nonetheless its struggle against the direct effects of the crisis constitutes the basis for the development of its class strength and unity.” (Theses on Decomposition, (1991) *International Review* No.107, 2001). The development of this massive combativity in struggles for the defence of purchasing power is, for the world proletariat, an inescapable condition for overcoming the deep setback it has undergone since the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the Stalinist regimes and for recovering its class identity and its revolutionary perspective.

In short, both from the historical point of view and from the current context facing the working class, this wave of strikes in Britain therefore constitutes a break in the dynamics of the class struggle, capable of setting in motion a “change in the social atmosphere”.

4. A struggle against economic attacks worsened by imperialist war

The importance of this movement is not limited to the fact that it puts an end to a long period of relative passivity. These struggles are developing at a time when the world is confronted with a large-scale imperialist war, a war which opposes Russia and Ukraine on European soil but which has a global scope with, in particular, a mobilisation of NATO member countries which is a mobilisation not only in arms but also on the economic, diplomatic and ideological levels: in Western countries, governments are calling for sacrifices to “defend freedom and democracy”. In concrete terms, this means that the proletarians of these countries must tighten their belts even more to “show their solidarity with Ukraine”, in fact with the Ukrainian ruling class and the rulers of the Western countries.

Faced with the conflict in Ukraine, calling for a direct mobilisation of workers against the war is illusory in Western Europe or in the United States; however, since February 2022, the ICC has highlighted that the workers’ reaction will appear on the basis of the attack on their wages, products of the accumulation and interconnection of the crises and disasters of the past period, and against the campaign calling for the acceptance of sacrifices in support of the “heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people”.

Further, the mobilisation against capitalist austerity also ultimately contains an opposition against war. This is also what the strikes of the working class in the UK bear in embryo, even if the workers are not always fully conscious of it: the refusal to make more and more sacrifices for the interests of the ruling class, the refusal of sacrifices for the national economy and for the war effort, and the refusal to accept the logic of this system which leads humanity towards catastrophe and, finally, to its destruction.

In short, even if the struggles are limited to one country at the moment, even if they run out of steam, and even if we should probably not expect a series of similar major developments in different countries in the near future, a milestone has been reached. The essential achievement of the struggle of the workers in Britain is to stand up and fight because the worst defeat is to suffer impoverishment without a fight. It is on this basis that lessons can be learned and the struggle can move forward. In this perspective, the strikes represent a qualitative change and herald a change in the situation of the working class vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie: they mark a development of combativity on a class terrain which can be the beginning of a new episode of the struggle, because it is through its massive economic struggles that the working class will be able to progressively recover its class identity, eroded by the pressure of 40 years of decomposition, by the ebb of struggles and consciousness, by the sirens of interclassist movements, populism and environmental campaigns. It is on this basis that the working class will be able to open up a perspective for the whole of society. From this point of view, there is a “before” and an “after” to the summer of 2022. **R. Havanais, 22.09.2022**

Workers fight for their own side in the class war

As soon as the “period of mourning” for the Queen came to a close, with its deafening hymns to national unity, over 500 dockers in Liverpool confirmed that they were going on strike, followed straight away by the dockers in Felixstowe who had already been out on strike in the weeks prior to the Queen’s death. Planned strikes on the railways, postponed by the unions “out of respect for the Queen”, are to go ahead, and will be accompanied by further strikes in the post, on the buses, on the underground. Other disputes, involving council refuse workers, construction workers, Amazon warehouse staff, and others rumble on. Education workers and others are also being balloted. The “summer of anger” looks like turning into a hot autumn and perhaps another “Winter of Discontent” as workers face spiralling prices and minuscule wage increases.

Meanwhile, the liberal/left wing press has denounced the Truss government’s “mini-budget”, which ostentatiously removed limits on bankers’ bonuses and offered tax cuts which will clearly benefit the very rich, as a declaration of class war by the Truss government. And that of course is correct: the ruling class is constantly at war with those it exploits, and in times of crisis above all is forced to lower the living standards of the exploited, whether it does it crudely and openly or in a more subtle, step-by-step approach. But that’s because the class war is not some ideological deformation, a choice adopted by our rulers. It is the fundamental reality of this social system, which can only live and “grow” in the soil of the exploited labour of the majority.

And what the strikes this summer and autumn have shown is that the exploited class is taking the first steps towards fighting the class war on its own terrain and for its own needs.

Significance of the revival of class struggle in Britain

We have written elsewhere¹ about the international significance of the current struggles in Britain, as a sign that the working class has not disappeared, has not been engulfed by the accelerated disintegration of the capitalist system – and thus as a kind of appeal to the world working class to respond to the onslaught on their working and living conditions by returning to the path of struggle.

The capitalist system first took roots in Britain, and in the period of rising capitalism in the 19th century the working class in Britain was, at certain moments, in the forefront of the workers’ movement internationally. It was in Britain that the workers first formed trade unions to defend themselves against brutal levels of exploitation, and later a political party, the Chartists, which sought to put forward the independent interests of the class in parliament and society as a whole.

The unions and parties which the workers created have long since become cogs in the capitalist system, but the militant spirit of the working class did not die with them, whether we are talking about Red Clydeside in 1919, the General Strike of 1926, or, in the late 1960s and 70s, the waves of struggle which marked the emergence of the working class from the long counter-revolution which descended on the international working class from the late 1920s on.

It was to counter the militancy of the working class in Britain that the bourgeoisie, led by the Thatcher government but with the full support of the world ruling class, launched a major counter-offensive. This took its most evident form in the defeat of the year-long miner’s strike, which opened the door not only to the closure of the pits but to the dismantling of whole sectors of British industry. But dockers too suffered from important defeats in 1989 and again 1995-98.

The process of “deindustrialisation” had its economic motivations – in particular the search for higher rates of profit in the “emerging” economies – but it is no accident that it also dispersed some of the most combative sectors of the working class, not only the miners but also the workers in the shipyards, in the steel and car plants, on

the docks and so on, while the new measures of “privatisation” also ensured that important sectors like the railway workers no longer faced a single state boss but several, and could thus be more easily divided.

All this was accompanied by a new ideological offensive, based around the theme that the class war was over, the class struggle was consigned to the history books. And with the collapse of the eastern bloc in 1989-91, this campaign took wings across the world, insisting even more forcefully that the working class was dead and that any idea that it could change the present system could only end in failure. The “death of communism”², we were told, meant the end of any hope there could be an alternative to capitalism.

The collapse of the eastern bloc marked the entry of capitalism into a new, final phase of its decadence, marked by growing fragmentation and chaos at all levels. Again, this process hit the working class in Britain with particular severity, sharpening social atomisation, feeding the rise of urban gangs, nourishing divisions between different ethnic groups, emphasising new “identities” to replace class identity and thus class solidarity. In the last decade or so all these divisions have been further exacerbated by the campaign around Brexit and the stoking of the so-called “Culture Wars” by both right and left wings of the bourgeoisie.

The working class in Britain has thus found it particularly hard to recover from the set-backs of the 1980s and the 1990s. But today, despite this long retreat, despite all the divisions, the working class is once again raising its head, and in many cases it is the “traditionally” militant sectors, those with a long history of past battles – rail, docks, buses, post – who are providing a lead which can be followed by other sectors which may be more numerous but don’t always have the same history of class struggle: education, health, distribution, and so on. The economic crisis, and above all the surge in inflation, poses the objective need for all workers to fight together, and in doing so, to recover the sense of belonging to a class with its own independent interests and, ultimately, with its own alternative for the future of society. And while these struggles are not directly pitting themselves against the capitalist drive towards war or openly denouncing the appeals for sacrifice on behalf of the conflict between NATO and Russian imperialism, the very fact that they are taking place in the face of such appeals is evidence that the working class, above all in the central countries of the system, is not ready to sacrifice itself on the altar of capitalist war.

Union strikes and “wildcat” initiatives

Most of the strikes in the key sectors have been well controlled by the trade unions, who have carried out their role for capitalism by keeping the strikes isolated from each other (just as they did with the miners and other sectors in the 1980s), spreading them out on different days, even among workers in different parts of the transport system (rail, tube, buses...), and often restricted to one or two days of strike with notice given long in advance. But a sign of the underlying combativity of the workers is the prominent role being played by left-wing union leaders. Mick Lynch of the RMT (the main rail union) has been most in view, and he has been widely praised for his ability to answer hostile questions in media interviews. For example, he has replied to the media charge that the rail strikes were being waged on behalf of a privileged sector, insisting that his members are fighting because all workers were under attack and need to struggle together. The general secretary of the Unite union, Sharon Graham, has distanced herself from Labour’s mealy-mouthed attitude to strikes and has gone over the head of her own bureaucrats to set up “Combine Committees” bringing together union representatives from different sectors (refuse, warehouses, hospitality etc). We should not be surprised if, as the struggles continue into autumn and winter, we hear more appeals to working class unity and more common actions,

2. This campaign was based on a fundamental lie: that Stalinist state capitalism was really communism.



demonstrations and so on. For leftist groups like the Socialist Workers’ Party this is offered as proof that the rank and file can force the leaders to fight if they put enough pressure on them, but for communists who understand that the unions have become state organs, the radicalisation of the unions obeys the need to adapt to the class movement in order to retain control over it.

We should also note that the fighting spirit of the workers has also expressed itself in unofficial actions, even wildcat strikes, in a range of different sectors. In their article ‘Wildcat Strikes in the UK: Getting Ready for a Hot Autumn’, the Communist Workers Organisation made a (non-exhaustive) list of the following examples:

*“10 May: some 100 refuse collectors in Welwyn Hatfield walked out in protest against a manager accused of sexism, racism and bullying. 11 May: some 300 construction workers at a refinery in Hull went on strike because of wage payments being delayed or incomplete. 17 May: over a thousand offshore oil workers in the North Sea walked out across 19 rigs demanding their wages match inflation. 27 July: some 100 workers at a food plant in Bury walked out in response to not being allowed proper breaks at work. 3 August: hundreds of Amazon workers at various sites in Tilbury, Rugeley, Coventry, Bristol, Dartford and Coalville have staged walkouts and slowdowns in response to a pay “rise” of only 35p more per hour. 10 August: hundreds of contract workers, including scaffolders and maintenance workers, at refineries, chemical plants and other facilities in Teesside, Grangemouth, Pembroke, Fife, Fawley and Drax walked out in a fight over pay, picketing motorists entering and leaving the facilities”.*³

The CWO followed up this article by publishing the appeal of the Offshore Oil and Gas Workers Strike Committee, which explains why they are launching a “wildcat” without waiting for a union ballot⁴:

*“Our unions say they haven’t got the numbers currently to ballot for strike. We say that’s rubbish as the whole North Sea are absolutely livid about our treatment. The wildcat strikes that are being talked about and planned are a result of years of inaction from the unions and our employers and have made us feel like we can only get things done by taking things into our own hands. We have went through the whole due process when it comes to raising our grievance. We used the proper channels but feel we are being led down the garden path. The whole of the UK is up in arms about the cost of living. We are no different”.*⁵

This strike was denounced by the RMT, Unite and the GMB who said in a joint letter that *“Our concern is that unofficial action risks everything. Some operators on the old infrastructure will use industrial unrest to justify early decommissioning and all we’ll get is more redundancies. Others will see a divided workforce and will exploit that.”*

3. See also <https://libcom.org/article/wildcat-action-hit-refineries-and-power-plants-august-24th>

4. “RMT, Unite and GMB unions denounce North Sea oil and gas rig wildcat strikes”, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/09/08/coef-s08.html>

5. ‘North Sea Oil and Gas Fields: The Struggle Continues!’

The actions at Amazon are also interesting, because the majority of workers took strike action without being part of a union at all. The “workerist” group Notes from Below have published accounts from some of the workers involved in the strikes, this one from Amazon’s “Fulfilment Centre” in Coventry:

“We worked through the entire Covid pandemic, including the lockdowns. We’ve been waiting for information about this pay rise since April with everyone expecting at least £2 extra per hour. However, management announced on Wednesday that we were only going to get a 50p rise per hour.

*We only planned to go on strike two hours before it actually happened. We had seen the strikes at Tilbury and Rugeley fulfilment centres on TikTok during our break time, and it inspired us to strike. We watched those videos at 11am, and started spreading the idea of a walkout through word of mouth around the warehouse. By 1pm, we had over 300 people who walked out and stopped working. At the beginning, we had no help with the strikes from any trade unions. We organised it all ourselves. However, after we walked out, GMB made some contact with us about joining the union and giving us advice”*⁶.

This account sheds light on a number of issues: an element in the current upsurge of class anger is the fact that numerous sectors - health, recycling, transport, distribution etc - who were told during the pandemic that their work was essential, and that they were heroes for carrying on, are now being rewarded with insulting wage increases. It also shows the capacity for workers to take strike action without any union “assistance”, as described in more detail in an account from the first Amazon wildcat⁷.

But it also shows that the trade unions are always ready to step in an “organise” the workers for their own good. If it’s not an official union like the GMB (which calls itself “a union for all workers”), as in this case, then there are a number of “rank and file”, semi-syndicalist organisations like the United Voices of the World and the IWGB (The Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain) who have specialised in recruiting the more precarious sectors hitherto ignored by the main union bodies. And we should not forget that the lowest level of the official unions, shop stewards or local organisers, can also set up pseudo-independent strike committees and coordinations that are not genuine expressions of strikers’ mass meetings and seek to act as the final bulwark of the trade unions.

The unions, and the basic ideology of trade unionism, have a very long history in Britain and it will take a long time and many confrontations with union sabotage before workers are able to develop autonomous forms of organisation on a massive scale – in particular, sovereign general assemblies where workers can debate and make their decisions about the way to extend and unite their struggles. And it is also likely that the new “anti-union” measures announced by the Truss government will help to reinforce the idea that the unions really do belong to the workers and need to be defended, even though the unions have become very adept at policing and normalising previous anti-strike legislation (ballots, limits on secondary pickets, etc).

Nonetheless, we can see in some of these recent examples that the authentic class tradition of deciding actions at general meetings, of organising mass pickets and calling directly on other workplaces to join the struggle, has by no means vanished from the collective memory of the working class in Britain and still exists in embryonic form. The present wave of strikes is an essential preparation for the struggles of the future to reach the much-needed levels of self-organisation that will enable the workers to unify their struggles. **Amos, 4.10.22**

6. <https://notesfrombelow.org/article/how-amazon-wildcat-spread>

7. <https://notesfrombelow.org/article/wildcat-strike-amazon>

1. See our international leaflet *A summer of anger in Britain: The ruling class demands further sacrifices, The response of the working class is to fight!*

Capitalist destruction of nature heats up the need for communism

In the first half of 2022, as in so many of the previous years, the planet was plagued by numerous wildfires in France, Morocco, South Korea, Turkey and Argentina; catastrophic flooding in Pakistan, India, South Africa, Madagascar and Brazil; tropical storms in the Philippines and Mozambique, Cuba and Florida, unprecedented heat waves in India and Pakistan. The increase of temperature has considerably exacerbated the risk of extreme weather disasters. The scale of destruction it implies is terrifying: it reveals the acceleration of the decomposition of capitalism.

One of the most devastating natural disasters of 2022 occurred in Pakistan. In the first half of 2022 the country was hit by an unprecedented heat wave with temperatures of more than 50°C while in the second half of 2022, only some months later, a third of the country was flooded and made the situation completely catastrophic. In Jacobabad, a city with 200,000 inhabitants, temperatures first reached more than 49°C, and then all streets were inundated. Pakistan is known for its vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events. This year thousands of people have died in Pakistan, 1,400 from the floods alone. Many of the flood-hit areas are receiving the barest minimum of support from the authorities. But then, capitalism is not interested in saving human lives.

The disastrous effects of rising temperatures

The planet has never been hotter. Since 1880 Earth's temperature has risen by 0.08°C per decade, but since 1981 the rate of warming is more than twice that: 0.18°C per decade. Averaged across land and ocean, the 2021 surface temperature was 1.04°C warmer than the last two decades of the 19th century. According to the National Centres for Environmental Information (NCEI) 9 of the 10 warmest years occurred since 2005, and the five warmest years on record all occurred since 2015. NASA confirmed this observation and found that 2010-2019 was the hottest decade ever recorded. US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) discovered that greenhouse gas pollution trapped 49% more heat in the atmosphere in 2021 than they did in 1990.

But what is the relationship between rising temperatures and the ever-increasing perturbations and extremes in weather conditions? There is not an irrefutable proof that a tornado or flood in a certain part of the world is caused by rising temperatures. But in the past 30 years the number of climate-related disasters has tripled and this increase in quantity becomes a circumstantial support for the hypothesis that the major part of the weather disasters is caused by global warming - and, in the last instance, by irresponsible and destructive “human intervention”. With a probability bordering on certainty, scientists can therefore determine that the warming of the atmosphere, the ocean and the land is at the root of the majority of the ever more devastating “natural” disasters.

The increase of air and water temperatures leads to rising sea levels and the massive melting of the icecaps, to supercharged storms and higher wind speeds, prolonged heat waves and more intense droughts, heavy downpours and massive flooding, making more and more parts of the planet uninhabitable. And as direct consequences of these crisis-ridden conditions we saw that:

- * between 2011 and 2020 the attendant destruction around the globe totalled approximately \$2.5 trillion, up almost 50 percent from the 2001-2010 figure;
- * since 2008 every year more than 20 million people were forced from their homes, a number that increased year after year, reaching 30.7 million in 2020 alone;
- * from 1970 to 2019 there were more than 11,000 reported disasters attributed to natural hazards globally, with more than two million registered deaths.

The destruction of nature by mankind has a very long history, but in previous societies this destruction was so limited that nature was able to recover from it. But within capitalism that changed dramatically: it developed productive forces which were able to change the face of nature in whole regions in a relatively short time. During the industrial revolution, for instance, the exploitation

of copper and coal mines led to the destruction of large forests in South Wales (Great Britain) within a couple of decades, changing the landscape forever.

But man cannot make such profound changes to nature with impunity. *“At every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people. (...) For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us”*¹. Today, or rather in the last few decades, we can see how nature, after 140 years of ruthless plundering by capital, is beginning to “take its revenge” on a global scale. The processes set in motion by the destruction of nature hits back at society like a boomerang in the form of a rapid increase in natural disasters with long-lasting and increasingly devastating effects.

Global warming is inherent to the capitalist mode of production

Under capitalist conditions each unit of capital must accumulate and expand under the spur of competition with other capitals. It has to produce as efficiently as possible, with the highest productivity and the lowest possible cost. Every activity of capital is constantly aimed at the growth of profit and the increase of the exploitation of nature: labour power, soil, raw materials, etc. Profitability is the beginning and the end of every capitalist enterprise.

Within capitalism the aim is not the creation of more useful products (“use values”), but the widening of commodity production for the sake of profit. Capital has made the increasing volume of production, the expansion of the market and the reproduction of value on an enlarged scale, as an end in itself. And the more capital has accumulated, the more is it able to accumulate. Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake, that is what characterises capitalism. The eternal continuation of each production cycle on an ever-larger scale becomes, in the end, in the period of decadence of capitalism, a completely irrational and even destructive logic.

For capital nature is a “free gift”, it has no price for except, for the discovery and extraction, it has no cost. From the capitalist point of view, nature is a storehouse of raw materials that can be plundered to its heart's content. Therefore, in the accounts of capitalist companies, all costs are precisely noted (transport, machines, labour, etc.), but not the damage caused to nature by capitalist production process. Sometimes damage to nature is restored, but most of the time not by the company that caused it.

In the period of the decadence of capitalism, and in particular because of the needs of the war economy, each national state is obliged to strengthen its grip on society and to subject more and more parts of economic life to its direct control. State capitalism became the dominant characteristic and has more and more imprisoned private capital in its straitjacket. Today the entirety of capital in a nation is concentrated around the state apparatus. In this way the merciless competition between private companies is for the great part absorbed by and turned into the cutthroat competition between the nation states.

What has this to do with the problem of global warming? It means that the main decisions in the struggle against global warming do not depend on the decisions of private capitals, but on the policy of national states. And the balance-sheet of the policy of the national states in protecting the climate is not positive. On the contrary, in the period of the imperialist blocs, until 1989, when the nations were under the yoke of the bloc leader and compelled to work together, the bourgeoisie already proved to be incapable to do anything substantial to prevent the further destruction of nature. But in the present phase of decomposition of capitalism, when the cohesion of the blocs no longer exists and the relations between the nations are dominated by “each for himself”, increasing centrifugal forces and growing military chaos, things only have become worse: any effort to decide a joint policy to safeguard the climate from warming and to prevent ever more dramatic weather disasters have become illusory. Nowadays all tendencies point 1. Friedrich Engels, ‘The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man’

towards an increasing political chaos in which any attempt to build a global consensus between nation states, even when they present themselves as “socialist”, the dream of the leftist factions of the bourgeoisie, is doomed to fail. And all the international conferences for the “protection” of nature over the last thirty year testify to this failure.

The destruction of nature to the point that it can no longer really recover, is directly linked to capitalism. Capitalism is absolutely unable to change the economic laws (the urge to expand, to concentrate and to make more profits) that are responsible for the ever-increasing damage to nature. Bourgeois society shows itself *“like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells”*². Rising temperatures and global warming are inherent to the capitalist mode of production.

This means that in order to stop this catastrophic dynamic it is necessary to get rid of the capitalist mode of production.

It is not necessary here to dwell on the numerous bleak but realistic forecasts or on the various doom-laden scenarios that await us if the rise in temperature is not halted. There is plenty of material on the internet, in magazines and books and of course on our website, for example the article ‘The world on the eve of an environmental catastrophe’ (*International Review* no. 135) However there is one thing which should be mentioned, and that is the fact that we are fast approaching the point of no return. We are dangerously close to the emergence of “feedback effects”, where carbon and methane emissions from defrosting peat lands and the arctic permafrost, which can warm the atmosphere 20 times more than carbon, increase so rapidly as to be unstoppable, causing global warming to continue even if all human emissions were to stop.

Climate change and war

The war industry is highly polluting. It is estimated that the emissions from armies, and the industries that supply them, are responsible for about 5% of global emissions, more than air and shipping combined. The US military alone emits more greenhouse gases per year than countries like Spain, Portugal or Sweden, and as much as the yearly emission of 257 million cars. The Cost of War Research Project in Boston calculated that the emissions for all US military operations from 2001 to 2017 are estimated to be about 766 million metric tons of CO₂.

In February 2022 the US Army released its first climate strategy (ACS), which aims to slash its emissions in half by 2030, for instance by electrifying its combat and non-tactical vehicles, by powering its bases with carbon-free electricity and by developing clean global supply chains.

For an institution that regularly releases tens of thousands of kilotons of carbon dioxide a year and that is responsible for the most poisonous environmental contamination through materials such as Agent Orange, rocket fuel, and toxic fire-fighting foam, this plan is utterly hypocritical. It is a perfect illustration of the green washing campaign of the US Army: completely inadequate, and wholly diversionary.

Militarism continues to poison the planet and to contribute to global warming. The impact of the war in Ukraine on the environment is already disastrous. There is evidence of severe air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the intense and permanent battles. Russian missiles attacked a number of oil and gas facilities in Ukraine. The resulting fires gave rise to heavy emissions. In the first five weeks of the war already alone 36 Russian attacks on fossil fuel infrastructure were recorded, leading to prolonged fires releasing soot particulates, methane and carbon into the atmosphere. The Ukraine army struck back and set oil infrastructure ablaze on the Russian side.

And that is not all. Both sides do not hesitate to use the nuclear power plant of Zaporizhzhia, the largest in Europe, as a target for their military clashes. The four high-voltage lines, which must supply the plant with offside power to run its safety and cooling system, etc., are systematically cut by shelling. Thus the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said at 9 September that 2. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, ‘Communist Manifesto’

the risk of a nuclear accident at the power plant has “significantly increased”. Any further destruction of the infrastructure around the power plant could already have immense consequences, even a nuclear disaster on the scale of Fukushima.

Western European countries have agreed to get rid of fossil fuels from Russia. Wouter De Vriendt of the Green Party spoke in the Belgian parliament about a great opportunity *“to get rid of fossil fuels”*. But the reality is completely different. The war in Ukraine will not mean a breakthrough in the conversion to cleaner energy. Russian gas and oil will be replaced by fossil fuels, some of which are even more polluting, such as shale gas mining and lignite mining. Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands hypocritically announced the lifting of restrictions on fossil-fuel power plants and have extended the lives of a dozen coal plants that were scheduled to close by 2030. In fact, the Western countries are using the war in Ukraine as an alibi to strengthen their own fossil energy industry.

“Degrowth”: a false solution for increasing climate disasters

The word degrowth was formulated for the first time in 1972 when André Gorz posed the question about the relation between growth and capitalism. The degrowth movement itself started about 30 years later. In 2002, the French magazine *“Silence”* published a special issue on the topic of degrowth, which received lots of public attention. The first international degrowth conference for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity took place in Paris in 2008. This gave a real impetus to the movement and thereafter several important publications were issued.

There is no one clearly defined degrowth ideology. One point that is endorsed by the whole movement is that there are limits to growth and so its aim to replace quantitative growth by qualitative growth or development. Degrowth, we are told, can be done in many ways, but common suggestions are to stop the production of useless consumer goods, of the goods with built-in obsolescence or goods that cannot be repaired, to phase out fossil fuels, to replace private transport by public transport, dismantling the arms industry and the military-industrial complex, etc.

These suggestions make much sense in themselves. The question is whether they could ever be carried out in the framework of capitalism. They are *“based on a very accurate observation: in the capitalist system, production is not carried out to meet the needs of humanity but for profit, and in so doing not only does it not generate well-being (far from it) but also destroys the planet. The solution, for the proponents of degrowth, is therefore to consume better and less. [But] the theory of degrowth only touches on one part of the problem and in a superficial way; it does not get to the heart of the matter”*³.

Within the ecological movement there are also currents who have understood this, arguing that capitalism is causing the climate crisis and that *“any true alternative to this perverse and destructive dynamic needs to be radical - that is, must deal with the roots of the problem: the capitalist system. (...) Ecosocialist degrowth is one such alternative”*⁴. Of course, we agree that capitalism cannot solve the problem of global warming; because it is inherent to the logic of its system. Thus, capitalism itself has to be abolished.

But the actual proposals by these “ecosocialists” to create the necessary conditions for the abolition of capitalism are far from radical. While arguing for the *“social appropriation of the main means of (re)production”*⁵, we remain completely in the dark about *who* should appropriate these means of (re)production. The people, as is suggested? But in class society, the “people” as a category does not exist, or only as an abstraction. And it is impossible to attribute the means of production to an abstraction. The only conclusion that remains is that they are to be taken over by the state, whose 3. Journée de discussion à Marseille: un débat ouvert et fraternel sur “un autre monde est-il possible ?”, ICConline - 2008 4. For an Ecosocialist Degrowth, Michael Löwy, BengiAkbulut, Sabrina Fernandes and Giorgos Kallis 5..Ibid

Continued on page 7

American imperialism, a major factor in capitalist chaos

As Russian troops poured into Ukraine, President Biden, in his speech on February 24, stated that *“Putin has committed an attack against the very principles which protect world peace.”* The world is thus confronted with the tragedy of a new war due to the due to the madness of a single man. This propaganda, presenting Ukraine and the “Westerners” as victims working only for “peace”, is a lie.

In reality, this murderous conflict is a pure product of the contradictions of a capitalist world in crisis, of a society rotting on its feet and subject to the reign of militarism. The current war, like all wars in the decadence of capitalism, is the result of a **permanent** imperialist balance of power, affecting all the protagonists, small or large, whether they are directly or indirectly involved in this conflict¹. In the cynical struggle within this planetary bucket of crabs, the United States is, as the only superpower, at the forefront of the barbarism, not hesitating to propagate chaos and misery to defend its sordid interests and to slow down the inevitable decline of its leadership.

Maintaining NATO, the Gulf War: the bringing to heel of the ex-allies after the Cold War

After the Cold War, in parallel with their desire to keep a grip on its former allies in the Western bloc, the United States never abandoned their strategy of absorbing the countries that had been part of the bloc led by the USSR. Thus, as early as 15 February 1991, the Visegrad Group was formed, composed of former Eastern European countries (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia), in order to promote their integration into NATO and Europe. Such pressure led the European powers to express their great concern not to “humiliate Russia”. This tone already revealed a latent challenge towards the United States.

While the collapse of the Berlin Wall symbolically announced the end of the Cold War, a new war, the first Gulf War, initiated by the United States², would foreshadow the chaos of the century to come. Far from being a “war for oil”, it was a question of American power, following the bankruptcy of the common enemy (the USSR), putting pressure directly on its most powerful ex-allies, in order to keep them under its yoke by dragging them into this barbaric military adventure.

As the world had ceased to be divided into two disciplined imperialist camps, a country like Iraq thought it possible to take over a former ally of the same bloc, Kuwait. The United States, at the head of a coalition of 35 countries, launched a deadly offensive aimed at discouraging any future temptation to imitate the actions of Saddam Hussein.

Thus, the operation “Desert Storm”, undertaken by an “international coalition” against Iraq, was in reality an exercise of American imperialism intended to “bring to heel” their former allies who might challenge its leadership, by asserting itself as the only “world policeman”. All this at the cost of several hundred thousand deaths.

Of course, the victory of President Bush Sr, which promised “peace, prosperity and democracy” would not sustain the illusion for very long. The apparent stability, won at the price of iron and blood, was momentary, confirming the United States as the “world’s policeman”, but containing the seeds of growing contradictions and tensions.

Yugoslavia: a permanent struggle against the decline of American leadership

If the Gulf War had momentarily stifled the first attempts at open opposition to the American policy, they were then expressed soon after, notably with the conflict in the former Yugoslavia (from 1991 to 2001). In the early 1990s, the government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, pushing and supporting the independence of Croatia and Slovenia in order to give Germany access to the Mediterranean, was in direct opposition to the American power, but also to the interests of France and the United Kingdom. Through its bold initiatives, Germany initiated the process that would lead to the explosion of Yugoslavia.

1. For more explanation see ‘Militarism and Decomposition’ (May 2022), *International Review* 168
2. See ‘War in the Gulf: Capitalist massacres and chaos’, *International Review* 65 (1992)

Faced with the open challenge to their authority, the United States did not stand idle. As early as the summer of 1995, it launched a vast counter-offensive, relying on its major asset: military power. The United States got its own armed force, the Implementation Force (IFOR) by ousting the UN and European troops, thus showing its overwhelming superiority and its impressive logistics. This demonstration of force, diplomatically piloted under the authority of Bill Clinton, compelled the Europeans, in November 1995, to sign the Dayton Agreement. Here again, the conflict left thousands of victims.

Of course, these agreements, signed under conditions imposed by the United States, through the pressure of arms and of an aggressive diplomacy, playing especially on the divisions between the European states, continued to be sabotaged by these same states. Germany, for example, never stopped putting the brakes on the wheels of the United States in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia, and it also favoured diplomatic rapprochements that tended to anger Washington, concretised especially by its links with the Turkish and Iranian chancelleries.

Even in the Middle East, a traditional preserve of Uncle Sam, European rivals have gradually been able to hinder the American policy. Such a challenge also reached the United States’ most loyal lieutenants, starting with Israel, especially after Netanyahu took power in 1996, when the White House was banking on Labour’s Shimon Peres. Likewise, Saudi Arabia more and more openly displayed its resistance to American diktats in the region.

far from being based on rational factors or even on the simple search for immediate economic profit, the motive for the action of American imperialism, like that of all the other great powers, is to defend its position in a world that is becoming more and more chaotic

Successive setbacks for Uncle Sam arrived only a few months after its successful counter-offensive in the former Yugoslavia. In all the strategic zones of the planet, American interests were thwarted more and more. Faced with the growing development of every man for himself, the ICC wrote:

“In some respects, even if the United States, thanks to its economic and financial power, a strength that the leader of the Eastern bloc never had, a parallel can be drawn between the current situation of the United States and that of the situation of the defunct USSR in the days of the Eastern bloc. Like the USSR, they have nothing to preserve their domination but the repeated use of brute force and this always expresses a historic weakness. This exacerbation of the ‘every man for himself’ and the impasse in which the ‘world policeman’ finds itself is but a reflection of the historical impasse of the capitalist mode of production. In this context, the imperialist tensions between the great powers can only escalate, bringing destruction and death on ever larger areas of the planet and further aggravate the appalling chaos which is already the lot of entire continents”³.

Afghanistan, Iraq: The United States’ headlong rush into chaos

At the dawn of the new century, what we declared in the mid-1990s had largely been confirmed. The United States was even to be hit for the first time

3. ‘Imperialist Conflicts: “Every Man for Himself” and the Crisis of American Leadership’, *International Review* 87, (1996)

in its history on its own soil during the deadly attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York. The horrific and symbolic collapse of the Twin Towers marked a new dimension in the development of capitalist horror and chaos. But these attacks also represented for the United States an excellent opportunity to defend its imperialist interests with a rush to war. Here again, American policy was going to engage more and more in massive retaliation and murderous military operations to try to attempt to maintain its authority, in the name of the “fight against terrorism”. The administration of George W. Bush Junior’s, with its armed forces, quickly launched air strikes against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, an undertaking supported at the time by its former allies.

But very quickly, the new crusade envisaged by Washington, in Iraq, against the “Axis of Evil”, was to be the object of virulent and growing criticism. In 2003, encouraging the propagation of false information about Saddam Hussein’s “weapons of mass destruction”, in order to rally the support of his population and that of his former partners, the United States found itself increasingly isolated in its new war operation⁴. France, this time, openly defied the United States, even using its right of veto in the UN Security Council.

Supposed to eliminate terrorism and halt the decline of American leadership, this new show of force instead opened a Pandora’s Box, and the attacks that were to follow over the world could only underline the irrationality of these military undertakings which, in reality, fed this same infernal spiral, increasing the contestation, chaos and barbarism.

The United States also continued its determined policy towards the East, with the trips of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to promote “change” and “democracy”. Her work would bear fruit. By 2003, American imperialism was clearly advancing its pawns in the Caucasus by supporting the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia, which was to precipitate the ousting of the pro-Russian Shevardnadze and replaced him with a pro-American clique. The “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 was also part of the same strategy. Russia’s centrepiece, Ukraine was already in the grip of political tensions. With respect to the “Orange Revolution” of 2004, like that of 2014, the major issue was not about a so-called “struggle for democracy”, but a strategic objective in the games of NATO and the great powers to gain influence⁵.

But massive military force and the growing use of arms would not enable American imperialism to eradicate the challenge to their leadership. Far from ensuring “peace and prosperity”, the United States has become bogged down in all the major strategic points that it sought to stabilise and defend for its own benefit.

The American withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 further accentuated the development of every man for himself, the same year that the civil war in Syria contributed to the explosion of chaos in a region of the world that had become totally uncontrollable. The withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 has also been accompanied by an irresolvable disorder, bringing the Taliban to power. Each of these operations, designed to impose the “order” of the Pax Americana, has only reinforced the chaos and barbarism, forcing the United States to continue its military rampages.

“Strategic pivot” towards Asia, war in Ukraine: a new stage in world-wide chaos

These failures alone are not the reason for the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan⁶. Indeed, in 2011, matching words with actions, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

4. Apart from Britain’s support, no major military power participated in this conflict alongside American troops.
5. The masses who supported Viktor Yushchenko or lined up behind Viktor Yanukovych, were mere pawns, manipulated and lined up behind one or other of the rival bourgeois factions on behalf of this or that imperialist orientation.
6. Moreover, as demonstrated by the assassination of Al Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri on July 31, 2022, the United States has by no means given up on influencing the situation in that country.

announced the adoption of a “strategic pivot to Asia”. Far from a supposed “disengagement” from world affairs, this political orientation of Barack Obama’s mandate was taken forward by Donald Trump with the slogan “America First”. While, in the past, China occupied a secondary position in the world arena, it has gradually taken on the character of a true challenger, worrying and threatening more and more openly an American bourgeoisie which is determined to maintain its status as world leader. Faced with the rise in power of China, the objective was clearly announced: “to place Asia at the heart of American policy,” which the faction around Joe Biden has had to pursue and strengthen. But far from having “deserted” the other major hot spots, this repositioning gave a new breath of life to American imperialism. The impression of “disengagement” led some of the USA’s rivals to embark on imperialist ventures of their own, where Uncle Sam was no longer present. Many, like Russia, are paying a high price for this underestimation! By sending its troops forth in a ridiculous military invasion of Ukraine, Russia was planning to weaken the chokehold which is now suffocating it more and more. It thus fell into a trap set by the American bourgeoisie⁷. In reality, the American disengagement from Afghanistan corresponds to a global vision, a longer term view, dictated by the desire to contain China, which has become a major imperialist power threatening its vital interests. As a result, the current offensive of the United States, through the pressure it is exerting on European countries, through Ukraine’s spectacular counter-offensive following from the sophisticated logistical and material support, or the maintenance of diplomatic pressure on Iran (regarding the nuclear programme) and on the African continent with the trips of its chief diplomat Antony Blinken in the face of the appetites of Russia and China, are all part of America’s fight against the historical decline of its leadership.

By thwarting China’s “silk roads” to Europe through the war in Ukraine and by further control of the maritime routes of the South Pacific, the United States has succeeded, for the time being, in forcing China to expand its ambitions only by land and within a limited sphere. Aware that China is far from being able to match its military power, the United States aims to capitalise on this weakness, to maintain the pressure and even to allow itself to engage in provocations like the very political and symbolic trip to Taiwan by Democrat Nancy Pelosi. This unprecedented affront, revealing China’s relative powerlessness, may be repeated in the future, perhaps pushing Beijing into dangerous military adventures.

From these developments linked to the efforts of American imperialism, we may draw some lessons:

- far from being based on rational factors or even on the simple search for immediate economic profit, the motive for the action of American imperialism, like that of all the other great powers, is to defend its position in a world that is becoming more and more chaotic, thus reinforcing the grip of chaos and destruction;
- in order to ensure this increasingly irrational objective, the United States does not hesitate to sow chaos in Europe, as we can see with the trap set for Russia, the sophisticated weapons and military aid it is giving to Ukraine to keep the war going in order to exhaust its Russian rival;
- to defend its position, the only reliable force is plain to see: that of arms. This is what is shown by Uncle Sam’s whole journey in recent decades, in which it has become the spearhead of militarism, every man for himself and warlike chaos. Already, we are experiencing the greatest chaos in the history of human societies.

In its ultimate phase of decomposition, capitalism plunges the world into barbarism and leads inexorably towards mass devastation. This terrible situation and the horror brought to everyday life show us how much is at stake and how much responsibility the world working class bears. Today, the survival of the human species is at stake. **WE, 14.10.22**

7. See ‘The significance and impact of the war in Ukraine’, *International Review* 168

The world economy hit by the acceleration of decomposition

Capitalism is more and more being strangled by a whole series of contradictions inherent in its way of existing, which are now inter-acting and mutually reinforcing each other, threatening society at unheard of levels of scale and frequency.

In the face of these calamities, the bourgeoisie has always had the concern to discount and discredit any explanation which raise the question of the responsibility of the system itself. The goal of the ruling class is to hide from the working class the real cause of wars, world disorder, climate change, pandemics, the world economic crisis.

Overproduction and the falling rate of profit show the historic limits of capitalism

Overproduction was identified by Marx as being at the origin of the cyclical crises of capitalism in the 19th century¹. The *Communist Manifesto* already proclaimed in 1848 that “*in these crises, there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of over-production*”. Nevertheless, in the ascendant period of capitalism, this contradiction acted as a factor in the expansion of capitalism across the globe through the search for markets to serve as outlets for the production of the industrialised powers.

By contrast, in its period of decadence, overproduction is at the root of the economic impasse marked by the great world depression of the 1930s, by the succession of deeper and deeper recessions which have followed each other since the end of the 1960s, but also by the dizzying development of militarism, since “*faced with a total economic impasse, with the failure of the most brutal economic ‘remedies’, the only choice open to the bourgeoisie is that of a forward flight with other means - themselves increasingly illusory - which can only be military means*.”² Tragic illustrations of this impasse: two world wars and, since the first, an almost uninterrupted series of local wars between states.

The cause of overproduction was shown by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*. Pushed by competition to enlarge itself more and more on pain of death, production permanently tends to become excessive, not in relation to the real needs of human beings, but in relation to the buying power of the waged or unemployed proletarians. The proletarians only constitute an outlet for capitalist production so long as the reproduction of their labour power makes it necessary³. To pay the workers above this necessity would certainly reduce overproduction but would also stand in the way of the accumulation of the surplus value extracted from wage labour.

There is no solution to overproduction inside capitalism. It can only be eliminated by the abolition of wage labour, which means establishing a society without exploitation. Questions and misunderstandings about this have been expressed in our public meetings and meetings for contacts. For one comrade, overproduction could be lessened or even eliminated under the influence of other “inverse” contradictions that result in a scarcity of certain commodities. In reality, while shortages are affecting certain sectors of world production, for example due to gaps in supply chains, other sectors continue, in essence, to be affected by overproduction.

If the wheels of the world economy are not gripped all the time by the permanent and growing tendency towards overproduction, it’s because the bourgeoisie has resorted massively to non-reimbursed debt in order to create demand, leading to the accumulation of a colossal global debt

1. See Marxism and crisis theory, *International Review* 13
2. See War, militarism and imperialist blocs in the decadence of capitalism, Part 2, *International Review* 53.
3. “*The consuming power of the workers is limited partly by the laws of wages, partly by the fact that they are used only as long as they can be profitably employed by the capitalist class. The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit.*” *Capital* Vol 3, part V, chapter 30

which hangs like Damocles’ sword over the world economy.

The tendency towards the falling rate of profit, also identified by Marx, presents itself as a supplementary barrier to accumulation. Faced with the exacerbation of competition and in order to keep their enterprises alive, the capitalists are forced to produce more cheaply. To this end they have to increase productivity by using more and more machinery in the process of production (raising the organic composition of capital). The result is that each commodity produced in this way contains proportionately less living labour (the part of the workers’ labour not paid for by the capitalist), and thus less surplus value. Nevertheless, the effects of the falling rate of profit can be compensated by various factors, in particular augmenting the volume of production⁴. But this in turn comes up, as with overproduction, against the insufficiency of markets. While the falling rate of profit did not appear right away in the life of capitalism as an absolute barrier to accumulation, it’s because there were still outlets existing in society, initially real ones and later increasingly based on the growth of world debt, allowing it to be offset. In the present context, it is yoked dangerously to overproduction.

The soaring unproductive expenses generated by state capitalism and rising rates of inflation

With the outbreak of the First World War, capitalism entered into a new period in its life, its decadence, where social contradictions imposed the setting up of state capitalism, charged with maintaining the cohesion of society in the face of these contradictions, in particular:

- War or the threat of war which implies the development of militarism and thus of military expenses
- The development of the class struggle, but also the growth of crime and gangsterism, which makes it necessary to set up various repressive bodies (police, courts, etc)

These kinds of state capitalist expenses are totally unproductive and, far from contributing to accumulation, constitute a sterilisation of capital. Here again incomprehension has been expressed about the production and sale of arms, which are seen as part of the accumulation process and thus confer a certain rationality on war. In fact, the idea that the sale of such commodities implies the realisation of surplus value is rejected by marxism. To be convinced of this, you only have to refer to Marx: “*A large part of the annual product, the part consumed as income and no longer re-entering production afresh as a means of production... This kind of productive labour produces use values, is objectified in products, which are only destined for unproductive consumption. These products have in reality, as articles, no use value for the reproduction process.*”⁵(our emphasis). In this category are all the luxury articles destined for the bourgeoisie as well as arms, since arms obviously do not re-enter the production process as means of production.

Since the beginning of the 20th century unproductive expenses have continued to grow, especially military expenses, and the present war in Ukraine have given them a further impetus.

Inflation

Inflation should not be confused with another phenomenon in the life of capitalism, the rising price of certain commodities resulting from a lack of supply. The latter phenomenon has taken on a particular significance due to the war in Ukraine which has affected the supply of an important amount of agricultural products. This is already aggravating poverty and hunger on a world scale.

By definition, inflation is not one of the contradictions inherent in the capitalist mode of production, as is the case for overproduction for example. Nevertheless, it is a permanent element in the period of capitalist decadence and has a major impact on the economy. Like the lack of supply,

4. There are also other counter-tendencies to the falling rate of profit, in particular the intensification of exploitation
5. Marx: Productive and Unproductive Labour



it expresses itself in rising prices but it is the consequence of the weight of unproductive expenses in society, whose cost has repercussions for the commodities being produced: “*Today, in the price of each commodity, alongside profits and the cost of labour power and of constant capital used in production, there is a greater and greater involvement of expenses which are indispensable to its being sold on a more and more saturated market (from the salaries of those engaged in marketing to the amount set aside to pay the police, functionaries and soldiers of the producer country). In the value of each object, the part which embodies labour time necessary for its production becomes smaller and smaller in relation to the part embodying human labour imposed by the system’s survival. The tendency for the weight of these unproductive expenses to annihilate the gains of labour productivity manifests itself in the constant rise in commodity prices*”⁶.

Finally, another factor in inflation is the result of the devaluation of money which accompanies the uncontrolled expansion in global debt, which today is nearing 260% of world production.

The ecological crisis

If the bourgeoisie has thrown itself so avidly on natural resources by incorporating them into the productive forces, it’s because they present the peculiarity of being “free” for capitalism.

However polluting, murderous and exploitative capitalism was in its ascendant period as it was conquering the world, this was nothing compared to the infernal spiral of the destruction of nature since the First World War, the consequence of ferocious economic and military competition. The destruction of the environment has thus reached new levels, as capitalist enterprises, private or public, have increased pollution and the pillage of the resources of the planet to unprecedented levels. What’s more, wars and militarism have made their own contribution to pollution and destruction of the natural environment⁷. In the second half of the 20th century there has been a new dimension in the disaster that capitalism is storing up for humanity: the development of climate change which threatens the very existence of our species. Its causes are economic, and, in turn, so are its consequences.

Climate change is having a greater and greater impact on the life of human beings and the on the economy: monstrous fires, violent and extensive flooding, heatwaves, drought, violent storms... increasingly affecting not only agricultural production but also industrial production and human habitats, thus more and more punishing the capitalist economy.

Such a threat can only be removed through the overthrow of capitalism. But on this point there exists the idea that you can’t rule out the bourgeoisie being able to avoid the climate disaster by installing new “clean” technologies. There is no doubt that the bourgeoisie is still capable of making considerable advances in this domain, even decisive ones. But against this, it is totally incapable of unifying itself on a world scale in or-
6. *World Revolution* 2, “Overproduction and inflation”
7. Capitalism is poisoning the earth, *International Review* 63; The world on the eve of an environmental catastrophe, *International Review* 135; The world on the eve of an environmental catastrophe: Who is responsible?, *International Review* 139

der to put such technological advances into practice.

It’s not the first time in history that such illusions in the bourgeoisie have been put forward. In a certain way they took the form in the theory of “super-imperialism” developed by Kautsky in particular on the eve of the First World War and purporting to show that the great powers could come to an agreement among themselves in order to establish a shared, peaceful domination over the world. Such a conception was obviously one of the spearheads of the pacifist lie, aiming to make workers believe that you could put an end to wars without needing to destroy capitalism. Kautsky’s view ignored the deadly competition between capitalist powers. It also ignored the fact that the highest possible level of unification between the different national fractions of the world bourgeoisie is precisely that of the nation, making them incapable of setting up a really supranational political authority and organisation of society.

Reality is quite the opposite to the illusion of a bourgeoisie capable of avoiding the climate disaster. What we are seeing is the persistence and even aggravation of total irrationality and irresponsibility in the face of climate change, expressed not only by the unleashing of new imperialist conflicts like the war in Ukraine (catastrophic for the human beings but also for the planet) but also through lesser, but still significant, aberrations like the running of Bitcoin, which requires a consumption of energy equivalent to that of all of Switzerland’s activities⁸.

The consequences of capitalism’s entry into the final phase of decadence, the phase of decomposition

Decomposition corresponds to the final phase of capitalism’s life, initiated by a deadlock between the two main antagonistic classes, neither of them able to bring its own solution to the historic crisis of capitalism. The deepening of the economic crisis thus determines the phenomenon of society rotting on its feet. This affects the whole of social life, in particular through the development of the tendency towards “every man for himself” in all social relations, and in particular within the bourgeoisie. This was illustrated very clearly during the Covid epidemic, notably through two examples:

- The inability to coordinate and centralise research for a vaccine and to establish the planned production and distribution of vaccines for the whole planet;
- The gangster behaviour of certain industrialised countries, stealing medical material destined for a neighbouring country on the tarmac of an airport.

Thus, while the roots of decomposition lie in the economic crisis, we have seen since 2020 that the latter is itself being increasingly affected by the most severe manifestations of decomposition. Thus, the course of the economic crisis has been aggravated by the development of every man for himself in all domains, but especially in the relations between the great powers. Such a situation cannot but act as a major handicap to setting up concerted economic policies in response to the next recession.

The risk of chain reactions in the economic sphere

The reality of such threats is reflected in the declarations in July 2022 of the head economist of the IMF, who can hardly be suspected of trying to throw oil on the fire: “*It may well be that we are on the eve of a world recession only two years after the last one*”⁹ (our emphasis).

In fact, “it is certain” that the situation is much more alarming than it was two years ago. The conjunction of a whole number of phenomena is there to support the prediction of major disturbances at the economic level and, as a result, well

8. Le Monde, 24 September 2022 on the production of Bitcoin
9. Les Echos, 27 July, 2022

Continued on page 7

International Communist Current public meeting

The international importance of the strikes in Britain

The strike wave in Britain continues. Transport, health, docks, education, local councils, Amazon – more and more workers are determined to fight for their most basic demands faced with surging prices, benefit cuts, deteriorating working conditions, precarious employment...For decades, the class struggle has been in retreat despite a relentless onslaught on our living standards. But there are now clear signs of a revival, and what’s happening in Britain can serve as an encouragement to workers everywhere: right now the workers in France are responding to the rising cost of living with a series of strikes and demonstrations in different sectors. The class struggle is international because the capitalist system that exploits us is a world system, and everywhere on the planet it is in deep crisis. And no matter which party holds the reins of government, they are all forced to make the working class pay for the crisis.

The ICC invites you to attend a public meeting from 2-5pm on Saturday, 12 November 2022,

MAYDAY ROOMS
88 Fleet Street
London EC4Y 1DH

We will present our analysis of the current world situation and the significance of the current strike movement. We hope that this will stimulate a wide-ranging discussion around questions such as:

- How can we unite our forces as a class? Do the trade unions unite us – or divide us into different categories, each fighting in our own corner?
- How can workers really control their own struggles?
- Are our enemies just the Tories, or all the parties of the ruling class?
- What is the long-term perspective for our struggle faced with a world system which can only offer us poverty, war, and ecological catastrophe?

Come to the meeting and help develop the discussion.
Read our international leaflet on the importance of the strikes in Britain: A summer of anger in Britain: The ruling class demands further sacrifices, the response of the working class is to fight!

Continued from page 6

beyond it:

- all the contradictions of capitalism examined in this article – reduction of solvent markets, frenzied race to increase productivity, intensification of global trade war – are being exacerbated.
- Capitalism is facing the near certainty of having to fork out major new expenses: everywhere in the world, particularly in Western Europe, the acceleration of militarism is generating a powerful rise in unproductive expenditure. Similarly, aging infrastructures have been forgotten for decades in state budgets, which in turn makes society even more fragile, demanding enormous expenses to deal with perfectly predictable phenomena, as we saw with the Covid pandemic.
- There are various possible detonators of an economic cataclysm, like the **property sector crisis in China** (which is at the origin of zero growth in this economy in the second trimester of 2022¹⁰), where bankruptcies like that of Evergrande may not be limited to this country but could have heavy international repercussions, such is the fragility of the world economy; **the surge of inflation**, as well as deeply affecting the lives of the exploited, and thus the working class in particular, poses other political problems for the bourgeoisie. An uncontrolled inflation is a fetter on a world commerce already affected by imperialist tensions. To the point where, faced with the seemingly ineluctable prospect of a rise in interest rates in a certain number of industrialised countries, recession seems inevitable. A menace whose gravity the bourgeoisie doesn’t seem able to admit since it would take place in the context of an already deteriorating economic situation, thus exacerbating the trend towards every man for himself and in some cases open hostility between the main powers.

Today, after more than a century of capitalist decadence, we can see how visionary were the words of the Communist International about the “internal disintegration” of world capitalism which will not disappear on its own but will drag humanity into barbarism if the proletariat doesn’t put an end to it. The hour has come for the proletariat to again react as a class in response to the apocalypse that capital is preparing for us. There is still time for that. **Silvio 5.10.22**

10. L’immobilier, maillon faible de l’économie chinoise. *Le Monde* du 17 août 2022

Continued from page 8

The “Tory crisis” expresses the impasse of the whole ruling class

The British bourgeoisie faces a combative working class
On another front, the British bourgeoisie has to deal with the struggles of the working class.
The struggles of the summer did not die out with the coming of autumn and, while, at the moment, the control of the unions is limiting the extent of the struggles, what is already a break with years of passivity could still go further. In response to this there has been government talk of strengthening legislation against strikes and protests. All bourgeois factions will use repression in one form or another, but the attempt to push through provocative political and economic measures at a time when the class struggle is developing is another expression of the particular incompetence of the Truss government. On the other hand, despite this growing loss of control of the political apparatus by the bourgeoisie, we should not underestimate the capacity of the different factions to respond to developments in the class struggle, in particular through a division of labour between a “hardnosed” government and increasingly radical-sounding trade unions. At the same time, the opposition parties, led by Labour, are redoubling their calls for a general election, which is another tried and tested means to sabotage class struggle
However, the objective conditions for the sharpening of class conflict are maturing every day. Capitalism cannot avoid attacking the living and working conditions of the exploited class, whether in the form of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, or cuts in government spending - which in practice means attacks on benefits, pensions, and services from any government funded body, from the health service to education to housing to public transport. The bourgeoisie can only offer austerity, and there is no alternative beyond this that can be honestly offered by parties in opposition, whatever Labour or the SNP might promise.
In defending itself from mounting assaults on its living standards, the working class cannot gain anything from the widening divisions among its class enemy: at this stage in the class conflict, they are more likely to be used to strengthen divisions within the working class itself (the clash between the supporters and opponents of Brexit, or

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

the so-called “Culture Wars”, have precisely this impact on the workers’ awareness of themselves as a *class* with common interests). The development of the class struggle depends on workers beginning to see that there’s nothing to salvage from capitalism and that their resistance needs to develop the perspective of the overthrow of this rotting system. **Car, 22/10/22**

Continued from page 4
Capitalist destruction of nature

destruction the “ecosocialists” do not envision.
Thus, the formulation that “*the main decisions on the priorities of production and consumption will be decided by people themselves*” is mainly a cover-up for the fundamental democratic leanings of the authors, which do not go beyond the confines of the capitalist mode of production. Despite its “radical” language, the ideology of ecosocialism is an excellent instrument for guiding genuine concerns about the climate crisis away from the need for a fundamental change in social relations into the dead-end of the impossible reform of the existing order.
But worse, the idea of “degrowth” under a state capitalist regime can also function as an ideological justification for further attacks on the living conditions of the workers. It could be used to appeal to workers to reduce their consumption on behalf of state-run “pro-environment” policies. In the end it would only mean more austerity.
Capitalism cannot be reformed. It is a moribund system of exploitation and it is taking humanity into the abyss with it. Therefore, any real fight against the further destruction of nature will be impossible as long as capitalism rules the planet. The real change in the relationship between man and nature can only start to take effect under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The balance between man and nature “*can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature*”⁶. **Den-nis, October 2022**
6.. Karl Marx, Capital Vol. III, Part VII. Revenues and their Sources, Chapter 48. The Trinity Formula

ICC books and pamphlets on the history of the workers’ movement

The Italian Communist Left £10

Dutch and German Communist Left £14.95

Communism is not a nice idea but a material necessity £7.50

Unions against the working class £3.00

Communist organisations and class consciousness £1.75

Donations

Unlike the bourgeois press, revolutionary publications such as *World Revolution* have no advertising revenue, no chains of news agents and no millionaire backers. We rely on the support of our sympathisers, and those who, while they might not agree with all aspects of our politics, see the importance of the intervention of a communist press.

Recent donations include:

PC	£53
PC	£20

Bookshops selling ICC press

LONDON
Bookmarks 1 Bloomsbury St, WC1.
Housmans 5 Caledonian Rd, Kings Cross, N1.
Freedom Bookshop Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

OUTSIDE LONDON
Word Power 43 West Nicholson St, Edinburgh EH8 9DB
Tin Drum 68 Narborough Rd, Leicester LE3 0BR
News From Nowhere 96 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY
October Books 243 Portswood Road, Southampton SO17 2NG

AUSTRALIA
New International Bookshop Trades Hall Building, cnr. Lygon & Victoria Sts., Carlton, Melbourne

Contact the ICC

Write to the following addresses without mentioning the name:
WORLD REVOLUTION BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX, GREAT BRITAIN

Write by e-mail to the following addresses:
From Great Britain use **uk@internationalism.org**
From India use **India@internationalism.org**
From the rest of the world use **international@internationalism.org**



www.internationalism.org

The “Tory crisis” expresses the impasse of the whole ruling class

The resignation of Liz Truss after 44 days as Prime Minister is just the latest in an unprecedented and chaotic sequence of events in British politics since the Brexit referendum of 2016, and there is no sign that things are going to miraculously settle down into some sort of constitutional normality. At the time of writing, a new leadership contest is underway: Rishi Sunak may be favourite to win, but the return of Boris Johnson is also a possibility – a clear expression of a party which is running out of options and could be on the verge of a historic split. But the “Tory crisis” is really an expression of a much deeper political crisis within the ruling class as a whole, of a decomposing system in which the bourgeoisie everywhere is increasingly losing control over its own political life.

44 days of political mayhem

Truss became Prime Minister on 6 September and proceeded to remove from ministerial roles anyone who had opposed her in the leadership election against Rishi Sunak. On 23 September Kwasi Kwarteng announced a series of tax reducing measures that had not been costed or run by the Office for Budget Responsibility. This had an instant dramatic impact on the value of the pound, on interest rates, pension funds, government bonds, and the availability of mortgages. At the Tory Party Conference in early October Truss labelled all opponents of her economic policies as being part of an “Anti-growth Coalition”. As if there was any faction of the ruling class that has no interest in the accumulation of capital and in the strengthening of the national economy – it’s just that there are differences in the bourgeoisie on the means to achieve this.

On 14 October Kwarteng was ordered back from an IMF meeting in the US to be sacked (for doing what had been agreed with Truss) and replaced by Jeremy Hunt as Chancellor of the Exchequer. On 17 October Hunt announced the scrapping of nearly all the measures announced in the mini-budget devised by Truss. A plan for £45bn of unfunded tax cuts underwent a £32bn reversal, and, in the name of stability and balancing the books, there will be “eye-watering” spending cuts to come; the planned two-year energy price cap will only last until next April, and they’ve so far found only about half of the £70bn fiscal black hole.

Yes, the Truss government proved itself particularly incompetent in not understanding what would

be the effect of their policies, but the political and economic crisis convulsing British capitalism has a global context and historic roots that go beyond the ineptitude of a particular administration.

Social decomposition and the loss of political control

Historically the British bourgeoisie used to be able to make appropriate adjustments in its political apparatus to cope with all situations – whether changes in the economy, at the imperialist level, or in relation to the class struggle. The last three decades of social decomposition have shown how the bourgeoisie has increasingly lost control of its political apparatus, not least due to the growing influence of populism in one of its main parties. The first signs of this became obvious in 2016, with Cameron’s blunder in holding a referendum on membership of the EU, in a failed attempt to counter the influence of UKIP-style populism on the Tory Party. Since the Brexit decision we have seen May and the negotiations over leaving the EU, then Johnson and “getting Brexit done” which meant accepting an agreement that it was soon clear they had every intention of challenging. Johnson’s leaving was messy as he departed implying that he had been the victim of a stab in the back; there are still many Tories who are now openly in favour of returning Boris to power. The advent of Truss, who emerged from a limited pool of candidates, all of whom were tainted by their involvement in the Johnson government, might have been a turn away from big-spending “levelling up” populism, but it involved the adoption of free market fantasies à la Thatcher that further damaged the image of the Tory party as a safe manager of the British economy. The one element where there was continuity between Johnson and Truss was the ability to make U-turns without any shame.

A long-standing economic crisis

Truss and, before her, Johnson, blamed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February for the rise in inflation, and specifically the increase in energy costs. Yet energy firms were already going bust in late 2021, and inflation in the UK (currently growing faster than any of the G7) was already taking off during 2021, and had reached 5.4% by the end of December 2021, before subsequently going into double figures (with much food inflation significantly higher). This was the highest

rate since 1982, with predictions of more to come. With energy costs specifically, electricity prices rose by 54% and gas prices by 95.7% in the year to September. But the economic crisis of British capitalism is not just the product of the war or the pandemic or because of Brexit. In reality, Britain’s economic supremacy in the world was



already being challenged by rising powers like the US and Germany in the latter part of the 19th century, and the century since World War I has been a story of Britain’s continuing descent to the status of a third-rate power. This long descent has accelerated in the final phase of capitalism’s decadence: the rise of populism and the Brexit fiasco are a classic product of this phase, and while they are certainly an exacerbating factor in the UK’s economic and political turmoil, they are not the underlying cause, which can only be sought in the irresolvable contradictions of capitalism as a world system.

This is important to understand because it serves as a warning to the working class that a change of ruling team will not do away with the growing threat of pauperisation. The choices made by different ruling teams do not include any benign alternatives. As the resolution on the international situation from the ICC’s 24th Congress puts it: “policy changes cannot rescue the world economy from oscillating between the twin dangers of inflation and deflation, new credit crunches and currency crises, all leading to brutal recessions.” Where Truss initially wanted to take on “Treasury orthodoxy” which led to panics in the market, massive increases in debt, pressure on inflation, and attacks on the conditions of life of the working class, Hunt’s embrace of Treasury orthodoxy, in the latest of many government U-turns, means the reassertion of an austerity regime, without

the pretence of wealth “trickling down”. It will involve reductions in public spending and tax increases. In short, further attacks on living standards.

As things stand, the policy of the Treasury means cutting government expenditure, while the Bank of England, having tried to deal with government recklessness, will still be trying to limit inflation, which commentators are pointing to as the route to a deeper and more prolonged recession.

Cracks in the “United” Kingdom

Another area of continuity was in making the SNP and Scottish independence look as though they were viable possibilities. In contrast to the Johnson and Truss governments, the SNP in Scotland has performed within the normal boundaries of bourgeois respectability, always able to blame London for economic problems or carelessness over the pandemic. The break-up of the United Kingdom used to seem an impossible aspiration of eccentric nationalists, but the SNP is now able to present independence (and rejoining the EU) as an inviting alternative to rule by English populists and extremists. At the same time the question of the status of Northern Ireland is unresolved with the final Brexit deal leaving the British bourgeoisie trapped between the Northern Ireland Protocol and the Good Friday Agreement. The DUP has dug in its heels over the Northern Ireland Protocol, but the British government’s current position is that it would have no option but to call an election if the DUP does not return to power-sharing by 28 October. As the DUP was overtaken by Sinn Féin as the largest party at the last elections in May, it might be reluctant to repeat the experience. Meanwhile there is pressure on Britain from both the EU and the US not to do anything to disturb the present fragile situation around Northern Ireland.

With the war in Ukraine British imperialism remains Zelensky’s biggest supporter in Europe in terms of both arms and rhetoric supplied. This makes demands on British finances, and Truss’s previous commitment to significantly increase the defence budget is not necessarily going to be upheld, although it should always be remembered that militarism is at the core of the survival of the national capital, and war is no longer a rational factor in terms of economic or even strategic gains.

Continued on page 7

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 statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in

the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

* All the nationalist ideologies - ‘national independence’, ‘the right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. ‘Democracy’, a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-‘Communists’), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘anti-fascist fronts’ and ‘united fronts’, which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union

organisation, whether ‘official’ or ‘rank and file’, serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

* In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it’s not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

* The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers’ councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

* The communist transformation of society by the workers’ councils does not mean ‘self-management’ or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active

factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to ‘organise the working class’ nor to ‘take power’ in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat’s combat.

OUR ACTIVITY

Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.

Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

OUR ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League* of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen’s Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 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*.