



# world revolution

## Facing war, massacres, exploitation, poverty...

# How can we change the world?

The world is turning into a vast graveyard. For several weeks, the Middle East has once again been ravaged by fire and bloodshed. After Gaza, it is now Lebanon and Iran that are being subjected to a deluge of bombs by the Israeli and American states, while the Islamic Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah fire rockets, drones and missiles towards neighbouring countries. Amid this deluge, civilian populations, held hostage by the imperialist rivalries of all the belligerent nations, are desperately trying to escape death, wandering through the rubble and ruins, stepping over the corpses littering the streets of Tehran, Beirut and many other cities besides.

### Unchecked barbarism ...

A great swathe of humanity is currently being massacred across the globe. According to the UN, in three years, the civil war in Sudan has caused “more than 200,000 deaths, displaced nearly 14 million people and triggered the worst global food crisis”. In four years, the war in Ukraine, with its 500,000 to 600,000 deaths, military and civilian combined, holds the record for the worst bloodbath on the European continent since the Second World War. Everywhere, wars are generalising, spreading, or just waiting to erupt, with no other outcome than death, destruction and desolation.

As for countries not directly affected by military conflicts on their territory, military spending is

skyrocketing. In France, the defence budget is set to rise from 32 billion in 2017 to over 67 billion in 2030. In Britain, this marks the sharpest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War.

Against the backdrop of a global economic crisis, the all-consuming cancer of the war economy means cuts to health, education and cultural budgets, the militarisation of the workplace—with workers facing hellish work rates, reduced staff numbers and wage cuts—amidst soaring food and energy prices... Everywhere, in every country, the bourgeoisie calls for these sacrifices to be accepted in the name of the nation’s greater good and peace.

### ... and dead ends

We must not accept this! Our world has the capacity to feed, house, clothe and care for the whole of humanity whilst respecting the environment. We have the knowledge and the technology. Instead, all social forces are being thrown into destruction: the bourgeoisie gives the orders and the working class pays the price all over the world. So, we must fight! But how?

In March, huge demonstrations took place in the United States and Spain under the slogans ‘No King’ and ‘against the war’. Thousands of genuinely outraged people gathered to protest against the horrors of this world. In reality, they have fall-

en into a trap: the bourgeoisie knows that a growing section of the working class is asking itself how to fight. It therefore offers its false answers, and pushes many of those who want to take action into dead ends.

That of ‘pacifism’, for example, which distorts the workers’ outrage at the barbarity of war into a sweet melody of defence of freedom and peace... within capitalism. As if this system of exploitation and repression could exist without war. History shows, on the contrary, that the logic of pacifism always leads to war. This is how this ideology served as a justification for social democracy to participate in the First World War. Because it was supposedly a conflict forced by ‘the other side’, the ‘warmongers’, the ‘barbarians.’ In short, one had to allow oneself to be conscripted in turn to defend ‘democracy’, ‘civilisation’ and ‘peace’.

Then there is democracy itself, another asset of the bourgeoisie, “a form of capitalism that would bring happiness, prosperity and peace... but which dictatorship would try to destroy”<sup>1</sup>. In reality, democracy is just as barbaric: the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, napalm in Vietnam, electric torture in Algeria... these horrors are crimes committed by the great democracies. Whether left-wing, right-wing, democratic or authoritarian, all capitalist states massacre, torture. See our article in French “Pacifism prepares for war”, *Revolution Internationale* 195 (1990).

ture, deport, imprison, starve...

Since 1914, war and its preparation have been at the heart of decadent capitalism. The capitalist system survives the ravages of competition only through the increased exploitation of the working class. It has no choice to offer the proletariat other than that of one nation at war with another, that of one economic power competing with others, that of one side of the border against the other. Capitalism is war! And exploitation is death and misery!

### Only one way: the class struggle

To counter this deadly dynamic, we must fight and oppose all the sacrifices demanded of us by the bourgeoisie. It is through our struggles, as an exploited class, that we can create a favourable balance of forces against the ruling class: with class solidarity against the defence of one sector against another; for class solidarity against the defence of one state against another. We must bring down this decaying system: the world proletarian revolution is the only alternative to barbaric capitalism.

Everywhere, the working class is under attack. Everywhere, it has the same interests. Everywhere, it has the same struggle to wage, the same solidarity to build, across borders.

But it is in the industrialised countries of Europe and North America, where the dynamic of militarism is detonating, where the working class has the greatest historical experience, where for decades it has been confronting the traps of democracy and the sabotage of ‘free’ trade unions, it is in these countries where capitalism was born that the working class must show the way to the proletariat of the whole world, by waging a conscious, united and determined struggle against the bourgeoisie and the appalling living conditions it imposes.

Capitalism is leading humanity to its death; only the world proletarian revolution offers an alternative to escape this decaying and barbaric system. The slogan of the *Communist Manifesto* is more relevant than ever: “Workers have no country. Workers of the world, unite!” **Julie, 13 April 2026**

## War in Iran

# The Pandora’s Box of a mode of production in putrefaction

The prospects offered by the world situation are everywhere creating a deep sense of anxiety.

War is spreading across the planet, giving the lie to world leaders who fill the media with empty promises of peace. The US/Israeli assault on Iran and Lebanon, and the counter-attacks by Iran and its proxies on Israel and the Gulf states, have set the whole of the Middle East on fire. The war in Ukraine is now four years old and there is no sign of a settlement. Look further east and you will see clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, between Pakistan and India, Cambodia and Thailand. Look west and you will see the genocidal conflict in Sudan, the seemingly endless war in the Congo, the battles between Islamist gangs and the Nigerian state.... Meanwhile every new scientific report on climate change confirms that the existing system is utterly failing to deal with the destruction of the environment. On the contrary, the spiralling military barbarism not only brings added ecological catastrophes but makes it virtually impossible for the world’s states to devote even the minimum of resources to mitigating the

impact of global heating (see our Manifesto on the ecological crisis).

Little wonder that anxiety, nihilism, and apocalyptic moods are everywhere on the rise, generating increasingly irrational responses which are becoming part of the political mainstream. It has been reported, for example, that high-ranking officers in the US army have delivered fiery sermons to the troops engaged in the war on Iran, explaining the war as follows: Donald Trump has been anointed by God to usher in Armageddon and the return of Jesus. But many suspect, quite rightly, that the war in the Middle East is a real sign that the world leaders are losing their grip on this slide towards a world of wars, towards new levels of barbarism and self-destruction, and that the very future of humanity is under threat.

Faced with these sombre perspectives, small minorities across the world are moving towards the recognition that behind this deadly spiral lies an entire social system, a system of class rule which is demonstrating its incapacity to meet the needs of humanity; a senile, putrefying system which

‘survives’ and defends itself by inflicting catastrophe after catastrophe on the world’s population. This is capitalism in its epoch of decadence and decomposition.

### A shot in the dark with global implications

It is evident – including to broad sections of the ruling class itself – that the war in Iran has been initiated without any clear plan or objective, or that the stated objectives change from one day to the next: is this awesome (and vastly expensive) mobilisation of US military power aimed simply at destroying Iran’s military capacities, or is it aimed at overthrowing the Mullahs’ regime altogether? Without a precise objective, even if such an objective can be formulated in the context of the total irrationality of current imperialist wars, how will the conflict end? has the US government assessed the capacity of Iran’s capacity to respond not only by firing missiles and drones

Continued on page 2

### Inside this issue

ICC online public meeting: Spain 1936-9 fascism and anti-fascism mobilise for imperialist war	2
“No kings”: defence of democratic rights is a trap for the working class	3
Descent into crisis - failure of capitalism	3
Transnational Social Strike discussions	4
Strikes in Britain despite union obstacles and decomposing capitalism	4
Sex scandals: decay of capitalism	5
Public meeting: should revolutionaries defend ‘revolutionary defeatism’?	6
<i>Life of the ICC</i>	7
80 years ago, founding of Gauche Communiste de France (part2)	8

Continued from page 1

## The Pandora's Box of a mode of production in putrefaction

all over the Middle East and even beyond, by adopting a scorched earth strategy throughout the region, but also, and probably more significantly, by delivering a heavy blow to the world economy by closing off the Straits of Hormuz, a key conduit for global trade and energy supplies?

Moreover, the least we can say is that the current president of the world's leading "democracy" is abjectly cynical. Struggling to flush out Iranian missiles and drones, the US Air Force is not content with randomly destroying bridges, hospitals and schools, Trump is openly threatening to destroy power plants and drinking water facilities! What began as a call to liberate the Iranian population from a criminal regime, ends with threats to annihilate that same population by "driving Iran into oblivion" and bombing it "back to the Stone Age"!

This lack of any coherent plan behind the war is generally explained by pointing the finger at Trump and his cronies, and particularly at Trump's narcissistic or egomaniacal personality, his incapacity to think coherently, or his growing signs of senility and cognitive decay. And Trump is indeed all these things. But as the saying goes "cometh the hour, cometh the man". That such a man could be placed at the head of the most powerful country of the world speaks volumes about the nature and trajectory of the capitalist system, which has not only been obsolete for over a century but since the end of the 80s has entered the terminal phase of its decline. Its inability to offer humanity any future inevitably produces 'leaders' who are increasingly unable to think ahead and who are themselves in a state of denial about what lies in front of us. Trump's insistence that climate change is a huge hoax, or that America is on the verge of a new Golden Age, are symptoms of this irrational myopia.

The improvisation, the bungling and vengefulness of Trump and his clique of political amateurs are a factor in accelerating the tendency of the US power to act, no longer as the main bulwark of the world capitalist order, but as a force of increasing destabilisation all over the planet. But this tendency long predates the reign of Trump. In the early and mid-2000s, for example, in many of our articles and resolutions on the international situation we noted that, faced with the growing disorder in inter-imperialist relations that came about after the collapse of the Russian bloc, the USA was itself becoming the principal promoter of global chaos, despite or rather because of its efforts to defend its interests through brutal exhibitions of military power. What happened in Iraq was the prime example: the fact that it brought about the spectacular overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime did not prevent its invasion of Iraq from plunging the country into endless bloodshed and fragmentation, with the rise of numerous uncontrolled armed militias and terrorist gangs like ISIS that have spread throughout the region and beyond it.

The scale of this war against Iran, and the intensity and dynamics of the chaos it has unleashed, have led to an unprecedented level of global destabilisation.

The present war on Iran, with its considerable military, political and economic consequences, is already taking this effect onto a higher level. It is dragging more and more states and factions into the quagmire.

But its effects go far beyond the regional framework, because the Middle East is the epicenter where tensions between the major powers crystallize, and where crucial economic and strategic interests collide. For several decades now, the Middle East has been one of the biggest minefields in international geopolitics.

The current war is not only causing catastrophic damage to the global economy, but is also having an impact on relations between imperialist nations, for example within the BRICS, but above all within NATO, where an increasingly frank divorce is emerging between the European countries and the USA, sucking more and more states and factions into its vortex.

But this is fundamentally because the underlying tendency of capitalism towards its "inner disintegration" (to quote the Communist Interna-

tional in 1919) has been progressing in leaps and bounds for some decades now.

### Anti-Trumpism and anti-fascism: capitalism's ideological defence mechanisms

Blaming all this on Trump or his faction alone has a definite ideological function: it implies that if this gang could be replaced by serious, democratic politicians, the profound trajectory of this doomed civilisation could be reversed. Hence the need to prepare for the next round of elections, to support the Democratic Party or even the more sensible rump of the Republican party in their campaigns to dump Trump, put the grown-ups back in charge of government and help restore a "rules-based order" at the international level. In sum, this argument is a way of preventing the cultivation and spread of a very different conclusion: that the real problem is not this or that politician or capitalist party, but capitalism itself, including the sham of parliamentary democracy and the international institutions (UN, NATO, etc) which exist to perpetuate its global domination.

The same goes for the illusion that Israeli imperialism could pursue a policy of peace if Netanyahu and the religious fanatics in his government could be ousted at forthcoming elections, when all the Israeli political parties from right to left are unashamedly rallying behind the attack on Iran. Or indeed that the torture and massacre of dissidents in Iran would come to an end if the cruel reign of the Mullahs was replaced by democratic opposition parties or even by returning to the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty.

And it also applies to the argument that Trump and his carbon copies in other countries are a threat to democracy, that they are leading us towards fascism.

Again, it's true that with Trumpism we are seeing the state relying more and more on directly repressive methods, on the violence within its own cities that parallels the violence being meted out to the cities of Iran. The use of ICE as a kind of praetorian guard of the leader, deployed to impose open terror on the population of the US, certainly has echoes of previous authoritarian regimes like Mussolini's fascism or Hitler's Nazism, even if the historic conditions which brought those regimes into being are very different today. But the principal lie concealed in this grain of truth is that the way to fight such examples of state repression, even though it primarily involves the arrest and deportation of proletarians, must again be fought by campaigns and marches organised around the defence of 'true American democracy'. In short, campaigns which call on the proletariat to immerse itself in the mass of citizens and behind bourgeois political slogans, rather than uniting and organising around its own class interests. These interests, though in the first place mainly posed on the economic level, certainly include the defence of fellow workers against state repression. But when the workers abandon their own class struggle and follow calls to join a 'popular' front behind so-called 'progressive' factions of the bourgeoisie to 'stop fascism', they deliver themselves into the hands of the class enemy. In the so-called 'Spanish revolution' in 1936-39, the workers thus found themselves being shot down not only by Franco and his troops but also by the militias of the Popular Front (most famously at the barricades of Barcelona on May 1937).

### The reality of the world bourgeoisie's 'rules-based order'

Liberal and democratic opinion in the US and western Europe is in mourning for the 'rules-based order' which was set up in the wake of World War Two. This 'order' lies in pieces following the US threats against Greenland, a fellow NATO country, the kidnapping of Maduro, the attempt to establish a 'Board of Peace' in place of the UN, and the growing divorce between Europe and the US, made crystal clear by the refusal of America's NATO allies to commit themselves to Trump's war and take part in unblocking the Straits of Hormuz.

But what was this 'rules-based order' in reality? It was from the start an American order, formed

above all to counter the rise of the USSR as a global imperialist power. The formation of the two-bloc system did impose a certain discipline on the countries under US or Russian 'protection'. But we must never forget that both bloc leaders were always ready to maintain their blocs through coups, infiltration, assassinations, and above all through endless proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, Africa and elsewhere - wars fought in the name of 'containing Communism' or 'national liberation' and which cost millions of lives. It was an 'order' over which the shadow of a nuclear holocaust was a permanent threat.

When the Russian bloc collapsed in 1989, the ICC predicted that we would now be entering a phase dominated by 'each against all' in international relations, a mounting tide of chaos which did not cancel out decadent capitalism's drive towards war but merely gave it a different shape. During the first years of this new phase, the USA acted as a global 'gendarme', attempting to use its military superiority to keep its former allies in line and stem the tide of chaos and destabilisation. But as we have already said, US actions like the first Gulf war or the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq had the net opposite effect: accelerating the break-up of old alliances and plunging the invaded countries into chaos. Since then, we have seen this process of decomposition accelerating more and more, giving rise to an increasingly deadly situation, marked by key moments like the pandemic at the start of the 2020s, which has shown nations supposedly committed to "rules and the international community" carry out veritable acts of piracy, snatching masks and medical equipment from airport tarmacs to cope with the collapse of the healthcare system. The Covid pandemic also brought the entire logistics of globalised production and trade to a screeching halt.

This event was followed by a cascade of large-scale conflicts such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the war between Israel, Hamas and Hizbollah. The US/Israel assault on Iran, and Iran's counter-attack on neighbouring countries and on world trade, signifies that the slide towards uncontrolled military barbarism has acquired a new quality, confirming what the Communist International affirmed in its first Manifesto in 1919, looking at the ruins left by the war which marked capitalism's entry into its epoch of decline: "*the ultimate result of the capitalist mode of production is chaos*".

It might be thought that Trump's objective was, as shortly before in Venezuela, to strike a blow against China, the USA's principal rival, and for whom Iran is an important imperialist partner at the economic and strategic level. But far from imposing US hegemony over the Middle East by force, this conflict has led the US into a new quagmire: either Trump gets stuck in a spiral of endless destruction, with a succession of bombings, truces, blocking of straits and ports, commando operations, annihilation of infrastructure, massacres... or he withdraws his army leaving immense chaos behind him. Regardless, America has not only been humiliated and is more isolated than ever, but it has also had to withdraw its forces from the Pacific, weakening its position against China. The attempt to cause mayhem among its enemies has inflicted an immediate blowback on the US. On the other hand, Iran has also entered into a pure scorched earth logic. If the regime is to perish (which is less and less likely in the immediate future), it will do so by sowing chaos and barbarism.

This logic of self-destruction, of ever-increasing conflict where nobody wins, is the very image of capitalism. Capitalism is truly in its death throes and if it is not overturned it will drag the whole of humanity down into the abyss with it. This is why it's so important for the working class and its revolutionary minorities to reject all illusions that this deadly trajectory can be reversed by changing political leaders, reinvigorating global institutions or 'democratising' the state. Our enemy is not this or that politician or political party, this or that country, but the very mode of production which lives by exploitation and war, and which can only be brought to an end by the revolutionary struggle of the exploited class in all countries. **Amos, April 2026**

## ICC international online public meeting

### The war in Spain 1936-39: fascism and anti-fascism mobilise the proletariat for imperialist war

Online public meeting in English.  
Sunday 31 May, 2026,  
2pm to 5pm UK time.

To take part, write to [international@internationalism.org](mailto:international@internationalism.org) for the links.

90 years ago this July, the military forces led by Franco launched a coup d'Etat against the Spanish Republic. The workers of Barcelona responded with their own methods of struggle: massive strikes and the formation of workers' militias. But very quickly this proletarian response was dragged onto the bourgeois terrain of defending the Republic against fascism, and the ensuing 'civil war' was turned into an inter-imperialist slaughter, a dress rehearsal for the even bigger massacre of World War Two

Today the working class is also confronted with the spread of imperialist wars across the globe, even if the conditions which led to World War in the 1930s are not the same – above all because the working class has not suffered from a historic defeat as it did with the crushing of the international revolutionary wave of 1917-23. But the dangers posed by capitalism's accelerating dive into the chaos and self-destruction of a system in terminal decline are no less real.

In the 1930s only a handful of revolutionary organisations, and above all the Italian Fraction of the Communist Left, were able to understand the real nature of the war in Spain and put forward an internationalist positions against all those – from the Stalinists and Trotskyists to the anarchists – who called on workers to rally to the defence of bourgeois democracy. Faced with today's wars, this intransigent defence of internationalism is as vital as ever.

In a brief presentation and through interventions during the two and a half hours of open discussion, we will present our analysis of the events in Spain 1936-39. To enable the maximum of political clarification, we recommend that those interested come prepared to take position on the topic and in particular to pose any questions or divergences they may have. To assist with this preparation, we suggest comrades read the following two texts which provide an orientation on the ICC's position:

\* Lessons of Spain 1936 (*International Review* 4)

\* The war in Spain - No betrayal (chapter 5 of our book *The Italian Communist Left*)

Continued from page 3

Admittedly, the road ahead is still long and difficult for workers to succeed in putting forward the revolutionary perspective. But by fighting against the effects of the crisis, our class confronts the very heart of capitalism: the exploitation of man by man, wage labour and private property. By being forced to fight for survival, it is reconnecting with the only ground on which the proletariat can build its strength: that of economic demands, of strikes, of assemblies to organise the struggle, and of street demonstrations. The struggle enables the proletariat to gradually rediscover what makes them strong: their unity, their solidarity, the need to organise themselves, and conscious reflection on the goals to be set for the movement.

The crisis currently unleashing its destructive effects reveals the true future that awaits the proletariat if they do nothing to defend themselves. Despite the enormous suffering that capitalism inflicts on the proletariat, the crisis of capitalism nevertheless remains the proletariat's ally. **HD, 9 April 2026**

# “No Kings” demonstrations: the defence of democratic rights is a trap for the working class

28 March 2026 saw the largest and most widespread protests in US history. Eight million people took part in 3,300 demonstrations across all fifty states. Demonstrations also took place in other countries, including Canada, Europe, Japan, Australia and Thailand. In Minnesota, the epicentre of the terror waged by the immigration police (ICE), two demonstrations were organised. Rallies took place in major cities and small towns, including in Trump’s electoral strongholds.

Many demonstrators joined the rallies, concerned about the consequences of the war against Iran and disappointed by Trump’s broken promises regarding an end to the “forever wars”. Others joined the demonstrations out of anger at the economic situation, with high prices, precarious living conditions, redundancies, food insecurity - in short, widespread impoverishment. Still others took part to express their anger at the actions of ICE and the state’s increased repression. Finally, there were also those who wanted to express their disgust at the odious figure that is Trump. The slogan “No Kings, no ICE, no War” thus expresses a wide range of grievances, with each person having their own motivation for taking part.

Yet the organisers had a very specific objective: “In America, we have no kings. A masked secret police force is terrorising our communities. An illegal and catastrophic war is putting us in danger and driving up prices. Attacks are threatening our freedom of speech, our civil rights, our freedom to vote. Prices are pushing families to the brink. Trump wants to rule over us as a tyrant. But we are in America, and power belongs to the people, not to pretenders to the throne or their billionaire cronies”. Admittedly, the appeal also mentions “prices”, but only to immediately link the issue of inflation to slogans about “our freedom of speech, our civil rights, our freedom to vote”. The “people” are thus expected to defend American democracy against a “tyrant”.

Trump’s megalomania and his outrageous authoritarianism are easy targets for his opponents. But the Democrats, just like the Republicans, have a long history of justifying repression, wars, torture and the use of the police in the name of defending democracy and freedom: there have been the endless wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Vietnam, and the “war on terror”, with its assassinations, torture and abductions. Democrats and Republicans have all carried out massive, inhumane deportations: they have all given carte blanche to the police (FBI, CIA and ICE) against the working class.

Why? Because in America, power does not belong to ‘the people’ and even less to the working class: as everywhere else, it belongs to the bourgeoisie.

In America, as in every country in the world, the bourgeoisie exploits and represses the proletariat with ever-greater ferocity. And in America, as elsewhere, it peddles a whole series of lies about ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and ‘rights’, designed to chain the proletariat to its exploiters, to the bourgeois state and to the nation, and to obscure the fact that the ‘democratic’ state is the most effective means of oppressing the working class! The mobilisation of eight million people to defend “our freedom of expression, our civil rights, our freedom to vote” clearly bears witness to this insidious danger. By calling on the proletariat to defend the iron heel of the ‘democratic’ dictatorship, ‘No Kings’ seeks to divert workers from their class interests against capitalist exploitation, and to push them into engaging in struggles between rival bourgeois factions. Despite the good intentions of many participants, these demonstrations therefore constituted a veritable trap for the working class.

Yet many workers among the demonstrators are not inclined to rally behind the Democratic Party. In order to lure these workers, who are seeking answers, into this trap, the left wing of the movement has presented it as a movement against the oligarchy and dictatorship: “The scale of the 28 March demonstrations testifies to the depth of popular anger at the rise of dictatorship in the country and the escalation of imperialist war abroad. A confrontation is unfolding between a capitalist oligarchy that is breaking with demo-

cratic forms of government and the vast majority of the population. [...] The scale of the opposition terrifies the ruling class, and the reaction of the mainstream media has been to downplay it and move on as quickly as possible”.<sup>1</sup> Beneath the veneer of ‘Marxist’ vocabulary, the message remains the same: to defend the ‘democratic’ state against Trump’s ‘dictatorship’. Thus, far from being terrified, the bourgeoisie has been able to mobilise the workers in defence of its state and its powerful ideological weapon: democracy. It is delighted that workers’ discontent over the war is being drowned out by a movement that claims that capitalism, the deadliest system in history, could be peaceful, if we stop “warmongers” such as Trump.

It thus aims to prevent workers from realising that it is indeed capitalism that is the cause of war, and not this or that politician or party.

Admittedly, the Trump administration is a disaster for the American bourgeoisie. The war against Iran, the threats against European powers, his purge of the military and the rest of the state, the corruption within the administration—all of this is a catastrophe for the US state. But the root of this political vandalism is not Trump: it is the historical impasse of capitalism. The failure of the military adventure in Iran, Trump’s inability to 1. The ‘No Kings’ demonstrations of 28 March: the political lessons, *wsws.org* (2026)

stand for re-election and his growing loss of popularity can only accelerate the chaos, destruction and irresponsibility. Trump and his administration are like a wounded animal thrashing about, and the resort to repression against his political rivals and all those who oppose him will only worsen. Tensions and clashes with other factions of the ruling class can only become more hostile, and likely violent. The threat that workers will find themselves caught up in these clashes, whether called upon to defend the ‘democratic state’ or the factions opposed to Trump, is growing. The “No Kings” movement is part of this threat: that is why it is so dangerous.

The working class must refuse to be drawn into defending the democratic state. This means refusing to sacrifice itself to protect the interests of the ruling class. Its interest lies in defending its own autonomy through struggles to defend its jobs, living conditions and working conditions. In March, 3,800 workers at the JBS slaughterhouse in Colorado went on strike. The majority of them are immigrants, from Haiti, Somalia, Burma and Mexico. They refused to be intimidated by the threat of ICE and fought alongside their comrades to defend their class interests: “The strikers documented unfair labour practices, cases of labour trafficking and wage theft, as well as wages that have failed to keep pace with the cost of living in Colorado”. Since the start of 2026, there has

been a series of struggles, often limited to a single company or sector, but significant insofar as they are taking place despite the putrid social atmosphere of chaos and fear. These include the strike by tens of thousands of healthcare workers in New York, California and Hawaii; the strike by University of California staff in February; the strike by Freudenberg-NOK workers in Findlay on 24 March; and the strike by 620 technicians at the General Dynamics Bath Iron Works shipyard over a pay deal. 900 workers at the BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana, were locked out in March after rejecting BP’s pay offer by 98.3 per cent. Despite their isolated nature, these struggles demonstrate something very important: workers are prepared to put their interests before those of national capital.

Workers in the United States are not alone. Despite the media silence (which is very real, unlike the international coverage of the “No Kings” movement), struggles—sometimes massive—are breaking out all over the world, in Europe, Canada and elsewhere. Workers are refusing the sacrifices demanded by the bourgeoisie to pay for its crisis and its weapons. “No Kings”, on the other hand, and all those promoting these mobilisations, however critical they may be, are leading the proletariat into the defence of the national interest and the capitalist state. **J & W, 12 April 2026**

## The inexorable descent into crisis reveals the historic failure of capitalism

Attacks on all fronts: for the past ten months or so, redundancies worldwide have been running into the millions. This reflects a crisis affecting all sectors of the economy, with the notable exception of the arms industry: IT (Ubisoft, Oracle, Cap Gemini, IBM), the automobile sector (Aston Martin, Stellantis, Volkswagen, Bosch and all the sector’s subcontractors, such as Goodyear), the glass industry (Arc, Verallia), the retail sector (Auchan, Jennyfer), banking and financial services (ABN Amro in the Netherlands, Block in cryptocurrencies), logistics (Amazon, UPS, Ziegler), the press (*La Tribune*, *Washington Post*), and various industrial sectors (Heineken, SEB, Erasteel, Lanxess and BASF) are all affected. Added to these figures are the redundancies resulting from the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) into production processes, particularly in IT, with tens of thousands of engineers, technicians and staff finding themselves unemployed, with little chance of finding work quickly. To this we can add job cuts among civil servants worldwide, with Trump and Musk following a few months on from their precursor Milei and his chainsaw. The French national education system is another good example for the coming period.

No national economy can escape the purge afflicting capitalism as a whole. China is affected just as much as the rest, despite the opacity of unemployment statistics in that country. Germany is particularly hard hit, since its industrial sector, long buoyed by the growth of the Chinese domestic market, can no longer rely on it. It faces fierce competition, notably from Chinese industry, in its most iconic sectors: machinery, chemicals and the automobiles, resulting in a cascade of job cuts in a country unaccustomed to such measures: Volkswagen and Opel, as well as Bosch, Aumovio and all the automobile industry’s subcontractors, are planning drastic staff cuts. BASF is seriously considering relocating part of its administrative services to India and Malaysia; the chemical company Lanxess is also set to reduce its workforce. All these announcements at the heart of European industry are the result of a general economic downturn. In Germany, new jobs are mainly part-time, whereas the jobs lost were skilled, full-time, productive and well-paid.

The list is endless. Even the UN is making mass redundancies of its staff worldwide!

These redundancies are accompanied by a tight-

ening of governments’ social and health policies and increasingly severe monitoring of the unemployed: in Argentina, the Milei government is further deregulating the labour market to facilitate redundancies, extending the daily working day from 8 to 12 hours, and allowing holiday leave to be split up... Belgium, for its part, is set to limit the duration of unemployment benefits, automatically cutting off a portion of the unemployed from any income.

Young workers are particularly hard hit worldwide: in England, the system for funding higher education, based on variable-rate student loans, is creating situations of colossal debt for young graduates. In India, more than half of young graduates will not find work. The same problem exists in China, where the youth unemployment rate is well above the national average: more than one in six young people there are out of work. Youth unemployment is even becoming an increasingly central concern for the government, alongside the rampant ‘curse of 35’ (age-related redundancies).

### The global economy increasingly marked by the decomposition of capitalism

All these attacks are the consequence of capitalism’s plunge, over the past fifteen years or so, into an increasingly uncontrollable spiral of economic crisis: financial crises (the subprime crisis in 2008 and sovereign debt crises), the destabilisation of the global economy during the Covid pandemic, and the global economy being dragged into the maelstrom of war (Ukraine, Gaza, Iran...). Inflation is exacerbated by an increasingly unstable global situation, a war economy marked by a staggering explosion in military spending, rising energy prices driven by the conflict in Ukraine and now in Iran, rising tariffs almost everywhere in the world, supply chain disruptions linked to local conflicts such as the blockades in the Strait of Hormuz, and the increasingly exorbitant cost of environmental destruction.

On the other hand, the increasingly marked stagnation of the global economy (excluding armaments) highlights the historical limits of the system: permanent overproduction, the inability to move beyond national economic management policies, and fierce competition between rival nations are driving the bourgeoisie into increasingly self-destructive strategies: it is dismantling all the

safeguards and countermeasures put in place after the Second World War to implement even minimally coordinated policies aimed at combating the effects of capitalism’s historic crisis, such as the opening of markets, the limitation of customs duties, the development of common standards, and the implementation of coordinated monetary policies. Overproduction is clearly the cause of the unfolding crisis that is leading to redundancies. China, for example, is reaching the limits of its domestic market despite huge subsidies designed to enable it to absorb its production. It has no choice but to flood the world and its competitors with goods that it cannot sell on its domestic market.

The impact of the decomposition of capitalism is reflected in an acceleration of increasingly short-sighted state measures. All this is marked by the ever-sharper fragmentation of the national bourgeoisies over the policy to be pursued, by irrational and demagogic populist programmes (such as the tariff war triggered by the Trump administration), and by the ideological blindness of bourgeois cliques hysterically clinging to their privileges. The impact of decomposition on the economy has intensified sharply, as the bourgeoisie has no coherent economic policy to offer to mitigate the effects of an irreversible crisis.

The brutal and lasting plunge into crisis we are witnessing is profound: no serious, comprehensive counter-trend in bourgeois policy is visible, and the destruction we are witnessing in countries at war will probably never be repaired. Besides, who would finance it?

### Fighting back against these attacks means beginning to fight capitalism

The historic crisis of capitalism is the crisis of an economic system based on the increasingly ferocious exploitation of those proletarians who are still fortunate enough to have a job, and on the cynical abandonment of the rest. Overproduction affects all commodities, of which labour is the most tragic! This barbaric reality, which the working class is experiencing ever more starkly, demonstrates the bourgeoisie’s inability to offer them any prospect other than war, relentless exploitation and destitution.

Continued on page 2

# Assessment of the discussions at the meeting of the Transnational Social Strike Platform

On Saturday, 28 February, a meeting of the Transnational Social Strike Platform took place in Cologne<sup>1</sup>, which focused on two main questions:

- the reality and effects of the rapidly increasing militarisation in Europe (Europe at War was the key message): how is this perceived? And, of course, the question: what can be done?

After a brief introduction by the organisers, in which they rightly insisted, in our view, that one must not support either side in a war (the organisers' keyword was "campism"), the ICC raised the question of whether the focus on "Europe at War" would not limit the view of the dynamics of war too much to Europe. Of course, there have been enormous steps towards militarisation in Europe since the start of the war in Ukraine (in Germany, the then Chancellor Scholz spoke of a turning point and quickly doubled military spending); shortly after the start of Trump 2.0's reign, the EU decided on an arms package of €800 billion to build its own war economy that is much more independent of the US; and with the reintroduction of conscription in many countries (e.g. France, Germany, whether gradually or directly), new levels of remilitarisation are being reached. It was also rightly mentioned that this whole development is accompanied by militarisation at the borders, the deportation of refugees and repressive measures within the countries themselves.

## A spiral of war worldwide or limited to Europe?

The ICC raised the question of whether we need to broaden our view to include the confrontation between the US and China, which plays a major role in many conflicts (e.g. US intervention in Venezuela, among other things, with the aim of pushing back China's influence there), or in Iran, where China, among others, is also to be 'robbed' of an ally. At the same time, there is a chain of wars in Africa and the Middle East, and rearmament in Japan and East Asia. In short, does the prism of "Europe at War" underestimate the true phenomenon of militarism, whose destructive power can be seen all over the world? The meeting took place on 1. <https://www.transnational-strike.info/2026/01/29/meeting-europe-at-war-programme-and-registration-form/>

place on the day that the US and Israel launched their offensive against Iran, and shortly afterwards Pakistan bombed the Afghan capital and refugee stronghold of Kabul. We emphasised that militarism and its spiral of destruction are escalating everywhere around the world – accompanied by ever more devastating environmental destruction. By focusing primarily on Europe at war, are we not underestimating the danger to all of humanity?

The ICC's statement was intended to make it clear that we cannot limit our view to one region (the role of the US machinery of destruction, the policies of Russian imperialism, China's rearmament, India's military ambitions, etc.), but that this is a global, historical phenomenon and therefore raises the question of the capitalist system, which is at an impasse and can only survive through destruction and terror – making it necessary to address the need to overcome it worldwide.

## The question of assessing the balance of class forces was not raised

When discussing the impact and perceptions of participants who had come from many European countries, the entire campaign of intimidation of the population and the attempt to recruit soldiers with completely misleading advertising slogans were rightly highlighted, as was the fact that this will in reality force cuts and austerity budgets. But in view of the fact that the EU has approved the above-mentioned war package of €800 billion, the unlimited financing of the German armed forces, the increase in military spending to 5% in line with NATO requirements, and the increase in US military spending from the current \$900 billion to \$1.5 trillion, it was difficult to ask the question clearly: who will pay the bill for all this? In a statement by the ICC, we emphasised that it will be the working class in particular who will foot the bill – whether through demands for longer working hours (whether weekly working hours or the length of working lives), cuts in health and education, increases in energy costs, rents, etc. – and all this in addition to the other hardships resulting from the economic crisis, such as job cuts, layoffs, intensification of work rhythms, etc. The central question

– whether the ruling class can pass on all these costs to the working class, whether the working class is prepared to tighten its belt and ultimately even give its life for the war machine – was not sufficiently addressed. But by not asking whether the ruling class will succeed in getting the working class on their side and behind the capitalist class, and whether the working class is actually prepared to participate in the killing machine and sacrifice their own lives, the crucial question of assessing the balance of forces between capital and labour was avoided.

Although mention was made of how cunning and clumsy the attempts are to recruit cannon fodder and delude soldiers through advertising campaigns for the Bundeswehr or the armies of other countries, the fact that the majority of young people and other generations are opposed to war was not really assessed in depth.

However, because the needs of the war economy and the associated austerity measures will present the working class with new challenges, in which the connection between war and crisis must be addressed in the defensive struggles against these decisions, and because we must prepare ourselves for this necessity and take a stand against it, there was a great danger at the meeting of not preparing for the real needs of the struggle.

For example, one participant regretted that IG Metall welcomed and fully supported the arms orders in the metal industry and that the trade unions could not really be relied upon, but no one mentioned that the trade unions – especially in Germany, where they were pioneers – passionately supported the entire war machine of German capital when they declared a truce in August 1914 and, four years later, when workers and soldiers rose up in Germany, worked side by side with the military and the SPD to crush the workers.

## Activism, or where should the lever be applied?

In the last part of the event, when the question of what to do was raised, the whole dilemma of the approach became clear. After several participants had reported on 'action after action', on numerous initiatives, and although the impression

emerged that no real successes could be achieved in terms of effectiveness, except for the fact that a network of activists had been established, people were, in a sense, reluctant to ask the question: who can actually build up the pressure to force governments and capital to give in? How can we succeed in establishing a balance of forces that paralyses the destructive arm of the ruling class, indeed the entire machinery of war? Is this actually possible without overcoming the system as such? In other words, can war be eliminated without eliminating the system? Although many – as mentioned above – had thrown themselves into numerous initiatives with great energy, the search for the truly central force, the working class, had not been undertaken.

Yet, as we mentioned in this part of the discussion, the working class has proven throughout history that only it – and not pacifists, etc. – can end war, but that ultimately the system as a whole must be overcome. In short, that nothing less than a revolution, a world revolution, is necessary to achieve this.

Although the organisers of the meeting rightly rejected "campism" (taking sides with one or the other warring party) in the invitation, the word "internationalism" was not even mentioned during the entire event. But how is it possible to face the challenges of the struggle against the capitalist system if we fail to focus on the necessity of the working class fighting together across all the boundaries that divide it? Accordingly, our statement ended with the call that we cannot rush headlong into activism, but must ask ourselves what force is capable of overcoming capitalism, even if this may seem unlikely in view of the undeniable difficulties currently facing the working class. But if we do not even ask this question and recognise where and how the lever must be applied and how long and difficult the road to overcoming the system will be, then we run the risk of sinking and ultimately becoming demoralised... and, of course, the system will remain untouched. As long as we do not take a fearless look at the pitfalls of activism, the greatest drive to resist this system will dry up without any prospects. Clarifying these questions is unavoidable.

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## Strikes in Britain

# Workers continue to fight, despite the obstacles raised by trade unions and decomposing capitalism

Since the turn of the year, strikes by UK workers have continued to confront the ruling class and its governing Labour Party. Sectors affected include transport (London Underground, bus and train services around the country), education (university lecturers, teaching assistants, library assistants, administrators, IT workers and other support staff, plus some teachers) and the health sector (critical care nurses in Manchester, 'resident' doctors nationwide and health visitors in south Wales). 'Industrial action' also affected the construction industry (crane drivers), refuse services ('bin-men') and even the 'defence' sector (Royal Fleet Auxiliary service seafarers<sup>1</sup> and Atomic Weapons Establishment workers at Aldermaston and Burghfield<sup>2</sup>).

These current struggles of the working class are primarily driven by a profound fall in purchasing power (inflation devaluing wages) plus an increase in the rate of exploitation (fewer workers taking on more responsibilities and tasks over longer hours). Despite their modest size and impact on national life, they go to the heart of the existence of the proletariat as the exploited producer class of society, its history under capitalism and its future perspectives. In this sense, they are still in

1. A Merchant Navy organisation of civilian-crewed ships providing vital logistic and operational support to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

2. Workers (who are public servants) focus on safety and security in Aldermaston and Burghfield.

continuity with the much larger-scale movements of the class in Great Britain in the summer of 2022 and the winter 2023, which reverberated around the globe.

## The meaning of the 'rupture' with the years of apathy

The 'Summer of Discontent' which swept the UK in 2022, and which continued into the following winter, characterised by its slogan of "enough is enough", marked a radical departure with the decades which preceded it. Following the defeat of the miners' strike in mid-80s Britain, and cemented by a vast ideological campaign about 'the death of communism' and 'the victory of democracy' after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, a whole epoch of world-wide workers' struggles which began in May '68, France, was brought to an abrupt halt. Despite certain important exceptions, the decades that followed witnessed a retreat in working class combativity and a much deeper retreat in class consciousness, even leading to a loss of the proletariat's class identity.

What gave the 2022/2023 movement in Great Britain its significance was precisely the fact that it broke the years of apparent quiescence and acceptance of spiralling attacks by the ruling class. It had echoes up and down the country; it affected different industries simultaneously, and as it unfolded, the proletariat began to rediscover its voice and unity - "we are the working class" as banners

proclaimed.

They were not only a reaction to the "cost of living crisis", they were also the product of a long and mostly hidden process of questioning, of overcoming hesitation and doubt, of what Marx called the "work of the old mole" and what the ICC describes as a process of a "subterranean maturation of class consciousness."

Moreover, the strikes in GB inspired those in other countries, which made direct reference to them and echoed their slogans: in France, in Belgium, in the United States... This is why the ICC called the movement and those which followed in other countries a 'rupture' with the previous period:

*"The essential achievement of the struggle of the workers in Britain is to stand up and fight because the worst defeat is to suffer impoverishment without a fight. It is on this basis that lessons can be learned and the struggle can move forward. In this perspective, the strikes represent a qualitative change and herald a change in the situation of the working class vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie: they mark a development of combativity on a class terrain which can be the beginning of a new episode of the struggle, because it is through its massive economic struggles that the working class will be able to progressively recover its class identity, eroded by the pressure of 40 years of decomposition, by the ebb of struggles and consciousness, by the sirens of interclassist movements, populism and environmental campaigns. It is on this basis that the*

*working class will be able to open up a perspective for the whole of society. From this point of view, there is a 'before' and an 'after' to the summer of 2022."*<sup>3</sup>

## The barriers to developing the struggle remain

Thus the present strikes fall within the global and historic dynamic of this 'rupture'. They share its promise of a massive struggle against austerity and war. They also share many of the weaknesses of the 2022 movement and confront the same barriers to effectively combatting the ruling class and to developing a perspective of getting rid of it altogether!

Of the strikes so far this year, two in particular have drawn greater attention.

The first are those of the 'resident' doctors working in hospitals run by the National Health Service, the UK's largest employer. These strikes in fact began in March 2023 and the 6-day stoppages after Easter 2026 were the 15<sup>th</sup> such action. At root is the issue of pay – the doctors claim their salaries are today worth 29% less compared to 2008 – and of the lack of advancement prospects leading to both career stagnation and, more importantly, an

3. The return of the combativity of the world proletariat", *International Review* 169, Winter 2023

**Continued on page 5**

# Sex scandals: the decadence and putrefaction of the ruling class

Almost seven years after the suicide in prison of the sex predator and paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, and the discovery of a vast international sex trafficking network, the documents and photographs from a voluminous file – only part of which has been made public – continue to dominate the headlines. This nauseating scandal directly implicates two US presidents, Donald Trump and Bill Clinton, but also an impressive number of political figures from all sides, compromised across the globe, ranging from Prince Andrew to ministers from several European powers and celebrities from the worlds of finance and entertainment, not to mention the head of the Davos Forum, the IOC president, property developers, businessmen and lawyers, all involved to the core. The highly sophisticated and methodically organised ramifications of ‘private parties’, the staggering sums of money involved and the complicity of the highest echelons of the ruling class have shocked the entire world.

## The exploitation of women, a reflection of the morals of class-based societies

We are supposed to believe that all this horror is only the work of a megalomaniacal, narcissistic pervert. But this situation of depravity and the use of one’s social position to carry out sexual blackmail is by no means an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, it illustrates a practice that is very widespread within the ruling class. One need only recall a few notorious examples from recent years: the ‘bunga bunga’ parties organised by the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who was also the owner of a television channel and a major businessman, and who regularly engaged the services of call girls in the 1990s; the arrest of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then managing director of the International Monetary Fund and the clear favourite in the 2012 French presidential elections, who attempted to sexually assault a chambermaid in a New York hotel and was subsequently accused by many other women of similar behaviour<sup>1</sup>; or the former president, Colonel Gaddafi, whom a jour-

## Continued from page 4

absence amounting to tens of thousands of clinical specialists which impacts on the health, lives and livelihood of the working class as a whole. (cf: the hundreds of deaths attributed to ‘failings’ in maternity care.<sup>4</sup>)

So this is not just an issue for the ‘junior’ doctors or even other sectors within the NHS such as porters, cleaners, nurses, technical and admin staff, etc, who are also under the same cosh as and are often in struggle at the same time. The trade unions proclaim that “Unity is Strength” but any common struggle is buried by their divisive strategy, an historical product of the development of capital but one which is rigorously enforced by these very same unions which have an historic strength in the UK, despite, or more accurately, because of being in the service of the capitalist state for over a century.

The division of workers by trade, by sector, by seniority, by geography, sometimes even within the same building, leads to a fragmentation of struggles! In the absence of workers creating their own mass meetings and assemblies, with delegates charged with extending the fight and revocable at any time, the planning and execution of strikes is left the hands of the trade unions who strictly enforce all the state’s rules and regulations (like those prohibiting ‘secondary picketing’).

The effectiveness, dynamic and possibilities of real unity and self-organisation are severely curtailed when they are not sabotaged in the name of ‘negotiations’ before strike movements have even taken off. Workers are effectively carved up by the state, robbed of the active support of their

analyst, Mémona Hintermann, testified had attempted to rape her during a stay in Libya in 1984 in exchange for an interview.

Indeed, from prehistoric times to the present day, women have always been exploited as sexual objects or commodities in class-based societies. Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and August Bebel in *Women and Socialism* clearly demonstrated and denounced the exploitation of women by men in all class-based societies characterised by patriarchal domination. However, as successive modes of production and exploitation fell into decline, the ideological superstructures tended to disintegrate further, driving the declining ruling classes towards even more ‘deviant’ and sick behaviour.

This was particularly evident with the decline of the English aristocracy in the 18th century. Its libertinism and depravity are a recurring theme in the work of the painter William Hogarth. In France, during the same period, particularly under the cynical Regency of Philip II of Bourbon between 1715 and 1723, the loosening of morals and the success of the ‘fêtes galantes’ at the Palais-Royal bear witness to the same phenomenon. This phenomenon was to continue under Louis XV and his favourites, former courtesans ennobled, and in a more discreet form with the vogue for ‘literary and artistic salons’.

However, under capitalism, the exploitation of women took on a new dimension with the commodification of the female body – a sort of second ‘historical defeat of the female sex’<sup>2</sup> – symbolised by the ‘golden age of brothels’ in the 19th century and the widespread practice of prostitution ‘in the service’ of armies on manoeuvres. Even though capitalism has, to some extent, mitigated the gender division of labour by integrating female workers into the production process, it fundamentally maintains the framework of women’s forced submission to men, particularly through marriage and their isolation within the nuclear family, summed up in Flora Tristan’s phrase, taken up by Marx and Engels: “woman is the proletarian of the man”.

Bebel, in particular, vehemently denounced 2. Engels describes the overthrow of matrilineal law in the Neolithic period as the “historic defeat of the female sex”.

comrades; and the trade unions are the instruments used to achieve this. It’s illustrative that workers employed by the British Medical Association, the trade union ‘representing’ the doctors, have themselves been obliged to launch strike action over pay – a struggle that ‘their own’ union has kept strictly separate from that of the doctors!

This wholly intentional isolation of workers in struggle is highlighted by a second movement in GB which has stood out from the rest – that of the 14-month long struggle (with all-out strike action for over a year) by 400 or so bin-men, refuse workers, in the ‘second city’ of the country, Birmingham, governed by what is said to be the largest local authority in Europe. The Labour Party-controlled council has gone to extraordinary lengths (including at one point declaring itself bankrupt, and at another calling in military planners while firing and rehiring staff at lower wages, using the courts to criminalise the strike and hiring scab labour) to spearhead an attack on its workers in a manner that can be replicated throughout the country. This includes speed-ups, job losses and wage cuts up to the value of £8000 a year.

The Birmingham drivers and loaders have militantly tried to oppose these further degradations of wages and conditions but have come up against not just the frontal attacks of the bosses but the ‘solidarity’ proposed by ‘their’ union, Unite, which has maintained a rigid ‘cordon sanitaire’ around them, refusing to extend the strike by involving any of its other 1.2 million members. Instead, Unite has staged three, day-long ‘mega-pickets’ at which various unions and politicians declared their purely verbal and verbose support and has announced the strike (now in effect a lock-out) is to be extended to September.<sup>5</sup>

5. On April 27, some 11 days before local council elections, Birmingham Authority (Council) and the Unite Union announced a ‘deal’ to settle the strike on which the workers would be voting.

the hypocrisy of bourgeois society during capitalism’s ascendant phase, particularly within the great bourgeois families: “In marriage, a woman is bought and becomes the legal property of her husband. [...] If marriage represents one side of the sexual life of the bourgeois world, prostitution represents the other. The former is the front of the coin, the latter its reverse”<sup>3</sup>. In fact, capitalist relations not only perpetuate but accentuate the role of women as sexual objects who effectively become the private property of men to the extent that they are reduced to the function of a tool in the service of male desire and impulses. Working-class women, in particular, and especially in the context of their exploitation at work, are forced, under the constant threat of unemployment and of being reduced to destitution and poverty, to stoop to enduring every humiliation.

## A symbol of the rotteness of capitalism

Of course, prostitution, rape and paedophilia have ‘always existed’ in class-based societies. But this exploitation takes on an even more extreme, abject and widespread form as the capitalist system sinks deeper into its historic crisis. Prostitution has now taken on unimaginable industrial proportions, as has the exploitation of women and children in pornography. Ultra-violent sex slavery networks have exploded, capitalising on the growing destitution and isolation of young girls. Pornography, increasingly vile and cruel, has become widely normalised, even among the youngest. It is estimated that one in eight women today has been raped or sexually assaulted before the age of 18, the vast majority within the family and in war zones, where the figure soars to one in four! This museum of horrors is endless. Whilst the bourgeoisie has nothing left to offer but war, destitution and widespread chaos, the rotteness of all its social structures is having far-reaching effects, including on a moral level: “All these signs of the social putrefaction which is invading every pore of human society on a scale never seen before, can only express one thing: not only the dislocation of 3. Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, “Women in the Present”.

Workers who have placed the organisation of the struggle in the hands of ‘their’ unions have bitter experience of the isolation and defeat that results: the 1984/85 miners’ strike demonstrated that long, drawn-out, isolated strikes, with workers who suffer the same attacks separated from each other by police outside and unions inside the movement, are a means the exhaust the workers’ fighting spirit. 100 years since the trade unions sabotaged the UK General Strike, these are lessons that must be widely appropriated: the organisation and extension of the struggle – crucial to push back the attacks – is absolutely the task the workers can absolutely not left in the hands of the unions.

## Capitalism offers only lies, austerity and war – the working class can offer another world

But workers in Britain, facing struggles right here, right now, are not on their own.

Crucially, there’s the reality that they are part of a class – a world working class – with nothing to lose but its chains and a world to win. And this working class has a history rich in hard-won lessons as well as the unique perspective of a co-operative, classless future which is both possible and absolutely necessary. Throughout its history, as well as facing up to immediate problems, the proletariat has also and always produced political minorities – sometimes in the form of parties, sometimes as fractions, intransigently internationalist and with the task of lighting “the general line of march” using the marxist method.

But time isn’t on the side of the workers. Already, many of our children can’t find jobs; our health, transport, water and other ‘services’ are crumbling. Already the talk of conscription and sacrifice is on the agenda. Already inflation erodes our meagre benefits and pay – and the worst of capitalism’s insoluble economic crisis is ahead of us. The inflationary consequences of the global in-

bourgeois society, but the destruction of the very principle of collective life in a society devoid of the slightest project or perspective, even in the short term, and however illusory”<sup>4</sup>.

Whilst this phenomenon affects all strata of society, it takes on extreme forms amongst the bourgeoisie, for whom access to such practices is greatly facilitated by the dominant position of its members. Thus, all forms of corruption are growing and flourishing within the bourgeoisie, particularly within the political apparatus, as evidenced by the wave of scandals sweeping most countries, on a scale and to an extent never seen before. Mirroring the growing gangsterisation of political and economic institutions, riddled with corruption and links to mafia circles, Epstein, an utterly unscrupulous individual trained behind the scenes of the Wall Street stock exchange, ceaselessly resorted to power plays, blackmail, threats and intimidation, both against his extremely wealthy ‘clients’ or ‘patrons’ – whom he constantly blackmailed by amassing compromising files – as against his victims, carefully targeted and selected from among the most fragile or vulnerable, coming from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or having experienced difficult family circumstances (drugs, alcoholism, prostitution, sexual abuse, etc.).

It is no coincidence that Trump, the spearhead of populism, himself linked to mafia circles, was an accomplice of Epstein: “Many women have already claimed that Trump raped them at various events or beauty pageants. It is also known that Trump paid to silence the two women who accused him of having illicit relations with him: porn star Stormy Daniels and former Playboy playmate Karen McDougall. [...] His association with Epstein is also well known; Epstein was accused of rape, abuse and, above all, international child trafficking. He appears with Trump in dozens of photographs. Finally, Trump was also found guilty of thirty-four counts of falsifying business records, which came to light during the investigation into the payments made to Stormy Daniels”<sup>5</sup>

But why is so much media attention being devoted to this case? There is, of course, an ideological exploitation of this media campaign. There is an element of settling scores between rival bourgeois factions: some seeking to discredit Trump’s ‘authoritarian, dictatorial, fascist’ policies and attempt to impeach him; others, in the MAGA camp, seeking to fuel their delusional theories about a vast conspiracy hatched by ‘elites’...

But it is also about fuelling a campaign in defence of ‘democracy under threat’, polarised around the false opposition between populism and anti-populism. On the one hand, this is a dangerous trap set for the working class to divert it from its struggles. At the same time, this campaign serves to divert attention from capitalism’s inexorable descent into barbarism: the horror of the exploitation of women and children is reduced to a single individual, Epstein, and is presented as something that could be resolved through ‘more democracy’, more ‘transparency’, more ‘justice’. By focusing attention on individuals, the bourgeoisie seeks to conceal the fact that behind these despicable figures, the real culprit is decaying capitalist society. It is trying to prevent people from realising that to put an end to all these horrors, we must put an end to this system. **Wim, 28 February 2026**

4. “Theses on decomposition” (May 1990).

5. How can we explain the chaos of bourgeois politics? International Review 174

crease in arms spending and the wars bleeding the populations of Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Iran, Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and Sudan can only produce further massive lay-offs and shortages of all kinds in GB, the US and in the rest of Europe.

As well as attacks on its living standards, the working class is being faced with a seemingly bewildering barrage of political ‘choices’: for or against ‘immigration’; for or against Reform or

# Should revolutionaries put forward the slogan of ‘revolutionary defeatism’?

Faced with the gravity of the international situation and the escalation of the barbarity of war, it is the responsibility of revolutionaries to stimulate the working class to become conscious of the historic stakes at play, to grasp the dynamics of the balance of forces between the classes and the consequences for its struggle, and to develop reflections on the goals of its struggle. With the perspective of defending the principles of the Communist Left, the question therefore arises as to what analyses and orientations the various groups within the proletarian political milieu are putting forward to orientate workers’ struggle.

## The importance of proletarian debate

Public meetings, such as those organised by the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) on 7 March and by the ICC on 21 March, in Paris and other cities around the world, provide forums for proletarian debate where the analyses and arguments of different revolutionary groups can be compared. We therefore agree with the following emphasis in the ICT’s assessment: “We consider these spaces for discussion, reflection and debate to be essential in a period fraught with dangers for the working class, not only to compare the viewpoints and opinions of militants and sympathisers of the Communist Left, but also to offer a political opening to those newly interested in the proposals of revolutionary internationalist minorities”.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the debate was conducted in a fraternal spirit not only amongst proletarian groups, but also with the other participants,<sup>2</sup> notably young people interested in the positions of the Communist Left, particularly on the central question of war and how revolutionaries and the working class must respond, for, as the ICT emphasised, “a consensus quickly emerged regarding the catastrophic and barbaric prospect towards which capitalism is leading us”.<sup>3</sup>

During the debate, significant differences emerged regarding the method of analysis and its implications for the proletariat’s struggle. On the assessment of the dynamics of war, the majority of the groups present asserted that the world was heading “towards a third world war”, whilst the ICC, going against the current, maintained that: “we are heading towards a proliferation and generalisation of conflicts across the world, against a backdrop of growing chaos, ultimately threatening to destroy humanity”. The debate centred on the appropriateness today of the slogan of ‘revolutionary defeatism’, that is, the desire of the proletariat in each country to see its own bourgeoisie defeated in order to facilitate the struggle for its overthrow. In reality, the promotion of this slogan reveals not only ambiguities regarding genuine internationalism, but above all erroneous views concerning the implications of the current dynamics of capitalism and the present balance of forces between the classes.

## An ambiguous slogan from the start...

The slogan of ‘revolutionary defeatism’ was certainly put forward by Lenin during the First World War. However, he was then seeking to “respond to the sophistries of the ‘centrists’, who while being ‘in principle’ against any participation in imperialist war, advised that you should wait until the workers in the ‘enemy’ countries were ready to enter into struggle against the war before calling on workers in ‘your’ country to do the same. In support of this position, they put forward the argument that if the workers of one country rose up before those in the opposing countries, they would facilitate the imperialist victory of the latter. Against this conditional ‘internationalism’, Lenin replied very correctly that the working class of any given country had no common interest with ‘its’ bourgeoisie. In particular, he pointed out that the latter’s defeat could only facilitate the workers’ struggle, as had been the case with the Paris Commune (following France’s defeat by Prussia)

1. “Bilan of the 7 March 2026 public meeting”, published in French on Leftcom.org.

2. Communist Left groups present: ICT, PCI-Le Prolétaire and PCI-Cahiers Internationalistes, the ICC. Plus one militant from the CNT-SO.

3. “Bilan of the 7 March 2026 public meeting”, op cit

and the 1905 revolution in Russia (which was beaten in the war with Japan). From this observation he concluded that each proletariat should ‘wish for’ the defeat of ‘its’ bourgeoisie. This last position was already wrong at the time, since it led the revolutionaries of each country to demand for ‘their’ proletariat the most favourable conditions for the proletarian revolution, whereas the revolution had to take place on a world-wide level, and above all in the big advanced countries, which were all involved in the war.”<sup>4</sup>

Rosa Luxemburg was already criticising Lenin’s erroneous position in this respect, even though she, too, sometimes succumbed to the logic of this sort of ‘reverse patriotism’. It is, however, no coincidence that in her *Junius Pamphlet* she concludes with the far clearer slogan from the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848: “Workers of the world, unite!” and not with the slogan of “revolutionary defeatism”. Moreover, “with Lenin, the weakness of this position never put his intransigent internationalism in question (we can even say it was precisely his intransigence which led to the error). In particular, Lenin never had the idea of supporting the bourgeoisie of an ‘enemy’ country - even if this might be the logical conclusion of his ‘wishes’.”<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the nationalist vision of the revolution contained in the slogan of “revolutionary defeatism” was subsequently exploited on numerous occasions “by bourgeois parties draped in ‘communist’ colours, in order to justify their participation in imperialist war. Thus, for example, after the signing of the Russo-German pact in 1939, the French Stalinists suddenly discovered the virtues of ‘proletarian internationalism’ and ‘revolutionary defeatism’, virtues they had long ago forgotten and which they repudiated no less rapidly as soon as Germany launched its attack on the USSR in 1941. The Italian Stalinists also used the term ‘revolutionary defeatism’ after 1941 to justify their policy of heading the Resistance against Mussolini.”<sup>6</sup> A lesson must be drawn from this: “any slogan addressed to this or that sector of the proletariat, attributing it with tasks that are distinct or different from those of other sectors, is ambiguous and can easily be turned against the working class”.<sup>7</sup>

Lenin would hardly ever put forward this slogan again after February 1917, favouring instead that of “transforming the imperialist war into a civil war”. Moreover, the slogan of “revolutionary defeatism” contains yet another major drawback, highlighted after the First World War, which underscores how much it tends to turn its back on true internationalism: “The old schema of revolutionary defeatism, which held that the defeat of one’s own government is favourable to the development of the revolution, as well as containing an inherent ambiguity about the need to oppose all governments in a situation of war, has been demonstrably refuted by the fact that the division between victorious and defeated nations creates deep divisions in the world proletariat, as was most clearly seen in the wake of the 1914-18 war.”<sup>8</sup>

## ... an aberration today

The current dynamics of global capitalism bear no resemblance whatsoever to those within which the slogan of ‘revolutionary defeatism’ was first raised. Today, it does not in any way tend towards the formation of blocs with a view to a third world war, or even the mobilisation of tens of millions of proletarians at the front, but on the contrary towards the explosion of imperialist ‘each against all’ and the proliferation of chaotic and barbaric wars, within the framework of a capitalist society in decay. Nor are we in a situation of profound physical and ideological defeat for the working class, but in a context where workers are attempting, albeit not without difficulties, through their economic struggles, to develop their autonomy

4. See our Polemic: The proletarian political milieu faced with the Gulf War, *International Review* 64 (1991).

5. Ibid

6. Ibid

7. Ibid

8. Report on the class struggle for 26th ICC Congress *International Review* 174 (May 2025)

and class consciousness.

The proletariat is returning to the path of struggle and is indeed emerging from its torpor, particularly since the movements that erupted in Britain in 2022 during the ‘*Summer of Discontent*’, under the slogan ‘*Enough is enough!*’. The momentum set in motion, which continued in 2023 in France, the United States and across the globe, marks a ‘rupture’<sup>9</sup> with the relative passivity of the past thirty years, signifying a tendency to once again express a fighting spirit and a conscious effort enabling the gradual reclaiming of a lost class identity. This slow, bumpy, difficult process is certainly marked by obstacles, but, to paraphrase Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution*, it indicates “a molecular process”, that is to say, a tendency still in the making, leading towards a necessary politicisation and the affirmation of a long-term perspective of revolutionary struggle. And in this respect, resistance in response to the economic attacks linked to the crisis of overproduction, against the war economy, but also against the ideological campaigns demanding sacrifices, is indeed a real step forward, even if still fragile. In short, the stakes of the current dynamic and the challenges they pose to the working class are considerable, but they are not those of a world war to which the slogan of ‘revolutionary defeatism’ claimed to respond.

In reality, this framework of analysis defended by the ICC is neither strange nor original. It refers to the ‘classical’ analysis as developed by Marx and Engels in their time (and partly by Rosa Luxemburg), which held that the proletariat’s revolutionary struggle would arise from the economic collapse of capitalism and not from war between capitalist states: “No, war does not create the most favourable conditions for the generalisation of the revolution. Contrary to the thesis on war which implies the view of an extremely rapid progression which surprises the bourgeoisie (on the Russian model), the revolution emerges, as Luxemburg said at the founding congress of the German CP, as a long and painful process, full of false starts, advances and retreats in the struggle. It is in this process that the conditions mature for generalisation, the raising of consciousness and the capacity for self-organisation. Revolutionaries must cease making their impatience a point of reference and learn to work in the long term, as reality dictates. [...] The conditions for generalisation can be found in the crisis itself. The inevitable submersion of capitalism in a deeper and deeper crisis creates the inexorable march towards the generalisation of the struggle, the condition for the opening of the revolution on a global level and for its final victory.”<sup>10</sup>

From such a perspective, ‘revolutionary defeatism’ is no longer merely a mistaken slogan, completely beside the point; it immediately opens the door to leftist positions. In fact, this slogan allows, the bourgeoisie and its leftists to embody imperialist aims, sometimes coupled with another slogan, that of ‘national liberation struggles’, a fig leaf for imperialist enterprises and the massacres of populations, as during the Cold War and the first Gulf War in 1990, when this slogan enabled the Trotskyists to defend Saddam Hussein’s Iraq against ‘US oppression’. Similarly, it remains one of the slogans used to justify nationalist support for ‘oppressed Palestine’ in the conflict pitting the Palestinian bourgeoisie against that of Israel.

The ICT, moreover, uses a similar lexicon, albeit ambiguously, though it does so to defend a necessary ‘fraternisation among the oppressed’.<sup>11</sup> While the ICT and the PCI do not support one bourgeois camp against another, advocating “revolutionary defeatism” on the erroneous basis of differences in national situations between countries obscures any clear distinction from the deceptions of the leftists and their tainted “internationalism”. For these organisations, the erroneous use of the slogan of ‘revolutionary defeatism’ illustrates the danger of a mechanical and blind

application of old formulas from the past. The ICT and PCI are incapable of taking into account in their analytical framework today’s historical situation, the balance of forces between the classes that it entails, and the actual material situation of the working class, particularly in the central capitalist countries, which the comrades consider to be “still heavily marked by the weight of the counter-revolution”<sup>12</sup>

While war and militarism are indeed at the heart of the current situation and the defence of proletarian internationalism remains unquestionably a principle to be upheld, unlike in the past, the development of the next revolutionary wave will not arise from a world war, nor in any case from fraternisation across the fronts as advocated in a recent PCI article.<sup>13</sup> The revolution has its origins in the deepening economic crisis: “the bourgeoisie’s demand for sacrifice in the name of boosting the machinery of war will certainly encounter serious resistance from an undefeated working class. The class movements that characterise the rupture re-affirm the centrality of the economic crisis as the main stimulant of the class struggle. But at the same time, the proliferation of war and the increasing cost of the war economy, above all in the main countries of Europe, will be an important factor in the future politicisation of the struggle, in which the working class will be able to make a clear link between the sacrifices demanded by the war economy and the growing attacks on its living standards, and eventually to integrate all the other threats coming from decomposition into a struggle against the system as a whole.”<sup>14</sup> And in this sense, the most consistent slogan remains that of Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*: “Workers of the world, unite!” *WH*, 4 April.

12. ICT Introductory remarks to public meeting

13. PCI, War in Ukraine. The “Clear Tendency” in the murky quagmire of national defence and realpolitik

14. Resolution on the international situation *International Review* 174 (November 2025)

Continued from page 5

## Strikes in Britain

Labour, Greens or Tories, woke or anti-woke; Palestine or Israel... the ideological divisions are presented as problems to be solved by workers, as individuals, as sides to be joined or fought against, according to which hucksters hog the media microphones and megaphones, always with the idea of waving the Union Jack, ‘saving the country’, of pursuing ‘what’s best for Britain’. But what’s best for the country always implies the worst for the working class.

There’s a pressing need for the working class to rediscover its real traditions and the lessons of previous defeats and to reappropriate and develop its organisational as well as its political abilities: the economic struggle is a political matter! But acknowledging the reality that the workers are one class, a revolutionary class which holds the future in its hands, can be a source of immeasurable strength faced with immediate issues as well as illuminating the path beyond them. *KT* 28/4/2026

Continued from page 8

## 80 years ago, the founding of the Gauche Communiste de France (Part 2)

### II- The GCF's contribution to understanding the decline of capitalism

Many of the fundamental issues raised by the defeat of the revolutionary wave and the experience of the Third International had been only sketched out by the Italian Fraction. The latter had left them largely as open questions rather than conclusions capable of being unequivocally integrated into the programme of the communists. By engaging in genuine collective work, through internal debates (or with other groups) and the profound contributions of its militants, the GCF achieved significant advances, particularly in deepening the understanding of the decadence of capitalism. Building on the analytical framework established by the Communist International as early as 1919 (*"the era of wars and revolutions"*), the GCF was able to extend and enrich the thinking developed by the Italian Fraction during the 1930s. The 1945 report on the international situation, to which we have already referred, provided an extremely profound clarification of two fundamental questions: the nature of imperialist war and that of state capitalism.

From the very beginning of the 20th century, the revolutionary movement had highlighted that militarism and imperialist war constituted the most significant manifestation of the capitalist mode of production entering its phase of historical decline. This change of historical period entailed a fundamental shift in the causes of war, to which the GCF made a decisive contribution:

*"In the epoch of ascendant capitalism, wars (whether national, colonial or of imperial conquest) represented an upward movement that ripened, strengthened and enlarged the capitalist economic system. Capitalist production used war as a continuation by other means of its political economy. Each war was justified and paid its way by the opening up of a new field for greater expansion, assuring further capitalist development.*

*In the epoch of decadent capital, war, like peace, expresses this decadence and greatly accelerates it.*

*It would be wrong to see war as negative by definition, as a destructive shackle on the development of society, as opposed to peace, which would then appear as the normal and positive course of development of production and society. This would be to introduce a moral concept into an objective, economically determined process.*

*War was the indispensable means by which capitalist opened up the possibilities for its further development, at a time when such possibilities existed and could only be opened up through violence. In the same way, the capitalist world, having historically exhausted all possibility of development, finds in modern imperialist war the expression of its collapse. War today can only engulf the productive forces in an abyss, and accumulate ruin upon ruin, in an ever-accelerating rhythm, without opening up any possibility for the external development of production.*

*Under capitalism, there exists no fundamental opposition between war and peace, but there is a difference between the ascendant and decadent phases of capitalist society (and in the relation of war to peace), in the respective phases. While in the first phase, war had the function of assuring an expansion of the market, and so of the production of the means of consumption, in the second phase, production is essentially geared to the means of destruction, ie to war. The decadence of capitalist society is expressed most strikingly in the fact that, while in the ascendant period, wars had the function of stimulating economic development, in the decadent period economic activity is essentially restricted to the pursuit of war.*

*This does not mean that war has become the aim of capitalist production, since this remains the production of surplus value, but that war becomes the permanent way of life in decadent capitalism<sup>9</sup>.*

This analysis has proved entirely valid: since that time the world has witnessed over a hundred armed conflicts causing at least as many deaths

as the Second World War. This spiral of war has even intensified considerably over the last four decades, as evidenced by the current bloodshed in both Ukraine and across the Middle East.

In March 1946, the GCF adopted the 'Theses on the Nature of the State and the Proletarian Revolution'<sup>10</sup>; this document constituted a further significant contribution, particularly regarding the role of the state in the period of decadence and the proletariat's position towards it. The Communist International had already recognised the omnipresent role of the state in all spheres of society, and particularly in the economic sphere. The *Manifesto* of the First Congress of the CI in March 1919 clearly argued that *"the nationalisation of economic life, against which capitalist liberalism protested so vehemently, is a fait accompli. A return, not to free competition, but even to the dominance of trusts, syndicates and other capitalist octopuses, is now impossible"*. This prediction was fully borne out in the following decades, and especially after the crisis of 1929, which reminded the bourgeoisie that the state's takeover of the management of national capital had become an unavoidable and permanent necessity. The preparations for war during the 1930s and, even more so, the ruin of almost all the world's major industrial centres by 1945, further accelerated this general trend towards state capitalism. It was therefore through a rigorous examination of the dynamics of capitalism since the First World War that the GCF was able to demonstrate that *"State capitalism is not an attempt to resolve the essential contradictions of capitalism as a system of exploitation of labour power, it is the expression of these contradictions. Each group of capitalist interests attempts to push the effects of the crisis of the system onto a rival group, by taking it over as a market and as a field of exploitation. State capitalism is born out of the necessity for a given group of capital to concentrate itself and take hold of external markets. The economy is thus transformed into a war economy"*.<sup>11</sup>

Here again, the GCF's analysis and predictions have been fully confirmed, since the ever-increasing role of state capitalism over the last 80 years has in no way counteracted the deepening of capitalism's historic crisis. On the contrary, it has been a powerful factor in exacerbating the system's contradictions<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, armed with a much clearer and deeper understanding of the general and permanent characteristics of the period of capitalism's historical decline, the GCF was also able to resolve key questions for the revolutionary struggle, the main ones being as follows:

During the period of capitalism's ascendancy, trade unions were organisations that enabled the development of the struggle on the economic front. In the period of decline, they constitute organs fully integrated into the bourgeois state, which the workers have to oppose in their struggles.

Whilst during the 19th century, national liberation struggles and colonial independence could form part of the proletariat's tactics, in the period of capitalist decline such demands can only push the working class to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie.

On the question of the state in the transitional period, the GCF continued the line of thought of *Bilan by defending* the idea that the dictatorship. <https://en.internationalism.org/content/1585/pamphlet-period-transition>:

Basic Texts 1: THESES ON THE NATURE OF THE STATE AND THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION (1946). See also Marc Chirik and the state in the period of transition, *International Review* 168

11. *Internationalisme* 1952: The evolution of capitalism and the new perspective [9], *Internationalisme* 46, summer 1952, republished in *International Review* 21

12. Within the scope of this article, it is not possible to explore the question of state capitalism in greater depth. For this, see the following references:

- *The Decadence of Capitalism*, ICC pamphlet. <https://en.internationalism.org/pamphlets/decadence>

- 'Economic Crisis: The State, capitalism's last bastion', *Révolution Internationale* No. 339, October 2003.

- Report on the pandemic and the development of decomposition, *International Review* 167

9. Report on the international Situation, Gauche Communiste de France, July 1945. Extracts published in 50 years ago: The real causes of the Second World War, *International Review* 59

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ship of the proletariat must be exercised through its specific organs (the councils), distinct from those of the state. This is a crucial position subsequently defended and developed by the ICC.

It was with the same rigour that the GCF continued to defend to the very end the only credible alternative facing the working class in the aftermath of the Second World War: *"Under the current conditions of capital, generalised war is inevitable, and even less so its triumph. The revolution represents only one branch of the alternative that its historical development now imposes upon humanity. If the proletariat fails to attain a socialist consciousness, this will open the way to a course towards barbarism, some aspects of which can already be discerned today."* Here too, the GCF guarded against all dogmatism. Unlike Bordiga, who, during the same period, declared that *"the revolution is as certain as if it had already taken place"*, the GCF argued, on the contrary, that the path to communism would still be very long, strewn with gigantic obstacles, and would require immense efforts on the part of the working class.

In the third part, we shall discuss the GCF's contribution to the question of the party and its relations with the class, as well as the reasons that led to its dissolution in 1952. **Vincent, 13 April 2026**

# 80 years ago, the founding of the Gauche Communiste de France (Part 2)

## Keeping alive the spark of revolutionary organisation

In the first part of this series<sup>1</sup>, we showed that the Gauche Communiste de France (GCF - Communist Left of France) was formed in the continuity of the Left Fraction of the Italian Communist Party and the International Communist Left. In the midst of the counter-revolution, it remained the only organisation capable of defending the organisational principles of the Communist Left in a coherent and uncompromising manner. But this group was not merely a continuation of the Italian Fraction; it did not content itself with preserving the acquisitions and the political contribution produced by *Bilan*. Without neglecting its responsibilities regarding intervention in the immediate struggles of the working class, the GCF devoted a great deal of its energy to the work of political and theoretical clarification. On numerous questions raised by the experience of the defeat of the revolutionary wave and the degeneration of the Communist International, this organisation was able to provide clearer and more profound answers, thereby enriching the theoretical and programmatic framework upon which the ICC was founded and on which it still relies today.

### I – In the aftermath of the war, understanding the historical course: the defence of the marxist method

The outbreak of workers' struggles against the war in Italy during 1943, followed a year later by strikes in Germany, posed the following question to the revolutionary vanguard: did the workers' reactions in these two countries hold the prospect of the emergence of a revolutionary process similar to that which had emerged from 1917 onwards in Russia? Such was, initially, the hypothesis of the various groups and organisations of the Communist Left. In August 1943 in Marseille, the Italian Fraction of the Communist Left held a conference, attended by the French Nucleus of the Communist Left<sup>2</sup>, during which the analysis was put forward that events in Italy had opened up a pre-revolutionary phase. However, subsequent events were to contradict this approach. The struggles of 1943 had not forced the Italian bourgeoisie to end the war, as had been the case in Russia in 1917 or in Germany in 1918. Nor did they constitute the first 1.80 years ago, the founding of the Gauche Communiste de France (Part 1), World Revolution 405

ripples that were to provoke a new international revolutionary wave. The terrible massacres perpetrated in the various workers' strongholds by both the Allied and Nazi armies, as well as the powerful anti-fascist and democratic campaign following the 'liberation' of Europe, demonstrated the global bourgeoisie's ability to learn the lessons of the previous revolutionary wave by crushing any attempt to extend the struggle and workers' solidarity beyond borders<sup>3</sup>. By firmly grounding itself in the foundations of the marxist method and the political acquisitions of the Communist International and the International Communist Left, the French Fraction was able to draw the implications of the evolving situation. The report on the international situation adopted at the July 1945 conference (just two months after the end of the war in Europe and when the conflict had not yet ended on a global scale) revised the organisation's initial position by clearly demonstrating that the balance of forces in the aftermath of the Second World War was not favourable to the proletariat: "Unlike the first imperialist war, where the proletariat, once it had engaged in the course towards revolution, retained the initiative and forced global capitalism to end the war; in this war, from the very first sign of revolution in Italy in July 1943, it was capitalism that seized the initiative and relentlessly pursued a civil war against the proletariat, forcibly preventing any concentration of proletarian forces, and refusing to end the war, even after the collapse and disappearance of the Hitler government and Germany's insistent demand for an armistice, in order to safeguard itself, through a monstrous bloodbath and a merciless pre-emptive massacre, against any hint of a revolutionary threat from the German proletariat". Realising that the working class's reactions against the war had not brought the period of counter-revolution to an end, the GCF concluded that the time was absolutely not ripe for the formation of a party. This was in clear contrast to the position defended by the Italian Left, grouped within the *Partito Comunista Internazionale* (PCInt), which, unable to grasp the significance of the situation and obsessed with seeking immediate influence within the class, persisted in repeating the old schema inherited from the past in order to better justify the wholly mistaken path of party formation<sup>4</sup>. In the 3.1943: The Italian proletariat opposes the sacrifices demanded for the war, International Review 75

series of articles entitled 'Current Problems of the Workers' Movement', published in the journal *Internationalisme* during 1947, the GCF engaged in a fraternal yet uncompromising polemic to criticise the sterile and deleterious course on which the Italian Left had embarked: "The absence of any serious analysis of the events of recent years and of the forces which, through their presence or absence, have determined the course of events in a profoundly reactionary direction, is currently the striking feature of revolutionary militants and of groups which consider themselves to be in the vanguard. The habit of applying schema drawn from the past to new, real-life situations that arise has, in a sense, freed militants from the concern of having to engage in studies that seem tedious and tiring to them. What is the point, they ask themselves, of analysing and studying the present situation, when, according to their schema, they know what it ought to be. All that remains for them is to know how to apply the appropriate tactics... and to organise the agitation effectively."<sup>5</sup> The schematism and superficiality of the PCI's analysis were in reality a reflection of the poverty of political life and the absence of debates and discussions within the 'party' itself: "The PCI [of Italy] is currently the organisation where theoretical and political discussion is least prevalent. The war and the post-war period have raised a host of new problems. None of these problems has been or is being addressed within the ranks of the Italian Party. One need only read the party's writings and newspapers to realise their extreme theoretical poverty. When one reads the minutes of the Party's founding conference, one wonders whether this conference took place in 1946 or 1926."<sup>6</sup> Yet, as the GCF asserted, "no period in the history of the workers' movement has so thoroughly overturned established assumptions and raised so many new problems as this relatively short 20-year period between 1927 and 1947, not even the period from 1905 to 1925, however turbulent it may have been. Most of the fundamental theses that formed the basis of the CI have become outdated and obsolete."<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, the political approach of the "Parti-5. 'La Gauche communiste et le processus d'élaboration du programme', Internationalisme n° 18 (1947) 6. Against the concept of the "brilliant leader", Internationalisme, August 1947, published in English in International Review 33 7. *ibid*

to" openly turned its back on the basic responsibilities that the vanguard of revolutionaries must assume, as defined in the Communist Manifesto of 1848:

"The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement".

For the GCF, whilst revolutionary organisations were duty-bound to defend the still-valid political gains inherited from a century of experience within the workers' movement, this did not mean reciting lessons well learnt from history books whilst assuming that history repeats itself in an unchanging manner. On the contrary, by adopting the method of critical analysis established by Marx and Engels as early as the mid-19th century, the GCF intended to tackle the new questions posed by the post-war situation with the same spirit as the International Communist Left in the 1930s, "without taboos or ostracism":

"Against the idea that militants can only act on the basis of certainties, even if they are founded on false positions, we insist that there are no certainties but only a continual process of going beyond what were formerly truths. Only an activity based on the most recent developments, on foundations that are constantly being enriched, is really revolutionary. In contrast, activity based on yesterday's truths that have already lost their currency is sterile, harmful and reactionary. One might try to feed the members with absolute certainties and truths, but only relative truths which contain an antithesis or doubt can give rise to a revolutionary synthesis.

If doubt and ideological controversy are likely to disturb the activity of militants, one can't see why this should only be valid today. At each stage in the struggle, the necessity arises to go beyond the old positions. At each moment acquired ideas and positions that have been taken up have to be verified and thrown into doubt. We are thus in a vicious circle: either we think and don't act, or we act without knowing whether our action is based on adequate reasoning"<sup>8</sup>.

8. *ibid*

Continued on page 7

## Political positions of the ICC

**World Revolution** is the English language paper 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*.