



world revolution

War, crisis, austerity

The proletariat must fight back with the class struggle!

The war in Ukraine is getting bogged down in barbarism, an irrational and infernal spiral where death and ruins are piling up. The “high intensity” war has taken hold in Europe, giving a colossal boost to all the damage that has already struck the world before it. Militarism and imperialist tensions are increasing, as we have seen, for example, between China and the US last summer over Taiwan, with the corollary of increasing global chaos.

War accentuates the fragmentation and disorganisation of world production and trade; it fuels inflation and generates new shortages. The economic crisis, also aggravated by the increase in military expenditure, has led to new trade wars between every country, to the point where certain strategic decisions, such as the adoption by the United States of a \$369 billion programme designed to attract business, was interpreted by its European rivals as a veritable “act of war”, a situation which made them fear the massive de-industrialisation of the Old Continent. Everywhere, shortages are threatening vital sectors such as energy or medicines, and even certain foodstuffs.

The deepening of the crisis is itself contributing to the increased plundering of resources and, ultimately, to the multiplication of “natural” and industrial disasters. Fires that have devastated entire regions, droughts and record temperatures, floods and other extreme climatic phenomena have all worsened the state of society as a whole.

At the same time, the Covid pandemic has spread with the Omicron variant. It poses the threat of further mutations from China, where millions of infected people and hundreds of thousands of additional victims are evidence of the worsening of the already dire conditions of an economy in crisis, further damaging depleted health systems.

The year 2022 is not just a dramatic confirmation of these dynamics and miasma, a mere *annus horribilis*. It marks a further step in the deadly trajectory of capitalism. Society is sinking deeper and faster into chaos at all levels and no one can believe the rhetoric of the ruling class, asking for more belt tightening for a more than hypothetical “better future”.

In reality, the logic that generates the disasters combined in a real spiral of destruction comes from the crisis and the historical limits of the capitalist mode of production and not from “bad leaders” or from “neoliberal mismanagement”, so much denounced by the left-wing parties of the bourgeoisie. It is the product of the contradictions

of capitalism which, like all modes of production of the past, is a transitory system, now obsolete. It is through its irreversible decline that capitalism plunges humanity further into the abyss. After having plunged the African continent and the Middle East into chaos and barbarism, the decomposition of capitalism is now brutally striking the most powerful countries on the planet.

With no perspective or solution other than to see its own system sink into barbarism, the bourgeoisie only generates despair and the idea of “every man for himself”, turning inward and fortifying its borders, pushing for the rejection of migrants, castigating “super-profits” to better justify and make people accept exploitation and growing pauperisation. The populist demonstrations, mirroring these rotten ideologies typical of the period of decomposition of capitalism, pushed Trump’s fanatical supporters to violently enter the Capitol two years ago, with only vandalism as an outlet. More recently, the vindictive gangs of supporters of Bolsonaro also attacked government premises, leaving in the background the spectre of a civil war with incalculable consequences.

Faced with these scourges, which make the world unbearable to live in and the ruling class

nervous, only the working class can offer a perspective by developing its struggles against the attacks of capital and against this world in ruins. Thus, the recent demonstrations and strikes around the world, after years of apathy, have been a reminder that class struggle is still a necessity. In the UK, with the continuing strike wave, those in the US and Europe that have taken place in many sectors, the huge demonstrations that mobilised between one and two million people on 19 January in France against the pension reform, all these movements show the way to take confidence in our own forces and try to recover, in the long term, a lost class identity.¹

However, this arduous struggle is already strewn with pitfalls. The proletariat must be wary of its false friends, the unions and the left and far-left parties of the bourgeoisie, state forces whose role is to contain and sabotage the struggles.

The long road of the class response highlights, moreover, the particular responsibility of the most experienced and concentrated fraction of the world proletariat, that of the working class bastions of Western Europe. The working class 1. See our international leaflet: How can we fight together in a massive united movement? below.

will only be able to assert itself on the basis of this historical experience, that of an autonomous struggle, on a firm class terrain. It must not allow itself to be drawn into sterile movements, without perspective and dangerous for its unity and its consciousness. On the contrary, it must be wary of “popular” revolts or inter-classist struggles which drown the interests of the proletariat in the “people of the nation” and hand it over hand and foot to the settling of scores between fractions of the bourgeoisie. The working class must turn away from movements like those in Iran, China this autumn and Peru more recently, movements in which proletarians find themselves trapped on the terrain of the bourgeoisie: the defence of bourgeois democracy or struggles around feminism, i.e. demanding that the ruling class kindly “reform” its rotten system. While these movements may express legitimate anger, such as the intolerable situation of women in Iran, they nonetheless drag workers behind petty-bourgeois ideologies or behind some bourgeois clique, thus diverting the proletariat from its autonomous struggles, an essential aspect of the development of class consciousness.

Revolutionaries have an enormous responsibility here and an indispensable role in warning the working class of these many pitfalls and dangers. They must defend the future that belongs only to the class struggle and its specific methods of combat. Let’s come together! Let’s take charge of our struggles through collective discussions and initiatives! Let’s defend our own class autonomy! Proletarians of all countries, unite! **WH, 19.1.23**

Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, United States...
**Economic attacks are raining down everywhere
Everywhere, the working class is struggling
Everywhere, the bourgeoisie divides us
How can we fight together in a
massive united movement?**

In Britain since June the cry has echoed from strike to strike:

“Enough is enough!”

This massive movement, dubbed the “Summer of Anger”, has become the Autumn of Anger, and then the Winter of Anger.

The wave of strikes in the UK is a symbol of workers’ combativity that is developing all over the world:

- In **Spain**, where doctors and paediatricians in the Madrid area went on strike at the end of November, as did the airline and rail sectors in

December. Further strikes in the health sector are planned for January in many regions.

- In **Germany**, where soaring prices are causing employers to fear the consequences of an unprecedented energy crisis. The large metal and electrical industries underwent a series of slowdowns in November.

- In **Italy**, a strike by air traffic controllers in mid-October was added to that of EasyJet pilots. The government even had to ban all strikes on public holidays.

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Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, United States...

Economic attacks are raining down everywhere
Everywhere, the working class is struggling
Everywhere, the bourgeoisie divides us

How can we fight together in a massive united movement?

- In **Belgium**, where national strikes were called on 9 November and 16 December.

- In **Greece**, where a demonstration in Athens in November brought together tens of thousands of workers from the private sector, shouting "The cost of living is unbearable".

- In **France**, where, in recent months, there have been successive strikes in public transport and hospitals

- In **Portugal**, where workers are demanding a minimum wage of 800 euros, compared to the current 705. On 18 November, the civil service was on strike. In December, there were strikes across the transport sector.

- In the **United States**, the House of Representatives intervened to break an industrial dispute and avoid a rail freight strike. In January, thousands of nurses struck in New York.

The list would be endless because, in reality, there is everywhere a multitude of small strikes, isolated from each other, in different businesses and in the public sector. Because everywhere, in every country, in every sector, living and working conditions are deteriorating, everywhere there are soaring prices and poverty wages, everywhere there is precariousness and flexibility, everywhere there are hellish work rates and not enough workers, everywhere there is a terrible deterioration in housing conditions, particularly for young people.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, hospitals have become the symbol of this daily reality for all workers: being understaffed and overexploited, to the point of exhaustion, for a wage that can no longer pay the bills.

The extended wave of strikes that has since June been hitting the UK, a country where the proletariat seemed resigned to its fate since the Thatcher years, expresses a real break, a change of attitude within the working class, not only in the UK, but internationally. These struggles show that in the face of the deepening crisis, the exploited are no longer prepared to be pushed around.

With inflation at over 11% and the announcement of an austerity budget by the Sunak government, there have been strikes in almost every sector: Transport (trains, buses, tube, airports) and health, Royal Mail postal workers, civil servants in Defra, Amazon employees, school workers in Scotland, North Sea oil workers... The scale of the mobilisation of health workers has not been seen in this country for over a century! And teachers are expected to strike from February.

In France, the government has also decided to impose a new "reform" making the legal age of retirement later. The aim is simple: to save money by squeezing the working class like a lemon, all the way to the cemetery. In concrete terms, it will mean working old, sick, exhausted or leaving with a reduced and miserable pension. Often, moreover, redundancy will cut the knot in this dilemma before the fateful age.

The attacks on our living conditions will not stop. The global economic crisis will continue to worsen. In order to get by in the international arena of the market and competition, every bourgeoisie in every country will impose increasingly unbearable living and working conditions on the working class, invoking "solidarity with Ukraine" or "the future of the national economy".

This is even more true with the development of the war economy. An increasing proportion of labour and other resources is directed to the war economy. In Ukraine, but also in Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Mali, Niger, Congo, etc., this means bombs, bullets and death! Elsewhere, it means fear, inflation and accelerated work rates. Every government is calling for "sacrifices"!

Faced with a capitalist system which plunges humanity into misery and war, into competition and division, it is up to the working class (wage-earners in all sectors, in all nations, unemployed or working, with or without qualifications, working or retired...) to put forward another perspective. By refusing these "sacrifices", by developing a massive united struggle, it can show that another world is possible.

Divided, we are weak Divided, we lose.

For months, in all countries and in all sectors, there have been strikes. But they have been isolated from each other. Everyone in their own strike, in their own factory, their depot, their business, their part of the public sector. There is no real link between these struggles, even when it would be just a matter of crossing the street for the strikers from the hospital to meet those from the school or the supermarket opposite. Sometimes this division borders on the ridiculous when, in the same business, strikes are divided by corporation, or team, or unit. You have to imagine office workers on strike at different times to technical staff, or those on the first floor on strike on their own without any connection to those on the second floor. Sometimes this is what actually happens!

The dispersal of strikes, locking everyone in their own corner, plays the game of the bourgeoisie - it weakens us, reduces us to impotence, it exhausts us and leads us to defeat.

That's why the bourgeoisie puts so much energy into maintaining it. In all countries, the same strategy: governments divide. They pretend to support this or that sector to better attack the others. They highlight one sector, or even one company, by making promises that they will never keep, in order to conceal the onslaught of attacks that is taking place everywhere else. In order to better divide, they provide limited support to one group and reduce the rights of all the others. Branch by branch and company by company negotiations are the rule everywhere.

In France, the announcement of the pension reform, which will affect the entire working class, is accompanied by a deafening media "debate" on the unfairness of the reform for this or that section of the population. It should be made fairer by acknowledging the particular qualifications of apprentices, certain manual workers, women... Always the same trap!

Workers must take the struggle into their own hands

Why is there this division? Is it only government propaganda and manoeuvres that succeed in dividing us in this way, keeping the strikes and struggles of the working class separate from each other?

The feeling that we are all in the same boat is growing. The idea that a massive united struggle with widespread solidarity can change the balance of forces between the classes is becoming clearer. So why do we see divisions between workers over many months in every country and in every sector?

In the UK, striking workers traditionally picket outside their place of work. For several months, organised pickets have not been far apart, sometimes taking place only a day apart, sometimes struggles have happened at the same time but with the pickets separated by a few hundred metres but with no attempt to link up together. All on strike, but stranded on the picket line. Without fighting this dispersion, without developing a real unity in the struggle, this could exhaust our fighting spirit. In recent weeks the deadlock and the danger that this situation presents has become more evident. Those workers who have been on 'rolling strikes' over the last six months could now be feeling weary and powerless.



The dynamic of workers' struggles which began in Britain last summer has now spread to France, with massive demonstrations against the pension "reforms"

However, on several picket lines we have visited, workers expressed to us their feeling of being involved in a much broader struggle than just with their employer, their department, their sector. There is a growing sense of needing to struggle together.

But for months, in all countries, in all sectors, it is the unions that have been organising all these fragmented struggles. The unions decide the strategy that divides and isolates, and advocates that negotiations take place branch by branch, sector by sector. The unions choose to set out specific demands and the unions warn, above all, that "we will dilute our own struggle if we make common demands".

And yet, the unions have become aware that anger is growing, that it risks overflowing and breaking the barriers that they have built between and within the private sector and public sector. They know that the idea of "a common struggle" is maturing inside the class.

That's why, for example in the UK, unions are starting to talk about joint actions across sectors, which they had been very careful to avoid until now, and the words "unity" and "solidarity" are beginning to appear in their speeches. They won't stop dividing workers, but in order to continue to do so, they are taking up the concerns of the class. In this way they keep control over the direction of struggles.

In France, faced with an attack on the class with the announcement of the pension reforms, the unions displayed their unity and their resolve; they called for big street demonstrations and for engagement with the government. They have demanded that this reform must not pass, that millions of people must reject it.

So much for the rhetoric and the promises. But what is the reality? To explain this, we only need to recall the movement that fought against Macron's pension reform bill of 2019-2020. Faced with the rise in combativity and the growth of solidarity across the generations, the unions used this same strategy, advocating the "convergence of struggles", creating an illusory unitary movement, where demonstrators were called by sector and by company, not all mixed in together, but one behind the other. The trade union banners and the union stewards divided the marchers by sector, by company and by plant. Above all, there were no discussions and no meetings. The message at the end: "Disperse with your usual co-workers and go home, until the next time". The sound system was on full blast to make sure that workers couldn't hear each other because what really makes the bourgeoisie tremble is when workers take their struggles into their own hands, when they organise themselves, when they start to meet up, to debate... to become a class in struggle!

In the UK and in France, as elsewhere, to affect the balance of forces that will enable us to resist the constant attacks on our living and working conditions, which tomorrow will become even more violent, we must, wherever we can, come together to debate and put forward those methods of struggle that unify and strengthen the working class and have allowed it, at certain moments in its history, to shake the bourgeoisie and its system:

- in the search to broaden support and solidarity beyond the workplace, the company, the institution, the sector of activity, indeed city, region and country;
- in workers' self organisation of the struggle, particularly through general assemblies, without surrendering control to the so-called struggle "specialists", the unions, and to their organisation;
- through the widest possible discussion on the general needs of the struggle, on the lessons to be learned from past struggles and also from their defeats, because there will be defeats ahead, but the greatest defeat arises from not reacting to the attacks. The entry into struggle is the first victory of the exploited.

In 1984-5, under Thatcher, British miners fought for a whole year, with immense courage and determination, but the forces of the state and the unions isolated them and they were rendered powerless and locked in their sector; their defeat was one for the whole working class. We must learn from our mistakes. It is vital that the weaknesses that have undermined the working class for decades, and that have marked a succession of defeats, are now overcome, specifically the trap of corporatism and the illusion that trade unions are working class organs. The self organisation of the struggle, its broad unity and solidarity, are indispensable ingredients in the preparation of tomorrow's struggles!

For this, we must recognise ourselves as members of the one same class, a class united by its solidarity in struggle: the working class. Today's struggles are indispensable not only in defending ourselves against attacks but also in recovering our class identity on a global scale, preparing the eventual overthrow of this bankrupt system that is synonymous with deprivation and disasters of all kinds.

Capitalism has no solution: either to the destruction of the planet, nor to continual war, nor to unemployment, nor to precariousness of work, nor to pauperisation. Only the struggle of the world working class supported by all the oppressed and exploited of the world can open the way to an alternative, that of communism.

The strikes in the UK and the demonstrations in France, are a call to struggle for proletarians across the world.

Leaflet given out by the ICC at the recent massive demonstrations in France

It's not enough to come out in large numbers, we have to take control of our struggles!

On January 19th and 31st, more than a million of us took to the streets to mobilise against the new pension reform. The government claims that this anger is due to a "lack of explanation", to a "lack of education". But we all understand very well! With this umpteenth reform, the goal is clear: to exploit us more and more and to cut the pensions of all those who, because of redundancy or illness, will not be able to complete their years of service. Working until exhaustion for a miserable pension, that's what awaits us

But *"at some point, enough is enough!"*. This expression came up so often in the processions that it was picked up by the front pages of the press. This is almost word for word the phrase that strikers have been putting forward for months in the UK: "Enough is enough". This is not a coincidence. The link that unites us is obvious: the same degradation of living and working conditions, the same attacks, the same inflation, and the same growing combativity. Because, yes, "enough is enough". The pension reform, the soaring prices, the infernal pace of work, the understaffing, the miserable wages... and what about the new reform of the unemployment insurance, a revolting measure that reduces the duration of compensation by 25% and will allow the beneficiaries to be deregistered in no time! And this for the sake of statistics and lies about "reducing unemployment".

Massive struggles show our solidarity

By being more than a million in the streets on January 19, more on January 31, the working class demonstrates once again what makes its strength: its capacity to enter massively into struggle. Unemployed, retired, future workers, employees, of all professions, of all sectors, public or private, the exploited form one and the same class animated by one and the same feeling of solidarity: *One for all, all for one!*

For months, there have been small strikes everywhere in France, in factories or in offices. Their multitude reflects the level of anger in the ranks of the working class. But because they are isolated from each other, these strikes are powerless; they exhaust the most combative sectors in hopeless struggles. Corporatist and sectorial strikes only lead to the defeat of all: each one loses in their corner, each one in turn, one after the other. The organisation of corporatist and sectorial struggles is only the modern incarnation of the old adage of the ruling classes: *"Divide and rule"*.

Faced with this dispersal, under the impact of constant attacks on our living and working conditions, we feel more and more that we must break this isolation, that we are all in the same boat, that we must fight all together. On January 19 and 31, with more than a million people in the streets, sticking together, there was not only joy but also a certain pride in experiencing working class solidarity.

To be truly united, we must regroup, debate and decide together

With more than a million people in the street, the atmosphere takes on a new mood. There is the hope of being able to win, of being able to make the government back down, to make it bend under the weight of numbers. It is true, only the fight can stop the attacks. But is being numerous enough?

In 2019, we were also massively mobilised and the pension reform passed. In 2010, against what was supposed to be the last pension reform, we held fourteen days of action! Nine months of struggle! These processions gathered millions of demonstrators several times in a row. For what result? The pension reform has been passed. However, in 2006, after only a few weeks of mobilisation, the government withdrew its "Contrat Première Embauche" (CPE). Why? What is the difference between these movements? What frightened the bourgeoisie in 2006, to the point of making it retreat so quickly?

In 2010 and 2019, we were many, we were determined, but we were not united. There may have been millions of us, but we marched separately, one behind the other. The demonstrations consisted of coming with your colleagues, walking with

your colleagues under the deafening noise of the sound systems, and leaving with your colleagues. No assembly, no debate, no real meeting. These demonstrations were reduced to the expression of a simple parade.

In 2006, precarious students organised massive **general assemblies** in the universities, open to workers, the unemployed and the retired, they put forward a unifying slogan: the fight against casualisation and unemployment. These assemblies were the lungs of the movement, where debates were held, where decisions were made.

Result: Each weekend, the demonstrations gathered more and more sectors. Waged and retired workers joined the students, under the slogan: 'Young lardons, old croutons, all the same salad'. The French bourgeoisie and the government, faced with this tendency to unify the movement, had no choice but to withdraw its CPE.

The big difference between these movements is therefore the question of the workers themselves taking charge of the struggles!

In the processions today, the reference to May 68 is regularly recurring: "You talk about 64, we reply with - May 68," could be read on many posters. This movement has left an extraordinary trace in the workers' memories. And in 1968, the proletariat in France was united in taking its struggles into its own hands. Following the huge demonstrations of May 13 to protest against the police repression suffered by the students, the walkouts and general assemblies spread like wildfire in the factories and all the workplaces, leading to the largest strike in the history of the international workers' movement, with nine million strikers. Very often, this dynamic of extension and unity had developed outside the authority of the unions, and many workers tore up their union cards after the Grenelle agreements of May 27 between the unions and the employers, agreements that had buried the movement.

Today, whether we are talking about waged workers, unemployed, retired, precarious students, we still lack confidence in ourselves, in our collective strength, to dare to take our struggles in hand. But there is no other way. All the "actions" proposed by the unions lead to defeat. Only coming together in open, massive, auto-

nous general assemblies, really deciding on the conduct of the movement, provides the basis of a united struggle, carried by the solidarity between all sectors, all generations. It's in these general assemblies that we feel united and confident in our collective strength.

There is no room for illusions, as history has shown a thousand times: today the unions display their "unity" and call for a general mobilisation, tomorrow they will oppose each other to better divide us and better demobilise us. In fact, this work of division has already started:

- On the one hand, the unions classified as "radical" focus on the need to block the country's economy. In concrete terms, this means that the workers in the most combative sectors at present, such as the oil refiners or the railway workers, will find themselves locked in their workplaces, isolated from their class brothers and sisters in the other sectors, who will be reduced to striking by proxy. Just like in 2019!

- On the other side, the so-called "reformist" unions are already preparing for disunity by repeating *"We are not against pension reform. We are not unaware. It is well known that we must maintain a system of financial equilibrium in this pay-as-you-go pension plan. [...] However, we do not want a reform that is unfair."* (Geoffrey Cailion, CFDT *TotalEnergies* coordinator). And so, they call on the government to "hear" the discontent and negotiate. In other words, the government and the unions have long been planning adjustments to the reform to make it work. Just like in 2019!

The future belongs to the class struggle!

Pension reform is done in the name of budget balance, justice and the future. On January 20, Macron announced with great fanfare a record military budget of 400 billion euros! This is the reality of the future promised by the bourgeoisie: more war and more misery. Capitalism is an exploitative, global and decadent system. It is leading humanity towards barbarism and destruction. Economic crisis, war, global warming, pandemic are not separate phenomena; all of them are scourges of the same moribund system.

February 1st strikes and demonstrations: Union control reinforces divisions

On February 1st around half a million workers from different sectors in Britain were on strike – rail and some bus networks, civil servants, and in particular workers in education, both schools and universities. This was the biggest number of workers out on one day since the strike wave in Britain began last summer.

Responding to a growing feeling in the working class that "we are all in the same boat" and that we need to struggle together, the more militant union leaders, like Mick Lynch, echoed by their supporters in the extreme left (SWP etc), have for some time been using a more radical language, talking about the need for working class unity and solidarity and even coordinated strike action¹. And although up till now the unions have been careful to avoid large demonstrations composed of all the different sectors involved in the current movement, on February 1st, in Bristol, a "joint rally" between the education, civil servants and rail workers attracted around 3,000 workers; in London, a much bigger demonstration, probably tens of thousands, gathered at Portland Place and marched to Westminster. Dominated by the banners of the National Education Union and the Universities and Colleges Union, there were also small contingents from the RMT and the health unions and a larger number of civil servants. And there were smaller demonstrations in a number of other cities, such as Leeds and Liverpool.

These demonstrations were very lively, with a

1. See in particular <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17278/unions-dont-unite-our-struggle-they-organise-its-division>

strong presence of young workers, many of whom arrived with their homemade placards and who cheered especially loudly when new contingents of workers, from whatever sector, arrived on the scene. Such events are an occasion for workers to gain confidence from being part of a wider movement.

But as the title of the leaflet issued by our section in France put it, *"It's not enough to come out in large numbers, we have to take control of our struggles!"*. In France, while the number of strikes is far lower than in Britain, the unions have been calling big demonstrations to protest against the increase in the retirement age from 62 to 64. On the most recent "day of action" perhaps 2 million were on the streets. But our comrades pointed out that in previous struggles against pension reforms, in 2010 and 2019, big demonstrations alone had not forced the government to withdraw its attacks; and the demonstrations themselves became a kind of ritual event, consisting of *"coming with your colleagues, walking with your colleagues under the deafening noise of the sound systems, and leaving with your colleagues. No assembly, no debate, no real meeting. These demonstrations were reduced to the expression of a simple parade"*.

Exactly the same could be said about the demonstrations in Britain on February 1st. Much of the enthusiasm was generated at the beginning of the marches, as workers gather together and recognise that they are taking part in something bigger than their own workplace or their particular sector, but once the march comes to its pre-organised conclusion, after listening passively to a few speeches by

Gather and debate

Marching one behind the other, then everyone leaving separately in their corner is sterile. To be truly united in the fight, you have to meet, debate, learn from the present struggle and past struggles. We must take charge of our struggles.

Wherever possible, in workplaces or here, on the pavements, now or at the end of the event, we have to regroup and discuss.

If by reading this leaflet, you share this desire to reflect together, to organise, to take control of the struggles then do not hesitate to come to our meeting at the end of the demonstration to continue the debate.

The emancipation of workers will be the work of the workers themselves.

Thus, our current struggles are not only a reaction to the pension reform, nor even to the degradation of our living conditions.

Basically, they are a reaction to the general dynamics of capitalism. Our solidarity in struggle is the antithesis of the competition to the death which marks a system divided into competing companies and nations. Our intergenerational solidarity is the antithesis of the no future and the destructive spiral of this system. Our struggle symbolises the refusal to sacrifice ourselves on the altar of the war economy. This is why every strike carries the seeds of revolution. The struggle of the working class is immediately a questioning of the very foundations of capitalism and exploitation.

Our current struggle prepares the way for the struggles to come. There will be no respite. As the world economic crisis deepens, in its mad race for profit, each national bourgeoisie will continue to attack the living and working conditions of the proletariat.

The most combative and determined workers must regroup, discuss, and reappropriate the lessons of the past, in order to prepare the autonomous struggle of the whole working class. It is a necessity. This is the only way.

International Communist Current (February 2, 2023)

union officials, the vast majority of participants look for the nearest underground station and go home. Once again: no assembly, no debate, no real meeting.

The uses and abuses of pickets

The same process of "disempowerment" can be seen with another characteristic element of the current strike wave: the picket line. The organising of pickets at the entrance to workplaces on strike days is an elementary expression of solidarity, and it's evident that one of the tasks of these pickets is to persuade as many colleagues as possible to join the strike. And the engagement of workers in the struggle has been shown on many occasions in recent months when scores and even hundreds of workers have turned up on the picket line, routinely ignoring the laws which formally restrict picket lines to 6 strikers.

But, like the rallies and marches organised by the unions, where workers are largely separated in their separate contingents waving their particular union flags, "official" picket lines end up accepting the most important limits to the struggles imposed by so-called "anti-union" laws, which are actually designed to prevent workers' actions from escaping union control and which are therefore rigorously enforced by the union apparatus. Thus, calling on colleagues at your workplace who belong to a different union or no union at all not to cross the picket line, and in particular sending pickets to other workplaces and sectors and asking them to join the struggle - all this is

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Citizens' mobilisations for "democracy" are a deadly trap for the working class

The deteriorating health crisis and the sharp economic downturn in China have led to an explosion of popular discontent, but also to the emergence of major working class movements. After the protests of thousands of buyers duped by the bursting of the property bubble and the collapse of various large developers (such as the Evergrande Group), the continued mass confinement of hundreds of thousands of people in all parts of China, with the appalling deterioration of living conditions that it implies, was the spark that ignited the conflagration.

First there was the death on 18 September 2022 of 27 people in a quarantine bus in the Guizhou region, then the massive protests by 200,000 workers at the huge factory of the Taiwanese giant Foxconn that assembles Apple's iPhones, protesting against inhumane confinement and non-payment of wages, and the death in a fire in Urumqi (Xinjiang) of 10 people because confinement conditions prevented firefighters from acting. Following these protests, demonstrations broke out in Beijing, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Wuhan, Chengdu, Chongqing and Shanghai. In China's economic capital, a large crowd gathered on Sunday 27 November to shout "*Xi Jinping resign! CCP resign!*".

The different mobilisations across the country are characterised by the following aspects:

- these mobilisations took place in a large number of Chinese cities; however, the media only report "hundreds" of people, which suggests that, in the face of repression and police threats, there is indeed a great deal of unrest, but that participation

in the demonstrations is still relatively limited; - they are a mixture of genuine workers' actions, for example at Foxconn, where there were clear wage demands and a fight against inhumane working conditions, and student or citizen mobilisations protesting against the outrageous confinement measures and demanding an end to controls and censorship;

- the dynamic that dominates and unifies these gatherings is not that of a massive development of mobilisation and workers' solidarity, but that of the rejection of the Stalinist regime and the defence of a democratic alternative, in continuity with the riots in Hong Kong in 2019 or those in Beijing in 1989.

We must therefore note that the perspective opened up by this sudden explosion of demonstrations is not that of a development of workers' struggles but rather that of a mobilisation on the bourgeois terrain of struggle for democratic reforms (even if occasional exceptions exist). Admittedly, these movements pose serious problems for the Chinese bourgeoisie: in the greatest haste, the latter was obliged to abandon in a few days the "zero Covid" policy that it maintained against all odds. However, they do not in any way present a perspective for the proletariat. On the contrary, the proletariat risks being diverted from its class terrain and engulfed either in a desperate citizen's movement against the Stalinist party and for democratic reforms, or in a struggle between bourgeois factions within the CCP.

While keeping a sense of proportion, we can say that the situation of the Chinese workers is comparable to what has been happening for several months in Iran, where the murder of a young girl by the morality police has provoked a tidal wave of riots, demonstrations and also numerous workers' strikes. Despite the very combative character of the Iranian working class, the dissolution of the workers' struggles into the popular movement against the religious autocracy and for democratic reforms is an imminent and constant threat. In fact, the use of proletarians as a mass of manoeuvre in the struggle between bourgeois factions (democrats, "enlightened" religious leaders, regional parties) or even between imperialisms (Kurdish, Turkish, Arab...) is a mortal danger and it is the responsibility of revolutionaries to warn the class about it.

Now, it is basically the same danger of dissolution of its struggles in popular revolts that the working class in China is facing. It is therefore important first of all to warn the Chinese workers against the siren songs of popular revolts for more democracy, but also and above all to arm them against "*the idea that 'anything is possible at any moment, in any place', as soon as sharp class confrontations arise at the peripheries of capitalism; this idea is based on an identification between combativity and the maturation of class consciousness*".¹

In China, all the elements of the situation point

1. 'Resolution on the critique of the theory of the weakest link', *International Review* n°37 (1984).

to the beginning of a destabilisation of the regime. Even if the state momentarily manages to bring the situation back to normal, the fuse of new protests will remain lit. In this context, even if the Chinese proletariat develops its combativity and acquires a weight in the situation, its terrible political backwardness and its vulnerability to democratic mystifications constitute a considerable obstacle. Therefore, it is necessary to be clear about the prospects for the working class there: "*The ICC rejects the naively egalitarian conception which holds that any country can be the point of departure for the revolutionary dynamic. This conception is based on the anarchist belief that, given the example of the revolutionary general strike, all countries could simultaneously initiate a revolutionary process*".²

In fact, despite its combativity, the working class in China, as in Iran or in other parts of the world, will have difficulty in strengthening its struggles on its class terrain and developing its consciousness as long as the proletariat of the Western countries does not show the way. For if all fractions of the world proletariat can and must make their contribution to the struggle against capitalism, those in Western Europe, through their experience of struggle but also of the democratic and trade union mystifications of the bourgeoisie, have a key importance for the revolutionary process. This only underlines the decisive responsibility of the Western European proletariat. **R.H., 14.1.23**

2. Ibid

Health crisis, economic stagnation, imperialist pressure...

The Chinese bourgeoisie in turmoil

While many observers claimed two years ago that China was the big winner in the Covid crisis, recent events underline that it is instead confronted with the persistence of the pandemic, a significant slowdown in economic growth, the property bubble, major obstacles to the development of the "New Silk Road", strong imperialist pressure from the US: in short the prospect of major turbulence.

China's inability to control the health crisis

Since the end of 2019, China has been suffering from a pandemic crisis that has largely paralysed its population and its economy. For the past three years, the "zero Covid" policy advocated by President Xi has led to huge and interminable lockdowns, as in November 2022, when no less than 412 million Chinese were locked up under terrible conditions in various regions of China, often for several months. By claiming that China would be the first to tame the pandemic through its "zero Covid" policy, Xi and the CCP rejected international anti-Covid strategies and medical research. As a result, they have found themselves stuck in an economically and socially catastrophic logic, with no real alternative: Chinese vaccines are largely ineffective, the hospital system is unable to absorb the wave of infections resulting from a less restrictive policy (Cuba has four times as many doctors and hospital beds per capita as China), especially since the corruption of the political administration in the provinces makes it impossible to obtain reliable data on the evolution of the pandemic (a tendency to disguise the figures to avoid political disgrace)

The Chinese authorities are therefore up against a brick wall. Faced with an exploding social protest against the horrific inhumanity of mass confinement, they abruptly abandoned the "zero Covid" policy without being able to propose the slightest alternative: without significant levels of acquired immunity, without effective vaccines and lacking sufficient stocks of drugs, without a policy of vaccinating the most vulnerable, without a hospital system capable of absorbing the shock, the inevitable catastrophe did indeed take place: sick people are queuing up to get into overcrowded hospitals and corpses are piling up in front of overcrowded



Chinese hospitals overwhelmed by a new surge of Covid following the sudden end of the state's brutal lock-down policy

crematoria, tens of thousands of people are dying at home, morgues are overflowing with corpses, the authorities are totally overwhelmed and unable to cope with the tidal wave: projections foresee 1.7 million deaths and tens of millions of people heavily affected by the current explosion of the virus.

Aggressive US pressure adds to economic difficulties

For several years, China has been under intense economic and military pressure from the United States, both directly in Taiwan and through the formation of the AUKUS alliance, but also indirectly in Ukraine. Indeed, the longer the war in Ukraine drags on, the more damage China suffers through the collapse of its main partner on the imperialist scene, Russia, but above all through the disruption of the European routes of the "New Silk Road" project.

On the other hand, the explosion of chaos and every man for himself, intensified by the aggressive policy of the United States, also weighs heavily, as shown by the plunge of Ethiopia, one of China's main pivots in Africa, into civil war. Plans to expand the "New Silk Road" are also in trouble because of the deepening economic crisis: almost 60% of the debt owed to China is now owed by countries in financial difficulty, up from just 5% in 2010. In addition, economic pressure from the United States is intensifying, in particular with the

Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, decrees that subject exports of technology products from various Chinese technology firms (e.g. Huawei) to the United States to heavy restrictions through protectionist tariffs, sanctions against unfair competition, but above all the blocking of technology transfer and research.

Repeated lockdowns and then the tsunami of infections leading to chaos in the health system, the property bubble and the blocking of various "Silk Road" routes by armed conflicts or the surrounding chaos have caused a very sharp slowdown in the Chinese economy. Growth in the first half of this year was 2.5%, making this year's 5% target unattainable. For the first time in thirty years, China's economic growth will be lower than that of other Asian countries. Large technology and business companies such as Alibaba, Tencent, JD.com and iQiyi have laid off between 10 and 30% of their staff. Young people are feeling the pinch, with an estimated 20% unemployment rate among university students looking for work.

The "neo-Stalinist" model of the Chinese bourgeoisie in great difficulty

Faced with economic and health difficulties, Xi Jinping's policy had been to return to the classic recipes of Stalinism:

- economically, since the administration of Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese bourgeoisie had created a fragile and complex mechanism to maintain an all-powerful single party cohabiting with a private bourgeoisie, stimulated directly by the state. Now, "*by the end of 2021, Deng Xiaoping's era of reform and openness is clearly over, replaced by a new statist economic orthodoxy*".¹ The dominant faction behind Xi Jinping is thus tending to reinforce absolute state control over the economy and to close the prospect of economic renewal and the relative opening of the economy to private capital.

- on the social front, with the "zero Covid" policy, Xi not only ensured ruthless state control over the population, but also imposed this control on regional and local authorities, which had proved

1. "Foreign Affairs", reprinted by *Courier international* n° 1674

unreliable and ineffective at the beginning of the pandemic. As recently as the autumn, he sent central state police units to Shanghai to impose order on local authorities that were liberalising control measures.

However, while the policy of the Chinese state since 1989 has been to avoid at all costs any large-scale social turbulence, the flight of buyers scared by the difficulties and bankruptcies of the property giants, but above all the widespread demonstrations and riots in many Chinese cities, expressing the population's exasperation with the "zero Covid" policy, have given Xi and his supporters cold sweats. The regime was forced to back down in great haste in the face of the rumbling social unrest and to abandon in a few days the policy it had maintained for three years against all criticisms. Today, the limits of Xi Jinping's policy, a return to the classic recipes of Stalinism, are apparent at all levels: health, economic and social, while the man who imposed it, the same Xi Jinping, has just been re-elected for a third term after complex behind-the-scenes negotiations between factions within the CCP.

In conclusion, it appears today that if Chinese state capitalism was able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by its passage from the "Soviet" bloc to the American bloc in the 1970s, by the implosion of the "Soviet" bloc and the globalisation of the economy advocated by the United States and the main Western powers, the congenital weaknesses of its Stalinist-type state structure are now a major handicap in the face of the economic, health and social problems facing the country and the aggressive pressure of US imperialism it is under.

The situation in China is one of the most characteristic expressions of the "whirlwind effect" of the concatenation and combination of crises that mark the 20s of the 21st century. This 'whirlwind' of upheaval and destabilisation is putting heavy pressure not only on Xi and his supporters within the CCP, but more generally on China's imperialist policy. A destabilisation of Chinese capitalism would have unpredictable consequences for global capitalism. **R. Havanais, 15.1.23**

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How should revolutionaries orient their interventions?

short, as the comrade says, it is a question of “orienting” struggles towards “class goals” and above all “towards the final goal” which is communism.

When, on the other hand, movements are situated on an inter-classist, or even downright bourgeois, terrain, what should revolutionaries do? They must warn the working class against the temptation to find a short cut to developing its struggle and its consciousness. This does not mean, as the comrade thinks, that we “denounce” or attack the individual proletarians who participate in it. What we denounce are the practices that lead to dead ends, the demands that do not belong to the class terrain of the proletariat. It’s not like the rebuke of a head teacher, it’s the only means we have to make disoriented workers aware that the cause they believe to be just (demanding rights from the bourgeoisie) is in fact a trap which ultimately leads them to defend capitalism (often in the wake of the petty bourgeoisie). We also know that these movements, not being situated on a class terrain, do not allow the working class to be present as a class, because it finds itself drowned or diluted, without any autonomous strength. Our intervention towards the proletarians directly involved is all the more inaudible, incomprehensible. This means that we have to assume that we are going against the tide, because revolutionaries have the serious task of trying to guide the working class towards the most favourable path for the development of its consciousness without ever losing sight of the goal of revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, the denunciation of this type of movement does not exempt revolutionaries from reflecting on the reasons why a more or less significant number of workers participate in these movements. This is notably what the ICC did in its analysis of the “yellow vests” movement in France.

Of course, the working class is not a disembodied entity, nor is it a homogeneous being. It is criss-crossed by currents, movements, debates, reflections and struggles. Within it and at each period, the propaganda of revolutionaries has a more or less important echo on a more or less extended part of the class. This is why our intervention must be conceived on a collective, class basis and not on an individual one. The level of consciousness of the working class at a given moment is not the sum of the individual consciousnesses that make it up, but the result of this permanent effervescence of reflection and debate which has allowed, sometimes in a few weeks, as in 1905 and 1917 in Russia, illiterate workers with no interest in politics, to create the conditions for an insurrection and to invent the methods for the exercise of power by the proletariat by creating workers’ councils.

It’s not an exact science, but a methodology to determine the class nature of a movement and to orient the intervention of revolutionaries within it. But starting from the individual is, on the other hand, a dead end because the individual on the political level does not exist in capitalism. To defend the contrary would be to deny the real conditions of capitalist production and to give credence to the democratic ideology which, starting from the votes of individuals in the polling booth, builds the myth of the “will of the people”.

What is most important is to start, on the contrary, from the historical and international dimension of the proletariat, to detect in each struggle the way in which the working class fits into this framework, to measure the extent it is able to develop its struggle by defending its own interests. It is a question of taking stock of the development of combativity, of the search for solidarity and unity. **GD, 11.11.22**

Capitalism accumulates ruins and corpses

Almost a year of war in Ukraine... Russia is well and truly bogged down and trapped.¹ Sucked in to the cycle of militarism, faced with a surprisingly well-prepared Ukrainian army, and Western powers that had not anticipated the timing but knew the aims of the cornered Kremlin, beleaguered Russian imperialism embarked on a suicidal “special” adventure. Today it finds itself stunned and very much weakened by this conflict which could only drag it under the wreckage.

A scorched earth policy

The thinly veiled aim of the US and NATO, by skilfully pushing Moscow into the trap, was to break the fragile link between Russia and China, to weaken and further isolate Putin on the international scene. All this at the cost of a scorched earth policy in which the Western powers are clearly complicit, arming and pushing their Ukrainian ally into bloody resistance, set for a chaos with unpredictable and potentially disastrous consequences. From July onwards, Russian troops have marked time, showing signs of weakening, unable to make progress against the Ukrainian army reinforced by artillery whose sophisticated weapons come largely from Western allies. The Russian army’s failures were further accentuated in September when Ukrainian troops achieved a spectacular victory in the province of Kharkiv and to the north of Sloviansk. This surprising turnaround was confirmed as soon as the Ukrainian army captured Kherson, a city declared “forever Russian” only a month earlier by Putin and then abandoned without resistance.

Today, the toll of this terrible war is horrifying. By the beginning of December, 200,000 people had been killed or wounded by the warring factions. 40,000 civilians have died in Ukraine and refugees number nearly 8 million.² Sadly, soldiers and civilians will still be condemned to further mourning, other sufferings, physical and psychological violence from both sides: deportation, torture, rape, summary execution, indiscriminate bombing (particularly with highly lethal cluster bombs). Added to this is misery, hunger and cold on a daily basis, the terror spawned by the Ukrainian state, its national coalition, with its controls, the police checkpoints carried out by its zealous minions.

Desperately trying to break the morale of the Ukrainian people, the Russian army is stepping up its violence and bombings, already having deprived the population of heating, water and electricity for the winter. Ukraine has become a mass grave and wasteland, a concentration of hatreds. A city like Mariupol, for example, 90% razed to the ground, is a tragic symbol of this. Entire civilian neighbourhoods, thousands of schools, hundreds of hospitals and factories are damaged or destroyed in many cities, such as the capital Kyiv, but also Lviv, Dnipro and Ternopil, in retaliation for the destruction of the Crimean Bridge. The destruction is such that it would cost at least \$350 billion to rebuild the whole country.³ The Ukrainian Prime Minister, Denys Shmyhal, has even suggested \$750 billion. But this patriotic zeal and the estimation of such figures will not prevent the resulting ruins and corpses!

A powerful accelerator of the decomposition of capitalism

While the Covid 19 pandemic has been devastating the world economy for the past two years, which was already showing signs of being in the red, the war in Ukraine is giving a huge boost to global stagnation, forcefully and qualitatively accentuating all the phenomena of the decomposition of the capitalist system by precipitating them into a really destructive vortex. A direct impact on the world situation that is already manifesting itself at different levels in a totally unprecedented bleak scenario. In the first place, by the sudden surge in world inflation linked not only to colossal indebt-



The war in Ukraine accelerates all the phenomena of capitalism’s decomposition

ness and a financial crisis, but also and above all to the explosion in military expenditure for this conflict and future “high intensity” fighting. In addition to industrial bankruptcies in Russia, there is the jump in state-specific spending since the beginning of the war, military and civilian budgets in support of Ukraine have become a financial black hole: “Between 24 February and 3 August, at least 84.2 billion euros were spent by forty-one, mainly Western, countries.” The United States alone paid out €44.5 billion (one third of Ukraine’s GDP in 2020).⁴ Of course, this does not stop poverty from exploding in this war-torn country, going from 2 to 21% of the population. Such a situation necessitates attacks on all workers, generating a growing pauperisation that is taking hold everywhere, even in the richest countries of the globe. Foodstuffs, like the energy that is essential for everyday life, have sometimes become unaffordable, real weapons of war between thugs with contempt for the populations that have to struggle to feed and heat themselves. For example, wheat harvests in Ukraine, where prices have been exploding, have been deliberately destroyed by the Russian army. The world market is becoming more fragmented, in a crisis that affects trade and the very basis of production.

The crisis and the war are also fuelling the climate and environmental catastrophe. The impact is already visible in Ukraine. Military vehicles, bombing of civilian and industrial buildings, arson, have generated very serious pollution: high emissions of CO₂, asbestos, heavy metals and other toxic products. Rivers, like the Ikva, are heavily polluted, contaminated with ammonia. Flora and fauna are very seriously affected: “900 protected natural areas in Ukraine have been affected by Russia’s military activities, i.e. about 30% of the country’s total protected areas”. And “almost a third of Ukraine’s crops may be unusable after the war”.⁵ The scandal of the sabotage of Russian gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea alone reveals that: “the infrastructure released about 70,000 tonnes of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, equivalent to the emissions of Paris for one year”.⁶ The threat of a nuclear disaster from the shelling of both sides in Zaporizhzhia further darkens this grim picture, yet it is far from complete.

The unleashing of militarism and chaos

Even if, in general, the military can demonstrate undeniable expertise, the acknowledged capability of capitalist states, even if they are able to score diplomatic points at this or that moment with ingenious global visions to defend their own interests, all their most rational calculations are at the service of narrow interests, marked by a mode of production in its death throes, where the logic of profit and the economy are swallowed up by the senseless needs of war. This totally irrational spi-

ral of military barbarism coldly planned by capitalist states is perfectly illustrated by the intentions surrounding the war in Ukraine. It fully confirms the absence of any possible economic motivation or advantage: “the capitalist world, having historically exhausted all possibility of development, finds in modern imperialist war the expression of its collapse, which can only engulf the productive forces in any abyss, and accumulate ruin upon ruin in an ever accelerating rhythm, without opening up any possibility of the outward development of production”.⁷

Thus, it is now abundantly clear that “the war in Ukraine vividly illustrates how war has lost not only any economic function but even its strategic advantages: Russia has embarked on a war in the name of defending Russian speakers, but it is massacring tens of thousands of civilians in predominantly Russian-speaking regions while turning these cities and regions into ruins and suffering considerable material and infrastructural losses itself. If, at the end of this war, it captures the Donbass and south-eastern Ukraine, it will have conquered a wasteland, a population that hates it and suffered a consequent strategic setback in terms of its great power ambitions. As for the United States, in its policy of targeting China, it is led here to pursue (literally even) a “scorched earth” policy, with no economic or strategic gains other than an immeasurable explosion of economic, political and military chaos. The irrationality of war has never been more apparent.”⁸ In the face of Russia’s military debacle, there have been discrete diplomatic signals that have been interpreted as Putin’s willingness to possibly ‘negotiate’. Similarly, in the West, primarily in the United States, there are concerns about the outcome of a conflict that could possibly lead to the unwanted handling of a catastrophic Russian implosion. But whatever the intentions or policies of the various parties, whatever the duration of this war, the outcome of which we do not yet know, or the ravages to come, one thing is certain: the dynamics of the acceleration of every man for himself and of chaos and militarism will only be exacerbated. Capitalism is indeed leading humanity towards its downfall and even its destruction. Only the world revolution of the proletariat will be able to put an end to the insanity of capital which is now taking on the appearance of the Apocalypse. **WH 20.12.22**

1. Cf. The significance and impact of the war in Ukraine *International Review* 168, (Report adopted May 2022)

2. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, quoted by *Courier international* (10 November 2022)

3. *La Tribune* (10 September 2022)

4. “War in Ukraine: six months of conflict summarised in nine key figures”, *Les Echos* (24 August 2022).

5. “Why the war in Ukraine is also an ecological disaster”, *BFMTV.com* (30 October 2022).

6. “Methane leakage from Nord Stream pipelines less than expected”, *Le Monde* (6 October 2022).

7. Report to the July 1945 Conference of the Gauche Communiste de France reproduced in the “Report on the Historical Course” adopted at the 3rd Congress of the ICC, *International Review* 18 (1979).

8. “The significance and impact of the war in Ukraine”, *International Review* 168, Report adopted in May 2022

A committee that leads its participants into a dead end

On Friday 2 December, the first meeting in France of the 'No War But The Class War' committee took place in Paris.

The existence of such committees around the world is not new, it is more than 30 years old. The idea of creating NWBTCW groups first arose in anarchist circles in England in response to the first Gulf War in 1991. It was a reaction, a refusal to participate in the "Stop the War" mobilisations organised by the left of capital, whose essential function was to divert the opposition to war into the dead end of pacifism. Indeed, the slogan No war but the class war refers to a phrase uttered in the first episode of Ken Loach's 1975 series *"Days of Hope"* by a socialist soldier who deserted the British army during the First World War: "I'm no pacifist. I'll fight in a war, but I'll fight in the only war that counts, and that's the class war, and it'll come about when this is all over".

New NWBTCW groups were created in reaction to the wars in the former Yugoslavia in 1993 and Kosovo in 1999, and to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003.

Where possible, we intervened in these committees which gathered together an extremely heterogeneous milieu, from bourgeois leftists to internationalists.

Another group of the Communist Left, the Communist Workers Organisation (CWO), which is now the organisation in Britain of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT), also intervened in the NWBTCW grouping from 2001. From the start the CWO gave its support, actively participating in the creation of new groups, as it did in Sheffield for example: "we are witnessing a significant upturn in strike action including firefighters, rail workers and actions outside the unions in transport and hospitals in Strathclyde. 'No War But the Class War' gives us the potential to work across the country with those forces who see a link between the two and wish to associate class struggle with resistance to imperialist war".¹

As regards the ICC, in 2002 we wrote: "This is why we never thought that the NWBTCW was a harbinger of a resurgence of class struggle or a definite political movement of the class that we should 'join'. At best it could be a reference point for a very small minority that were asking questions about capitalist militarism and the pacifist and ideological lies that accompany it. And this was why we defended its – albeit limited – class positions against the reactionary attacks of leftists like 'Workers Power' (see *World Revolution* no.250) and insisted from the beginning on the importance of the group as a forum for discussion and warned against both the tendencies to 'direct action' and to aligning this group with the revolutionary organisations".²

This is why the objectives of the ICC's intervention in these groups were:

- to make clear the principles of proletarian internationalism and the need for a clear demarcation from the left of capital and pacifism;
- to focus on political debate and to warn against tendencies towards activism which, in practice, would mean participating in the "Stop the War" demonstrations.

Now, twenty years later, with the outbreak of war in Ukraine, these NWBTCW groups have re-emerged, first in Glasgow, then in several cities in the UK, and also around the world, often at the initiative of anarchist organisations. Some other NWBTCW groups were launched directly by the ICT.

A weakening of the defence of internationalism

In early December we went to the first NWBTCW meeting in Paris. The committee had launched a genuinely internationalist appeal: "Against the imperialist war, what can revolutionaries do? The war in Ukraine has changed the world political situation by positioning Russia on one side and NATO and the USA on the other. (...) As in the two world wars, internationalist revolutionaries say that imperialist war and its fronts must be deserted

- in whatever way possible. In war and nationalism, the working class has everything to lose and nothing to gain. The only real choice it faces is to transform the imperialist war into a class war, with a view to building an alternative based solely on its own immediate and longer-term interests. This alternative already implies the rejection of the war economy and all the sacrifices that we would have to make on its behalf".

It was on this basis that we encouraged all our contacts to come along and participate in this meeting.

In the introduction to the discussion, the presidium proposed to divide the discussion into two parts: first, the analysis of the imperialist situation and then, the means of action for the committee to adopt.

The introduction made by the presidium to launch the debate clearly maintained the position of internationalism, with no ambiguity. It also described the current reality of imperialist barbarism.

However, it also defended a perspective of the generalisation of war with a dynamic leading towards the confrontation of blocs in a world war, a perspective we do not share.

The whole first part of the discussion was rather chaotic. Some individuals flatly refused to discuss the imperialist situation, they rejected any effort at analysis as a waste of time and called for some immediate action. They mocked any intervention deemed "theoretical", made fun of the age of the speakers, burst out laughing at the mention of historical references from the last century and interrupted and spoke over other participants. The presidium repeatedly had to call for the respect of the debate, but without success. Some then decided to leave in the midst of the debate.

This atmosphere and what was said against "theory" and in favour of "immediate action", clearly says a lot about the composition of this meeting and about who had responded to the invite. The invitation ended with these words, "Let's debate the situation together; let's think about the possible joint actions to take together! All internationalist initiatives are worth considering and promoting". As for the possible initiatives, there was the proposal "to attack democracy" (how? Unexplained...), to demonstrate in front of the Russian embassy, to financially support those fighting in Ukraine, to provide accommodation for Russian deserters...

This is why, in our first intervention, we had to show that:

- The war in Ukraine is totally imperialist in nature. The working class must not take sides in this carnage of which it is the main victim;
- The present phase of the imperialist wars of capitalism, as realised by the war in Ukraine, is leading towards the extinction of humanity;
- Only the overthrow of capitalism can put an end to imperialist wars;
- It is dangerous to slide into activism, delusional to believe that the general situation can be changed by dramatic actions carried out by small groups of individuals;
- This means that only the conscious and organised action of the working masses can bring an end to capitalist barbarism. It is a question for revolutionaries of engaging in this enduring process, contributing to the general development of class consciousness, by being able to draw on the important lessons of history.

This uncompromising defence of internationalism and of the role of revolutionaries was certainly not enough. On the contrary, what emerged above all from this first part of the discussion was confusion, weakening the defence of internationalism. Because alongside activism, there was also an intervention which supported the possibility for workers to struggle for Ukrainian independence. The spokesperson of the Trotskyist group Matière et Révolution defended this classic thesis of the extreme left. Far from provoking a strong reaction from the presidium, there was no response at all. It fell to someone in the room to denounce this nationalist position and ask why the committee had specifically invited this Trotskyist group. In reply, one of the members of the presidium, the

ICT militant responsible for sending out the invitations, hesitantly claimed that Matière et Révolution was not strictly speaking Trotskyist, which prompted their militant to exclaim: "Oh, yes, I am a Trotskyist!" A truly comical situation, if ever there was one.

Let's remember that the ICT appeal, which is the source of the emergence of these new NWBTCW committees, states in its point 11 that this "international initiative ... offers a political compass for revolutionaries from different backgrounds who reject all the social democratic, Trotskyist and Stalinist politics that either side outright with one imperialism or another on the basis of deciding which is the 'lesser evil', or by supporting pacifism which is a rejection of the need to turn the imperialist war into a class war, thus confusing and disarming the working class from taking up its own struggle."

We couldn't have said it better with regard to this "international initiative". Indeed, it "confuses and disarms the working class"!

An empty shell

In our first intervention, we also began to spell out our main disagreement with the NWBTCW initiative. As in 1991, 1993, 1999, 2001, 2003..., there is the illusion that the working class can provide a massive response to the war, or that it is already occurring, a reaction in which these committees would in some way be either the expression or its first steps. In support of this thesis, great prominence is given to every current strike that is taking place. However this turns things on their head.

At the beginning of the 1990s and 2000s, working class combativity was weak. There was, on the other hand, a real reflection with regard to the imperialist barbarism in which the big democratic powers were all directly engaged. That's why the left wing parties of capital collaborated in organising big pacifist demonstrations all over Europe and the US. By opposing this trap and dead-end, embodied in the slogan "Stop the War", the NWBTCW committees, despite all their confusions, represented at least a certain movement coming from elements seeking an internationalist alternative to leftism and pacifism. And it was this effort that the ICC was trying to push as far as possible by intervening in these committees. Meanwhile, the CWO, under some illusion in the potential of the class and these committees, thought it could extend its influence within the proletariat through the medium of the activity of these groups.

Today, there is growing social anger, class combativity is developing. The strikes that have been ongoing since June 2022 in the UK are the clearest expression of the current dynamics of our class at the international level. But the cause of these struggles is not in the working class's reaction to the war. No. It is the economic crisis, the degradation of living conditions, the rising prices and the poverty wages that provoke these strikes. It is undeniable that through these struggles, the working class is refusing to accept the sacrifices that the bourgeoisie demands in the name of "supporting Ukraine and its people"; and this refusal shows that our class has not been sucked in, that clearly it is not ready to accept the generalised march towards war; although we know it has not yet consciously understood all these links.

In concrete terms, what is implied by this dynamic?

To understand this, we only need to look at what happened in Paris during the course of this NWBTCW meeting.

This is a "committee" in name only. Indeed, it was the ICT that set up this group, with the support of a parasitic group called the International Group of the Communist Left. In the room, there were almost exclusively their representatives and a few politicised individuals who gravitate towards these two groups. The CNT-AIT Paris, Robin Goodfellow, Matière et Révolution, the Asap, and then a few individuals, some of the autonomist tendency, others from the CGT or from revolutionary syndicalism. So, in no particular order, Trotskyist, anarchist, autonomist, Stalinist and Communist Left militants... The IGCL itself

writes: "As soon as the *Appeal of the ICT* was launched, its members in France and ourselves have, in fact, constituted a committee whose first interventions took place, by means of leaflets, during the demonstrations of last June in Paris and some other cities".³ Therefore it is a totally artificial creation, clear for all to see. A committee is something else entirely.

In 1989, we wrote that "The period we are living through today sees, here and there, within the working class, the emergence of struggle committees. This phenomenon began to develop in France at the beginning of 1988, in the aftermath of the great struggle at the SNCF. Since then, several committees bringing together combative workers have been formed in different sectors in France (PTT, EDF, Education, Health, Social Security, etc.) and even, and increasingly, on an inter-sectoral basis.

A sign of the general development of the class struggle and of the maturation of the awareness it generates, these committees correspond to a need - felt more and more widely among the workers - to regroup in order to reflect (draw lessons from past workers' struggles) and act (participate in any struggle which arises) together, on their own class terrain, and this outside the framework imposed by the bourgeoisie (left-wing parties, leftist groups and above all the unions).

It was such a committee (the "Committee for the Extension of Struggles" which brought together workers from different sectors of the public sector and in which the ICC regularly intervened) which intervened on several occasions in the movement of struggles in the autumn of 1988."

So there was, at that time, a life and a concrete experience of the class. Obviously, a revolutionary organisation must encourage the creation of these committees, invest itself in them, push them to develop the organisation and consciousness of the class, but it cannot create them artificially, without any link to the reality of the class dynamic.

Today, we must follow closely the social situation. The question of war is not the starting point, the basis on which the working class mobilises, nor are there any struggle committees; on the other hand, the possibility of the formation of discussion circles or struggle committees emerging is quite conceivable, given the ongoing development of working class combativity in the face of the aggravation of the economic crisis and the continuing attacks on living conditions. Then it's the responsibility of revolutionaries to intervene to show the link with the war, by defending internationalism. Moreover, this is what all the groups of the Communist Left are already doing through the distribution of their press and their leaflets. This voice would carry further and have a much more profound historical significance, if all these groups were to form a chorus, sending out together one and the same internationalist message.

When the Onorato Damen Institute, Internationalist Voice and the ICC were able to see that beyond their disagreements, that they could defend and spread the same internationalist heritage, the ICT refused such an approach from within the Communist Left. It prefers instead to work with the parasitic IGCL, with empty shells in Toronto, Montreal, Paris... calling them committees. It prefers to regroup with Trotskyist, autonomist and anarchist groups defending any kind of resistance and making believe that this is a broadening of the internationalist base in the class.

The same mistake has been repeated again and again since 1991. Marx wrote that history repeats itself, "the first time as a tragedy, the second time as a farce". Indeed, from the floor of the meeting, someone asked three times what the committee's assessment of the NWBTCW experience was since 1991. The response of the ICT member of the presidium was highly revealing: "There is no need for such a review. It's like strikes, they fail but that shouldn't stop them from happening again". Revolutionaries, like the whole class, must clearly do the exact opposite: always debate to draw lessons from the failures of the past. "Self-criticism, a

3. Public meeting in Paris of the "Pas de guerre, sauf la guerre de classe" committee

1. Communism Against the War Drive (leftcom.org, 1.12.02)

2. "Revolutionary intervention and the Iraq war", *World Revolution* n° 264.

International Communist Current public meeting

The international importance of the strike wave in Britain

The strikes that started in Britain last year have continued through into 2023 and show every sign of continuing. Strikes on the railways, with postal workers, in the civil service, nurses and ambulance workers in the NHS, teachers, bus drivers, they have all been part of the movement. An estimated million working days were lost to strike action in the month of December alone, the highest figure since 1989. Hundreds of thousands of workers in the public and private sector have continued their struggles into the new year.

In France strikes in protest at plans to raise the French retirement age have involved more than a million people in demonstrations across the country. In response to strikes in Italy the government banned strikes on public holidays. Strikes in Germany, Portugal, the United States and elsewhere show that workers in Britain are not alone. However, what is most obvious is that the strikes are divided, different workers striking on different days, different locations at different times. These divisions come from the trade union organisation of the strikes. What's needed is for workers to take the struggle into their own hands.

Workers need to extend their struggles, to seek out support and solidarity away from the workplace, away from isolated sectors. Workers need to organise their own struggles, which means general assemblies, not controlled by the unions, but controlled by workers. Above all there needs to be the widest discussion on the needs of the struggle, on the lessons to be learnt from past struggles, both victories and defeats. While there will be future defeats, the entry into struggle is the first victory for the working class.

Come to a public meeting to discuss the international significance of the struggles in Britain and the issues that are raised in our latest international leaflet.

Saturday 11 February at 2pm
at Lucas Arms, 245A Grays Inn Rd,
London WC1X 8QY

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ruthless, harsh self-criticism, getting to the root of things, is the air and the light without which the proletarian movement cannot live" said Rosa Luxemburg⁴ in 1915. And drawing lessons from the failures of NWBTCW would allow the ICT to begin to face up to its mistakes.

This is what our second intervention wanted to underline and that one individual in the room misunderstood, seeing in it a form of sectarianism when it was highlighting the absence of principles in this regroupment, a committee in name only that is not only tarnishing the internationalist banner of the Communist Left but also spreading confusion.

A ploy to extend its influence that leads to disaster

During this meeting, the ICT member on the podium repeated several times, in order to justify this call for a regroupment without any real principle or basis, that the forces of the Communist Left were isolated, being reduced, according to him, to "talking amongst ourselves", thus implying that these committees have made it possible not to be alone and to have some influence inside the class.

Beyond the fact that this is an admission of the purest opportunism - "yes, I will befriend anyone and everyone in order to extend my influence" - and beyond the fact that this "influence" is illusory, these words reveal above all the real motivation for the creation of these committees by the ICT, to use them as an instrument, as an "intermediary" between itself and the class.

This was already the case in 2001 when it joined the NWBTCW committees in the UK. Already in December 2001 we had written an article entitled "*In defence of discussion groups*";⁵ to oppose the idea developed by the Partito Comunista Internazionale (now an Italian group affiliated to the ICT), and later taken up by the CWO, of "factory groups", defined as "instruments of the party" to gain a foothold in the class and even to "organise" its struggles.⁶ We believe that the NWBTCW project is a regression towards the notion of fac-

tory groups as a basis for political organisation, as defended by the Communist International in the phase of "Bolshevisation" in the 1920s, and strongly opposed by the Italian Communist Left. The recent transformation of this idea of factory groups into a call for the creation of territorial groups, and then anti-war groups, changed the form, but not really the content. The CWO's idea that NWBTCW could become an organised centre of class resistance against the war contains a certain misunderstanding of how class consciousness develops in the period of capitalist decadence. Of course, alongside the political organisation itself, there is a tendency for the formation of more informal groups, which are formed both in workplace struggles and in opposition to capitalist war, but such groups, which do not belong to the communist political organisation, remain expressions of a minority which seeks to clarify itself and to spread this clarification in the class, and cannot substitute themselves or pretend to be the organisers of wider movements of the class, a point on which, in our opinion, the ICT remains ambiguous.

However, the current practice of the ICT, in artificially creating these committees, has catastrophic consequences.

It creates confusion about the internationalism defended by the Communist Left, it blurs the class boundaries between the groups of the Communist Left and the left of capital and, perhaps most importantly, it diverts the reflection and energy of the searching minorities into an activist dead end.

All these adventures engaged in by the ICT, decade after decade, have always led to disaster, discouraging or wasting the currently immensely difficult and valuable effort of the proletariat to secrete minorities in search of class positions.

Therefore, we call once again, publicly, on the ICT to work with all the other groups of the Communist Left, to come together to raise the proletarian banner, to defend and keep alive the tradition of the Communist Left. **ICC (11/01/2023)**

Out soon

International Review 169

Faced with war and the acceleration of the crisis of capitalism:

Revolutionaries have a historic responsibility

Third Manifesto of the ICC:

Capitalism leads to the destruction of humanity...

Only the world revolution of the proletariat can put an end to it

The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity

The significance of the summer of anger in Britain: **the return of the combativity of the world proletariat**

The United States: **the superpower in capitalist decadence is now at the epicentre of social decomposition**

Critique of the so-called "communisers" (parts I & II)

100 years after the foundation of the Communist International:
What lessons can we draw for future combats? (part V)

Continued from page 3

illegal "secondary picketing" which contains the danger of a real unification of workers' struggles. The result is that pickets under union control end up acting as boundaries separating workers from one another.

The necessity for workers to organise the struggle themselves

The leaflet from our French section also points out that, whereas the struggles against pension "reforms" in 2010 and 2019 ended in defeat, it was a different story in 2006 in the struggle against the CPE, proposed government legislation that would institutionalise job insecurity for those starting employment: "*In 2006, the precarious students organised massive general assemblies in the universities, open to workers, the unemployed and the retired, they put forward a unifying slogan: the fight against casualisation and unemployment. These assemblies were the lungs of the movement, where debates were held, where decisions were made.*

Result: Each weekend, the demonstrations gathered more and more sectors. Waged and retired workers joined the students, under the slogan: 'Young lardons, old croutons, all the same salad'. The French bourgeoisie and the government, faced with this tendency to unify the movement, had no choice but to withdraw its CPE.

What forces the ruling class to back down - even if it can no longer grant any lasting improvements to the living conditions of the working class - is the sight of a working class that is threatening to break through all the divisions between union and profession and to organise this unity through its general assemblies and elected strike committees, embryos of the future workers' councils. And the present struggles of the working class in Britain and in other countries - even though still weighed down by corporatist ideology which sees each sector having its own disputes with employers, its own particular demands - contain the potential for this re-emergence of the working class as a real power in society, as a force for radically changing society.

This is why even the smallest gathering of workers, whether on the picket lines or at rallies and marches, who begin to question why the struggles are still so divided, who are not satisfied with the empty rhetoric of the trade unions, who pose the problem of what is the most effective way to struggle - represents an important step in the struggle, and one that revolutionaries should encourage at every opportunity. **Amos 4.2.23**

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

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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.

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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

4. The Junius Pamphlet, 1915.

5. *World Revolution* n° 250.

6. The report published by the ICT on the action of the committee it created, again with the IGCL, in Montreal, is edifying on this subject.

How should revolutionaries orient their interventions?

We publish below an extract from a letter sent by one of our readers, Robert, after an online meeting he attended, followed by our reply.

“... Concerning the struggles of proletarians: should revolutionaries denounce the struggles of proletarians who make mistakes, use methods that are not their own, or just criticise them? Because in my opinion, there is a difference between denouncing and criticising. Denounce means to point out as guilty. To publicly report dishonest, immoral or illegitimate practices. To condemn: “to declare (someone) guilty”, “to blame something”, “to close, prevent”, “forbid”. Criticize: “capable of discernment, judgement”, “separate”, “choose”, “decide”, “sift”.

If we look at these three definitions, in my opinion, we must condemn and denounce the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois organisations that mislead the proletariat. But we must criticise a movement led by proletarians by offering more clarification, with the aim of removing it from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois influence. If we denounce a proletarian struggle, we denounce it to whom? To the police, to the justice system? The state in general? Or denounce proletarians to other proletarians? For example, denouncing black proletarians, on the pretext that their movement is framed by bourgeois organisations, to white proletarians? To tell white proletarians that you have to support your black brothers but on a class basis? Or tell them no, it's an interclass movement, you have to denounce it? To criticise is to go through a struggle to see its strengths and weaknesses.

Let's see what Marx says about this, and I stress that I learned this phrase from the ICC, to criticise the PCInt, and I think it is right. Marx says: *“Hence, nothing prevents us from making criticism of politics, participation in politics, and therefore real struggles, the starting point of our criticism, and from identifying our criticism with them. In that case we do not confront the world in a doctrinaire way with a new principle: Here is the truth, kneel down before it! We develop new principles for the world out of the world's own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle. We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and consciousness is something that it has to acquire, even if it does not want to.”*

When Marx says that we don't say: “Cease

your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle “. This means, in my opinion, that Marx does not denounce or even condemn the struggles of the proletarians, even if the proletarians are wrong. But Marx adds: “We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and consciousness is something that it has to acquire, even if it does not want to.” This means, in my opinion, that revolutionaries must critique the struggles of proletarians and make sure that they are oriented towards class goals, towards the final goal which is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For partial struggles and the role of revolutionaries: *“No more than one judges an individual by the idea he has of himself, one cannot judge such an epoch of upheaval by its self-consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained by the contradictions of material life, by the conflict that exists between the social productive forces and the relations of production” (Karl Marx)*. What I understood from this sentence is that revolutionaries must not limit themselves to the outward appearance of struggles, but must look for the causes that push proletarians to engage in interclassist struggles. For the meaning that bourgeois and petty-bourgeois organisations and proletarians give to slogans is not the same. When proletarians speak of liberty, equality and fraternity, they mean dignity, bread, peace... Even if the words are ambiguous.”

Robert

ICC response

To begin with, we would like to welcome the letter from the comrade who wished to continue the debate and bring other arguments to those developed in the discussion at the meeting. We can only encourage this type of initiative and it is in this context that we are responding to the comrade.

The questions raised by the comrade are of great importance: it is a question of determining how revolutionaries should orient their intervention in the face of protest movements of all kinds. The first thing we have to emphasise here is the question of class terrain.

Capitalist society offers a considerable number of possibilities for indignation, anger and protest, so innumerable are the horrors, violence and misery that it generates. This leads to a whole series of scattered movements in which proletarians, refusing to accept all these expressions of barbarism

without flinching, can find themselves. It also happens that proletarians, sincerely indignant, support and participate in movements demanding rights and legislation for oppressed categories (women, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, etc.). But these are real traps set by the bourgeoisie, very often by its left-wing groups and parties, which instrumentalise the obvious disgust caused, for example, by the situation of African Americans in the United States or violence against women. These proletarians therefore find themselves trapped in fragmented movements, and consequently enlisted behind purely bourgeois demands.

Two examples can illustrate these situations. Many proletarians are worried about the future of the planet in the face of global warming and the increase in so-called “natural” disasters. But by getting involved in struggles for improved action by the state towards nature, these workers ally themselves with all layers of society in the illusion that improvements within capitalism are possible. They thus miss the only effective fight to save the planet: the fight for the destruction of capitalism! A fight that only the working class can lead.

In the same way, police violence in many developed countries, some of it highly publicised, has deeply outraged many proletarians. But by going to fight for laws and procedures to guarantee police behaviour that is more “respectful of individual rights”, workers simply put themselves at the mercy of the bourgeoisie and its state, forgetting that police forces are always the military wing of the bourgeois state in the repression of the proletariat's struggles, as the history of the workers' movement has shown on many occasions.

We cannot therefore characterise a movement by the sociological fact that proletarians participate in it. As individuals, proletarians are potentially sensitive to all causes and represent nothing in terms of social force. The only social force capable of fighting capitalism is the working class, and this class is not the simple sum of the individuals who compose it, it is not a sociological entity which exists only through the individuals who compose it. The working class exists through its economic and political dimensions within capitalism, through its struggle against the exploitation of its labour power through wage labour. In other words, as an exploited and revolutionary class. It finds its strength in its history, its struggles, its international character. Consequently, it is as a collective force, whose bond is international class

solidarity, that it can truly establish a balance of forces against the bourgeoisie.

Similarly, revolutionaries are not missionaries who intervene with proletarian individuals to save them from the dominant ideology, as this would be impossible anyway, as no individual can resist the steamroller of the dominant ideology alone. Revolutionaries are the most determined and conscious part of the working class. They represent an organised force whose task is to develop class consciousness and allow the proletariat to take the path of confrontation with capitalism.

In this framework, the intervention of revolutionaries can only be understood as addressing the working class as such. It's when the working class struggles as a class that it can best hear and assimilate what revolutionaries have to say to it, notably denouncing the traps that the bourgeoisie sets for it to lead it to defeat. But also to remind it of the tools and methods it has developed throughout its history to fight its battles, in particular the fact that only its conscious unity and autonomy can preserve it from the traps of the bourgeoisie and establish a balance of forces in its favour.

Therefore, we have to characterise a movement first of all by its demands and its methods of struggle. This does not mean waiting patiently for a “pure” movement, but it does mean identifying two things that are necessary to orientate the intervention:

- on what terrain is the struggle situated?
- in a movement, is it the working class that is mobilised or individuals who are undifferentiated and mixed up with other social strata in society?

At present, the vast majority of workers' struggles are organised by the unions. The latter, in accordance with their function within the state, are constantly dividing the proletarians in order to lead the working class to defeat. If the unions put themselves at the head of struggles, it's because the bourgeoisie sees the awakening of anger and combativity. Thus, during strikes or in demonstrations, demands that belong to the working class, such as better pay or better working conditions, are taken up by the unions. It's by taking up demands that belong to the working class that the unions manage to present themselves as the experts in the struggle and to keep control of it. It is therefore up to revolutionaries to denounce these practices of sabotage and to defend the self-organisation of the class through sovereign general assemblies. In

Continued on page 5

Political positions of the ICC

World Revolution is the section in Britain of the **International Communist Current** which defends the following political positions:

* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.

* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OUR ACTIVITY

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

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

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

OUR ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League* of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen's Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian Lefts*.