



# world revolution

## After the Trump election

# Faced with capitalist crisis and disorder, sharpen the class struggle!

On 20 January, Donald Trump officially took office as president. A nightmare that the most responsible factions of the bourgeoisie had tried to prevent throughout Joe Biden's term of office. A resounding failure!

### Capitalism is sinking into chaos at high speed

If the bourgeoisie had been surprised at the first election in 2017, it tried afterwards to control the moods and inconsistencies of the occupant of the Oval Office.

But the vengeful speeches and the discredit of the Democrats, proved more powerful than the convictions and trials brought against him for assault, blackmail or criminal behaviour during the January 2021 assault on the Capitol. This time, the American bourgeoisie is clearly overwhelmed by the situation created by this troublemaker who has never hidden his desire to weaken the institutions of the federal state and place himself above them. Trump's grip on all US institutions is now more solid and extensive than it was at the start of 2017, reflecting a greater loss of control over the political apparatus on the part of the more lucid factions of the US bourgeoisie, and the exacerbation of tensions within the ruling class over how to best defend the interests of national capital. Trump's programme, more brutal and outrageous than between 2017 and 2021, clearly reflects the entrenchment and expansion of the populism that is sweeping the world<sup>1</sup>.

The height of Trump's irresponsibility can be seen both in his outrageous statements as in the personnel of the new cabinet, symbolised by the ineffable Elon Musk. Pete Hegseth, a former *Fox News* presenter, accused of sexual assault, with no experience of high command, finds himself Secretary of Defence. Robert Kennedy Jr, a conspiracy-mongering anti-vax campaigner, becomes Secretary of Health. The climate sceptic Chris Wright has been appointed Secretary of Energy... In short, a team of nickel-and-dimers revealing a historical phase in which the American bourgeoisie, in the vanguard of all the bourgeoisies of the major Western powers, is tending to lose its compass, with the prospect of ever deeper and more chaotic political crises.

1. See our article "Neither populism nor bourgeois democracy ... The only real alternative is the worldwide development of class struggle against all factions of the bourgeoisie" ICC Online

In short, what this new mandate prefigures is nothing less than a further accentuation of world disorder. The policies pursued by the new team can only fuel the destructive whirlwind of crises that are self-perpetuating and interacting on a global scale: economic shocks, wars, accelerated climate degradation and the collapse of ecosystems, social crises, uncontrolled waves of migration...

### An ideological attack on consciousness

Using the miasma of the decomposition of its moribund system, the bourgeoisie knows perfectly well how to turn it against the consciousness of the working class, both to drive proletarians to despair and to sow the illusion of a 'fairer' and more 'democratic' future. While the Trump government

is a key player and agent in the global disorder, it is not the cause of it, contrary to what a large part of the bourgeoisie and its media are trying to sell, the better to conceal the historical impasse of the system behind the 'madness' of one man.

Continued on page 6

## Ukraine, Middle East...

# Capitalism caught in the spiral of endless wars

**As we go to press, the media are full of the news about the ceasefire and exchange of prisoners being cooked up in the Middle East. But as our article insists, "whatever truces or cease-fires may be concluded in the context of future imperialist manoeuvres, they can only be temporary and will only represent momentary pauses in the reinforcement of the barbaric militarism which characterises the capitalist mode of production".**

The ravages of three years of war in Ukraine, like the unspeakable barbarity of the fifteen-month Israeli-Palestinian conflict which has set the whole of the Middle East ablaze, are a terrible illustration of the wars engendered by the period of the decomposition of capitalism.

Whatever truces or ceasefires may be concluded in the context of future imperialist manoeuvres, they can only be temporary and will only represent momentary pauses in the reinforcement of the barbaric militarism which characterises the capitalist mode of production.

In February 2022, Putin declared that the Russian army would advance rapidly in Ukraine by means of a "special military operation" of short duration. Three years have passed and, although the missiles and artillery continue to destroy entire cities and claim thousands of lives, the war has reached a point where neither side is making significant progress, making military operations even more desperate and destructive. It is difficult to know with any certainty how many people have been killed or wounded in the war, but the media are now talking about more than a million dead or

wounded, and the protagonists are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit cannon fodder to fill 'gaps' on the front line.

In the Middle East, following the barbaric attack by Hamas, the retaliation by the State of Israel is causing destruction and massacres that are reaching an unimaginable level of savagery. Like Putin, Netanyahu, after the bloody attack on 7 October 2023, promised that in three months he would finish off Hamas: this has already been going on for more than a year and the barbarity it has unleashed has continued to grow. Israel has indiscriminately dropped 85,000 tonnes of explosives, the equivalent of three times the amount of explosive material contained in the bombs dropped on London, Hamburg and Dresden during the Second World War! These ferocious attacks left almost 45,000 people dead, more than 10,000 missing and almost 90,000 injured, many of them mutilated, including thousands of children. According to *Save the Children*, every day since the start of the war in Gaza, around ten children have lost their legs. In addition to the horror of the bombardments, there is hunger and diseases such as polio and hepatitis, which are spreading because of the inhuman sanitary conditions.

All this warlike madness that has been going on for so long in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip is now spreading to other countries, extending the spiral of chaos and barbarity. After the fighting in southern Lebanon and the bombing of Beirut, the renewed fighting in Syria, which led to the rapid overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, is a good illustration of how instability is spreading. Sub-

stantial military support from Russia and Iran had enabled Assad to prevail at the end of the Syrian civil war from 2011 to 2020, even if the situation was precarious. With the military weakening of Assad's allies, in particular with Russia trapped in Ukraine and Hezbollah occupied in Lebanon, their military support has been greatly reduced, leading to a loss of control of the situation by the regime. This was exploited by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group to attack and overthrow the government. However, Assad's flight in no way means that the new regime that has taken power in Damascus has a coherent, unified project. On the contrary, a multitude of more or less radical

Continued on page 2

### Inside this issue

Global economic crisis deepening, attacks on working class	2
Subterranean maturation of class consciousness	3
ICT public meeting: a necessary debate on positions and principles	4
Floods show the impasse of a dying system	5
A militant life: Tribute to comrade Laurie	6
ICC public meeting: an international debate to clarify the situation and prepare the future	7
<i>Life of the ICC</i>	7
Belgium: workers mobilise against austerity plans	8

# The global economic crisis deepens, and capitalism launches more attacks on the working class

The most respected economic institutions of the bourgeoisie boast of a rather positive assessment of the current state of the world economy, which “has shown remarkable resilience in the face of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and a surge in inflation”<sup>1</sup>. The IMF, the World Bank and other institutions are forecasting slightly more growth in 2025 than in 2024, despite their concerns about major uncertainties and risks, due in particular to rising geopolitical tensions. But the reality is quite different: the capitalist system is well and truly continuing its trajectory into the abyss of a chronic economic crisis, plunging the world further into stagnation and poverty.

## The unprecedented downturn of the world economy

In 2024, the world economy has not recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic and its strict confinements, resulting in a global economy weaker than ever. How could it be otherwise? Before the appearance of Covid-19, capitalism already had a very fragile monetary and financial system and massive national debt, which presaged a period of serious convulsions<sup>2</sup>. The pandemic that developed in 2020 only accentuated these trends, notably by further disrupting production chains and global commerce.

Over the past 25 years, the global economy has been kept afloat mainly by the administration of a massive dose of credit, leading to a soaring public debt. “Global public debt has more than quintupled since 2000, clearly outstripping global GDP, which has tripled over the same period”<sup>3</sup>. The UN talks of an alarming increase in world public debt (i.e. mainly that accumulated over several years by government bodies) which was scheduled to reach a record figure of 97,000 billion dollars in 2023, while total world debt (a total debt which also includes that of companies and households) was on course reach the delirious figure of 300,000 billion dollars, for a world GDP of only 105,000 billion dollars.

In recent years, the global economy has been hit by the eruption of extremely violent wars in the Middle East and Ukraine. The latter has caused inflation to soar in the two warring countries with a contagion phenomenon in several neighbouring countries, such as the Baltic States, where inflation exceeded 20% in 2022. The sanctions against Russia have had a negative impact both on the Russian economy and on those countries located close to the war zone. The most notable impact has been on the German economy, which has broken off trade relations with Russia and lost supplies of cheap gas.

The years 2020-2024 were the weakest half-decade of GDP growth for thirty years. In 2024-25, growth is expected to be below the average growth of the 2010s in almost 60% of the world's economies. This terrible situation raises the real possibility that major economies such as the United States, Europe and China will be hit by stagflation.

## The central countries are hit hard by the crisis

Europe's already fragile economy is being severely tested by relatively high energy prices and colossal national debts. The German economy is on the brink of recession. Its manufacturing sector (automotive and chemicals), once renowned, is being affected by high energy costs and fierce international competition. It is also suffering from a significant drop in foreign demand. In 2024, industrial production was 15% below the 2016 peak and tens of thousands of workers are on the verge of redundancy. France has lost control of its public finances, with debt levels well in excess of 100% of GDP, a problem also faced by Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Belgium. One of Europe's leading economies is therefore on an unsustainable economic trajectory. The French manufacturing sector is also in crisis, and there

1. ‘Harnessing the Power of Integration: A Path to Prosperity in Central Asia’, IMF Report (2024).

2. ‘Resolution on the International Situation (2019): Imperialist conflicts; life of the bourgeoisie, economic crisis’, *International Review* No 164 (2020).

3. ‘A world of debt - A growing burden on global prosperity’, UN Report (2024).

are no signs of recovery on the horizon. Escalating imperialist tensions and growing chaos, fragmented world trade, rising inflation and energy costs are all pointing to an unprecedented deepening of the crisis in the European economy.

In China, the impact of US sanctions and containment measures adopted during Covid-19 had already severely weakened the Chinese economy. But the bursting of the property bubble made the crisis even worse, with the total value of unfinished and unsold housing amounting to around 4.1 trillion dollars. The burst bubble has also led to the failure of 40 small banks, and around 3,800 other banks are now in serious difficulty. Finally, it has wiped out around \$18,000 billion in household savings, seriously affecting consumer confidence and curbing consumer spending. Combined with a steady decline in export earnings, this situation is leading to a slowdown unprecedented in decades. Today, the Chinese economy will certainly not be able to function as the engine of the global economy<sup>4</sup>, as it did after the 2008 financial crisis.

Trump has announced an aggressive protectionist policy, with the intention of imposing customs barriers on all his competitors, including his ‘partners’. This policy will provoke a bitter trade war, with other countries setting their own tariffs. It is likely to fuel inflation and further slow global growth, particularly in China, and probably in Europe too. The tariffs announced represent a new stage in a policy that is throwing the global economy into turmoil, exacerbating its fragmentation and foreshadowing a further dismantling

4. ‘China: Economic crisis exacerbates social and political tensions’, *ICConline* October 2023

Continued from page 1

## Ukraine, Middle East... Capitalism caught in the spiral of endless wars

‘democratic’ or ‘Islamist’ groups, Christian, Shiite or Sunni, Kurdish, Arab or Druze, are more than ever involved in the confrontations for control of the territory or parts of it, with the mafia of imperialist sponsors behind them: Turkey, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Iran, the European countries and perhaps even Russia, each with its own agenda and its own imperialist interests. More than ever, Syria, and the Middle East in general, represent a hotbed of multiple tensions that push towards war and militarism.

## War and militarism, barbaric expressions of decadent capitalism

Numerous new and sophisticated weapons have been deployed in Ukraine and the Middle East: missile defence shields, attack drones, manipulation of communication systems to transform them into explosive devices, etc. The budgets that the various states allocate to the purchase of conventional weapons and to the modernisation or expansion of the atomic arsenal are also exploding. According to data from the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (SIPRI), global military spending in 2023 will amount to 2,443 billion dollars, an increase of 7% compared to 2022 (the highest growth rate since 2009). And both the orders and the statements made by heads of state on every continent give us no reason to expect anything other than an impressive general expansion in militarisation, which at the same time is leading to a remarkable increase in the profits of arms companies.

But does this mean that war has a positive effect on the capitalist economy? Capitalism was born in the mud and blood of war and plunder, but their role and function have changed over time. In the ascendant period of capitalism, military expenditure and war itself were a means of expanding the market and stimulating the development of the productive forces, because the new regions conquered required new means of production and subsistence. In contrast, the entry into the period of decadence (which began with the First World

of globalisation. Their implementation will give considerable impetus to the global crisis, which will spare no power, not even the United States.

War is the way of life of capitalism in its decadent phase, so the economy naturally follows the path of militarism which dominates most national economies. With the proliferation of armed conflicts around the world, this tendency is becoming much more pronounced. For example, global military spending increased for the ninth consecutive year in 2023, reaching a total of 2,443 billion dollars, the highest level ever recorded. Germany has doubled its military budget, while the US budget is close to \$1,000 billion. Unproductive spending is a net loss for the national economy and could even bankrupt it. Remember that this heavy spending led to the bankruptcy of the ‘Soviet’ economy which contributed to the collapse of the Eastern bloc.

## The acceleration of decomposition pushes the global economy into the abyss

Today, capitalist society is in such a state of decomposition that, beyond its ideological superstructure, its own economic foundations are themselves affected by the destructive effects of this social decay. The accumulation of the combined effect of these factors (crisis, war, global warming, every man for himself) is producing “a devastating spiral with incalculable consequences for capitalism, hitting and destabilising the capitalist economy and its production infrastructure ever more seriously. While each of the factors fuelling this ‘whirlwind’ effect of decomposition risks leading to the collapse of states, their combined

effects far exceed the simple sum of each of them taken in isolation.”<sup>5</sup>

So the two wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are not only causing catastrophic destruction to the infrastructure of the countries concerned, but also fragmenting and destabilising whole swathes of the global economy. The ‘New Silk Roads’, for example, the land and sea link between China and Europe, one of which passed through the territory of Russia and Belarus, has been completely paralysed since the start of the war. Planes from North America and Europe can no longer fly over Siberia, and these diversions have led to a dramatic increase in the cost of the flights concerned. Various maritime trade routes, such as the Red and Black Seas, are risky for traffic because of the threats posed by the ongoing wars. These serious impediments to world trade are driving up sea freight costs, with the threat of a food crisis in some parts of the world.

Recurrent, random and potentially severe climate shocks lead to the destruction of infrastructure, soil degradation, the collapse of ecosystems and human populations, while nature is less and less able to recover from these catastrophic events, leading to a permanent loss of production capacity. Between 2014 and 2023, around 4,000 climate-related events appear to have resulted in economic losses estimated at 2,000 billion dollars. And since capitalism, due to fierce global competition, is unable to curb global warming, these losses will increase at an accelerating rate.

5. ‘This crisis is going to be the most serious in the whole period of decadence’, *International Review* 172

Continued on page 4

of destruction has become the symbol of a modern high-performance economy... these technological ‘marvels’, which have just shown their murderous efficiency in the Middle East, are, from the standpoint of production, of the economy, a gigantic waste”<sup>2</sup>.

## The bourgeoisie is increasing budgets... in order to extend destruction and massacres.

The growing development of militarisation has recently led some countries which had abandoned compulsory military service to reintroduce it, as in Latvia and Sweden, and the CDU party has even proposed it in Germany. Above all, it is reflected in the widespread pressure to increase military spending, with various bourgeois spokesmen campaigning, for example, for the need for NATO countries to go well beyond the agreed 2% of GNP spent on defence. In a scenario where Trump's United States will play the America First card more than ever, even towards ‘friendly’ countries that thought they were safe under the US nuclear umbrella, European countries are urgently seeking to strengthen their military infrastructures and are sharply increasing their military spending to better defend their own imperialist ambitions. When the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, says: “We have to spend more, we have to spend better, we have to spend European”, she sums up the strategy of expanding Europe's military infrastructure and an autonomous European arms industry.

In reality, the trend towards an explosion in arms spending is global, stimulated by an all-out advance in militarism. Every state is under pressure to strengthen its military power. This basically reflects the pressure of the growing instability of imperialist relations in the world.

Tatlin, 14 January 2025

1. ‘50 years ago: The real causes of the Second World War’, *International Review* 59, “Report on the international Situation”, GCF, July 1945.

2. ‘Where are we in the crisis: Economic crisis and militarism’, *International Review* 65.

# The historic roots of the “rupture” in the dynamic of the class struggle since 2022

## Part One: On the subterranean maturation of class consciousness

The ICC maintains that the wave of strikes in the UK in 2022 marked the beginning of a “rupture” or break with several decades of resignation and apathy and a growing loss of class identity. It was the first of a number of working class movements around the world, primarily in response to worsening living standards and working conditions<sup>1</sup>. Crucial to our analysis of a new phase in the international class struggle are two fundamental observations:

- this new phase was not merely a reaction to immediate attacks on workers’ conditions, one that could be measured in terms of the number of strikes and struggles at a particular moment, but has a more profound historical dimension. It is the fruit of a long process of the “subterranean maturation” of class consciousness which has been moving forward despite the enormous pressures exerted by the accelerating decomposition of capitalist society.

- this rupture, radiating outwards from the oldest centres of world capitalism, is a confirmation that the principal bastions of the proletariat remain historically undefeated since the initial revival of the class struggle in 1968, and retain the potential to advance from economic defensive struggles to a political and practical critique of the entire capitalist order.

These arguments have met with a rather widespread scepticism in the proletarian political camp. If we take the example of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT), although they initially acknowledged and welcomed some of the struggles that came to the surface after 2022, we have criticised the fact that they failed to see the international and historic significance of this movement<sup>2</sup>, and more recently, seem to have either forgotten about it (as evidenced in the lack of any published balance sheet of the movement) or have written it off as just another flash in the pan – as we noted in some of their recent public meetings. Meanwhile, a parasitic website dedicated to ‘research’, *Controverses*, has devoted a full article<sup>3</sup> to refuting our notion of the rupture, thus providing a ‘theoretical’ justification for the scepticism of others.

It is noteworthy that the author of this article has now lined up with the majority of those who are (or merely claim to be) part of the left communist tradition, and now dismisses the very concept of subterranean maturation. Not only that: in an article on the main developments in the class struggle in the last 200 years<sup>4</sup>, he embraces the idea that we are still living in the counter-revolution which descended on the working class with the defeat of the 1917-23 revolutionary wave. In this view, what the ICC insists was the historical reawakening of the world proletariat after 1968 and the end of the counter-revolution, was at best a mere “parenthesis” in a global chronicle of defeat.

This view is broadly shared by the various Bordighist groups and the ICT, whose forerunners saw little more in the events of May-June 68 in France or the ‘Hot Autumn’ in Italy the year after than a rash of student unrest.

In the next two articles, rather than entering into detail about the struggles of the last two years, we want to focus on two key theoretical planks for understanding our notion of the rupture: first, the reality of the subterranean maturation of consciousness, and secondly the undefeated nature of the world proletariat.

### The marxist basis of the concept of subterranean maturation

Let’s briefly recall the circumstances in which the ICC first took up the question of subterranean maturation in its own ranks. In 1984, in response to an analysis of the class struggle which revealed a serious concession to the idea that class con-

sciousness can only develop through the open, massive struggle of the workers, and in particular a text which explicitly rejected the notion of subterranean maturation, our comrade Marc Chirik wrote a text whose arguments were affirmed by the majority of the organisation, with the exception of the group which was eventually to desert the ICC at its 6<sup>th</sup> Congress and form the “External Fraction of the ICC” (its descendants are now part of *Internationalist Perspective*)<sup>5</sup>. Marc pointed out that such a view tends towards councilism because it sees consciousness not as an active factor in the struggle but purely as something determined by objective circumstances – a form of vulgar materialism; and it thus severely underestimated the role of minorities who are able to deepen class consciousness even during phases where the extent of class consciousness across the proletariat may have diminished. This councilist approach evidently has little use for an organisation of revolutionaries which is able, because it is based on the historic acquisitions of the class struggle, to steer its course through phases of retreat or defeat in the wider class movement; but it also dismisses the more general tendency within the class to reflect on its experience, to discuss, to pose questions about the major themes of the dominant ideology, and so on. Such a process may indeed be called “subterranean” because it takes place in restricted circles of the class or even inside the minds of individual workers who may give voice to all kinds of contradictory ideas, but it is no less a reality for all that. As Marx wrote in *Capital*<sup>6</sup>, “All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided”: it is in fact a specific task of the marxist minority to see beyond appearances and try to discern the deeper developments going on within their class.

When the ICC published documents relating to this internal debate, the Communist Workers Organisation welcomed what it perceived as an attempt by the ICC to settle accounts with the councilist residues which still had a weight within the organisation<sup>7</sup>. But in the substantive issued raised by the debate, it actually sided, somewhat ironically, with the councilist view, since they too rejected the notion of subterranean maturation as non-marxist, as a form of “political Jungianism”<sup>8</sup>. We say ironically because at that stage the CWO had embraced a version of class consciousness being brought to the class from the ‘outside’ by ‘the party’, constituted by elements of the bourgeois intelligentsia – the idealist thesis of Kautsky which Lenin adopted in *What is to be Done* but later admitted “*bent the stick too far*” in a polemic with the proto-councilists of his day, the Economist trend in Russia. But the irony dissipates when we consider that vulgar materialism and idealism can often exist side by side<sup>9</sup>. For both councilists and the CWO in their article, once the open struggles dies down, the class is no more than a mass of atomised individuals. The only difference is that for the CWO, this sterile cycle could only be broken through the intervention of the party.

In our reply<sup>10</sup>, we insisted that the notion of the subterranean maturation of consciousness was not at an innovation of the ICC, but is a direct descendant of Marx’s notion of the revolution as the Old Mole which burrows under the surface for long periods only to burst to the surface in certain given conditions. And in particular we cited a very lucid passage on this process from Trotsky in his

5. See our article The “External Fraction” of the ICC in *International Review* 45

6. *Capital* Volume 3, part VII, chapter 48

7. In *Workers Voice* 20, second series

8. This was in response to our citing of Rosa

Luxemburg’s insistence that “*the unconscious precedes the conscious*” in the development of the class movement, which is actually an application of the marxist formula that *being determines consciousness*. But this formula can be abused if it does grasp the dialectical relation between the two: not only is being a process of becoming, in which consciousness evolves out of the unconscious, but consciousness also becomes an active factor in evolutionary and historical advance.

9. Since that time the CWO has ceased defending the Kautskyist thesis, but it is has never openly clarified why it has changed its position.

10. Reply to the CWO: On the subterranean maturation of consciousness, *International Review* 43

masterly study of precisely this process – *The History of the Russian Revolution*, where he wrote: “*In a revolution we look first of all at the direct interference of the masses in the destinies of society. We seek to uncover behind the events changes in the collective consciousness... This can seem puzzling only to one who looks upon the insurrection of the masses as ‘spontaneous’ - that is, as a herd-mutiny artificially made use of by leaders. In reality the mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection, if it were, the masses would always be in revolt... The immediate causes of the events of a revolution are changes in the state of mind of the conflicting classes... Changes in the collective consciousness have naturally a semi-concealed character. Only when they have attained a certain degree of intensity do the new moods and ideas break to the surface in the form of mass activities.*”

By the same token, the international wave of struggles that began in May 1968 in France did not come from nowhere (even if it initially surprised the bourgeoisie who had started to think that the working class had become “embourgeoisified” by the “consumer society”). It was the fruit of a long process of disengagement from bourgeois institutions and ideological themes (such as trade unions and the so-called workers’ parties, the myths of democracy and “real socialism” in the east, etc), accompanied by worsening material conditions (the first signs of a new open economic crisis). This process had also expressed itself here and there in strike movements like the wildcats in the USA and Western Europe in the mid-60s.

**“The immediate causes of the events of a revolution are changes in the state of mind of the conflicting classes... Changes in the collective consciousness have naturally a semi-concealed character. Only when they have attained a certain degree of intensity do the new moods and ideas break to the surface in the form of mass activities.”**

Trotsky, ‘History of the Russian Revolution’

The same goes for the rupture of 2022, which also came in the wake of a number of strikes in the US, France, etc, many of which had been interrupted by the Covid lock-down. But what happened after 2022 revealed more clearly what had been gestating within the working class for some years:

- The widespread slogan “*enough is enough*” expressed a long-nurtured feeling that all the promises doled out in the period that followed the “financial crisis” of 2008 – promises that a period of “austerity” was needed before prosperity could be resumed – had proved to be lies, and that it was high time workers began raising their own demands. It was all the more significant in that the movement in Britain emerged after decades of stagnation and resignation that followed the defeats of the 1980s, in particular the defeat of the miners in 1985.

- The slogans “*we are all in the same boat*” and “*the working class is back*” expressed a tendency for the working class to regain a sense of itself as a class with its own collective existence and distinct interests, despite decades of atomisation imposed by the general decomposition of capitalist society, assisted by the deliberate dismantling of many traditional centres of working class militancy (mines, steel, etc). In the struggles in France against “pension reforms”, and elsewhere, frequent references to the movement in Britain which had “kicked off” the class revival testified to the stirrings of an awareness that this class identity does not stop at national borders, despite the enormous weight of nationalism and populism.

- Again in the movement in France, the slogan “*You give us 64<sup>h</sup>, we’ll give you 68<sup>h</sup>*” expressed 11. i.e. the proposed new retirement age

pressed a definite memory of the significance of the mass strikes of 68 (a phenomenon we had previously noted in the student assemblies in the anti-CPE movement of 2006, where there was a powerful desire to learn from what happened in 68).

- Just as the process of subterranean maturation prior to 1968 was to give birth to a new generation of politicised elements attempting to rediscover the real history of the revolutionary movement (and thus to the recovery of the tradition of the communist left), so in the current period we are seeing the international development of minorities tending towards internationalist and communist positions. The fact that the majority of these elements and their efforts to come together have been engendered less by the immediate class struggle than by the question of war is evidence that the current class movements express something more than concerns about deteriorating living standards. We have noted the importance of the fact that the struggles of the rupture broke out precisely at a moment when the workers of western Europe were being asked to accept living costs and wage freezes in the name of supporting the “defence of Ukraine” against the tyrant Putin. And again, some minorities within the demonstrations against the pension reforms in France were explicit about rejecting sacrifices in the name of building up a war economy.

- A further sign of the process of maturation can also be seen in the efforts of the bourgeoisie’s political apparatus to radicalise the messages addressed to the working class. The success of

Trumpism in the USA can in large part be attributed to its capacity to take advantage of real concerns of the US working class about rising prices and the effect of military spending on living conditions. And on the opposite wing of the political spectrum we have seen the appointment of more radical union leaders, as in Britain, and a definite move to the left on the part of the Trotskyists, with groups like Revolution Permanente in France or the Revolutionary Communist Party in Britain shifting their focus from identity politics to talking about communism, internationalism and the necessity for the proletarian revolution – the aim being above all to “mop up” young elements who are asking serious questions about the direction that capitalist society is taken.

We could continue with these examples. They will no doubt be countered by arguments which seek to prove that the working class has actually forgotten more than it learned from the wave of struggles after 1968 – notably, as demonstrated by the fact that there has been little attempt to challenge the union control of the current strikes and to develop forms of self-organisation. But for us, the broad tendencies initiated by the “break” of 2022 are only at their beginning. Their historic potential can only be understood by seeing them as the first fruits of a long process of germination. We will return to this in the second part of the article. **Amos, January 15, 2025.**

# A necessary debate for the clarification of positions and principles

On 23 November, the Internationalist Communist tendency (ICT) held a public meeting in Paris on the theme: *'Faced with the rise of nationalist wars and confrontations, the only perspective is the internationalist class struggle'*.

In addition to the ICT, the meeting was attended by militants from the International Communist Party - *Le Prolétaire* (ICP), the International Communist Current (ICC), a representative of the International Group of the Communist Left (IGCL), and several sympathisers from these different organisations.

The ICT has already published a report on this meeting on its website<sup>1</sup>. We do not claim to be exhaustive, but simply wish to briefly underline the crucial points which, for us, emerged from the discussion.

## The emergence of a new generation

The presence of a relatively large audience at this public meeting, characterised in part by its youth, is a very significant fact about the current dynamics of our class. The 'summer of anger' in 2022 in the United Kingdom, the series of strikes which affected almost every sector for several months, was a sign that the proletariat was returning to the path of struggle after more than twenty years of passivity. Faced with the blows of the economic crisis and the relentless attacks by capital and its governments, workers are once again ready to strike, demonstrate and fight.

This dynamic is also marked by a near-invisible global process: the considerable effort of reflection that our class is in the process of producing. Faced with the impasse in the system, a whole range of questions is germinating in the minds of the workers. This is why minorities are appearing in the four corners of the globe, seeking out revolutionary positions and coming into contact with groups in the proletarian camp, those who defend the autonomy of the class and internationalism. Apart from the greater participation in meetings of the organisations of the Communist Left, there are many other signs, such as the emergence of conferences on internationalism (in Arezzo, Prague, Brussels, etc.). But the most significant is surely the attitude of the bourgeoisie itself. Its extreme left is becoming increasingly radical in its language, no longer hesitating to emphasise the need for revolution, and its trade unions are increasingly militant and united in advocating 'class trade unionism'. For the left wing of capital, it's a question of playing its part in attracting the growing numbers of young people who want to fight.

## The historical responsibility of the groups of the Communist Left

The Communist Left has a historical responsibility to pass on to the new generation that is slowly emerging the positions, methods and principles that it inherited from the workers' movement. These lessons, acquired through long struggles over two centuries, are absolutely vital for the future; there can be no victorious international proletarian revolution if they are forgotten.

The ICT meeting held in Paris must be evaluated in the light of this requirement, which is binding on all groups of the Communist Left.

## 1. Debate with the aim of clarification

The presentation made by the ICT to launch the discussion clearly set out the following points:

- In the 19th century, certain national liberation struggles could be supported by revolutionaries, when they made it possible to sweep away the last feudal fetters and thus accelerate the development of capitalism. But since the beginning of the 20th century, in this system in decline, it is no longer the formation of capitalist nations that is on the order of the day, but international proletarian revolution.
- The current development of war and chaos in Ukraine, Gaza and elsewhere is the product of the capitalist system.
- Faced with this situation, only the working class is in a position to oppose the system which is generating this increasingly barbaric situation: capitalism.

ation: capitalism.

- Against the nationalist campaigns in which the bourgeoisie tries to mobilise the working class in defence of one side against another, revolutionaries must defend proletarian internationalism within the class.

The ICC intervened from the outset to support the broad lines of the presentation. In particular, we underlined the effort made to adopt a historical approach in order to understand these different questions, which are so crucial for the development of class consciousness and the future of the proletarian struggle. This is why we felt it necessary to stress the profound changes brought about by the entry of capitalism into its phase of decadence. As the Communist International proclaimed at its foundation in March 1919: the experience of the carnage of the 1914 war and the international revolutionary wave that followed proved that the world had entered *'the era of wars and revolutions'*: capitalism, now decadent, had nothing more to offer humanity, and the only alternative was its destruction by world proletarian revolution. From then on, war became capitalism's way of life; every nation, every bourgeoisie, big or small, was imperialist and contributed to the war and nationalist fever. In this new configuration, national liberation struggles and the call for self-determination, supported by revolutionaries in certain circumstances during the ascendant period, became obsolete and reactionary orientations and watchwords.

The ICP, for its part, defended an entirely different approach: faithful to its theory of invariance, the idea that the communist programme had been established once and for all in 1848 and that nothing could be added or modified since then, it maintained that national liberation struggles were still possible today. Consistent with this approach, the ICP and its sympathiser therefore defended the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's struggle against Israeli oppression (without, of course, at any time supporting Hamas or any local bourgeois faction). The ICP supporter even said that for him not to support the Palestinian people when they were being massacred, tortured and subjected to the most appalling barbarity was a form of indifference towards all this suffering.

In response, several speakers tried to show that national liberation struggles are a trap that chains part of the working class to the domination of its own bourgeoisie. In the face of this, we must brandish the slogan already contained in the Manifesto: *Proletarians have no country!*

If, during this first part of the debate, the ICT and the ICC together defended the same general political position, two nuances also emerged:

- Unlike the ICC, ICT militants never uttered the words 'ascendance' and 'decadence' to define the two great phases in the life of capitalism. In our view, these terms reflect the most accurate and precise vision of the profound and historical evolution of the system.
- The ICT said that it recognises the existence of oppressed nations and oppressing nations, which for the ICC is a mistake because it maintains an ambiguity when it comes to firmly insisting that all nations, large or small, well or poorly armed, are imperialist.

The second part of the discussion was devoted to the historical issues at stake today: war and class struggle.

In many of the interventions, in particular those of the ICT and the ICP, the vision defended was that of a course towards the Third World War (or towards the *'generalisation of war'*, we confess that we did not necessarily understand whether there was a difference between these two terms). There is in this position a pessimistic assessment of the state of the working class and its struggles.

The ICC then developed another assessment of the situation: capitalism is not heading for a third world war in the foreseeable future, but is in the process of decomposition. In concrete terms, this means a proliferation of warlike conflicts (as in Ukraine, Palestine, Syria, etc.), a disintegration of the social fabric (atomisation, a rise in violence, racism and identitarian isolationism, the gangrene of drugs and trafficking, etc.), an erosion of coherent and rational thought... This is no less a danger

than the possibility of a third world war, both of which lead to the disappearance of human civilisation. On the other hand, this latter approach makes it possible to understand the reality unfolding before our eyes in all its complexity and chaos, to link together phenomena that may appear independent of one another, or even contradictory<sup>2</sup>.

As for the class struggle, for the ICC, the proletariat is not defeated today. It is this strength of the proletariat, particularly in Europe and North America, which for 40 years prevented the Cold War from turning into the Third World War. Today, the proletariat has even begun to take up the struggle again and is trying to develop its reflection, its consciousness. As we said in the introduction, since 2022 and the series of strikes known as the 'summer of anger' in the UK, the ICC has been highlighting the return of workers' combativity<sup>3</sup>.

All these disagreements within the meeting were expressed in a very warm and open atmosphere, where everyone was keen to understand and respond to each other's positions in an argued manner.

This positive moment must serve as a benchmark: the groups of the Communist Left must develop the debate between them much more - the confrontation of their political positions, the participation in the public meetings of each other. Our newspapers and magazines must also participate in this process of clarification; there are far too few public polemics between our groups. While the ICP and the ICC write articles in response to each other, an effort that we must pursue and amplify together, the ICT almost systematically refuses this public debate, and our letters and articles remain dead letters.

## 2. Uniting around the fundamental positions of the proletarian camp

There was one moment at the ICT meeting which should particularly attract our attention: although all the interventions all clearly underlined the points of disagreement, some young participants intervened to say that they did not really understand what distinguished the positions of the different organisations present.

These remarks reveal an essential point: the organisations of the Communist Left, however important their differences may be, have in common a history, a heritage and fundamental positions.

The title of the meeting itself summed up this unity: *'Faced with the rise of nationalist wars and confrontations, the only perspective is the internationalist class struggle'*. All the speakers at this debate were keen to stand up against imperialist wars, to defend proletarian internationalism and to reflect on the development of workers' struggle and consciousness.

The dynamic of this meeting is further concrete proof that the different groups of the Communist Left have a twofold responsibility: to confront their differences in a collective process of clarification and to come together to defend, with a stronger voice, what they have essentially in common.

This is why, in each of its interventions, the ICC has systematically issued a joint appeal insisting that we should be able to defend with one voice the internationalist position of the Communist Left in the face of the military conflicts that are developing across the planet. We also pointed out that this joint appeal could enable new generations to draw on this experience, just as we ourselves can draw on the Zimmerwald experience. It would be a milestone for the future.

And once again, both the ICT and the ICP have rejected this joint appeal.

The new generation will therefore have an important role to play here, to push the groups of the Communist Left both to polemicise amongst

2. For those who wish to better understand the theory of decomposition defended by the ICC, we recommend these three texts:

- Theses on decomposition, International Review 107
  - Update of the Theses on Decomposition (2023), International Review 170
  - Militarism and Decomposition (May 2022), International Review 168
3. Read our article: After the rupture in the class struggle, the necessity for politicisation, *International Review* 171

Continued from page 2

# Global economic crisis deepens, capitalism attacks the working class

Under the growing influence of populism, bourgeois measures are becoming increasingly irrational, sometimes to the detriment of national economic interests. Take, for example, the sabotage during Trump's first presidency of the work of the World Trade Organisation, an institution designed to maintain a minimum of stability in the world economy, giving free rein to the international development of every man for himself. Similarly, the British bourgeoisie's decision to withdraw from the EU has created major obstacles to trade with the continent, with a significant negative impact on its economy. Finally, Bolsonaro and Modi's totally irrational handling of the Covid-19 crisis has resulted in many more casualties in these two countries than the general average, adding to the economic crisis.

## Capitalism makes the working class pay for the crisis

In recent years, the crisis has already led to significant impoverishment in the most important economic regions of the capitalist world. According to Eurostat, in 2023 16.2% of European citizens were at risk of poverty, which means that around 71.7 million people are suffering material and social deprivation and do not have enough income to lead a decent life. The United States has one of the highest poverty rates in the Western world. According to the Brookings Institute, 43% of all American families are unable to meet their basic needs<sup>6</sup>.

In China, there is officially no poverty. But in 2020, 600 million Chinese were still subsisting on the equivalent of 137 dollars a month, struggling to meet their needs<sup>7</sup>.

As the economic situation deteriorates, this tendency will continue in the years to come, as the series of redundancies already announced testifies. According to Layoffs.fyi, 384 US technology companies, for example, had already laid off more than 150,000 workers by 2024, adding to the 428,449 workers in the same sector who have lost their jobs in the previous two years. In Europe, massive redundancies have been announced at Bosch (5,000 jobs), Volkswagen (35,000 jobs), Schaeffler AG (4,700 jobs), Ford (4,000 jobs), Airbus (2,043 jobs) and Air France KLM (1,500 jobs). China's largest private companies have cut 300,000 jobs. Youth unemployment in China has reached 20%. These figures illustrate how the slowdown in the Chinese economy is affecting the workforce. The staggering plans of Trump's second term will certainly deal a further blow to workers' living conditions.

In response to the worsening global economy and deteriorating living conditions, the working class must prepare for struggle, as the workers in different countries have done since 2022<sup>8</sup> when they clearly demonstrated that they would not accept economic attacks without a fight and took to the struggle with more confidence. This should encourage all workers to overcome their hesitations and to follow the example of their class brothers and sisters and join their struggle.

**Dennis, 15 January 2025**

6. *ibid*

7. 'Chinese Poverty is a curse imposed by the CCP', Yinbao.net

8. 'Why does the ICC talk about a "rupture" in the class struggle?' *World Revolution* 397

themselves and to unite on the cardinal points they have in common, to push the groups of the Communist Left to live up to their historical responsibility.... **Pawel (09/12/2024)**

The remaining part of this article deals with the presence at the ICT meeting of a member of the "International Group of the Communist Left", a group which has engaged in police-like activity against the ICC, and thus with the necessity to defend proletarian principles of behaviour against such activity. The complete article can be found on our website: <https://en.internationalism.org/content/17594/necessary-debate-clarification-positions-and-principles>

1. We encourage our readers to read it at the following address Report on the public meeting held on 23/11/24, on leftcom.org

# From the floods in Germany (2021) to the destructive floods in Spain (2024), the impasse of a dying capitalist system

In a previous article<sup>1</sup> we condemned the recent catastrophic floods in Valencia and highlighted the crass incompetence of the bourgeoisie both to prevent and to react effectively to a disaster that it presents to us as the result of ‘the unpredictability of nature’ and ‘the impact of bad management’. The figures are frightening: more than 200 dead, more than 850,000 people directly affected, tens of thousands of damaged homes and vehicles, the collapse of transport, business and education centres, and traumatic psychological consequences for the inhabitants. In 2021, we witnessed a similar phenomenon in Germany and other Central European countries<sup>2</sup>, with more than 240 dead, thousands injured and billions of euros worth of material damage.

The scale of these two disasters aroused the despair and anger of outraged people. Already in Germany, the media were highlighting the lack of preparation for climate change: “*Deadly floods reveal shortcomings in disaster preparedness in Germany*”; “*while heavy rain was expected, many residents were not warned*”; “*deadly floods in Germany were up to nine times more likely due to climate change, and the risk will continue to increase*”(CNN). But beyond the resigned observations of the bourgeoisie, the search for those to blame, the illusion of ‘solidarity’-type reconstruction and the solemn promises of governments to get involved in the fight against climate change, we need to identify the underlying causes and consequences of these disasters, those that are hidden behind the horror of the images and the negligence of the authorities.

## The breakdown of capitalism leads to more disasters

These terrible floods are not just an anecdote in the succession of disasters throughout human history. From the end of the 1980s, a trend began to emerge towards the accumulation of a whole series of natural catastrophes and disasters of various kinds in the daily lives of the countries at the heart of capitalism: the chemical accidents at the Seveso factories, the nuclear disasters at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, the deadly effects of heatwaves, the resurgence of epidemics, air crashes and road accidents, the rise of drug addiction, and so on. Until then, the capitalist system had succeeded in limiting the proliferation of these phenomena to peripheral countries, but while they continued to multiply there, they also tended to spread to the whole planet, fully affecting, like a boomerang, the major metropolises at the heart of the system.

At the end of the 1980s, after years of decaying capitalism, the historical situation reached an impasse: faced with the resurgence of the economic crisis, the bourgeoisie was unable to implement its ‘solution’ of mobilising for a new apocalyptic world war, because of the development of workers’ struggles. The proletariat, for its part, mobilised in a series of major open struggles from the late 1960s onwards, but was unable to move towards politicising its struggle and decisively confronting the bourgeoisie. The consequence of this impasse in the balance of forces between the two antagonistic classes was an intensification of the process of social putrefaction, illustrated in particular by the collapse of the Eastern capitalist bloc and the entry into a New World Disorder<sup>3</sup>, a terrifying dynamic, apparently less direct, but ultimately just as destructive as world war itself.

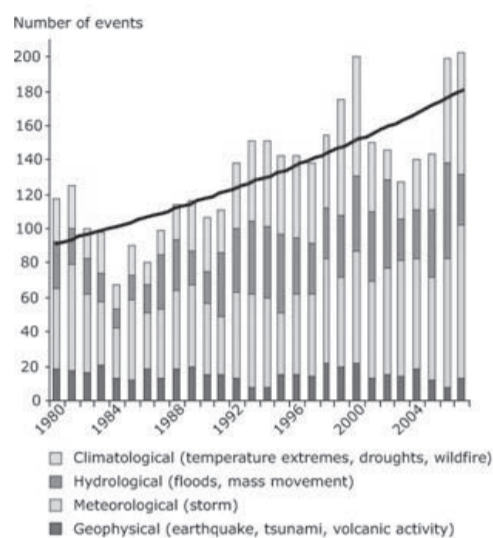
The scale of decomposition is perfectly illustrated, on a strictly ecological level<sup>4</sup>, by manifestations ranging from the expansion of asphyxiating megalopolises and pollution of all kinds to global phenomena such as the greenhouse effect and cli-

1. ‘Floods in Valencia: capitalism is an unfolding catastrophe’, ICC Online. At the time of writing, gigantic fires are raging in the Los Angeles region in the United States. The negligence and growing inability of the bourgeoisie to deal with the disasters caused by its system has been confirmed once again.

2. ‘Capitalism is dragging humanity towards a planet-wide catastrophe’, July 2021, ICC Online

3. The ‘New World Order’ is an expression coined by Bush Senior during the invasion of Kuwait, referring to a new era in which the United States was supposed to ensure order as the world’s policeman.

4. Sequía en España: el capitalismo no puede mitigar, ni adaptarse, solo destruir, ICC Online, Spanish language version, March 2024



The graph shows natural disasters in Europe from 1980 to 2007 (European Environment Agency)

mate change, themselves exacerbated by the multiplication of the interconnected effects of war and economic crisis. The bourgeoisie is increasingly unable to conceal its powerlessness in the face of the prospect of a chain of disasters to come.

While the capitalist system exploits the most advanced technology and resources to arm itself to the teeth, to set up instant transatlantic communications and to conduct the most complex scientific and technical research, at the same time it is suffering from the deepening of its internal contradictions and is therefore less and less able to postpone the worst consequences of these to the future and cannot prevent the effects of decades of decline from turning against it.

Referring to the floods of 2021, the Oxford Environmental Change Institute points out that “*this shows the extent to which even developed countries are not immune to the impact of extreme weather conditions, which we know will worsen with climate change*”. Extreme phenomena will become increasingly frequent, as shown by the recent succession of extreme droughts and floods in the Mediterranean. In the aftermath of 2021, a series of scientific surveys were commissioned to supposedly try to prevent these kinds of unexpected disasters, and the European Environment Agency asked the question: “*floods in 2021, will Europe heed the warnings?*” The answer is clearly no, as we saw in Valencia. In reality, capitalism is proving increasingly incapable of responding to scientific recommendations concerning the future of humanity and the planet.

On the contrary, there is even a tendency for the state to abandon the population, not just because of a lack of preparation, chaos or the deterioration of warning systems, but fundamentally because of a lack of resources and the way in which the bourgeoisie is dodging the problem, passing the hot potato of responsibility between its various regional or central factions. Already in Germany in 2021, the criticism was that “*communities should decide how to react. In the German political system, the regional states are responsible for emergency efforts*” (BBC News). In Spain, we have seen a similar spectacle, if not worse. In the face of this growing trend towards abandonment, “*what gave hope was the arrival of volunteers from all over Germany at the scene of the tragedy, clearing away the mud, talking to those affected... and donations reached record levels*” (DW News). Similarly, the disaster in Spain generated a similar surge of popular solidarity, reflecting the social nature of human beings. But does this kind of social impulse represent hope for the future, does it form the basis of the struggle for a society that will overcome capitalism?

Before delving any further into this question, we should note that, beyond the trivialisation of these disasters and their normalisation, the idea is increasingly propagated of ‘the need to adapt to inescapable changes’, so as to inculcate the idea that it is impossible to anticipate and therefore that we will have to ‘make do’, hoping to contain the

most destructive effects, thus stimulating fatalism and despair, the every-man-for-himself attitude and individual resourcefulness in the face of a system that declares itself incapable of reversing the trend. In fact, the world’s climate summits have gone from being totally hollow commitments to open shams! The last COP 29, marked by the absence of a large number of world leaders, produced results that were described as disappointing by the bourgeois press itself: “*a shameful agreement*” (Greenpeace); “*a complete waste of time*” (EuroNews). For *Nature* magazine, the funds allocated will not convince anyone, and the agreement does not even anticipate the impact of the next ‘Trump scenario’<sup>5</sup>; Cambridge researchers present at the COP confided: “*I didn’t speak to a single scientist who thought that the 1.5°C limit was still achievable with current resources*”.

## Where is the hope for the future?

In Spain, the spontaneous reaction of the population to the disaster gave rise to a wave of volunteers and an outpouring of generosity to help those affected and, faced with the inaction and incompetence of the state, even generated slogans such as “*only the people can save the people*”. This reaction was shamelessly exploited by various factions of the bourgeoisie, from its extreme right to its extreme left. The far-left groups have shared the work with the left parties by subtly re-directing workers’ thinking towards the bourgeois terrain. They never present us with a serious analysis of the evolution and nature of capitalism, but offer workers all sorts of false alternatives based on ‘popular management’ of the capitalist system. Groups like ‘Izquierda Revolucionaria’ in Spain or the German branch of the Committee for a Workers’ International, or the World Socialist Website, spit fire at the “*irresponsibility and criminal inaction of politicians and authorities*” and first tell us that “*capitalism is responsible*” only to claim that “*it is not the establishment, but the people themselves who have organised solidarity and hospitality and even part of the hospitality. Donations, people, services and rescue workers... a hopeful solidarity ‘from below’ that needs to be democratised and coordinated effectively*”. A caricature of the ideology according to which spontaneous solidarity in the face of catastrophe is a proletarian alternative to the negligence of capitalism is defended, for example, by the Trotskyists of ‘Left Voice’ (Révolution Permanente in France) who say that it can provoke a kind of ‘catastrophe communism’, where “*people free themselves from the capitalists and start to rebuild society in a collaborative way ... when I feel climate despair, I think of the prospect of joining with other people around the world to fight the catastrophe*”.

In Valencia, we saw how all the solidarity, anger, indignation and despair aroused by the disaster were channelled into national unity campaigns such as the joint mourning rallies with businessmen at company gates in ‘support for Valencia’ or ‘for the people of Valencia, proud of their solidarity’. The anarchists who normally call for ‘neighbourhood alternatives’ and self-management have embarked on the adventure of ‘local solidarity networks, for the self-organisation and empowerment of the people’. And the provocation of the arrival of the authorities was met with a shower of mud and insults.

However, there was no hint of a class approach, no protest against the pressure on workers to continue working, or against the loss of wages, unemployment subsidies or housing benefit. As there were no assemblies or discussions to reflect on the root causes of the disaster, the leftists and the unions had no trouble channelling some of the anger, while some of the inhabitants lost their way in pure disorientation, in conflicts between bourgeois parties, or even in populism against the inept

5. The ‘Trump scenario’: the new Trump administration intends to dismiss any talk of climate change, implementing a ‘drill baby drill’ policy while withdrawing from all international treaties combating global warming. Trump’s response to the catastrophic fires in Los Angeles sets the tone: Trump did not blame the drying up of forests due to climate change, but the alleged refusal of the governor of California to release water reserves in the region just to protect what Trump calls a ‘worthless fish’, the smelt.

political elites, ‘insensitive to the suffering of the people’.

We should have no illusions about the impact of these immediate reactions! When the reflexes of social survival do not find expression on a class terrain, they are immediately put to good use by the bourgeoisie to disarm the proletariat, preventing it from developing its own class response! This kind of spontaneous indignation, despair and rage within society in the face of destruction, fundamentally expresses impotence, frustration and a lack of perspective in the face of the rotting of society. The effects of the decomposition of capitalism, in themselves, do not constitute a favourable basis for a reaction of the proletariat as a class against capitalism, as the leftists would have us believe. They oppose and replace the class struggle of the proletariat with the shapeless magma that is the ‘people’, thus condemning the workers to be diluted into the dominated and powerless mass of ‘those below’.

The acceleration of the decomposition of capitalism will inevitably lead to a multiplication of increasingly terrible catastrophes, in the face of which states will show themselves to be increasingly incompetent and indifferent. The bourgeoisie will ideologically exploit both the effects of the decomposition of its system and ‘spontaneous reactions of solidarity’ to rally the population behind the defence of the state, with supposed purges of the corrupt or promises of improved efficiency in its management. But the exploitation of human solidarity by the ruling class (from voluntary sacrifices at work to humanitarian campaigns to give credibility to the system) does not give rise to any flame of hope for the future. Only the working class, through its struggle against the attacks on its living conditions, and the search for its extension and unity, its politicisation, represents the hope of overthrowing this rotten society.

Opero, 12 January 2025

## Read International Review 172

Faced with chaos and barbarism, the responsibility of revolutionaries

Democratic campaigns against working class consciousness

Faced with the rising tide of populism The capitalist left can’t save a dying system

Ukraine, Middle-East, Philippines, Taiwan, Africa, the deepening and extension of wars reflect the growing impasse of capitalism

More than a century of conflict in Israel/Palestine

Prague Action Week, activism is a barrier to political clarification

2 years on from the Joint Statement of the Communist Left on the war in Ukraine

Manifesto of the Communist Left to the workers of Europe, June 1944

The struggle against imperialist war can only be waged with the positions of the Communist Left

How the bourgeoisie organises itself

This Crisis is going to be the most serious in the whole period of decadence

Critique of the so-called ‘Communisers’, part iv

# Tribute to our comrade Laurie

It is with great sorrow that we must inform our readers of the death of our comrade Laurie, at a hospital in Birkenhead where he had been a patient for the best part of a year.

Laurie was a real militant of the working class, both in the more immediate sense as a product of workers' struggles in Merseyside in the early 1970s, and in a more historic sense, as one expression of the resurgence of class struggle that spread across the world after the events of May 68 in France. This is how, in an interview with other ICC comrades, he recalled his 'initiation' into politics:

*"I first became politicised when I was 23 years old, an unemployed worker in Birkenhead, made redundant in the shipyards. I attended unemployed claimant's meetings, and I went to a rally in Liverpool where thousands of unemployed workers listened to the unions and Labour Party speakers; there was the then TUC leader, Vic Feather who was booed off the platform, I think it was '72, a lot of commotion. The unions were very unpopular. Reaction from bourgeois press and the local press - the Birkenhead News who wrote an editorial on the boeing of Vic Feather. I wrote to this paper explaining why the unemployed workers were so angry..."*

It was through the publication of this letter that he was contacted by the Workers' Voice group, another, more directly political product of the revival of class struggle. Laurie describes the origins of the group as follows: *"The WV militants were trying to appropriate the lessons of the past, passionately interested in Workers' Councils and the German Revolution and the KAPD. Shared the same position as the KAPD that the unions were incorporated in the state. More importantly that the Shop Steward Movement was umbilically linked to the 'official' unions. Also, re-published many articles from The Workers Dreadnought, Sylvia Pankhurst's paper based in the East End of London from 1916 onward"*.

Workers' Voice joined the International Correspondence Network initiated by the Internationalism group in the USA, and in 1973 they hosted an international conference of groups which included the Groupe de Liaison pour L'Action des Travailleurs, a councilist group from France, and ex-members of the Solidarity group in Britain, who later on formed themselves into World Revolution and Revolutionary Perspectives (forerunner of today's Communist Workers' Organisation). But the most dynamic force at the conference were the comrades of Révolution Internationale from France, who most clearly defended the framework of the decadence of the capitalist mode of production as the basis for understanding the universal tendency towards state capitalism and the integration of the unions into the state. They also insisted that the aim of the International Correspondence Network should be to provide the starting point for the regroupment of revolutionaries on an international scale. The capacity of RI to convince the comrades of WR, and those in other countries, of the validity of this perspective laid the foundations for the formation of the ICC in 1975.

This was the first time comrades of the future WR/ICC met Laurie, and initially relations with Workers' Voice were very cordial. Other conferences took place and the lessons drawn by WV comrades about the role of the shop stewards – some of whom had themselves been shop stewards – were a key factor in assisting the comrades of WR to complete their critique of the union apparatus from top to bottom.

However, the challenge of going beyond an essentially local activity and forming a unified international organisation proved too great for Workers' Voice, some of whom had been scarred by their experience in the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League (later the Workers' Revolutionary Party) and had developed a suspicion of the notion of a centralised political organisation, coupled with a very strong 'workerism' which was also an inheritance from the SLL. Instead of continuing the debate to clarify our divergencies, they broke off all relations with the ICC, citing an entirely distorted description of our position on the state in the period of transition as proof of our alleged counter-revolutionary nature. We wrote about this retreat

into sectarian isolation at the time<sup>1</sup>, but the point we want to make here was that Laurie resisted this process and was in favour of maintaining relations with the ICC, which brought him into conflict with the other members of the group, leading eventually (although this was partly mixed up with personal issues given that this was a very difficult time in Laurie's life) to his expulsion from the group. Soon afterwards, Laurie moved to London and eventually became a member of the ICC.

Whatever mistakes he made at this time, this was a sign of the comrade's political courage – the willingness to stand up for your positions even at the price of being on your own or in a minority.

Further proof of this was supplied by the crisis in the ICC at the beginning of the 80s, which was centred around the section in Britain. WR had been split between two clans, partly based on personal likes and dislikes<sup>2</sup>, and these divisions were exploited by a dubious element in the French section, Chenier, especially as they became more overtly political in the wake of the steel strike in Britain. Laurie had been drawn into the clan most directly influenced by Chenier, and during the steel strike in Britain these comrades, in Laurie's words, *"got totally tangled up in the support for the shop steward committees in the steel strike. Effectively they were supporting union shop steward committees. They thought it was important to look at movement as a whole and claimed it was a break with the unions, which it wasn't. The strike finished and the antagonisms between clans became more intense"*. It was at this point that Chenier said he was leaving the ICC and most of his followers went with him, stealing typewriters from a comrade's house with the excuse they would make better use of them than the ICC. Chenier soon left these elements in the lurch and was later seen carrying a banner for the French Socialist Party, confirming the correctness of the ICC's decision to expel him and issue a warning to the proletarian political milieu. The efforts of the remaining elements to construct something out of a very confused anarchist milieu came to nothing, and nearly all of them quit political life soon after.

But Laurie recounts how he had been ostracised by the ex-members of the Chenier tendency for the crime of trying to maintain a channel of communication with the ICC. Following the thefts, *"there*

1. See 'Answer to Workers' Voice' in *International Review* 2 and also 'Sectarianism Unlimited' in *World Revolution* No 3.

2. For more on the problem of clans in political organisations, see our text 'The question of organisational functioning in the ICC', *International Review* 109

*was an emergency meeting of the WR section in a pub where we met. I asked to speak to the comrades and Krespel and MC (Mark Chirik<sup>3</sup>) came down to speak to me, comrade Krespel translated and both comrades had a lot to say. They said we make no concessions, we want all our material back before we talk. I was unhappy, thought I could be a middleman. But MC insisted - 'this is a point of proletarian principle'; 'theft from a proletarian revolutionary organisation is not the basis for a tendency'. I went back and informed (others in the 'tendency') that I had been to speak with the WR comrades and MC. Then the dye was cast, I was dead to them."* The comrade entered another difficult period in his personal life, with the break-up with his partner who had stayed with the 'tendency'. *"I missed political life, I realised that I had to return to the ICC, I wrote a letter to MC. I asked for his advice because I trusted him and admired his long years of militancy, his steadfastness. MC replied, 'don't give up, discuss your situation with the comrades of WR, trust them'"*.

Indeed Laurie did not give up, and was able to discuss and understand the political mistakes he had made by getting mixed up with the Chenier tendency. From that point on he never doubted his loyalty to the ICC and was always deeply involved in its activities, internal and external. He was in his element discussing with new contacts, distributing our paper and leaflets at demonstrations and pickets, as well as speaking up at his own workplace. In the struggles at the end of the 80s, for example, he was instrumental in his fellow bus workers joining a nurses' picket line, and even when he was ill in hospital he asked to be taken down to be with the picket line of striking theatre nurses. He was also particularly committed to travelling to other ICC sections to take part in their conferences and thus contributing to the international discussions within the ICC. It was a long way from the localist ideas that had contributed to the demise of the Workers' Voice group. Up to his very last weeks, confined to hospital, he always emphasised that he could not wait to get back to militant activity within the ICC.

There is a lot more to say about Laurie's personal warmth, his obvious enjoyment of the sociable relations he developed with comrades of the ICC

3. Founding member of the ICC who had played an important part in the development of the communist left in the 30s, 40s and 50s. See our articles in *International Reviews* 65 and 66, 'Marc, Part 1: From the Revolution of October 1917 to World War II'; 'Marc, Part 2: From World War II to the present day'

and their families. And about Laurie's abiding interest in literature and culture in general. As we wrote in a tribute written for his family at the time of his funeral, *"it was characteristic of him that while he was in hospital he began writing about one of his favourite authors, Varlam Shalamov, a Russian dissident who wrote moving stories about life in Stalin's gulag. Even though he wasn't able to get very far with this project, it showed both his determination and his abiding love of literature. Laurie never subscribed to the idea that art, or classical music, or great literature were something for the elite, beyond the comprehension of the uneducated masses, any more than he thought that the working class was incapable of understanding the revolutionary ideas which, in the final analysis, came out of its own struggles for emancipation. Laurie was truly a man of culture. And part of that was his love of fine food and his skill as a chef..."* None of that meant that he lost contact with his roots: he never tired of telling stories, handed down by his parents, of life in the Liverpool docks and surrounding districts; and one of the dishes he most liked to cook and serve was none other than "Scouse"<sup>4</sup>.

Within the past two years we have published tributes to three other ICC comrades who are no longer with us, Antonio, Miguel and Enrique<sup>5</sup>. The generation that came out of the historic resurgence of class struggle at the end of the 60s are now largely in their 70s. They have a major task in transmitting the political and organisational lessons they have learned through their long years of militant activity; it is the task of younger generations of revolutionaries to assimilate and develop those lessons in order to construct the revolutionary organisation of the future. Laurie's unwavering dedication to maintaining and building the ICC, his life as a militant of our class, is an example for them to follow. **ICC, January 2025**

4. Wikipedia definition: *"Scouse is a type of stew typically made from chunks of meat (usually beef or lamb) with potatoes, carrots, and onion. It is particularly associated with the port of Liverpool; hence, the inhabitants of that city are often referred to as 'scousers'. The word 'scouse' comes from lobsouse, a stew commonly eaten by sailors throughout northern Europe in the past, and surviving in different forms there today."* The current writer, soon after visiting Laurie in the hospital in Birkenhead, was however distressed to learn from two young people from Liverpool that those from Birkenhead on the other side of the Mersey were not considered to be true scousers... a view that Laurie himself confirmed.

5. Tribute to our comrade Antonio; In memory of our comrade Miguel; In memory of our comrade Enrique

Continued from page 1

## Faced with capitalist crisis and disorder, sharpen the class struggle!

This global ideological campaign is the continuation of a vast political offensive, initiated at the time of the election campaign, aimed of course at confusing the workers behind the flag of anti-fascism and promoting *"the defence of the democratic governmental facade of capitalist rule. A facade designed to hide the reality of imperialist war, the pauperisation of the working class, the destruction of the environment, the persecution of refugees. It is the democratic fig leaf that obscures the dictatorship of capital whichever of its different parties - right, left, or centre - come to political power in the bourgeois state"*<sup>2</sup>. This democratic ideological campaign is continuing, with each party adding its little stone to the mystifying edifice, like Macron in France denouncing a *"reactionary international"* or the German and British bourgeoisies denouncing Musk's *"interference"*.

But it is above all the most left-wing factions of

2. "For an Appeal of the Communist Left to the working class against the international campaign to mobilise for bourgeois democracy", ICC Online

the bourgeoisie who manage, in reality, to mystify the working class most effectively, in the name of defending 'democracy' against 'fascism'. The left-wing parties thus lend their 'radical' support and credibility to the idea of a "reactionary international".

The proletariat must be deaf to this intense propaganda, which is continuing and will intensify, at the risk of finding itself further weakened in the face of the forces of capital. It must understand that the democratic state is the tool of capital, its worst enemy. Today, the only means of struggle for the working class remains its fight on the terrain of its class interests and the defence of its living conditions in the face of attacks from all these states, even the most 'democratic' ones, whether led by the right or the left.

This fight will also have to be waged against those false friends of the working class, the trade unions. In Belgium, despite the trade union common front which seeks to contain and sterilise the struggle by organising a day of action every month, accompanied by other strikes, such as in

French-speaking education and on the railways, the class is tending to go beyond the trade union straitjacket and more and more workers are joining the days of action. Proletarians in Belgium are not alone. Since 2022, all over the world, in the United Kingdom, France, Canada and the United States, the working class has been raising its head, refusing to lie down in the face of the crisis, redundancies, inflation and 'reforms'. Everywhere, they are gradually beginning to recognise themselves as a social force. Everywhere, small minorities are emerging to question the origins of the crisis, war and the chaos into which capitalism is plunging us. It holds out the prospect of overthrowing capitalism and building another society, without exploitation and without the barbarity of war. **WH, 22 January 2025**

# An international debate to understand the global situation and prepare for the future

On 16 November, the ICC held an Online Public Meeting on the theme 'The Global Implications of the US Elections'.

In addition to ICC militants, several dozen people took part in the discussion, from four continents and around fifteen countries. Simultaneous translation into English, Spanish and French enabled everyone to follow the discussions, which lasted just over three hours.

Obviously, in view of the revolution that needs to be achieved by the entire working class worldwide, this small number may seem insignificant. We still have a long way to go before the proletariat develops a profound consciousness and a vast network of self-organisation. This type of international meeting is precisely a means of advancing along that road. For the moment, revolutionary minorities are still very small, a handful in one town, an individual in another. Gathering together from several countries to discuss, work out and compare arguments, and thus gain a better understanding of the world situation, is a precious opportunity to break down the isolation of each individual, forge links and feel the global nature of the proletarian revolutionary struggle. It's about participating in the effort of our class to create an international vanguard. This type of meeting is thus a milestone which foreshadows the necessary organisation of revolutionaries on a world scale. This regroupment of revolutionary forces is a long process, requiring a conscious and constant effort. It is one of the vital conditions for preparing for the future, for organising ourselves for the decisive revolutionary confrontations to come.

## A debate that raises a thousand questions about the state of the world...

The large turnout for our meeting also reveals the concern, even anxiety, aroused by the election of Donald Trump as head of the world's leading power.

All the speakers stressed, along with the ICC, that the victory of this President - who is openly racist, macho, full of hate, vengeful, and who advocates an irrational economic and war policy - will accelerate all the crises ravaging the world and exacerbate all the uncertainties and chaos.

From this common position, many questions and nuances, as well as disagreements, emerged in the course of the discussion:

Is Trump's triumph the result of a deliberate and conscious policy on the part of the American bourgeoisie? Is Trump the best card for the interests of the American bourgeoisie? Are his imperialist choices regarding Iran, Ukraine and China a step towards the Third World War? Is his protectionist policy of raising tariffs a piece in the jigsaw towards war? Are his plans to ferociously attack the working class, especially civil servants, linked to the sacrifices needed to prepare the national economy for this war?

Or, on the contrary, as the ICC and other participants argued, does Trump's arrival at the head of the world's leading power testify to a growing difficulty on the part of the national bourgeoisies to prevent its most obscurantist and irrational fractions from taking power? Is the clique war within the bourgeoisie itself, like the fragmentation of society into Americans/immigrants, men/women, legal/illegal, all of which the Trump clan is aggravating, not a sign of the trend towards disorder and chaos in American society? Doesn't the trade war that Trump wants, by returning to the protectionist measures of the 1920s and 30s, which ruined every country at the time, show the irrationality of his policy precisely from the point of view of the interests of American capital? In the same sense, doesn't the growing uncertainty about the imperialist policy of the new American administration reinforce war tensions between all countries, pushing even more towards unstable and changing alliances, towards every man for himself, towards short-sighted politics, towards the outbreak of wars which engender nothing other than a scorched earth?

For the ICC, answering all these questions means taking a deeper look at the historical period we are going through: decomposition, the final phase of capitalist decline. Because, basically,

Trump's victory is not something to be taken in isolation, analysed separately and imprisoned in the immediate term. It is the fruit of a whole global situation, of a historical dynamic, one that sees capitalism rotting on its feet. The victory of Donald Trump in the United States or Javier Milei in Argentina, Israel's 'no future' policy in the Middle East or Russia in Ukraine, the stranglehold of the drug cartels on ever larger swathes of Latin America, of terrorist groups in Africa or warlords in Central Asia, the rise of obscurantism, conspiracy theorists and flat earthers, the outbursts of violence from certain sections of society - all these apparently unrelated phenomena are in fact expressions of the same fundamental dynamic of capitalism in decomposition.

We'll come back to this subject and all these questions in a later article to develop our response'.

## ... and the class struggle

The second part of the discussion, which focused on understanding the current state of the class struggle, followed the same dynamic. Here too, the debate was open, frank and fraternal, and many questions were asked, with nuances and disagreements emerging.

Does Trump's victory mean that the proletariat has been defeated, or at the very least that it too is gangrened by racism and populism? Or, on the other hand, does the rejection of the Democratic Party by the workers lead to an awareness of the real nature of this bourgeois party? Can Trump's appearance as a dictator encourage working-class anger and reaction? Or will the campaign to defend democracy be a death trap for the proletariat? Will the worsening of living and working conditions, carried out in an extremely brutal way by Trump, Musk and their gang, provoke the class struggle? Or will these sacrifices reinforce the search for scapegoats, such as foreigners, illegal immigrants, etc.?

All these contradictory questions are not surprising. The situation is extremely complex, difficult to grasp in its entirety and coherence. And just as in the first part of the discussion, what is lacking is a compass, the compass to consider each question not in isolation, separately from each other, but as a whole and in an international and historical context. It's impossible to think about the world without consciously and systematically referring to the general and profound dynamics of global capitalism: the system is plunging into decay (with all the nauseating stench that emanates from it), but the proletariat is not defeated; indeed, since 2022 and the summer of anger in the United Kingdom, it has been raising its head, finding its way back to the path of struggle and its historic goals.

We can't develop our response any further here; we'll come back to it in our press and at our next meetings'.

## We look forward to the next one!

This debate is just the beginning. We encourage all our readers to come and take part in this effort by our class, in the debates between revolutionaries, in the collective process of clarification. Don't remain isolated! The proletariat needs its minorities to forge links, on an international scale, to organise themselves, to debate, to compare positions, to exchange arguments, to understand as deeply as possible the evolution of the world.

The ICC warmly invites you to come and take part in its various meetings: online and international public meetings, 'face-to-face' public meetings in certain towns and cities, and drop-in sessions. All these opportunities to meet and debate

1. We also advise our readers to discover or rediscover three fundamental texts by the ICC on the subject:

- 'Theses on decomposition', International Review 107  
- 'Update of the Theses on Decomposition (2023)', International Review 170  
- 'Militarism and Decomposition (May 2022)', International Review 168

2. In the meantime, our readers can look at our latest article analysing the return of workers' combativity since 2022 and the obstacles standing in the way of the resumption of revolutionary struggles: 'After the rupture in the class struggle, the necessity for politicisation', International Review 171

# ICC Public Meetings

The ICC holds various meetings where you can discuss the politics of the communist left and the current situation:

- online international public meetings
  - local public meetings in person
  - open meeting where you can raise and aspect of our politics.
- See our website, [en.internationalism.org](http://en.internationalism.org) for future meeting

You can also write to the ICC for discussion through correspondence. We welcome comments, criticism, disagreements.

## Subscriptions to the ICC press

### From Britain

World Revolution 3 issues per year	£12 for 2 years (6 issues)
International Review 2 issues per year	£18 for 2 years (4 issues)
Combined sub	£30 for 2 years

### From countries where there is no section of the ICC

World Revolution 3 issues per year	£20 for 2 years (6 issues)
International Review 2 issues per year	£18 for 2 years (4 issues)
Combined sub	£36 for 2 years

Pay by PayPal to [uk@internationalism.org](mailto:uk@internationalism.org)

And send your address to [uk@internationalism.org](mailto:uk@internationalism.org)

From India, which has different rates, contact [India@internationalism.org](mailto:India@internationalism.org)

## ICC books and pamphlets on the history of the workers' movement

**The Italian Communist Left**  
£10

**Dutch and German Communist Left** £14.95

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

**Unions against the working class** £3.00

**Communist organisations and class consciousness** £1.75

are regularly announced on our website.

In addition to these meetings, we also encourage you to write to us, to react to our articles, ask questions or express your disagreement.

And the columns of our press are open, they belong to the class. We welcome your suggestions for articles.

Debate is an absolute necessity. We are far apart, isolated, often at odds with the ideas developing around us. Gathering together, on an international scale, is vital if we are to prepare for the future. All revolutionary minorities have this responsibility. **ICC**

## Donations

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

Recent donations include:

JP	£10
V	£170
Blake	£7.50

## Contact the ICC

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

**Write by e-mail to the following addresses:**

From Great Britain use [uk@internationalism.org](mailto:uk@internationalism.org)

From India use [India@internationalism.org](mailto:India@internationalism.org)

From the rest of the world use [international@internationalism.org](mailto:international@internationalism.org)



[www.internationalism.org](http://www.internationalism.org)

# Belgium: Workers mobilise against bourgeois austerity plans

Once again, “*Enough is enough*” was the undertone for the days of action that took place in Brussels on 13 December 2024 and 13 January 2025 against the ‘austerity plans’ that are on the negotiating table in the talks about forming a new federal government, which have been dragging on for six months now. Earlier these plans were revealed through media ‘leaks’; today they are no longer a public secret. The unions speak of the “*most drastic measures of the past 80 years*”. The planned attacks would affect all sections of the working class. While workers in private companies will be laid off en masse (27,000 by 2024) and automatic wage indexation will come under attack, the new national government also wants to axe social security spending, including unemployment benefits and pensions. To crown it all, it wants to implement a two per cent downsizing of the total public workforce and make work even more precarious and flexible for all workers.

During that first day of action, with some 10,000 demonstrators, it was mainly trade union delegates who mobilised (and mainly from the Walloon region), this scenario took on a very different dynamic on 14 January. Instead of the 5,000 to 10,000 demonstrators originally envisaged by the unions, more than 30,000 workers from the various regions of the country and from a growing number of sectors eventually turned out for the demonstration. But also 47,000 teachers in the Flemish region went on strike, which was a historically high number. Work stoppages also took place at the railway, public transport, recycling, postal services and many other public services. A new day of action was announced for 13 February, now under the slogan “*for public services and purchasing power*”.

But even before these two days of action, another rally had taken place in November that also mobilised far more workers than anticipated. At that health and welfare workers’ demonstration on 7 November, the turnout was also three times higher than expected: more than 30,000 workers. In addition, on 26 November there was also a widely supported strike by French-speaking education personnel (Wallonia and Brussels region) against what Roland Lahaya, the secretary-general of the Walloon education union CSC-Enseignement called “*a declaration of war*”. Under the slogan “*teaching yes, bleeding no!*”, the strikers first and foremost rejected the announced cut in education by the already appointed Walloon government,

a measure that puts permanent appointments at risk, with significant consequences for staff pensions. On 27 and 28 January, there will be another two days of strikes and demonstrations. And the education union under pressure is considering announcing an indefinite strike.

These demonstrations, strikes, protests confirm the increased militancy worldwide, which we have reported on many times in our press in recent years. The escalation of imperialist tensions and growing chaos, the fragmentation of world commerce, rising inflation and energy costs are so many signs of an unprecedented aggravation of the economic crisis. In all countries, the bourgeoisie is thus trying to push the consequences of the economic crisis onto the workers. Belgium is no exception.

## Unions aim to prevent mobilisations gaining momentum

The bourgeoisie is well aware that these plans would provoke reactions in large sections of the class, and not only in the public service sector. It is aware that internationally the working class has already shown that it has overcome decades of declining struggles. That is why the bourgeoisie attaches importance to being well prepared and also putting in place the necessary forces to absorb and divert the expected resistance.

The unions saw the concern and discontent among the workers growing by the week and did not remain passive about preventing the discontent from manifesting itself in “uncontrolled” actions. On Sunday 8 December 2024, Ann Vermorgen (president of the ACV union) declared on television that the joint unions had decided to organise a day of action every month on the 13th in the coming period. This was followed by action days in December and January where the unions tried to limit mobilisations to certain sectors (especially education) and certain demands (pension reform in education). The unions are using established tactics: the isolation and division of different sectors and regions in a series of days of action will eventually exhaust the will to fight.

However, the strength and dynamism of the 13 January mo-

bilisation was such that it developed in other sectors and all regions and surprised the unions themselves. Indeed, the anger clearly shows that this goes beyond just one particular measure or announced ‘reform’. It is an expression of more general discontent and indignation and the reality of the return of militancy in the face of the rising cost of living, deteriorating working conditions, job insecurity and the spectre of falling into poverty.

For years, we have been told that capitalism is the only possible system and that democracy is the best and most perfect political institution imaginable. These mystifications have no other aim than to demobilise the working class, to isolate workers and reduce them to powerlessness, to cut them off from the strength and solidarity of their class. However, despite incessant appeals to rely on the ballot box in order to act as a ‘counterweight’ to austerity, alongside the calls to ‘defend democracy’ against the shameful discourse of the populists, the workers are rediscovering the path of struggle, the need to fight together on their own class terrain. It’s also significant that this dynamic of developing class struggles is taking place in the context of a war and constant increases in military spending which will have to be paid for by the working class.

## Solidarity and unity are the strengths of our struggle

In order to really parry the attacks on our living conditions the struggle must be developed from the broadest possible basis by uniting all workers, regardless of the company, institution, sector or region in which they work. All workers are “*in*



## Political positions of the ICC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*the same boat. All these groups are not separate movements but a collective cry: we are a city of workers - blue-collar and white-collar, unionised and non-unionised, immigrants and natives,”* as a striking teacher in Los Angeles in March 2023 put it. The strikes in Belgium are fully part of the movement which have been taking place over the last three years in other countries, notably Britain, the USA and France.

But it’s vital that the working class, in Belgium as elsewhere, is able to overcome certain weaknesses which appeared in the recent struggles:

- In 2022-23 in Britain, where workers from companies in different sectors, sometimes less than 100 metres apart, made no attempts to break the strict system of picketing your own workplace alone, rather than seek solidarity and unite their struggles.

- In 2023 in France, where workers participated en masse in 14 ‘days of action’ against the government’s pension plans, but failed to broaden the struggle to include strikes in actual companies and enterprises.

In Belgium, the bourgeoisie and its unions never cease spreading the poison of division: between the public and the private sectors, as between workers on either side of the language barrier. This is a traditionally difficult hurdle to overcome<sup>1</sup>, but not impossible as we saw on 23 April 2023 when the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking teachers demonstrated in unison in Brussels. The strikes of 1983 and 1986 also brought together hundreds of thousands of workers from the public and private sectors and from the regions of Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders<sup>2</sup>. Drawing the lessons of past struggles is more than ever indispensable if we are to arm ourselves against the traps laid by the bourgeoisie.

Our strength is unity, solidarity in struggle! Not fighting separately but uniting the struggle together in one and the same movement; going on strike and sending mass delegations to join up with the other workers in the struggle; organising general assemblies to discuss together on the needs of the struggle; uniting around common demands. It is this dynamic of solidarity, expansion and unity that has always shaken the bourgeoisie throughout history. **Lac, 21.01.2025**

1. See “La coalition ‘Arizona’ prépare une attaque frontale contre les conditions de travail et de vie”, *Internationalisme* 381

2. See: “Vers l’unification des luttes”, *Internationalisme* 111, August/September 1986

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*.