



workers of the world, unite!

# world revolution

## *Faced with crisis and austerity* **The working class is raising its head all over the world!**

After decades of attacks and a retreat in the class struggle, the strikes that erupted in Britain last June are demonstrating a clear change of mood inside the working class: “Enough is enough!” Moreover, the huge demonstrations against the pension reform in France and the multiplication of strikes and demonstrations all over the world confirm the reality of a real rupture, with workers refusing to put up with the current barrage of attacks any longer. Faced with inflation, redundancies, “reforms”, precarious work, and the continuous degradation of living and working conditions, the working class is making its response.

### **The working class is regaining its fighting spirit internationally**

**In France**, thinking it would bury the movement quickly, the bourgeoisie is facing a widespread mobilisation and a deep and lasting anger.

**In Spain** massive mobilisations continue to take place against the collapse of the health care system and the worsening of working conditions, with struggles and strikes across different sectors.

**In Germany**, public sector workers and postal workers are demanding pay increases. The transport sector has been paralysed by a “*mega streik*” and the situation is becoming more serious in the wake of ongoing negotiations between the employers and the IG Metall union, which is having to contain a growing anger.

**In Greece**, the working class has expressed its indignation in an explosive way following a railway accident that cost the lives of 57 people, revealing the shortages of funding and personnel and the cynicism of the government that wanted to absolve itself of the responsibility for massive and deadly budget cuts and place the blame on a station master.

**In Denmark**, strikes and demonstrations broke out against the abolition of a public holiday in order to finance the increase in the military budget for the war effort in Ukraine.

As these social conflicts are so widespread and present on all continents, a much longer list could have been compiled.

Gradually, the division between exploiters and exploited, which the bourgeoisie had claimed to be obsolete, is becoming visible to the workers, even if it is still quite embryonic. The deepening economic crisis, in an increasingly fractured world, is producing a more and more brutal exploitation of labour power; and, in response, the struggles are promoting solidarity and reflection. Faced with

working conditions whose clear injustices have become simply unbearable, workers, whether in the public or private sector, blue or white collar, behind a cash register or a desk, in the factory or on the dole, are beginning to recognise themselves as victims of the same system, sharing a common destiny in struggle. In short, workers are taking their first steps towards recognising themselves as a social class, the working class, without yet being really conscious of it.

But if many countries on all continents are affected by this profound wave, it is still unevenly spread, with very different levels of mobilisation and consciousness. The current situation is in fact fully confirming the distinction that must be made, politically and qualitatively, between the old proletariat of the central countries, notably Western Europe, and that of its class brothers and sisters in the countries of the periphery. As we’ve seen in China or Iran, the lack of historical experience of the struggle, the presence of more important intermediate social layers, and the more marked weight of democratic mystifications, puts the workers in the latter regions more at risk of becoming submerged within the anger of petty-bourgeois and highly pauperised intermediate layers, or even of getting embroiled behind a bourgeois faction, exposing themselves to repression, as the situation in Peru has shown.<sup>1</sup>

If the struggles are leading to a slow re-emergence of class identity, it’s in Western Europe that this is most clearly on a class terrain where we are seeing a greater development of consciousness, certainly still weak, but more advanced in its slogans and methods of struggle. Here the maturation of consciousness is taking the form of the emergence of minorities in search of proletarian political positions and in the reflection which is growing more widely within the working masses.

The proletariat is thus taking its first steps in a movement of resistance against the growing barbarism and the brutal attacks of capital. Whatever the immediate results of this or that struggle, whether victories (always provisional as long as capitalism has not been overthrown) or failures, the working class is today opening the way for other struggles all across the world. Spurred on by the deepening crisis of capitalism and its disastrous consequences, the working class in struggle is leading the way!

1. See our article on the situation in Peru, en.internationalism.org



**Protest of UCU members in front of the union headquarters**

### **A race to the bottom as capitalism plunges into crisis and chaos**

The historical responsibility of the revolutionary class in the face of the dangers that the capitalist system poses to the whole of humanity (climate change, war, nuclear threats, pandemics, extreme pauperisation...) is becoming more urgent and dramatic. The capitalist world is plunging into an increasingly bloody chaos, and this process is not only accelerating sharply, but is now visible for all to see.<sup>2</sup>

Already one year of war and massacres in Ukraine! This barbaric and destructive conflict continues with endless fighting, as shown by the deadly mobilisation around Bakhmut, testimony to a tragic stalemate. By accumulating ruins at the gates of Europe, this conflict has already succeeded in surpassing the human losses of the “Red Army” soldiers killed during the ten-year war in Afghanistan (from 1979 to 1989). For both sides, estimates already put the death toll at at least 300,000!<sup>3</sup> The murderous insanity in Ukraine

2. Including to the bourgeoisie who, in the “Global Risks Report” for the last Davos forum, exposed in a very lucid way the catastrophe towards which capitalism is dragging humanity.  
3. The UN has even revealed the facts about summary executions in both camps.

reveals the ugly face of decadent capitalism, in which militarism permeates every fibre of its being.

After the terrible seismic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, against a background of chaos, crisis of overproduction, shortages and massive indebtedness, this war in Ukraine has only reinforced the worst effects of the decomposition of the capitalist mode of production, leading to a phenomenal acceleration of the putrefaction of society.

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# The war in Ukraine is fuelling barbarism and chaos around the world

More than a year already of appalling carnage; hundreds of thousands of soldiers massacred on both sides; more than a year of indiscriminate bombings and executions, murdering tens of thousands of civilians; more than a year of systematic destruction turning the country into a gigantic field of ruins, while the displaced populations number in the millions; more than a year of huge budgets sunk into this butchery on both sides (Russia is now committing about 50% of its state budget to the war, while the hypothetical reconstruction of the ruined Ukraine would require more than 400 billion dollars). And this tragedy is far from over.

In terms of imperialist confrontations, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine was also an important qualitative step in the sinking of capitalist society into war and militarism. It is true that since 1989, various warlike ventures have shaken the planet (the wars in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria...), but these had never involved a confrontation between major imperialist powers. The Ukrainian conflict is the first military confrontation of this magnitude between states to take place on Europe's doorstep since 1940-45. It involves the two largest countries in Europe, one of which has nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction and the other is supported financially and militarily by NATO, and has the potential to result in a catastrophe for humanity.

Beyond the indignation and disgust provoked by this large-scale carnage, it is the responsibility of revolutionaries not to limit themselves to general and abstract condemnations, but to draw the main lessons of the Ukrainian conflict in order to understand the dynamics of imperialist confrontations and to warn the workers about the exacerbation of chaos and the intensification of military barbarity.

## Offensive of US imperialism exacerbates chaos

While Russia invaded Ukraine, a major lesson of this year of war is undoubtedly that behind the protagonists on the battlefield, US imperialism is on the offensive.

Faced with the decline of its hegemony, the US has been pursuing an aggressive policy to defend its interests since the 1990s, especially towards the former leader of the rival bloc, Russia. Despite the commitment made after the disintegration of the USSR not to enlarge NATO, the Americans have integrated all the countries of the former Warsaw Pact into this alliance. In 2014, the 'Orange Revolution' replaced the pro-Russian regime in Ukraine with a pro-Western government and a popular revolt threatened the pro-Russian regime in Belarus a few years later. Putin's regime responded to this strategy of encirclement by employing its military strength, the remnant of its past as a bloc leader. After Putin's 2014 takeover of Crimea and Donbass, the US began arming Ukraine and training its military to use more sophisticated weapons. When Russia deployed its army to Ukraine's borders, they tightened the trap by claiming that Putin would invade Ukraine while assuring that they themselves would not intervene on the ground. By means of this strategy of encircling and suffocating Russia, the United States has pulled off a masterstroke that has a much more ambitious goal than simply halting Russian ambitions: \* As of now, the war in Ukraine leads to a clear weakening of Moscow's remaining military power and a lowering of its imperialist ambitions. It also demonstrates the absolute superiority of US military technology, which is the basis for the "miracle" of "little Ukraine" pushing back the "Russian bear"; \* The conflict also allowed them to tighten the screws within NATO, as European countries were forced to fall in line with the American position, especially France and Germany, which were developing their own policies towards Russia and ignoring NATO, which French President Macron considered to be "brain dead" until two years ago; \* The primary objective of the Americans in teaching Russia a lesson was undoubtedly an unequivocal warning to their main challenger, China. For the past ten years, the United States has been defending its leadership against the rise of the Chinese challenger: first, during the Trump presidency, through an open trade war; but now

the Biden administration has stepped up the pressure militarily (the tensions around Taiwan). Thus, the conflict in Ukraine has weakened China's only important military ally and is putting a strain on the New Silk Road project, one axis of which passed through Ukraine.

While a polarisation of imperialist tensions has gradually emerged between the US and China, this is the product of a systematic policy pursued by the dominant imperialist power, the US, in an attempt to halt the irreversible decline of its leadership. After Bush senior's war against Iraq, Bush junior's polarisation against the "axis of evil" (Iraq, Iran, North Korea), the US offensive today aims to prevent any emergence of major challengers. Thirty years of such a policy have not brought any discipline and order to imperialist relations. On the contrary, it has exacerbated every man for himself, chaos and barbarism. The United States is today a major vehicle for the terrifying expansion of military confrontations.

## The intensification of every man for himself and of tensions

Contrary to superficial journalistic statements, the development of events shows that the conflict in Ukraine has by no means led to a "rationalisation" of the contradictions. In addition to the major imperialisms, which are under pressure from the US offensive, the explosion of a multiplicity of ambitions and rivalries accentuates the chaotic and irrational character of imperialist relations. The accentuation of the American pressure on the other major imperialisms can only push them to react: \* For Russian imperialism, it is a question of survival because it is already obvious that, whatever the outcome of the conflict, Russia will emerge clearly diminished from the adventure which has exposed its military and economic limits. It is militarily exhausted, having lost two hundred thousand soldiers, especially among its most experienced elite units, as well as a large quantity of tanks, planes and modern helicopters. It is economically weakened by the enormous costs of the war and the collapse of the economy caused by Western sanctions. While the Putin faction is trying by all means to keep power, tensions are arising within the Russian bourgeoisie, especially with the more nationalistic factions or certain "warlords" (eg Prigozhin, leader of the Wagner Group of mercenaries). These unfavourable military and unstable political conditions could even lead Russia to resort to tactical nuclear weapons. \* The European bourgeoisies, especially France and Germany, had urged Putin not to go to war and were even prepared, as Boris Johnson's indiscretions revealed, to endorse a limited attack in scale and time to replace the regime in Kiev. Faced with the failure of the Russian forces and the unexpected resistance of the Ukrainians, Macron and Scholz had to sheepishly adhere to the US-led NATO position. However, there is no question of submitting to US policy and abandoning their own imperialist interests, as illustrated by the recent trips of Scholz and Macron to Beijing. Moreover, both countries have sharply increased their military budgets with a view to a massive reequipment of their armed forces (a doubling for Germany, i.e. 107 billion euros). These initiatives have also raised tensions in the Franco-German couple, particularly over the development of joint arms programmes and over the EU's economic policy. \* China has positioned itself very cautiously in relation to the Ukrainian conflict, in the face of the difficulties of its Russian "ally" and the thinly veiled threats of the United States towards it. For the Chinese bourgeoisie, the lesson is bitter: the war in Ukraine has shown that any global imperialist ambitions are illusory in the absence of a military and economic force capable of competing with the US superpower. Today, China, which does not yet have armed forces equal to its economic expansion, is vulnerable to American pressure and to the surrounding war chaos. Of course, the Chinese bourgeoisie is not giving up its imperialist ambitions, in particular the reconquest of Taiwan, but it can only make progress in the long term, by avoiding giving in to the numerous American provocations ("spy" balloons, banning of the TikTok application...) and by carrying

out a broad diplomatic charm offensive aimed at avoiding any international isolation: reception in Beijing of a large number of heads of state, Iranian-Saudi rapprochement sponsored by China, proposal of a plan to stop the fighting in Ukraine.

On the other hand, the imperialist every man for himself is causing an explosion in the number of potential conflict zones. In Europe, the pressure on Germany is leading to dissension with France and the EU has reacted with anger to the protectionism of Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, seen as a real declaration of war on European exports to the US. In Central Asia, the decline of Russian power goes hand in hand with a rapid expansion of the influence of other powers, such as China, Turkey, Iran or the US in the former Soviet republics. In the Far East, the risk of conflict persists between China on the one hand and India (with regular border clashes) or Japan (which is massively rearming), not to mention the tensions between India and Pakistan and the recurrent ones between the two Koreas. In the Middle East, the weakening of Russia, the internal destabilization of important protagonists such as Iran (popular revolts, struggles between factions and imperialist pressures) or Turkey (disastrous economic situation) will have a major impact on imperialist relations. Finally, in Africa, while the energy and food crisis and war tensions are raging in various regions (Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Western Sahara), aggressive competition between imperialist cultures is stimulating destabilisation and chaos.

## Explosion of the irrationality of militarism

A year of war in Ukraine has underlined above all that capitalist decomposition accentuates one of the most pernicious aspects of war in the epoch of decadence: its irrationality. The effects of militarism are, in fact, becoming ever more unpredictable and disastrous, regardless of initial ambitions: \* the United States fought both Gulf Wars, as well as the war in Afghanistan, to maintain its leadership on the planet, but in all these cases the result was an explosion of chaos and instability, as well as streams of refugees; \* whatever the objectives of the many imperialist vultures (Russian, Turkish, Iranian, Israeli, American or European) who intervened in the horrific Syrian or Libyan civil wars, they inherited a country in ruins, fragmented and divided into clans, with millions of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries or to the industrialised countries. The war in Ukraine is an exemplary confirmation of this: whatever the geostrategic objectives of Russian or American imperialism, the result is a devastated country (Ukraine), an economically and militarily ruined country (Russia), an even more tense and chaotic imperialist situation in the world, and still millions of refugees.

## Contrary to superficial journalistic statements, the development of events shows that the conflict in Ukraine has by no means led to a "rationalisation" of the contradictions. In addition to the major imperialisms, which are under pressure from the US offensive, the explosion of a multiplicity of ambitions and rivalries accentuates the chaotic and irrational character of imperialist relations

The increasing irrationality of warfare implies a terrifying expansion of military barbarity across the globe. In this context, ad hoc alliances can be formed around particular objectives. For example, Turkey, a member of NATO, is adopting a policy of neutrality towards Russia in Ukraine, hoping to use this to ally itself with Russia in Syria against the US-backed Kurdish militias.

However, and contrary to bourgeois propaganda, the Ukrainian conflict does not lead to a regrouping of imperialisms into blocs, and therefore does not open the dynamics towards a third world

war, but rather towards a terrifying expansion of bloody chaos: important imperialist powers such as India, South Africa, Brazil and even Saudi Arabia clearly retain their autonomy from the protagonists; the bond between China and Russia has not tightened, on the contrary; and while the US is using the war to impose its views within NATO, member countries such as Turkey or Hungary are openly going it alone while Germany and France are trying in all sorts of ways to develop their own policies. Moreover, the leader of a potential bloc must be able to generate trust among the member countries and guarantee the security of its allies. China, however, has been very cautious in its support for its Russian ally. As for the United States, after Trump's "America First" approach, which had chilled the "allies", Biden is basically pursuing the same policy: he is making them pay a high energy price for the boycott of the Russian economy, whereas the United States is self-sufficient in this area, and the "anti-China" laws will hit European imports hard. It is precisely this lack of security guarantees that led Saudi Arabia to conclude an agreement with China and Iran. Finally, as a major obstacle to a dynamic towards a third world war, the proletariat is not defeated and ideologically mobilised in the service of the nation in the central industrialised countries, as illustrated by the current struggles in various European countries. An ideological weapon capable of mobilising the proletariat, such as fascism and anti-fascism in the 1930s, does not exist today.

## The war in Ukraine is stirring up the other dimensions of the "polycrisis"

The situation is all the more delicate because the "Ukrainian crisis" does not appear as an isolated phenomenon but as one of the manifestations of this "polycrisis", the accumulation and interaction of health, economic, ecological, food and war crises, which characterises the twenties of the 21st century. And the war in Ukraine constitutes in this context a real multiplier and intensifier of barbarism and chaos at the global level:

*"The aggregation and interaction of these destructive phenomena produces a 'vortex effect' (...) it is important to stress the driving force of war, as an action deliberately pursued and planned for by capitalist states."* In fact, the war in Ukraine and its economic repercussions have favoured rebounds in Covid (as in China), accentuated the rise in inflation and recession in various regions of the world, provoked a food and energy crisis, caused a setback in climate policies (nuclear and even coal-fired power stations are back in operation) and led to a new influx of refugees. Not to mention the ever-present risk of bombing nuclear power plants, as still seen around the Zaporizhzhia site, or the use of chemical, bacteriological or nuclear weapons.

In short, one year of war in Ukraine highlights how it has intensified the "great rearmament of the world", symbolised by the massive military investments of the two great losers of the Second World War, Japan, which has committed 320 billion dollars to its army in 5 years, the biggest armament effort since 1945, and above all Germany, which is also increasing its defence budget.

As an obviously deliberate product of the ruling class, the carnage in Ukraine clearly illustrates the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. However, the feelings of impotence and horror generated by the war do not favour the development of a proletarian opposition to the conflict today. On the other hand, the significant worsening of the economic crisis, and the attacks against workers which directly result from it, is pushing the latter to mobilise on their class terrain to defend their living conditions. In this dynamic of renewed struggles, warlike barbarism will eventually constitute a source of awareness of the bankruptcy of the system, which today is still limited to small minorities of the class. **R. Havanais, 25 March 2023**

1. The term is used by the bourgeoisie itself in the Global Risks Report 2023 presented at the World Economic Forum in January 2023 in Davos.  
2. "The 20th of the 21st century: The acceleration of capitalist decomposition poses the clear possibility of the destruction of humanity", *International Review*, No. 169 (2022).



# In France as elsewhere... The same struggle! The same class struggle!

*“An increasingly violent mobilisation” (The Times), “a fire that fascinates and destroys” (El Pais), “Fire in front of Bordeaux town hall” (Der Spiegel).*

The clashes between black bloc groups and the police in the demonstrations against pension reform made the headlines in many newspapers in Europe and elsewhere. Similarly, the foreign media also relayed videos of burning rubbish bins, broken windows, projectiles or grenades thrown, skilfully made to look like a real apocalypse. While the movement against pension reform in France has been blacked out until now, the foreign media has suddenly woken up from its torpor to completely distort what has been happening in the streets of all French cities since the middle of January.

Reducing the social movement to destructive riots, which are in fact very minor and marginal, has always been the exercise that the media relish in trying to discredit the struggle. The echo of the struggle in France against the pension reform among the working class in Italy, the UK or Germany has only accentuated the zeal of the bourgeoisie to convey these big lies.

## The struggle against pension reform: just a riot?

Very far from the few gatherings of “arsonists” (of rubbish bins), millions of people have been marching, week after week, in lively demonstrations, determined to fight and to push back this attack. The government’s activation on 16 March of Article 49.3 of the Constitution, allowing the adoption of the law without a vote of the deputies, followed, a few days later, by a contemptuous intervention by Macron comparing the demonstrators to “thugs” similar to the hateful and vociferous troops of Trump or Bolsonaro, have even further strengthened the anger and the will to make the government back down.

On the ninth day of mobilisation on 23 March, between 2 and 3 million people gathered. Employees, pensioners, unemployed, high school and university students ... Everyone was in the streets to shout out their continuing refusal to be exploited until the age of 64. The indiscriminate acts of violence by a few hundred members of black blocs, which are broadcast on the news and relayed internationally, have absolutely nothing to do with the very nature of this movement.

These sterile and useless acts serve precisely as a pretext for the CRS, BRAV-M and other guardians of “order” for the exploiters to inflict repression and make terror reign. All this is done with the aim of dissuading workers from joining the demonstrations and preventing rallies and discussions.

For all that, the strategy of sapping the movement through violence, knowingly orchestrated by the government, has not paid off for the moment. The massiveness and determination of the demonstrators over the next two days even led parts of the global bourgeoisie, through the Council of Europe or the UN, to warn Macron and his government against the “*excessive use of violence*”, as the death of one demonstrator could have a resounding impact on the whole proletariat in Western Europe.

Thus, despite the provocations, the multiple traps set by the government, the unions and all the other forces of the bourgeoisie, the struggle in France continues! The massiveness, combativity and solidarity remain intact. This is a matter of concern for parts of the French bourgeoisie who, faced with the isolation and the intransigence of Macron and his government, are resolutely seeking a way out<sup>1</sup>.

## An international movement of struggles

The scale of this movement is such that it is inspiring workers in several countries. In Italy, we ask ourselves why “nobody lifted a finger” when the retirement age was increased to 67 in 2011? Why didn’t we refuse to be further exploited as workers in France are doing today? Striking trans-

port workers in Germany have openly claimed to be inspired by the movement in France. The same was true in the UK and the Czech Republic, also in relation to pensions. Thus, far from being a specificity of “Gallic intractability”, the struggle against the pension reform becomes an active factor in the development of the combativity and the reflection of the working class at the international level.

Why is this so? Because it is the whole working class in the world that is affected by inflation, government attacks, the degradation of living conditions, the intensification of exploitation in the workplace.

This is why the “*enough is enough*” chanted in the UK for months by workers in many sectors, the “*ça suffit!*” of demonstrators in France, the reaction of workers in Greece following a railway accident<sup>2</sup> are all part of the same international movement of anger and discontent: Spain, Germany, Greece, South Korea, Mexico, China, Italy ... everywhere strikes and demonstrations, everywhere the same struggle to defend themselves against the worst effects of the crisis of capitalism.

As the international echo of the struggle in France shows, an embryo of links between workers that goes beyond borders is gradually emerging. These reflexes of solidarity are the exact opposite of the capitalist world divided into competing nations and constantly praising the cult of the fatherland! On the contrary, they recall the rallying cry of the working class since 1848, that of the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels: “*Proletarians have no homeland! Proletarians of all countries, unite!*”

Thus, the current struggles are the most favourable ground for the realisation that “we are all in the same boat”, as the demonstrators in Greece

2. “In Greece as well, workers’ combativity and solidarity” available on the ICC website (March 2023).

# Police violence and confronting the cops... the bourgeoisie will use all the means at its disposal to undermine the struggle!

Faced with the determination of the workers in France, the bourgeoisie is coming up with all kinds of tricks and traps: shameful provocations by the government, false hopes in an “institutional” way out or “social dialogue” ... from left to right, the bourgeoisie does all it can to drive the struggle into a dead-end. In recent weeks, it’s been the overt violence of the police that has been put to maximum use and relayed across the world by the media.

Police violence and provocations are classical methods for maintaining order. After vainly counting on workers becoming exhausted by repeatedly losing a day’s pay, Macron and his government are now instrumentalising the blind and sterile violence of the black blocs. This allows them to deliberately orchestrate a whole enterprise of police provocation and repression against all the demonstrators and striking workers.

For example: at the demonstrations of 28 March, everything was done to make sure the marches turned into massive and violent confrontations with the forces of order. First of all there were the verbal provocations by Macron, which portrayed the demonstrators as a horde of thugs. Then, shocking videos and recordings inundated social media, showing cops assaulting, intimidating and humiliating demonstrators, especially the youngest ones. Finally, a number of these young people found themselves in a life-threatening situation at Saint-Soline, hurt by military weapons, after which the emergency services were forbidden by the local authorities from stepping in and helping. These provocations were intolerable and there was a huge risk that feelings towards the forces of order would not stop at slogans like “every-one hates the police!” but would turn into chaotic street battles and burning barricades.

recently insisted. Even if it is still a very fragile and confused process, all these struggles allow us to become aware little by little that it is possible to fight as a united and collective force, as a class, as the world working class!

If combativity and massiveness alone have not been able to make the bourgeoisie back down, the mere fact of experiencing collective struggle, of measuring the deadlocks, of confronting the traps set by the bourgeoisie and of being able to reflect on them in order to draw lessons from them is already a victory and an additional step for future struggles: “*Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers*”<sup>3</sup>.

## How to extend and develop the struggle?

Every week, in the marches, slogans are expressed such as “*You say 64, we’ll give you 68 again*”, “*March 2023 is the new May 68*”. Similarly, the struggle against the CPE in 2006 is on everyone’s mind<sup>4</sup>. These experiences from the history of the working class are very precious for the development of struggles. They form a compass allowing the class to find the path of extension and unity of the struggle.

In 1968, the proletariat in France forced the government and the unions to agree on higher wages through massive walkouts and the spread of general assemblies in factories and other workplaces.

In 1969 and 1972, the miners in the UK also managed to create a balance of power favourable to the working class by being able to break out of the corporatist logic through the extension of the struggle: by the dozens and hundreds, they had gone to the ports, steelworks, coal depots, power

3. Marx and Engels, “Communist Manifesto” (1848).  
4. Even if they do not have the same meaning, nor the same historical significance as May 68.

stations, to blockade them and convince the workers there to join them in the struggle. This method, which became famous as “flying pickets”, expressed the collective strength, solidarity and unity of the working class.

In 1980, the working class in Poland shook the bourgeoisie in all countries by gathering in huge general assemblies and electing strike committees (the MKS), deciding on demands and actions of struggle, with the constant concern to expand the struggle.

In 2006, it was the general assemblies organised by the students and open to all (workers, unemployed, pensioners...) that were the lungs of a struggle which, faced with its dynamic extension, forced the Chirac government to withdraw the First Employment Contract (CPE).

All these movements show that the working class can push back the attacks and make the ruling class back down as soon as it is really able to take control of its struggles in order to extend them and unify them on the basis of common demands and means of action.

The media blackout on the massive scale of the struggle in France, like the ultra-publicised demonisation of minority violence, aims precisely at preventing the proletariat from reconnecting with this past, allowing it to become aware of its strength. That’s why today, the development of real places of debate, such as sovereign general assemblies open to all, must be defended as a means of action, as the means par excellence to reflect on how to develop and unify struggles. The reappropriation of the lessons of past struggles is a fundamental milestone in this process and, more broadly, in the recovery of the consciousness of belonging to one and the same class, carrying within itself the strength to overthrow the capitalist order. **Vincent, 7 April 2023**

other, split up by sector, profession, category, each one behind its own banner, contained by the unions with their sound systems in order to prevent any real discussion or any initiatives not orchestrated by them. The other side of this coin is provided by the left parties and the bourgeois media who try to inject more ideological poison into the workers’ heads – aimed at making us think that the unions really do defend the workers, but also that there could be a “police at the service of the people”, respectful of the rule of law, acting within the framework of “irreproachable ethics”. These are lies. The unions, like the police, are state organs. They are fundamentally servants of this organ whose role is to be the spearhead of the defence of capitalist order and exploitation.

The class struggle has nothing to do with the blind, minority violence which has been expressed in some confrontations with the forces of repression, any more than it can maintain any illusions in a supposedly more humane and democratic capitalism.

The strength of the working class resides in its collective, massive struggle, the soil in which can grow the consciousness of being a revolutionary class, capable of imposing a real balance of force against the ruling class. It’s not about burning dustbins or chasing a pack of CRS down the street. The bourgeoisie is well aware of this and this is why it seeks by all available means to prevent workers from developing this understanding by provoking reactions of blind anger which serve to blow off steam and which it is perfectly capable of manipulating in its own interests. **Vincent, 10.4.23**

1. For weeks, the unions have been reaching out to the government to try to calm the movement. But for the moment the government remains inflexible.



# Northern Ireland: An advance by US imperialism and a headache for the British bourgeoisie

The Windsor framework is a post-Brexit legal agreement made by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on February 27 this year, ostensibly over trade relations between the mainland and Northern Ireland. The deal, which has been affirmed by the Council of the European Union and accepted by a 515-29 vote in Parliament, was recommended by Sunak as “*Safeguarding sovereignty for the people of Northern Ireland*” In fact it is the opposite which is the case as the agreement significantly strengthens US imperialism’s long-term aim for a “United Ireland”. The deal contains lots of minute detail about the movement of goods between the mainland and Northern Ireland and protections for the EU’s Single Market. It also includes giving sops to the Unionists in the form of a “Stormont brake” which, by political necessity, is a virtually incomprehensible procedure very unlikely to be used. The agreement will replace the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill 2022/23, a “cunning wheeze” of the Johnson clique aimed at unilaterally and illegally overriding the Northern Ireland Protocol divorce agreement made by the EU and the UK in 2019, the purpose of which was to stabilise the American-imposed Good Friday Agreement (GFA) signed in 1998 by Britain and Ireland, an agreement voted against only by Unionists<sup>1</sup>.

Since the beginnings of capitalist decadence around the outset of the 1900s and its expression of full-blown, global imperialism – the permanence of war and preparation for war – the American ruling class has had its eyes set on and its policies directed towards Irish reunification. From that time, and still today, the policy of the United States in regard to Britain was first to overtake it as the major world power by dint of its imperialist and economic force and then to dismantle the British Empire piece by piece while appropriating to itself monies, gold, businesses, trade routes, influences, armies, territories and islands that once belonged to Britain. In true Mafia style it’s the most loyal lieutenants that the Godfather bleeds the most. Thus the real “special relationship” between America and Britain is one of imperialist force and, in general, the “Irish question” has reflected that trend during most of the 20th century.

US influence over Ireland, or “Shamrock Diplomacy” as it’s called, mostly by the British media, is now playing a significant role in post-Brexit US/British relations, including threats by the former to block any further trade deal between the two. The Irish-American lobby in Washington has never been so strong and so powerfully used by the American state.

US pressure for a united Ireland, reflecting its role as the new superpower, began in 1917, just after President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany, and reached a high point in a full-floor discussion in Congress, March 1919, calling on the US delegation at the Versailles peace talks to “*make Irish self-determination an urgent matter*”.<sup>2</sup> Ireland’s 1920’s/30’s neutrality, and its flirtation with the Nazis, made things difficult for the US but by the 1970’s and 1980’s the US was coming out in the open over its support for Irish nationalism, along with covert discussions going on with the IRA. And in the latter years, Brexit, which has immeasurably weakened the British state, has resulted in a manipulated groundswell of US agreement to defend the 1998 GFA. In the meantime, an Anglo-US trade deal is ruled out by both Democrat and Republican elements. But it is the Democrats in particular that see Brexit and its proponents as a maverick attempt to undermine US “order”.

Early in June 2021, *The Times* reported that the US administration had reprimanded Britain over its row with the EU regarding the Northern Ireland Protocol, saying that it was “*inflaming tensions*”.<sup>3</sup> According to the report the US ad-

ministration issued a rare *demarche* against the UK, which in diplomatic terms is the equivalent of a hefty kick up the arse signalling further intent; subsequent US denials about this can be taken with a pinch of salt. Partly in response to this, and after Sinn Féin won the most seats in the May 2022 election to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Unionist DUP<sup>4</sup> upped the ante: it refused to accept the vote and shut down the Assembly in protest about the direction the talks on the Protocol were taking. This stymied a working Northern Ireland Assembly, which is essential for US plans. Since then and up to today, despite the power-sharing GFA, Northern Ireland has been under direct rule from Westminster, a situation that is clearly unacceptable to the US which sees a working Assembly as a vehicle towards a united Ireland; and herein lies the tussle between the US and Britain, and definitely not in the movement of sausages from Barnsley to Belfast.

### Brexit further weakens British imperialism

It was the election of the Truss faction to government<sup>5</sup> that gave the US administration the perfect excuse to act swiftly and decisively on the Irish Question. Rishi Sunak, a Fulbright and Stanford scholar, employed by Goldman Sachs in America, and a United States citizen while he was Britain’s Chancellor, was the administration’s preferred candidate for Prime Minister after the greatly distrusted Boris Johnson was deposed. And in her turn Truss and her clique had to go and go they rapidly did on the back of what was effectively

4. Since the 1998 power-sharing agreement the Assembly at Stormont has been suspended on five occasions, including from 2002 to 2007 by the withdrawal of the Unionists and from 2017 to 2020 when Sinn Féin withdrew; and latterly it has been shut down for around a year since the Unionists withdrew over the Protocol. For a deeper analysis of the ICC’s position on the role of the factions involved in Ireland and the latter’s historical framework see the ICC’s polemic with the CWO (Communist Workers’ Organisation) on this issue: “Imperialist Conflict or capitalist ‘peace’?” in *World Revolution* 241.  
5. “Truss resignation shows the real nature of Britain’s ‘special relationship’ with the US”, ICCOnline Concerned about the incendiary policy of the Truss cult for the class struggle – and thus US-imposed acquiescence from its “allies” - the US took full advantage of Britain’s weaknesses to impose its own “solution.”

political and financially driven regime-change engineered by the ruling Democratic Party through the American-dominated IMF. It was a bloodless “coup”, resulting in the shedding of only a few tears and a big financial hit.

Trying to “take back control” through Brexit, i.e., the UK making its own way despite the demands of the American state and the EU, has been a disaster for Britain. It is a result of this declining power being buffeted by the storms of capitalist decomposition and this is firmly evidenced in the rise to power of both the populist and irrational Johnson and Truss cliques. The “trade deals” made by Britain in its new Brexit “freedom” has been one-sided and costly for it, reflecting the weakness of the UK’s negotiating position. And all the while the high-cost, low-wage British Isles, less and less able to deliver sufficient health care and floundering in its own sewage, is being circled by rival sharks and hovering vultures – and these are just its allies.

On the back of this weakness the US government has taken advantage of the situation to push home its agenda over Ireland. The Biden administration has certainly had many important issues and events to manoeuvre and manage over the last couple of years but, throughout this period, Ireland is one that it has brought to the fore with some political vigour. Despite the problems that Biden has had, his government has been on something of an unexpected roll recently and a subtly stage-managed trip to Ireland to move the “Peace Process” further forward will do the Democrats and Biden no harm in the run-up to the 2024 election. The danger from this is that the *Pax Americana* imposed by the US everywhere tends to bring in its wake even more chaos and instability, and Ireland will probably be no exception to this rule. However, it looks like Biden’s trip to celebrate 25 years of the GFA will go ahead (the US secret services have been reconnoitring in Ireland weeks before the British government’s invitation) and the appointment of Joe Kennedy III as “peace envoy”, from the dynasty that has always supported Irish reunification, send a clear message of US intent.

The instability at the imperialist level has reverberated throughout the domestic situation and impacted on the political apparatus of the British bourgeoisie, which has played the “Orange Card” once again; and the DUP, a minority of a minority in Northern Ireland, has obliged with its “No

surrender!” line and its threats to take months to consider the framework. DUP boss Sir Jeffrey Donaldson has said that it “*fell short of what his party could accept*”, while Downing Street has said that it wants to give the DUP the time that it needs to come to a conclusion. The DUP appears in no hurry despite Biden’s statement that this move is “*an essential step*” (*Reuters*, 27.2.23). This creates more problems for Sunak: can the British government continue to be complicit in the sabotage of the Northern Ireland Assembly in the face of the US offensive? Will it have to confront the DUP and override its veto? How will it get it back into the Stormont Assembly? When advocating the deal, Sunak gushed that it put Northern Ireland in a position that was “*most exciting ... unbelievably special ... unique in the entire world ... privileged access to the EU single market*” (*Daily Business*, 14 March). This statement of the benefits of the EU has raised some eyebrows, not only among political elements in Scotland and Wales; it has also caused further dissent and disquiet among the ranks of Tory MPs, particularly those that were already railing against the deal. All this shows the wider stakes involved in this political minefield for the British government.

The attack by paramilitaries on a senior policeman in Omagh at the end of February, probably by the dissident Republicans of the “New IRA” does, although a relatively isolated event, show the potential for what’s going on beneath the surface in this still militarised society that has been in effect a battleground for the imperialist rivalries of America and Britain for some time. And it also demonstrates that the de facto opposition to the Windsor framework is comprised of the Tory right, Ulster Unionism, and dissident Republicans. Against this, and in the face of the upcoming celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the GFA, and if everything goes to plan for the Americans, the working class in Ireland can expect to be inundated with a wave of pro-American Irish nationalism. And against this, it is important for the working class to retain the memory of its strikes and actions over the decades that have broken out of the sectarian prison, most lately exemplified by the massive 2019 Northern Ireland nurses’ and healthworkers’ strike which cut right across the religious divide and involved workers as workers fighting for their own interests. **Baboon, 26.3.23**

Continued from page 1

## Faced with crisis and austerity The working class is raising its head all over the world!

War and militarism, the climate crisis, disasters of all kinds, the disorganisation of the world economy, the rise of the most irrational ideologies, the collapse of state structures for health care, education and transport... this cascade of catastrophic phenomena seems not only to be dramatically worsening, but also to be sustaining itself, pushing the one against the other into a kind of deadly “whirlwind”, to the point of threatening civilisation with outright destruction.

Recent events only further confirm this dynamic: war also accentuates the already deep economic crisis. In addition to high inflation, fuelled by the arms race, there has been further turbulence in the banking sector in Europe and the United States, marked by the failure of banks including the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) in California and the rescue of Credit Suisse in a forced takeover by UBS. The spectre of a financial crisis once again hangs over the world; all this against a backdrop of heightened global disorder, unbridled competition, and merciless trade wars that push states into adopting policies with no foreseeable outcomes, precipitating fragmentation and disasters, not least the ones linked to global warming.<sup>4</sup> These disasters can only lead to further convulsions and a headlong rush into crisis, with unpredictable consequences.

4. At the end of March, in Spain, new “typical summer” fires have already forced the evacuation of 1500 people!



Demo in France against the pension reform

While the working class is returning to the terrain of the class struggle, the capitalist system can only plunge society into bankruptcy and destruction if it is not overthrown by the working class. These two poles of the historical situation will now collide with and confront each other much more in

the years to come. This evolution, in spite of its complex dynamics will, in the long run, reveal more clearly the only possible historical alternative: communism or the destruction of humanity!  
**WH, 5 April 2023**

1. For a concise history of Unionism and Irish nationalism with a link to the positions of leftism on the question, see: “Irish republicanism: weapon of capital against the working class” in *World Revolution* 231  
2. See this interesting piece: “How Brexit is leading a resurgent Irish American influence in US politics” on [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)  
3. “US reprimands UK over Northern Ireland protocol row”, on [www.politico.eu](http://www.politico.eu)



# The historic importance of the strike wave in the UK

Almost a year has passed since the strikes in the UK started. During the course of that year workers in Britain have reminded the world of their position at the birth of the workers’ movement, in the 1840s with the Chartists, the first political party of the working class, and later, with their leading role in the foundation of the First International. In the past 10 months workers in Britain have upheld that tradition and put themselves at the head of a new phase in workers’ struggle internationally.

## The strike wave heralds an international resurgence

The strike wave began only a few months after the start of the war in Ukraine, with its deafening campaign about the defence of democracy; but the ICC has always been confident in the capacity of the world working class, and was convinced that its fighting potential had not evaporated, and that it would, one day, return to the path of struggle – which is what happened in 2022. It’s the first time since the 1980s that the working class in Britain has clearly left its mark on the social situation.

The defeat of the miners’ strike in 1985, the dismantling of much heavy industry and of centres of class struggle like the mines and docks, the campaign about the ‘death of Communism’ after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, all these had for years confused and disorientated the working class in Britain. Any sense of class identity had virtually disappeared. This situation weighed heavily on the working class and reduced struggles to a historically low level. But this changed in 2022 with what the bourgeois media called the ‘Summer of Discontent’.

In the face of record-breaking inflation, workers embarked on struggles against the ‘cost-of-living crisis’. This was in spite of all the negative effects of the acceleration of social decomposition, a period marked by ‘each for himself’, despair, nihilism, the rejection of rational thought, the proliferation of violent crime, and most recently by the imperialist free-for-all exploding in the war in Ukraine. But none of this deterred workers in Britain from launching strikes, walkouts, demonstrations and other protests as part of a class-wide resistance against the attacks of the ruling class.

In 2022 more than 2.5 million working days were lost to strike action, more than any year since the end of the 1980s. The massive character of the struggles shows that what is taking place is not limited to a particular sector, or to the workers of a certain region, but is a struggle of the whole working class. The strikes demonstrate that decaying capitalism, as it exists in the UK today, no longer offers any perspective apart from growing poverty and the absolute degradation of living conditions. In the face of this worsening situation, the working class was no longer willing to accept it; and starting from the conviction that only by struggling together could gains be made, it developed the first expressions of collective action, of solidarity between different sectors, between “blue collar” and “white collar” workers, and between the different generations.

The strike wave also shows the first fledgling signs of a class regaining confidence in its own strength, and of a recovery of class identity among workers who are beginning to recognise that their struggle is part of a class movement that goes beyond disputes with individual employers. And if the present struggles are a direct response to the rising cost of living, they are also the product of three decades of maturation in the working class, of a new step in the loss of illusions in the capitalist system.

## Sabotage by the unions and the leftists

The bourgeoisie had not been passively waiting for the resumption of the struggles. In anticipation of a revival of working class combativity, it took precautions, for example with the emergence in 2021 of new, more militant union leaders, such as Mick Lynch and Sharon Graham, among others. These new leaders had to try to win the confidence of workers after years of anti-working class measures implemented with the help of the unions.

From the moment the strikes began in June 2022, the British bourgeoisie (government, opposition,

unions, etc.) mobilised all its forces and set up different obstacles to the struggles in order to avoid the coming together of striking workers beyond their own sector, their own region, their own company or their own office. Union-controlled pickets were used as barriers separating workers from one another. As we have pointed out *“Sending pickets to other workplaces and sectors and asking them to join the struggle, is illegal ‘secondary picketing’”*<sup>1</sup> The unions’ separation of workers was pushed to the extreme when pickets were sometimes less than a hundred metres apart and workers did not take the initiative to come together to unify their struggle. All strikes, walkouts and work stoppages were kept *“isolated from each other. Everyone in their own strike, in their own factory, their depot, their business, their part of the public sector. There is no real link between these struggles, even when it would be just a matter of crossing the street for the strikers from the hospital to meet those from the school or the supermarket opposite”*<sup>2</sup>

The bourgeoisie also made full use of the devolved governments in Scotland and Wales. The unions divided the struggle up between those in Scotland and those in England or between Wales and England. A good example was that of the Scottish government offering the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) a better pay deal than was offered in England and Wales. During the negotiations with the Scottish government, the RCN ‘paused’ the strikes, leaving nurses Scotland in a state of limbo, whilst nurses in England and Wales were on strike.

The left wing of the bourgeoisie has also been able to recuperate discontent in the class by pushing it towards the defence of public services. The day of protest on 11 March, for example, organised by SOS NHS, a coalition of more than 40 groups and some unions, mobilised thousands of workers from the health sector under the slogans *“This is a national emergency”* and *“Act now to save our NHS”*. The fight for better pay and working conditions of health care workers was turned into a call for Labour *“to reinstate the NHS as a fully public service”*, as Cat Hobbs, one of the organisers, said in her speech<sup>3</sup>.

In the last few months of the strike wave the call to unite the different struggles has become stronger, and unions have been compelled to create new organs, bringing together members of different unions, to mobilise and coordinate action at a rank-and-file level. *Socialist Appeal* were among those leftists who immediately supported this new union strategy and pleaded for *“cross-union strike committees that can ... mobilise and coordinate action at a rank-and-file level”*<sup>4</sup> between different striking sectors of the working class.

## Emerging protests by union members

As the strike wave advanced there have been several protests against proposed wage deals, organised by rank-and-file union organisations, in particular among university workers and health-care workers. In these two sectors we saw clear signs of a reaction against the readiness of the unions to make agreements with the bosses or the government.

A first example was the protest of 100 university workers who, after a call by the UCU Solidarity Movement, staged a demonstration outside the London headquarters of their own union (17 March 2023). Angry at a so-called “sell-out” by the union executive of their hard-fought dispute over attacks on their pay and pensions by their employers, they held up signs reading “no capitulation”,

A second example is the protest of the health-care workers against of the deal proposed by the National Health Service (NHS) and the unions. A cross-union group called NHS Workers Say No organised online calls, which were joined by hundreds of health workers from all the main unions.

1. ICC Online, “Union control reinforces divisions”  
2. See the ICC’s international leaflet, “How can we fight together in a massive, united movement?”, in *World Revolution* 395  
3. See our dossier of articles in ICC Online, “Solidarity with healthworkers striking in defence of their wages and conditions, not with their employer, the NHS”  
4. *Socialist Appeal* (The British section of the International Marxist Tendency): “After 1 February – Where next for the left?”



Protest outside union headquarters

It also issued a special bulletin, sent out to thousands of members of all the unions involved, in which it called on workers by #VoteReject to say no to the pay deal<sup>5</sup>.

A third example is from former senior members of the RCN who started a petition to hold a vote of no confidence in the RCN leadership. The intention of the petition was to enable members of the RCN to protest at the proposed pay deal and to force an extraordinary general meeting on the union leadership.

All these three examples show a growing questioning, and profound dissatisfaction with what the union leadership had done – but all within the framework of the unions.

However, the leadership of the National Education Union (NEU) was forewarned by the protests raised after the settlement for the healthcare workers and the university staff, and advised its members to vote against the wage deal it had reached with the Department of Education. The result was that the pay offer was rejected by 98% of the union members with new strikes on the horizon.

Ongoing reflection within the class

As we have seen for months in the UK, strikes are accompanied by discussion, which is a real and natural phenomenon during a strike wave. There can be no workers’ struggle without discussion. *“One of the big topics of debate on the picket lines, the demonstrations, and meetings afterwards was what will happen next”*<sup>6</sup> After the demonstration of 15 March intense discussions took place among members of the UCU around the next steps to take, with the result that a planned pause in the strikes was reversed.

After months of experiencing the unions’ divisive strategy, we can see an embryonic although confused process of reflection. At the same time workers also start to pose more fundamental questions such as “why are we still losing money in useless recurrent one day strikes?”; “are the unions simply just going to agree to a shit deal in the end, despite our struggle?” and, above all, “how do we get a struggle that unites all workers”.

But unions do all they can to prevent this questioning taking place. In response to the discontent exhibited by university workers in the UCU, *Socialist Worker* (9 February) proclaimed *“To win, workers must keep making their voices heard and seize control of their disputes. Workers in Liverpool have organised a city-wide strike committee—four branches—after picketing next Tuesday. Strikers everywhere should hold strike committees. They can be a crucial space, involving people beyond*

5. The preliminary result of this campaign is that the majority of the RCN members rejected the deal and new strikes have been announced, this time on a national scale and possibly in coordination with the junior doctors. Members of other unions might follow the example. Another confirmation that the strike wave still continues.  
6. “Action Now! Sign the petition to UCU”, an article from rank-and-file ginger group *Notes from Below*, (5/12/22).

*existing union structures, for debate and activity to take forward the strikes”*. This might seem very radical, especially the bit about “beyond existing union structures”, but these proposed committees are still “union structures”, new formations in the union framework, formed because of the perceived inadequacy of the existing structure.

## The preparation of future struggles

At the moment, following the acceptance of deals by unions in the rail and postal sectors in particular, the strike wave is showing some signs of decline, but that does not mean that the workers are defeated or that combativity in the class has diminished. On the contrary: together with strikes that still continue (health, civil service, education...) or restart we can see other expressions of struggle such as the growing protests against the union deals alongside a deeper reflection in the class. The latter is important in the attempt to find answers for the dilemmas that workers have been posed with in their struggles.

Leftist groups try to keep the activities of the workers within the union framework of course, and therefore tell them that they have to organise cross-union initiatives, on a rank-and-file level. This, it is claimed, would be a step forward in the struggle. But this is not the case. On the contrary, it is an outright trap. Such proposals tie workers even more to the unions, an apparatus of the bourgeois state embedded in the working class with no other purpose than to sabotage the class struggle from within.

Collective reflection and confrontation with the unions are a necessary phase in the creation of the best conditions for future struggles, which are inevitable, since, for the working class as a whole, the present strike wave has not brought any solution for the problems it is facing. But such activity cannot take place within the unions, which will do everything to sterilise reflection in the class and to sabotage any attempt to put criticism of the unions into practice.

Those militant minorities who recognise the need for the struggle to break out of the current divisions, and thus to be controlled directly by the workers, need to group together regardless of what sector they work in - both to discuss the lessons of the strikes so far and to spread their understanding more widely. In particular, it is vital to call for mass meetings, general assemblies open to all workers, where we can make decisions about how to sustain and extend the struggle, and where we can elect genuine strike committees responsible to the assemblies, not to the union machinery. **Dennis, 19 April 2023**



# How do you assess the general dynamic of a proletarian struggle?

“... as long as capitalism exists, there will be workers’ struggles. This was the case in the ascendant phase of capitalism. And also in the period of decadence (from about 1914 onwards) and this was true even during the period of counter-revolution. And even in the COVID period there were workers’ struggles, there were strikes in Italy, in the US, etc... So I ask myself: Are strikes in themselves, however positive, an indication of a general revival of the workers’ struggle? Can’t strikes sometimes be an expression of despair, of doubt? ... What are the criteria for determining that a particular workers’ struggle represents a genuine renewal of workers’ struggle, a struggle that offers a perspective?” (C)

The point raised by the comrade is crucial for the intervention of revolutionaries in the class struggle: how to identify the meaning of a struggle, “a struggle that offers a perspective”? Certainly, there are no absolute criteria for determining whether a particular strike represents “a general renewal of workers’ struggle”. However, one should beware of a purely empirical appreciation of such a movement, because in many cases appearances can be deceptive. To grasp its real significance, the analysis must go beyond superficial characteristics and start from a framework of evaluation that takes into account:

- First, the characteristics of the historical period in which it takes place: expansion or decline of capitalism, certainly. But, more importantly in today’s decadent capitalism, is it a period characterised by a global tendency towards counter-revolution or, on the contrary, by the opening of a course towards important class confrontations?
- Then, the appreciation of the balance of forces between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in a particular historical period: what is the dynamic of the class struggle at the level of its extension, unification or politicisation? What is the impact of the manoeuvres and ideological obstacles put in place by the bourgeoisie?
- Such a framework enables us to evaluate the development of the subjective factor within the class.

### Class struggle and historical period

In the present period of capitalist decadence, the general course towards defeat or, on the contrary, towards a strengthening of the proletarian movement, is a crucial reference point for evaluating the potentialities of a particular struggle, however radical it may appear at first sight. It makes it possible to take into account the level of consciousness in the mass of workers, beyond simple combativity or even the number of workers involved in the struggle.

Some historical examples demonstrate this. In May-June 1936, an immense wave of strikes and factory occupations swept across France: two and a half million workers from all sectors, private and public, and from all industries and services, launched themselves into struggle, so that Trotsky wrote on 9 June 1936 that “the French revolution has begun”. In reality, the proletariat was about to be enrolled behind the bourgeois ideology of anti-fascism - an ideology which was to lead it to defeat and war. This movement was situated in a general dynamic of struggle which was unfavourable.

After the defeat of the German Revolution and other massive movements in Western Europe, after the victory of Stalinism in Russia, the counter-revolution triumphed and class consciousness suffered a deep retreat among proletarians. Therefore, despite temporary gains such as wage increases, the 40-hour week and paid holidays, the 1936 movement quickly turned into a nationalist anthem and support for the Popular Front government, which would lead to a mobilisation of workers in preparation for the world war.

On 23 October 1956, students and young workers organised a demonstration in Budapest to express their solidarity with a workers’ uprising that had been bloodily repressed in Poznan in Poland. On the 25th, workers from all the industrial centres of Hungary joined the protests, went on strike and spontaneously formed workers’ councils: a spectacular development which seemed to

herald the beginning of a proletarian revolution. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, the proletariat, atomised by the Second World War, still remained globally mobilised behind the democratic or Stalinist ruling class. So, after the first mobilisations, the bourgeoisie was able to take advantage of the democratic illusions which undermined the workers’ consciousness. It was thus able to control the movement. On the 27th it installed a “progressive” government led by Imre Nagy, which immediately launched a counter-offensive by dismantling the hated security police, promising democratic reforms and calling for the restoration of order. Soon the workers’ councils, awash with illusions, expressed their support for the Nagy government by deciding to end the strikes and resume work.

When the strike movement of May 68 broke out in France, the historical conditions had radically changed. Its soil was fertilised by the first signs of the return of the historical crisis of capitalism, and the movement was initiated by a new generation of workers, who had not been subjected to the horrible events of the counter-revolution. This context allowed the proletariat to throw aside the dead weight of Stalinism and to seek to renew links with its past experience, to become aware of the need to struggle at the historic level. While it was the biggest strike in the history of the international workers’ movement, involving at least 8 million workers, the media and bourgeois intellectuals downplayed its importance and emphasised the student revolt.

The less spectacular appearance of the strike wave in fact masked an event of the utmost importance, which marked the end of the period of counter-revolution, heralded the historic resurgence of the class struggle on a global scale over the next two decades, expressed a real development of consciousness and aroused massive interest in a broad milieu for the writings of militants of the revolutionary workers’ movement.

### The balance of forces between the classes

With the numerous struggles in the aftermath of the May 1968 movement, which opened a dynamic towards decisive class confrontations, a process of developing consciousness, the balance of forces was initially in favour of the proletariat; and this was highlighted when the workers in Poland posed the question of the open politicisation of the struggle, involving a confrontation with the bourgeois state.

However, the working class, particularly in the core countries of capitalism, failed to take up the question in the 1980s by raising its consciousness to a new level. Despite numerous struggles, it was not able to go beyond the trade union framework and raise its struggle to the level of an open class-on-class confrontation, thus losing its advantage in the balance of forces with the bourgeoisie, even if its combativity prevented the latter from imposing its solution to the crisis - world war.

This contradictory situation finally led to a dead end, since neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat succeeded in imposing their perspective. After the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the ideological campaign on the “death of communism” and the “final victory of democracy”, as well as the opening of the phase of decomposition with an accelerated rotting of society, led to an ebb of the class struggle, provoking a retreat in consciousness within the class, a balance of forces that was more clearly unfavourable to the proletariat: “the decomposition of capitalism has profoundly affected the essential dimensions of the class struggle: collective action, solidarity, the need for organisation, the relations which underlie all life in society and which are increasingly breaking down, confidence in the future and in one’s own forces, consciousness, lucidity, coherence and unity of thought, the taste for theory.”<sup>1</sup>

It’s true that the ICC had a certain tendency to underestimate the extent of this ebb and to prematurely predict, as in 2003, the end of the retreat of the workers’ struggle: proletarian movements were held back first by a growing hold of the

unions in the 1990s, more generally by the deleterious effects of individualism and every man for himself or by their dissolution into popular and interclass revolts, as during the “Arab Spring” in 2010-11 or with the “Yellow Vest” movement in 2018-19.

Demonstrations of proletarian resistance against the pressure of decomposition did arise during these years, such as the anti-CPE movement in 2006 in France or the Indignados movement in Spain (2011), but they could not mark the end of the deep retreat insofar as they were not powerful enough, and above all not conscious enough, to impose an alternative on a class terrain in the face of the effects of decomposition.

### “Enough is Enough!”

In contrast to previous decades, the current wave of struggle, which began in the UK, marks a significant break with the previous thirty years. Beyond the immediate expressions, the context in which these struggles are developing highlights their deeper significance:

- despite the pressure of decomposition stimulating the search for individual solutions or interclassist and populist revolts;
- despite the two-year Covid pandemic, which has made it more difficult for workers to come together for the struggle;
- despite the current “vortex” effect of capitalist decomposition (pandemic, ecological catastrophe, economic disruption, etc.), within which the war in Ukraine in particular tends to amplify the powerlessness in the face of growing barbarism, workers have come to the conclusion that “enough is enough” and that the only way to put an end to it is to mobilise on their class terrain to defend their living and working conditions. In fact, the expansion of this wave can only be understood as the result of a change in the workers’ state of mind, as the result of a long process of subterranean maturation within the class, of disillusionment and disengagement with the main themes of bourgeois ideology.

In particular, it is especially significant that the British working class was in the vanguard of this rupture:

- even though the defeat of the miners’ strike in 1984-85 dealt it a severe blow and weighed on its combativity and consciousness in recent decades,
- even though the intensive populist Brexit campaign had created deep divisions in its ranks between “remainers” and “leavers” (pro and anti-EU), the proletariat in Britain, under the pressure of the widespread impact of the economic crisis and the heavy damage to its living conditions, has raised its head and resolutely engaged in the struggle.

Like May ‘68 (but in a different context), the current international movement expresses the beginnings of a process of in-depth reflection, of a tendency towards the recovery of class identity. It marks a break with a long period of retreat, characterised by disorientation, by a reduction of class consciousness and by workers’ struggles often being completely isolated from each other. Despite their weaknesses, the very simultaneity of the current struggles (in most of Western Europe, but also in Korea or the US) underlines once again the reality that, for a struggle to be successful, it must develop into a common and united movement throughout the class. The current wave shows not only a development of combativity but also a return of workers’ confidence in their own strength as a class and a deepening reflection, even if we are only at the beginning of this process.

Through examples from the history of the workers’ movement, we wanted to show:

- the importance for revolutionaries to analyse precisely the context of the workers’ struggle in order to assess the level of consciousness in the class;
  - that a superficial look at strikes can be misleading and lead to a wrong assessment and ultimately to a wrong orientation of the intervention of revolutionary organisations.
- As Lenin wrote: “Our theory is not a dogma, but a guide to action. Marx and Engels always said, rightly ridiculing the mere memorising and

repetition of ‘formulas’, that at best are capable only of marking out **general** tasks, which are necessarily modifiable by the **concrete** economic and political conditions of each particular period of the historical process.” **Dennis, 24 February 2023**



At the beginning of the war in Ukraine the International Communist Current proposed a joint internationalist statement on the conflict to the other groups of the Communist Left. Of these groups three affirmed their willingness to participate and a statement was discussed, agreed, and published by these different groups. The principle behind the joint statement was that on the fundamental question of imperialist war and the internationalist perspective against it, the different Communist Left groups were agreed and could unite on this question to provide, with greater force, a clear political alternative to capitalist barbarism for the working class in different countries.

The other side of the joint statement was that on other questions, particularly on the analysis of the present imperialist war, its origins and prospects, there were differences among the constituent groups which should be discussed and clarified. Consequently the groups have decided to produce brief statements on these questions and publish them in a bulletin

Continued from page 8

## Polemic

is revolutionary. Making demands, resisting capitalist exploitation, is the basis and the engine of the revolutionary action undertaken by the class. [...] In the history of the workers’ movement there is not a single proletarian revolutionary struggle which was not a struggle for demands at the same time. And how could it be otherwise, since it is the revolutionary struggle of a class, of a group of men who are characterized by their economic position and united by their common material situation?”<sup>12</sup>.

For the ICT, on the contrary, “the economic struggle arises, produces what it can produce on the level of demands, and then declines without leaving a political trace. That is unless there is an intervention by the revolutionary party”<sup>13</sup>. Thus, the workers are not able to politicise their struggle and this can only be done through the intervention of the “party”, which functions here as the *deus ex machina* necessary to overcome the opposition between the two dimensions of the struggle.

In short, in the face of the movements in Britain but also all over Europe, it is particularly worrying that an organisation which claims to give orientations for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is incapable of appreciating these struggles in their historical context and of apprehending their international dimension. But for the ICT, this responsibility does not seem to be necessary since “the party” will appear, like Superman, to solve everything with a wave of its magic wand! **D. & R.12.4.23**

12. ‘Why the proletariat is the revolutionary class: Critical notes on the article ‘Leçons de la lutte des ouvriers anglais’ in Révolution Internationale no 9’, en.internationalism.org  
13. ‘The Question of Consciousness: A Basis for Discussion’, leftcom.org



ICC online public meeting

Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Mexico, China...

We have to go further than in 1968!

3pm, Saturday 13 May

Enough is enough!" - Britain. "Not a year more, not a euro less" - France. "Indignation runs deep" - Spain. "For all of us" - Germany. All these slogans, chanted during the strikes around the world in recent months, show how much the current workers' struggle expresses the rejection of the general deterioration of our living and working conditions. In France, workers also raised the slogan "You give us 64, we give you May 68" – faced with the increase in years of wage labour from 62 to 64, we are returning to the massive struggles of May 1968.

But we must also go further. The wave of international struggle that began in May 1968 was a reaction to the first signs of the world economic crisis. Today, the situation is much more serious. The disastrous state of capitalism puts the survival of humanity at stake.

The momentum of May '68 was broken by a double lie of the bourgeoisie. When the USSR collapsed in 1990, it claimed that the collapse of Stalinism meant the death of communism and that a new era of peace and prosperity was dawning. Three decades later, we know from experience that instead of peace and prosperity, we got war and misery. We have yet to understand that Stalinism was the antithesis of communism, that it was a barbaric capitalist regime that emerged from the counter-revolution of the 1920s. By falsifying history, by presenting Stalinism as communism, the bourgeoisie succeeded in making the working class believe that its project of revolutionary emancipation could only end in disaster.

But in the struggle, we will gradually develop our collective strength, unity and self-organisation. In the struggle, we will gradually realise that we, the working class, are capable of offering a perspective other than the nightmare promised by a decaying capitalist system.

Come and discuss the lessons of May 68 for the struggles of today!

If you want to take part, write to us at uk@internationalism.org, and we'll send you the details.

Rail disaster in Greece  
In Greece as well, workers' combativity and solidarity

On numerous occasions, when climate or industrial catastrophes have left many victims, the ICC has systematically denounced the crocodile tears of the governments, of political or economic high-ups who always invoke chance or human error, the 'irresponsibility' of this or that technician, wage-earner or structure in charge of local maintenance, or the "unpredictability" of climatic episodes...

Each time, in the face of such disasters – floods, mudslides, gigantic forest fires, the collapse of bridges, as in Genoa, factory fires (and such events have accelerated in recent years), the cynicism and hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie knows no limits. It always seeks to point to a scapegoat, to find a convenient explanation to justify the unjustifiable, to make us forget who is really responsible: the representatives and defenders of a dying capitalist system, which seeps death and destruction from all its pores, all over the world.

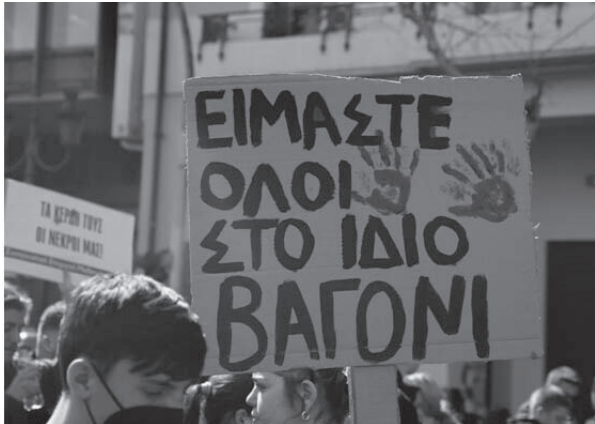
Today, in Greece, following the headlong collision between two trains, the government and railway companies have tried to put the blame on an inexperienced station master who made a fatal error which he himself has admitted to.

But the difference with other equally dramatic accidents, including the huge fires in Greece in 2018 and 2021 which left dozens dead, the shock and pain of the population provoked by the death of the 57 victims of the rail crash have not stopped at solemn homages under the auspices of the bourgeois state and were not aimed at station master judged "guilty" by the government and the prime minister Mitsotakis.

Rejecting the idea that this was something unavoidable, the immense anger and indignation of a major part of the population, above all the working class, exploded into the streets, in Athens, in Thessalonica, in the workplaces and in demonstrations held by tens of thousands of people, in spontaneous strikes by railway workers, with a call to stop work on 8 March in a large number of public and private sectors, from health to education, to sailors, metro workers, students...something not seen for over ten years.

As in Britain over the last 9 months, as in France today in reaction to the pensions "reform", the working class in Greece is also crying "enough is enough!"

Faced with decaying public services, with over



Protest in Greece after the train accident: "We are all in the same carriage"

ten years of austerity plans, the street has replied to the powers that be by a slogan heard at all the gatherings: "This was not human error, it was not an accident, it was a crime!" "Down with this government of murderers!" "Mitsotakis, minister of crime!". The apologies issued by Mitsotakis after his first lamentable statements about the station master's "human error" were just seen as a further provocation, leading over 12,000 people onto the streets.

The working class in Greece is expressing its solidarity with all the victims of capitalist exploitation, declaring its refusal to pay for the crisis, its rejection of repeated austerity plans and of the prolongation of years at work, as in France, its unwillingness to die in transport systems which have become death traps, owing to a lack of personnel, disrepair in the infrastructure, wrecked buses and trains, obsolete or non-existent safety systems, scarcity of material... "This train accident, is just a drop in the ocean. Nothing works in Greece. Education, health, public transport, everything is in ruins. This government has done nothing to redress this intolerable situation in the public sector, but it has spent money on the police and the army!" (a Greek school teacher).

This is the daily reality of the capitalist world, of the worsening of our living and working conditions all over the world!

The massive combativity of the working class in Greece today can be added to that of the proletariat in France, in Britain, which has already been

fighting for months, in struggles which express an enormous anger and determination.

Indignation at the hypocrisy of the state, faced with the frenzied search for profit in all enterprises, whether private or not, expresses the same anger, the same solidarity, the same refusal to bow down and pay with your life for the putrefaction of the capitalist system.

It's the same class "reflex" we are seeing in Greece, in continuity with other massive expressions of anger in the face of the economic crisis and the ineptitude of the state. And here again it's years since we have seen this level of militancy.

This "reflex" of solidarity in the workers' ranks is a break from years of apathy and retreat. A highly eloquent example: during the strike day on 8 March, the striking public transport workers decided to keep the bus and metro running for a few hours, so that people could take part in the demonstrations! This is how the struggle can spread solidarity and increase the scale of mobilisations, unlike the "blockades" proposed by the unions in France.

The bourgeoisie in Greece, which was initially taken aback by the massive reaction of the workers, has of course tried to put limits on the mobilisation and on reflection: it is shouting about corruption, cronyism, the retreat of a "law-based" state, about the austerity imposed by Europe, and is calling for massive participation in the forthcoming legislative elections. Everything to mask the reality of the decomposition of the capitalist world and its responsibility for the disasters it engenders, in Greece as everywhere else.

But whatever the outcome of this massive movement of solidarity, it is already a victory, a further step in the renewal of class struggle on an international scale. **Stopio, 10.3.23**

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**Revolutionaries have a historic responsibility**

Third Manifesto of the ICC:  
**Capitalism leads to the destruction of humanity...  
Only the world revolution of the proletariat can put an end to it**

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www.internationalism.org

# The ICT’s ambiguities about the historical significance of the strike wave in the UK

After ten months of strikes in many sectors, the ruling class, both on the European continent and overseas, can no longer hide the fact that the working class in Britain has raised its head. The bourgeois media, which were initially reticent in their reporting, must now admit that the strikes have broken all records: not only in the number of workers and sectors involved, but also in their development into a full-blown strike wave.<sup>1</sup>

The Internationalist Communist Tendency, through its affiliate in the UK, the Communist Workers’ Organisation, a group of the communist left, has taken position on the movements in a number of articles and leaflets. It generally defends class positions, insisting that capitalism has no way out of its deepening crisis and is obliged to intensify its attack on the workers, that the latter must escape from the union prison if they are to overcome the divisions and that this means taking the organisation of the struggle into their own hands.

**From a gross overestimation to a haughty disdain for struggles**

But it is not enough to propose abstract positions interspersed with random analyses. Revolutionary organisations have a responsibility to accurately assess the relationship of forces and the context in which the struggles take place in order to present concrete perspectives for the dynamics of the movement. In this respect, the ICT’s analysis of the significance of these struggles is highly contradictory and reveals an inconsistent framework for understanding the relationship of forces between classes.

The first expressions of struggle in the UK initially aroused some enthusiasm in the ICT: *“the frontal assaults on labour are provoking the beginnings of a new resistance (...) after decades of class retreat”* and *“in the current wave of wildcat actions we already see the possibility of going beyond both the Union framework and the Legal framework of the capitalist state”*<sup>2</sup>. But then the ICT’s enthusiasm cooled significantly: *“We are still far from the level of militancy of the 1970s”* while in early 2023 it estimated that *“the danger*

1. Some examples:  
\* “Les syndicats mènent leurs plus grandes grèves depuis trente ans”(Le Monde)  
\* “The UK is experiencing historic strikes” (Washington Post)  
2. ‘Wildcat Strikes in the UK: Getting Ready for a Hot Autumn’, leftcom.org

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

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

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

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

*of ‘money militancy’ looms large: isolated sections of workers exhausting themselves through quite draining strikes fighting over what amounts to crumbs”*<sup>3</sup>. The ICT refers here to its position on the struggles of the 1970s, *“the 1970s when each sector of workers divided by the unions chased ever greater percentages for a wage rise. This not only did not lead to a questioning of the wages system but even reinforced it”*<sup>4</sup>. But surprise, in one of its most recent articles, the ICT again gets carried away: *“On the first of February, 2023, was the biggest strike day for over a decade. This is just the beginning of a strike wave”*<sup>5</sup>.

Apart from the fact that the bourgeoisie itself had noted this long before the ICT, we would like to understand the ICT’s overall assessment of the struggles in the UK: do they indicate *“the beginning of a of strike wave”* or just *“isolated sections of workers exhausting themselves through quite draining strikes”*? Does this movement constitute *“the beginnings of a new resistance (...) after decades of class retreat”* or has it *“not lead to a questioning of the wages system but even reinforced it”*?

**The absence of an analysis based on an international perspective**

Since the summer of 2022, the expansion of workers’ struggles in Britain has inspired similar movements in other countries. As a result, a correct assessment of the current wave in the UK is impossible if it is disconnected from the evolution of the class struggle at the international level. Yet the ICT almost exclusively views the struggles through British glasses: the seven articles produced on the strikes in Britain lack reference to the struggles developing elsewhere. It is as if each national sector of the working class was waging its own struggle and the global struggle was merely a sum of national struggles rather than the expression of a single dynamic.

Certainly, the ICT writes about struggles in other parts of the capitalist world, but it does not see the importance of the movement in the UK as an expression of a global international tendency of the proletariat to break with the previous period of low combativity and lack of self-confidence. It knows that the struggles in the UK and France are taking place on a proletarian terrain, but it fails to

3. ‘Notes on the UK Strike Wave’, leftcom.org  
4. ‘Unions - Whose Side Are They On?’, leftcom.org  
5. ‘Unite the Strikes’, leftcom.org

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

grasp, in practice, the common ground shared by these two fractions of the working class.

The ICT’s distorted view of the international dimension of the proletarian struggle is clearly illustrated, for example, in the article on the 2015 telecom workers’ struggle in Spain, in which it writes that *“there are concrete possibilities here for international extension of the struggle as Telefonica operates in 5 countries”*<sup>6</sup>, when in fact the real and immediate need of the striking workers is to get in direct contact with the workers involved in the struggle *“in the nearest factory, hospital, school, administration”*<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, this kind of “international” sectoral extension of the struggle only reinforces corporatism within the working class and tends to undermine its international unification.

**The failure of the ICT to understand the historical context**

To appreciate the significance of a particular class movement, it is essential to place it in a more historical and global context. Thus, for the ICC, the current struggles are important because they mark a break with a period of retreat that goes back to the late 1980s and the implosion of the “Communist” bloc, but also because they confirm that this retreat was not equivalent to the kind of global historical defeat that the working class experienced after the crushing of its first revolutionary assault, between 1917 and 1923, a period that the international resurgence of struggles in 1968 brought to a close.

But on these questions, the ICC confirms its inconsistency. Ten years ago, it stated bluntly that we were still living in a counter-revolutionary period: *“The fragmentation and dispersal of the class (...) has reduced the working class capacity to fight back and the continuing refrain that there is no alternative to capitalism are all evidence that the class still has not reversed the heavy defeat of the 1920s”*<sup>8</sup>. However, in 2016-2017, it cautiously maintained that *“currently the class is slowly recovering from decades of retreat and*

6. ‘Spanish Telecom Workers on All-Out Strike’, leftcom.org  
7. International leaflet of the ICC: ‘UK, France, Spain, Germany, Mexico, China... Everywhere the same question: How to develop the struggle? How to make governments back down?’  
8. Cleishbotham (2.9.11) Forum of the ICT, ‘ICC theses on decomposition’

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

*restructuring”*<sup>9</sup>. But the ICT quickly withdrew this analysis to assert that *“we are still fighting to redress the balance which we have seen as one of retreat for 40 years”*<sup>10</sup>.

The clearest evidence of the ICT’s failure to grasp the overall historical context is the fact that its underestimation of the significance of the current struggles goes hand in hand with the high energy it invests in its ‘No War But The Class War’ campaign, which rests on the illusion that the working class is already capable of waging a direct anti-war struggle, without realising that such an expectation is completely inconsistent with its idea that the proletariat is still labouring under the weight of a historic defeat.

**A lack of understanding how consciousness develops in the class**

Although the ICT is fairly consistent in its denunciation of union divisions, we know that it tends to fall into the trap of rank-and-file unionism, when the latter uses more radical language which can include raising the banner of ‘strike committees’ that in fact represent an adaptation of union structures in order to maintain their control over workers. For the ICT, these union bodies can be a step forward, as shown by the example of the Bus Workers Combine set up by ‘Unite’: according to the ICT this is *“an attempt to coordinate the struggle for improved pay and conditions across different depots. Different groups of workers uniting their struggles is incredibly important, and is our best chance of success”*<sup>11</sup>.

This opportunist attitude towards rank-and-file unionism is linked to the ICT’s confusion about the relationship between economic and political struggle. The notion of ‘money militancy’ (see quote above in the article) actually expresses a devaluation of economic struggles, an underestimation of their implicitly political dimension.

For the ICC, the struggle on the economic terrain is an essential and unavoidable dimension, forging the weapons of tomorrow’s revolutionary assault. In other words, any proletarian struggle *“is simultaneously for immediate demands and it*

9. ‘A Crisis of the Entire System’, Summer 2017, leftcom.org  
10. Cleishbotham, February 2019, ICT Forum: ‘The Party, Fractions and Periodisation’  
11. ‘Two Comments on Recent Bus Strikes in the UK’. Leftcom.org

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*.

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