

REVOLUTION or WAR

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Faced with the Threat of World War, the Working Class Must Respond with the Mass Strike

International Situation

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The Left and the Leftists at Work in Iran: the "Charter of Minimum Demands"

Workers Struggle in France: 1st and 2nd communique (January 23rd and March 19th 2023)

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History of the Workers Movement Faced with Imperialist War

Workers Strikes during World War II in Canada (Klasbalato-ICT)

Pacifism Ready to the Working Class Struggles against War

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Call on Support

We thank our readers who understand and support our activity through written, material or financial contributions, as well as by other means. Publishing, printing and mailing costs of our review represent a large financial effort, given our limited resources. The development towards decisive class conflicts, as well as our organization's overall activity (intervention in the class and regroupment...), all this demands, among other things, an important financial effort on our part. We appeal to all readers interested in our work, and the analyses that we defend, to show their support by subscribing and by getting the word out about our review, which is published in full version in English and French. We also publish a Spanish version with selected articles (any help with translations is also welcome). If they want to receive the journal regularly and be informed of our communiqués, they can send us their email at intleftcom@gmail.com.

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This number 24 of our journal has been conceived as a “special issue on class struggle and revolutionary intervention”. In previous issues, we have already intervened on the significance of the imperialist war in Ukraine and the step it represents in the march to the generalized war in which capitalism in crisis is taking us. The new factor in the situation in recent months is that the proletarian struggles are developing and asserting themselves internationally. We have therefore decided to focus this issue on these. And on the first experiences of intervention by communist groups – those who are destined to fight both for the political leadership of these class confrontations and for the communist party of tomorrow.

Faced with The Threat of World War, The Working Class Must Respond with The Mass Strike!

A widespread proletarian revolt can end the war in Ukraine and slow down the march to WW3. A global proletarian revolution is the only way to permanently remove the prospect of a civilization-ending nuclear holocaust, as well as eventually create a worldwide framework to deal with other existential threats such as climate change.

The war in Ukraine has had a profound impact on the global economy and the geopolitical situation. It was the occasion for the West to launch an economic war against Russia, by imposing sanctions on it and excluding it from the SWIFT messaging system, which financial institutions use for encrypted communication and international money transfers. The goal of these sanctions was to cause a financial collapse in Russia, and create political instability leading to possible regime change. That policy, spearheaded by the US, failed but an unintended consequence has been to accelerate the process of formation of a bloc of countries that are willing to buy and sell fossil fuels in currencies other than the dollar. States that are willing to do so include traditional allies of the US, including Turkey, India, and Saudi Arabia. US diplomacy towards its allies and semi-colonial countries has involved using coercive means to pressure them to denounce Russia and join in the sanctions¹. Russia, on the other hand, has not insisted that African countries take its side in the war in Ukraine. It has presented itself as an anti-colonial power fighting against US hegemony for a multi-polar world in which African states would stand to benefit. This has enabled Russia and China to expand their influence in Africa and the so-called “Global South” in general, which Josep Borell² referred to as a Jungle in contrast to the civilized Garden that is the EU, at the expense of the West. There is an obvious incentive to countries wanting to shield themselves from US (and Western) sanctions, which are to a significant extent enabled by the

leverage over the global economy the USD provides. Hence, the status of the USD as the international reserve currency is a stake in inter-imperialist competition.

Besides losing some of the influence it had over other countries when it had uncontested supremacy in the decades following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the US bourgeoisie risks losing the leverage afforded to it by the status of the USD as the global reserve currency. We see now that countries like Iran, Russia, and Venezuela are already selling their oil in non-dollar currencies and Saudi Arabia has threatened to sell its oil in other currencies as well. Oil is still the most important resource for modern industry and crude oil is the single most traded commodity in the world. The fact that crude oil has for decades been traded nearly exclusively in USD, together with the pivotal role of that resource in the global economy, has enabled the US to engage in a monetary policy that would be ruinous for any “normal” country.

Now that is slowly coming to an end. At the same time, we see a dire economic situation developing in the West, where inflation, recession, and fragility of financial institutions are evident. In an attempt to bring inflation under control, central banks have increased interest rates. However, this has increased the burden of the massive debt, which in the US has skyrocketed to 30.93 trillion and where debt to GDP ratio has been increasing steadily since the year 2000. However, if this raising of interest rates in an attempt to control inflation results in a chain reaction of bankruptcies of massive financial institutions, central banks have no response other than additional rounds of quantitative easing to prevent a complete collapse of the financial system, further increasing the debt burden. With the erosion of the USD’s status as global reserve currency, the ability to engage in quantitative easing policies while avoiding the worst consequences of doing so will be coming to an end. In other words, the global economic situation currently is worse than “stagflation” (instead of inflation on top of economic stagnation, we have recession and inflation) and the prospects for the fu-

¹ . *Western Allies Pressure African Countries to Condemn Russia*, Robbie Gramer, *Foreign Policy* (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/05/western-allies-pressure-african-countries-to-condemn-russia/>)

² . The UE “Foreign Minister”.

ture seem dire. The development of this economic crisis only exacerbates militaristic tendencies that are already being expressed around the world.

So what can we say based on the above? The US-led Western Bloc, itself far from free of internal contradictions and antagonisms, is in relative decline and an alliance between Russia and China poses a serious threat to US dominance. China is the largest manufacturer of industrial goods. Russia is the biggest exporter of raw material; it also has a very developed military industrial complex and large nuclear arsenal. Leading US politicians have said that China's economic rise is a threat to the US and that the US should contain China to prevent it from overtaking the US. This geopolitical dynamic is setting up a situation of a seemingly inevitable inter-imperialist clash, with catastrophic consequences for humanity, as the growing strength of the China-led bloc runs into the policy of containment pursued by the West.

At least the clash would be inevitable if the proletariat were not a historical subject that can intervene in the international situation and completely turn it upside down.

We start by revolting against the immediate material consequences of the drive to war, which are increases in the cost of living due to sky-rocketing food, energy, and rent prices. The only effective way to revolt against these conditions is by generalizing our strikes beyond sectoral and corporate confines. In this, we will inevitably be confronted with the unions who will try to maintain control over the situation by keeping strikes isolated by company or sector. The consequences of the march to war and the economic crisis do not just impact workers in this or that particular workplace, but all workers in every workplace. Therefore, there is an objective basis for generalizing the strikes into a mass strike. However, going from objective possibility to actuality will require the effective intervention of the political vanguard in the struggles and the capacity of the combative workers involved in the struggles to begin to take charge of coordinating and spreading them. One of our tasks as the political vanguard is to gather the combative workers into the NWBCW committees, which we

conceive as struggle committees set up in anticipation of the development of mass struggle, to enable the political vanguard's intervention in the struggles and to favour the capacity of the factory vanguard to take charge of coordinating and generalizing the struggles. Once the struggles take on a mass form, new forms of organization will emerge such as workers councils and mass assemblies, but for now the task for the political vanguard is to fan the flames of the mass strike through their activity in the NWBCW committees, gathering combative workers around themselves and intervening in local strikes to push for generalization.

The development of historical events cannot be allowed to proceed according to the logic of capitalism and inter-imperialist rivalries. The ruling class, to impose its murderous solution to the contradictions of its historically outdated system, will have to contend with the international proletariat, which is already starting to revolt against its worsening condition. Only the decisive and radical intervention of the proletariat can prevent a generalized imperialist war that is ruinous for everyone.

A proletarian revolt of sufficient scale will force the bourgeoisie to agree on a truce in the arena of imperialist rivalries, to better be able to confront its biggest enemy: the proletariat, first at home front and then internationally. Then, the significance of the mass strike will extend beyond opposing the war by opposing the sacrifices required for it to be waged. The necessary historical outcome of the mass strike — the proletarian insurrection — will begin to be concretely posed, as the class war intensifies and as the bourgeoisie loses its capacity to rule. The proletarian vanguard, hopefully strengthened by the whole preceding period of class struggle and collective re-appropriation of the communist program, will intervene with orientations that correspond to the moment and that show the way forward, as we are attempting to do already. A revolutionary outcome from this historical tempest will depend on the communist vanguard effectively assuming the leadership of the mass movement of the working class.

The Editorial Team, April 2023

International Situation

Despite the State and Unions' Control, a Genuine International Dynamic towards a Proletarian Response to the Crisis and Imperialist War

Workers from across the globe have continued to mobilize. It would be long and tedious to list the proletarian struggles and social revolts of the last few months at the international level. They have touched every region of the world, from China – especially in the province of Guandong – to Iran, Lebanon, South America, Africa, Greece. At the time of writing, the public service strike in Canada is affecting hundreds of thousands of proletarians, while massive work stoppages have taken place in the various transport corporations in Germany. Recently Portugal has become another center of activity as teachers, railway workers, airline workers, and other have continued a massive strike wave that has rocked the country. Even Sweden has been affected by a railway strike. The proletariat in other countries such as France, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom have continued their struggle against the bourgeoisie. With 67% of French respondents stating that they believed these strikes should be “intensified,” it is clear that these shutdowns and protests will continue.

These strikes and the others in Europe are clearly linked to the collapse of living conditions across the world as a result of the war in Ukraine. In the case of struggles that are not directly for wage increases in the face of inflation, as in France, the worldwide increase in inflation is still the main immediate factor driving the present dynamic of struggle as well as the need to extend and unite the demands. In themselves, as the struggles in France and UK illustrate, the present mobilization of proletarians expresses the tendency towards the process of the mass strike, as the “*universal form of the proletarian class struggle resulting from the present stage of capitalist development and class relations*”. (Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike*) Because any struggle is in our days confronted by the entire state apparatus, including the unions and the left and leftist political forces, it is necessary to extend and generalize it by means of strikes, mass delegations to other workplaces, mass picket lines, street demonstrations, etc. It is the only way to impose a relation of forces favorable to workers on the capitalist class and to defend, even temporarily, the proletariat's living conditions. The present concrete historical situation confronted by these struggles are the increasing crisis of capital and its drive towards generalized imperialist war. Both have direct implications on the ruling class' policies and attacks against the working class. In particular, the

march towards generalized war, which implies the development of a war economy in all countries, the increase of military production and expenditures, worsening budget deficits, complicates the ability of capital to respond to workers' economic demands. It also means that the development of strikes and street demonstrations, even those controlled by the unions, tend to put at risk the ability of the bourgeoisie to manage the political situation.

The demands of war and its preparation can only exacerbate the antagonism and the confrontation between the working class and the capitalist class. That is why even in so-called democratic countries, the state is exerting more and more repression against any nascent proletarian struggle, even if it is controlled by the unions. As we can see in France and in the UK, the unions' control and policy aims at preventing any dynamic of generalized struggle and strike and, if they cannot oppose it, to derail it. As we will see below, this union policy is not unique to the UK and France. But even if this union control was enough for the ruling class in the past, nowadays the urgency and the necessities for the march towards war economy and the generalized imperialist war itself require the state to implement and intensify anti-strike and anti-demonstration laws of all kinds – it is the case in the UK, in the US, as well as in France. Furthermore, if not enough to prevent the development of the struggle, the use of police repression is direct and massive as we can see in France. It is another dimension of the present class struggle with which proletarians from the historical core of capitalism, the so-called democratic countries, are confronted.

The present historical situation, the state of capitalism and its drive towards imperialist war, ensures that even historically “rich” capitalist powers no longer have the means, nor the time, for the “luxury of democracy.” They are compelled to join in the direct and massive repression that the “poorer” capitalist powers typically use against their populations and working class.

The United States has likewise seen a number of strikes that, despite their small size relative to the movement in Europe, point to the continued confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as a result of the war and the reliance of “democratic” powers to directly repress the working class. In January nurses in two hospitals in New York City went on strike over pay and “chronic understaffing” before agreeing to a new

contract that included a pay increase and provisions for hiring new nurses.³ In Los Angeles a three-day strike shut down school as educational workers such as custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and other service workers picketed the LAUSD headquarters with the support of the United Teachers Los Angeles Union.⁴ “Middle America” sees worker activity with strikes continuing in Ohio at the INEOS Pigments Plant 2 in Ashtabula.⁵

The largest and most important battleground for the American proletariat with the onset of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine so far has been the American railroad system. During three years of Covid and austerity 115,000 railroad workers have toiled under unsafe conditions in one of America’s most profitable industries. Overworked under the “precision scheduled railroading” system and laboring since 2019 without a contract, a pay raise, or guaranteed days off, railroad workers had numerous incentives to strike. The United States government moved to squash the labor dispute by invoking the Railroad Labor Act, a federal law enacted in 1926, to override the workers vote for strike.⁶ While President Joe Biden’s Emergency Board granted pay raises to the railroad workers, the more pressing concerns of sick-leave and the “precision scheduled railroading” system were mostly left unaddressed with workers only receiving one day of paid-leave a year.⁷

Both the United States government and the unions remain the largest obstacles to an American strike wave. Whether it is through preemptively halting a strike as occurred at caterpillar, or by negating various new contracts as is the case in New York City, unions have been an indispensable tool for the bourgeoisie in 2023.⁸ In the railroad labor dispute unions likewise acted in support of the bourgeoisie with Teamsters’ president, O’Brian, declaring that Pres. Biden was not responsible for the outcome of the dispute.⁹ Occasionally the government has stepped in directly, as was the case with the derailed U.S. railroad strike.¹⁰ So

far the situation has not escalated like in France with massive protests challenging the police directly in street battles, but it is obvious the overwhelming force of the American police state apparatus is another massive obstacle facing any movement by the proletariat.

Rosa Luxemburg’s declaration that “history is the only teacher, the revolution the best school for the proletariat” still rings true today. While the proletariat struggle in the United States may not match the match the size of the efforts in Europe, workers across the globe are not only engaged in the same struggle but have the opportunity to learn valuable lessons. Victory will be impeded, not supported, by the unions and their bureaucracy. Furthermore, worker struggles must not be sectionalized into different fields and workplaces but generalized as much as possible. Finally, even modest gains by the working-class can threaten the bourgeoisie in this state of imperialist war. The inability of the bourgeoisie to grant railroad workers sick-leave and support nurses during anThe largest and most important battleground for the American proletariat with the onset of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine so far has been the American railroad system. During three years of Covid and austerity 115,000 railroad workers have toiled under unsafe conditions in one of America’s most profitable industries. Overworked under the “precision scheduled railroading” system and laboring since 2019 without a contract, a pay raise, or guaranteed days off, railroad workers had numerous incentives to strike. The United States government moved to squash the labor dispute by invoking the Railroad Labor Act, a federal law enacted in 1926, to override the workers vote for strike.¹¹ While President Joe Biden’s Emergency Board granted pay raises to the railroad workers, the more pressing concerns of sick-leave and the “precision scheduled railroading” system were mostly left unaddressed with workers only receiving one day of paid-leave a year.¹² understaffing crisis seemingly points to both the fragility of the system and the general malaise of capitalism. With a growth of NWBCW committees in the United States, it is time for communist militants to use this moment to illustrate these lessons to the American proletariat.

Frederick, April 2023

³ <https://apnews.com/article/nyc-nurses-strike-d81f32cb7ac709404eb795a6d8822b34>;
<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/01/12/new-york-city-nurses-strike-ends-00077646>.

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/22/us/lausd-strike-school-workers-los-angeles-wednesday/index.html>.

⁵ <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/03/21/flyl-m21.html>.

⁶ <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/11/21/rail-n21.html>.

⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/bidens-emergency-board-delivers-recommendations-railroad-labor-dispute-2022-08-16/>;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/09/15/rail-strike-deal-agreement-biden/>.

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/business/caterpillar-workers-reach-deal-with-union-averting-possible-strike-2023-03-01/>.

⁹ <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/04/17/upsd-a17.html>.

¹⁰ [https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-signs-bill-block-us-](https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-signs-bill-block-us-railroad-strike-2022-12-02/)

[railroad-strike-2022-12-02/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/09/15/rail-strike-deal-agreement-biden/).

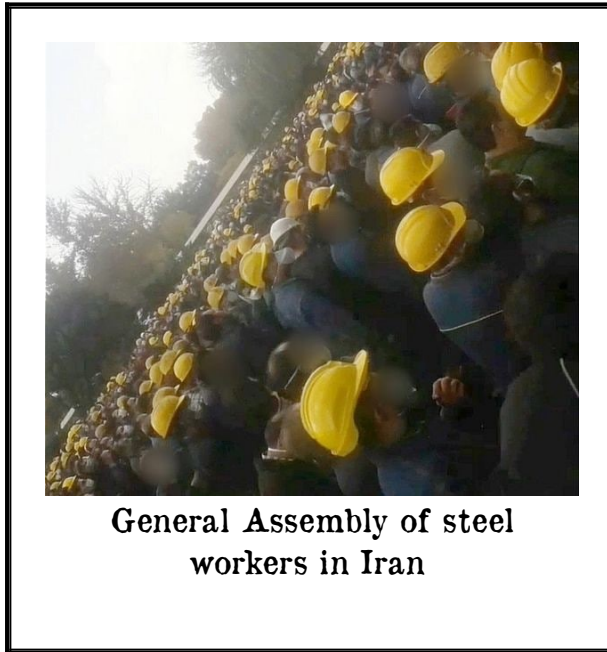
¹¹ <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/11/21/rail-n21.html>.

¹² <https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/bidens-emergency-board-delivers-recommendations-railroad-labor-dispute-2022-08-16/>;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/09/15/rail-strike-deal-agreement-biden/>.

The demonstrations and riots that followed the assassination last September of the young Iranian woman by the Islamist police because she was not wearing a veil are presented to us as a particular struggle against the "dictatorship of the mullahs" and which would be specific to Iran. However, even if the spark was specifically linked to the Iranian mullahs' regime, the development and extension of workers' strikes as well as the exacerbation of social and class antagonisms in the country are an expression and a factor of the international dynamic of struggle that we see on all continents. This is how we must understand and denounce the emergence and the putting forward of a "democratic and leftist" political alternative to the mullahs' regime: diverting the proletarian dynamic from its demands and class struggle to the benefit of "democratic demands" and on the terrain of the people, otherwise of the nation and of capital.

The Left and Leftists at Work in Iran: The "Charter of Minimum Demands"



With the start of the Iranian protests and strike waves in reaction to the death of Mahsa Amini, both the right and the left wing of capital formed different alliances and groups. Some of the most famous faces of the Opposition outside of Iran formed a group called "The Alliance for Democracy and Freedom"¹³, a group that is made up of the son of the last Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi, and other prominent rightists and leftists¹⁴. With their formation, they published a charter to announce their presence. Around a month after the publication of this charter, called "The Charter of Solidarity and Alliance for Freedom" or "The Charter of Mahsa"¹⁵, the "more radical" left wing of capital saw the necessity of

also announcing their existence by writing something similar which can be seen as a charter in response to the "Charter of Mahsa". Even the name of this prism shows the affiliation of these "Independent Unions and Civil Organizations" to capital and the goal of preserving it.¹⁶

Minimum Program, A Deprecated Tactic

In the time of the Second International, in particular when the bourgeois state still had a progressive character and when the pursuit of reforms was still a viable and tactically positive goal, the Second International parties pressured the state to enact laws and reforms in favor of the proletariat and its organizations. These tactics and demands were called minimum program as an

¹³ <https://adfiran.com/en/>

¹⁴ <https://adfiran.com/en/signatories/>

¹⁵ <https://adfiran.com/en/docs/mahsa-charter/>

¹⁶ <https://iranwire.com/en/politics/113866-iranian-trade-unions-civic-groups-issue-charter-of-minimum-demands/>

immediate international revolution was not on that era's agenda. With the start of the decadence of capitalism and consequently the bourgeois state losing its semi-progressive character with its imperialist wars and economic crisis, the pursuit of reforms became a reactionary and unfavorable tactic for the proletarian class over time. Minimum Program became obsolete and the first thing on the agenda was a world revolution. Any group or organization still advocating and using this tactic has been fully integrated into the bourgeois camp and fully left the proletarian camp.

The Current State of the Iranian Leftists

Apparently for the Iranian leftists the bourgeois state still has a progressive and reformable character, and ridiculously enough, this bourgeois state is the state of the Islamist bourgeois whose Machiavellianism and brutality is known by all.

The demands of “the abolition execution”, “the Separation of the religion and state” or “the abolition of oppressive organs and limiting the authority of the state” from the bourgeois state (nonetheless the Islamist bourgeois) in this era of decadence, seems nothing but some childish joke.

One of the other ridiculous demands of these organizations was the “normalization of foreign relations with other countries based on justified relations and mutual respect”. The Iranian leftists are living in the pre-imperialist times and they are still stuck in the demands of the First International.

In demand number 4 “recognition of the rainbow society LGBTQIA+, decriminalization of all gender relations and tendencies”, they try to defend the rights of sexual minorities. However, it is impossible to fully rid capitalist society of discrimination and bigotry towards sexual minorities without a working class revolution. The events of the Russian revolution and the subsequent decriminalization of gay and trans people show this¹⁷. Iranian society is being ruled by the Islamist bourgeoisie whose core ideology is against the existence of gay and trans people.

Left wing of capital, preservation of capitalist relations

Once again we can see the full depth of how leftist organizations are a force with the goal of preserving capitalism (consciously or unconsciously). There is no sign of working class unity and independence in this charter. Not to mention the absence of the word “working class” or “proletariat” in this charter, but instead there are many mentions of “the people”. This shows how much the international proletariat and in particular the working class in the region of Iran need an international class party (as is said well by the comrades of the ICT¹⁸).

The horizon of the International working class

Even with the active sabotage coming from all sides of the bourgeoisie, the proletarian strikes and struggles (on the international scale) are still alive and going. This is also true for the Iranian proletariat with different sectors and professions actively participating and joining the waves of strikes. What the Iranian working class needs is not the unity of the leftists and their nationalist scope of view, but the international party and its ability crystallize the struggles and the experiences of the international working class.

Daron, April 2023

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41737330/>
<https://www.marxist.com/bolshevik-decriminalisation-of-homosexuality-intentional-or-oversight.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-03-06/iranian-workers-need-an-internationalist-class-programme>

The following two communiqués on the proletarian mobilization against the new attack on the pension system in France “stop” at the end of March. However, the movement has continued until today with massive demonstrations on the occasion of May 1st. But, despite the continuing combativeness, the outcome of this class battle is no longer in doubt: the bourgeoisie succeeded in raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 and the working class suffered a new defeat. The fate was already fixed at the end of March, as the entire state apparatus, government, opposition from the left and the right, unions and leftists, managed to keep political control over this mobilization. At no time, except for the fools who get excited at the sight of garbage fires in the streets, has the working class questioned – or even considered questioning – the control and direction of this struggle by the unions and their day of action tactics. While it is premature to draw any definitive conclusions, it will be necessary to question the **chronic** inability of the proletariat in France to oppose union tactics that regularly lead to impotence with each new mass mobilization, often on the question of pensions, since 2003.

Communique of January 23, 2023 on Workers' Struggles in France

We present the following text, written as a leaflet, as a communique insofar as we consider that the leaflet that the International Communist Tendency has produced and that we reproduce hereafter our text puts forward the same orientations of struggle as those that we ourselves put forward. Insofar as we are able, we will distribute the ICT leaflet in future demonstrations as long as we consider it relevant, even though it was written for the January 19th street demonstrations and strikes. The fact that communist groups that are resolutely situated on the terrain of the struggle for the world party of the proletariat can speak with one voice in the struggles of our class, because they are politically in agreement, is an asset for the current struggles – by reinforcing the capacities of intervention of the revolutionaries – and by offering a clear alternative to the trade union sabotage; it is also a moment of the struggle for the party of tomorrow.

In France as Elsewhere

Capitalism is Preparing for War by Imposing more and more Sacrifices on Proletarians

Two facts: On Thursday 19, two million demonstrators and strikers marched in the streets of French cities against yet another pension reform, which pushes back the retirement age to 64 at best – and this in the name of a supposed deficit in the pension system announced for the coming years. On Friday 20, President Macron announced a one-third increase in military spending for the period 2024-2030.

Two figures: 413 billion and 17 billion euros. The first is the decreed amount of France's military expenditure – an increase of one third! The other would be the supposed, and quite hypothetical, deficit of the French pension system, which would oscillate “between 7.9 and 17.2 billion euros” in 2025.¹⁹ Two figures that are bound to change. The first one, let's not doubt it, will increase. The second is much less certain, as it is a vague working hypothesis of the *Conseil d'Orientation pour les Retraites* (COR), a French government body on pensions, and comes after two years of positive balances of 900 million and then 3.2 billion.

Two figures and two facts that the whole state apparatus, government, political parties, unions, media and other zealous and highly paid propagandists are careful not to bring together. Two figures and two facts which illustrate and summarize at the same time where capital leads us: always more sacrifices for the preparation of the imperialist war, the only capitalist way out of its economic impasse and crisis.

Whatever the conscience of each of the two million demonstrators and strikers of Thursday 19th, their will

to refuse and to fight against the new attack on pensions rises up and opposes, in fact, against the increasing sacrifices that capital seeks to impose on the whole of the world proletariat, that is to say, on the wage-earners who produce the essential part of social wealth. An this for the needs of the defense of each national capital and of the march to the generalized war. Whatever the individual consciousness of the millions of workers in Great Britain who are trying to fight for an increase in their wages at this very moment, they too tend, objectively, to rise up and slow down the march to generalized war: isn't the real and universal fall in wages because inflation itself due to the economic crisis of capital and multiplied by the direct and indirect consequences of the imperialist war in Ukraine? For the proletarians of the whole world, especially in Europe where the imperialist war is now raging in the heart of the historical countries of capitalism, the struggles to defend themselves against capitalist exploitation are widening and now include the opposition and the braking of the generalized war dynamic.

So what to do? Resist all attacks on our wages and living conditions, including attacks on pensions and other social *benefits*. Whatever the deficits and other financial reasons put forward, it is not up to the workers to pay for the crisis and, even less, for the war and its preparation. Resist through demonstrations, strikes, delegations to other companies, general assemblies, etc.; in short, by any means that express and realize the unity of our living conditions and our struggle. Capital and the bourgeoisie of each country attack the whole working class, whatever the corporation or status, civil ser-

¹⁹ . <https://www.retraite.com/dossier-retraite/le-deficit-du-systeme-de-retraite-francais.html>.

vant, private employee, fixed or precarious contract, pensioner or student destined to capitalist exploitation. Therefore, resist by extending and unifying our struggles against capital and the forces of the state apparatus that support and defend it.

How to extend and unify the struggle? By not getting stuck and locked into the logic of union action days, one after the other, and by not leaving the initiative and the organization of the struggle to the unions. To accept their direction is to accept in advance a new failure after those of 2003, 2010, 2013 and 2019. By regrouping, for those of us who are already convinced and willing to become militants of this mobilization, in committees of struggle or others to intervene together

in assemblies, strikes, coordinations and demonstrations in order to open the way to generalized and united strikes and demonstrations. This is the only way to impose a balance of power on the government, representative of the capitalist class, and its privileged tool, the state, which will force them to back down. By doing so, in addition to this retreat, the workers as a whole will tend to weaken the implementation of the war economy that Macron, like all the governments, is calling for to relaunch, and so slow down the march to generalized war.

Faced with the coming catastrophe, there is no other way than to fight against capital.

The IGCL, January 23rd 2023

Leaflet of the Internationalist Communist Tendency:

Inflation, Pensions, War Spiral: Only the Open and Massive Struggle Will Be Able to Stop the Descent into Hell Promised by Capitalism.

While for months, proletarians have seen their real wages decrease due to inflation and after a reform of the unemployment insurance which considerably restricts access to it, reduces the amount and duration of compensation, the government is once again attacking our living and working conditions by moving back the retirement age to 64 and by extending the duration of contribution. Their objective is clear: to reduce pensions!

This attack comes in a context of a major economic crisis, aggravated by the direct and indirect consequences of the war in Ukraine. As a result, all over the world, the bourgeoisie is trying to squeeze the proletarians even more and to make them pay the price of the crisis in order to safeguard its profits.

With this counter-reform, the bourgeoisie wants not only to save money but also to strike a blow at the proletariat, to break its willingness of revolt and to reduce it to the state of worker-citizen identifying with the interests of national capital and ready to sacrifice themselves for it.

Comrades, proletarians,

We do not have to demonstrate why it is imperative to reject this new attack, nor do we have to propose a more just reform. The balance of the budgets of the bourgeois state, the health of the companies or that of the national economy are not our business! The concessions, rights or advantages obtained in the interest of the workers are determined by the struggle, the balance of power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie whose interests are radically opposed. Nothing is acquired, as long as capitalism lasts, it will try to take back what it was forced to give up. Let's rather think about organizing our fightback!

Let us rely only on ourselves. The experiences of past struggles have shown that there is nothing to expect from the union leaderships and their practice of class collaboration. They sabotage struggles by isolating them and organizing harmless days of action, while they negotiate in our name with our class enemy.

- **From tomorrow, let's renew the strike. Let's organize ourselves at the base, let's constitute committees of struggle and let's decide on the follow-up to our movement.**
- **Let's organize delegations to extend the fight to other companies and administrations nearby.**
- **Let us regroup, make contact and push forward the discussion. Let's affirm that beyond this important stage of struggle, only a communist perspective can ensure the survival of humanity and life on Earth in the face of the chaos of capitalism..**

Only a massive struggle uniting all categories, breaking with union practices, and defending only our class interests, can push back the bourgeoisie and mark the beginning of an offensive struggle against capitalism.

Bilan & perspectives, Internationalist Communist Tendency, January 18th 2023

(translated by the IGCL)

Communique on the Working Class Struggles in France – March 19th 2023

Warning: this communique was written on March 18 and 19 for the internal discussion of the IGCL and to specify its orientations of intervention in the situation of the workers' struggles in France. It was therefore written before the rejection of the motion of censure [no-confidence vote] of Monday March 20 by the French Parliament. The result of the vote, only 9 votes were lacking for the government to be overthrown, does not fundamentally change the analysis and the dynamic of struggle that is underway. It has only exacerbated the anger and combativeness on the one hand and weakened the government itself on the other. For all that, the global control of the anger and of the workers' struggle by the whole bourgeois state apparatus, in the first place, the unions, leadership as radical base, remains untouched for the time being and we do not see any material clue allowing us to foresee a break in the present dynamic. (March 21, 2023)

March 17th : “France erupts in strikes and protests.” (*The Guardian*) “The violent overnight protests around the country raised worries that opponents to the pension changes might turn to more radical tactics.” (*New York Times*) “A country in flame.” (*El Confidencial* from Spain) That is how the bourgeois international press is presenting the new development of the working class mobilization in France against the pension reform. It is quite close to what the leftist bourgeois forces say this same March 17. For the American Trotskyist World Socialist Web Site, “Anger explodes in the working class, which enters into a direct and revolutionary confrontation with the Macron government.”²⁰ The most active Trotskyist group in France in the present mobilization, *Révolution Permanente*, very active in the radical union SUD, declares that “the 49.3²¹ has allowed the struggle of the masses to unfold potentialities that were previously contained by the inter-union. We are entering a pre-revolutionary moment.”²²

So, what is going on in France since March 16th? Has the refusal of the Macron’s government to submit the pension reform to the Parliamentary vote changed the whole dynamic of the proletarian mobilization in France, which lasts since January? Do the so-called spontaneous immediate reactions, particularly through street demonstrations in many cities since late Thursday and still going on this Sunday, often ending

²⁰ . <https://www.wsws.org/fr/articles/2023/03/17/tmit-m17.html>

²¹ . The article 49.3 of the French Constitution that enables any government to force the adoption of any new law without asking the Parliament to vote. Actually, the use of this constitutional rule is required when any government is not sure of its majority in the Parliament, to the point that there is a risk that the adoption of the law would be refused. Macron has used it for the adoption of the pension reform. Then, only a *no-confidence motion* adopted at the majority by the Parliament can stop the law from being adopted. But this means the government has to resign. Hence, the rise in anger because Macron did not respect democracy...

²² . Editorial du 19 mars.
<https://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/Bataille-des-retraites-Du-moment-Berger-au-moment-pre-revolutionnaire>

up with confrontations with the police, present a dynamic of proletarian overwhelming of the state apparatus control of the situation? An open questioning of the unions and their tactics of day of action? Does the relative extension, in number, of renewable strikes, particularly in the transports and energy companies, sometimes even against the advice of the official unions represent a first expression of an open process of *mass strike* that the unions would have difficulties to prevent and even manage? Should we therefore change our basic orientation of intervention in the present situation and adopt new slogans?

We will limit here our attempt of analysis to the genuine dynamic of the working class mobilization. We refer the comrades to our previous communique of January 23²³ and analysis of the situation we had discussed, on which these comments are based. Let’s just recall it here briefly: the dynamic in the making was still the same until that last Thursday and it is characterized by a complete control of the situation by the unions, without any attempt to question their tactics, nor any overwhelming, had expressed to date. It is also important to say that we will not deal with the political difficulties or tactics of the bourgeois parties in the Parliament and in relation to the government. Many bourgeois journalists and propagandists present the situation as a political crisis. If the *no-confidence motion* would be adopted next Monday, then we would have to reflect on the meaning of the new situation such an event would actually represent and politically signify for the state political apparatus and *game*.

Until the use of the 49.3 and the vote against the law last Thursday, March 16th, the 7th and 8th union day of action, last Saturday and Wednesday, has gathered fewer demonstrators than the previous ones even though their number was still impressive. The number of strikers tended to reduce significantly and the most probable scenario was to see minority and sectors

²³ . <http://www.igcl.org/Communique-of-January-23-2023-on>.

strikes of *blockage of the economy*, essentially in transport and energy (electricity and refineries), lasting and exhausting the most combative part of the proletariat, without any possibility of changing the unfavorable dynamics of the immediate balance of power. The *forcing through* of the law by the government with the 49.3 has obviously exacerbated the anger and renewed the combativeness: it was a question of, let's say *pride*, to react in front such an arrogant and provocative policy. Then, there was no doubt that, once the 49.3 was publicly known, it would provoke spontaneous fights-backs among the most combative part of the proletariat.

1) The street demonstrations

As soon as the use of the article 49.3 became known, around 3pm, demonstrators began to gather in the biggest cities of the country but also in the smallest ones. Let's only present what occurred in Paris, in Place de la Concorde. Since 11 am, the radical union SUD – mostly radical Trotskyist militants, particularly of *Révolution permanente* the railway and post office – had called for a gathering authorized by the police. So, already the leftist forces were in the square in advance. Then a student demo in another Paris neighborhood – we have serious reason to think the Trotskyists were organizing it too – decided to join Place de la Concorde. It is the greatest square in Paris. It is not a usual place for demonstrations. It is very rare because it is separated from the National Assembly, the Parliament, by a bridge over the river Seine, which was closed by anti-riot police. On the other side of the square, are the Champs Élysées, the US Embassy and the Élysée Palace, where French Presidents are located. These avenues were also closed in advance by the police. Then, on the TV news, they began to film live the gathering and the radical discourse of the leftist unionists and actually *encourage* people to join it: “*for now, there are only 6000 people, but more and more are coming and there will be much more in the hours to come. The gathering is peaceful...*” And actually, many people were running to the place. Little by little, without any other thing to do, the demonstrators began to face and pressure the police barrage of the bridge. Little by little, some began to gather bricks and rise up some improvised barriers, very weak and stupid barricade, against the police own barrage. Around 7.30/8 pm, vans and union balloons from SUD and CGT, which had joined the demos, disappeared from the square. It was the sign that the police had called them – unions and police are in constant contact in such a legal demo – and warned them they were going to charge and clear the place. A few minutes later, the police charged and began its evacuation of the place. Then, ebbing and dispersing in the streets, the demonstrators set fire to the garbage

cans, in particular to those, that were numerous, because of the strike of the garbage collectors. That is what the international bourgeois press calls *Paris in flames*. The same occurred in the other main cities of the country that night, the following one and yesterday Saturday. So, the leftist and anarchist *radicalness* of the demos has to be, in itself strongly relativized, and has no real proletarian significance other than the immediate powerlessness, given the lack of concrete political perspectives.

From these facts, we can conclude that, for now, the ruling class is **politically** controlling and even managing the development of the street demonstrations.

2) The new strikes and the 9th day of action, Thursday 23

Faced with the general feeling of anger and a relatively renewed combativeness of the proletarians, all the unions immediately called for a 9th day of action... a week later. Evidently all the leftist groups criticized the unions for waiting so long, while there is a widespread anger due to the use of article 49.3. For us, it is the usual tactics of day of action and division of work between official trade-unions and radical rank-and-file unionism and leftism.

Already underway, the strikes in the refineries became renewed and the physical blockage of gas by means of picket lines systematized. Harbors tend to be blocked for a few days of action by the dockers, different railway workplaces or deposit are on strike, not all and not always in majority. There has been a so-called, by the local SUD unionist, *wildcat* strike in the maintenance technicenter of Châtillon for the west lines of high speed trains. The main cities garbage services are partly on strike – in Paris for instance – for more than a week now. Until now, and under the leftist union leadership, all these strikes are directed to make March 23rd a union success. These strikes fit within this timing. Thus, the various and dispersed strikes are still under control of all the unions, thanks to radical and rank-and-file unionism.

These strikes, as well as the demos from March 16th, express a renewed and *radicalized* proletarian anger and militancy. Thus, if we could say that it was highly improbable that the previous dynamic of the whole mobilization could be questioned by the workers until the use of article 49.3, by using it the ruling class takes the risk of re-opening a little bit this possibility, by transforming it into a concrete and immediate political stake between the classes. For instance, there have been signs of open discontent and potential struggles, about wages rise, in Amazon or in the PSA car company (Peugeot, Citroen, Audi), that the present general mobilization can favor this open expression. Thus,

since March 16 and for a short period of time, we cannot therefore totally exclude that some new factor may break with the present dynamic of the mobilization against the pension reform and its control by the unions.

That is how we have to understand the *Révolution permanente*'s initiative to set up *comité d'action* to create and develop a *network for the general strike*²⁴, thus allowing leftism to anticipate any proletarian overflow. In fact, we can say these committees, if they are to be effective and *successful*, will certainly substitute the former *interpro-assemblies* of the previous massive mobilizations of 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019.

3) Adapting our orientation and intervention?

Globally speaking, we do not think we should change our general orientation. For instance, that we return to a direct and massive *agitation* intervention calling the whole proletariat to go on strike, extend it and unite it – through a leaflet for instance – as at the very beginning of the demonstration (see the B&P-ICT leaflet²⁵ that we had taken over). The whole “field” is still occupied by the whole union apparatus and particularly the base and leftist ones. In that context our slogan could only be, formally, the same as the leftist ones. Thus they would become useless **in the present situation**,²⁶ or could even play objectively in favor of the union general sabotage. So, the group as such, and the *party*, should... wait – on this occasion, yes! – for the coming days to see if the small probability of breaking the unions control and the present dynamic, which is the same as the one before March 16th even though the anger and militancy is greater and renewed, has some kind of realization or not. Then, we will be able to see if the dynamic dominated by the unions is confirmed or questioned and adapt our intervention accordingly.

We call on the most combative proletarians in the workplaces to be active part of the strikes or even at their initiative when their workplace is not yet on strike and the potential exists for it. We should also watch closely any gathering of potential *struggle committees*, even when they are set up by leftism and unionism, as the *comité d'action* of *Révolution permanente*.

In these committees, even though there is no real *space* or *door opened* for presenting a real and immediate alternative, the communist groups should intervene and defend not only the general needs of extension of any struggle – all participants will agree – but also to denounce the unions and call for openly contesting the leadership of the mobilization and the initiatives by the unions. Specifically and concretely from today to next Thursday, we call these committees for organizing specific processions within the March 23rd demonstration, with their own specific slogans. That is, we put forward the orientation of *transforming* the union day of action into a *day of extending the strikes and centralizing the movement* around the *committees*, whether they are called *comité d'action* or *interpro-assembly*, or whatsoever, as well as *extending* the slogans and goals to wages increases.

We stop here this communique, which initially was for our internal discussion. By publishing it, our first concern is to share this new experience with all the comrades. In particular, it is important that the international new generation of revolutionaries experience the degree of *radicalization* the base unions can develop and how they can *occupy* the whole terrain in order to prevent the autonomous proletarian movement to develop. If this generation, the ones who will set up and lead the world communist party of tomorrow, wants to be up to its tasks, then it has to develop its political experience and ability to exert a genuine political leadership of the whole proletariat in the historical drama which is coming.

The IGCL, March 19th 2023.

²⁴ . <https://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/Reunion-du-Reseau-pour-la-greve-generale-ce-mardi-18h30-organisons-nous-a-la-base-face-au-49-3>

²⁵ . See the ICT leaflet we integrated in the previous communique of January (page 8)

²⁶ . It is not because our slogan might be the same as the unions' or leftists' that they would be useless. But because the timing, the present moment. For instance, we can call for the strike and its extension as the leftists do in the beginning of a mobilization. We are not “anti-unionism” in itself... but in regards with the direct goals of any struggle and according to the different battles and barricades...

Debate within the Proletarian Camp

France and Great Britain: Workers' Struggles and Revolutionary Intervention

The rise of workers' reactions at the international level is the *de facto* response of the international proletariat to the crisis and to the dynamic towards generalized imperialist war – the Third World War – that capitalism is announcing. It is a real expression of the massive confrontations between the classes that are coming. The crisis and the war, the former making the dynamic towards the latter the central factor of the historical situation, force each national capitalist ruling class to redouble its attacks against its own proletariat. One of the stakes of the coming historical drama will be the capacity of the revolutionary communist minorities and of the party, once constituted, to rise to the forefront of the class confrontation and to assure its political leadership. There is thus a whole experience of analysis and understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon of the mass strike that it is up to communist groups to develop and, in part, to re-appropriate – especially for the younger generations of revolutionaries.

From this point of view, the massive proletarian mobilizations in the United Kingdom and France and the intervention of the groups of the Communist Left – we will limit ourselves to these –, although they are ultra-minority, provide us with an experience that must be shared at the international level by all the revolutionary and communist groups, what we call the proletarian camp. The groups of the Communist Left which, to our knowledge, intervened in the struggle in France by means of leaflets and articles were the ICT, the ICP-*Le Prolétaire*, the ICC and ourselves, to which we can add the nucleus in France of another ICP which publishes *The Communist Party*. In general, with the exception of the latter which calls for “real class unions”, all of them defended the same general orientations: denunciation of the union tactics of the days of action; emphasis on the necessity of the extension and unity of strikes and demonstrations. All of them, without exception, including the ICC – despite its congressional position excluding any risk of generalized imperialist war – were able to make the connection between the attacks on the proletariat, pensions and wage cuts, and the preparation of generalized war through the development of the war economy and arms production. The only criticism we will make here, not linked to the trade union question *per se*, will be directed at the councilist tendency of the ICC to fall into the fetishism of self-organization. It makes the general assemblies “the only place to organize the response to the repression and the defense of our means of struggle.” And, in the middle of the struggle and the confrontation with the state and its unions, it concludes once more with an abstract call, outside the immediate battle, without object for the proletarians confronted with the union sabotages, without concrete perspective of fight, to... discuss and debate: “we must meet, debate, draw the lessons of the past struggles, to develop our current struggles and prepare the fights to come.” (leaflet of March 27 against repression)

More seriously and fundamentally, the following correspondence between the ICT group in France, *Bilan et Perspectives* (B&P) and the IGCL is essentially about both understanding the dynamics of proletarian mobilizations in France and the UK and the intervention of revolutionaries. The difference is that the ICT defends that the unions are also organs of mediation between capital and labor, which we reject. If this difference did not prevent us from adopting the same orientations and slogans during the mobilization against pensions in France, to the point of intervening together, it was not so during the proletarian strikes and mobilization in the UK. We address this point in the last part of our letter of March 30. We propose and open this debate to the readers and to the whole proletarian camp.

2nd Leaflet of *Bilan et Perspectives* of February 2023

Neither Petitions nor Processions Will Make the Government Back Down! Let's Organize Ourselves at the Base to Be Able to Really Fight!

The massive demonstrations of 19 and 31 January against the pension reform, the largest in years, have shown the extent of workers' anger at this new attack by the bourgeoisie. The speeches of the bourgeoisie and its stooges, journalists and experts, did not deceive anyone, everyone understood that the objective was to make savings on our backs by reducing pensions.

BUT THIS ANGER GOES BEYOND THE QUESTION OF PENSIONS, IT CONCERNS THE DEGRADATION OF OUR LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN GENERAL: INFLATION, THE REFORM OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, THE PACE OF WORK, OVERWORK ...

The bourgeoisie, all over the world, is multiplying the attacks against the proletarians to save its profits, in the face of the economic crisis and the direct and indirect consequences of the war in Ukraine. In France, after cutting unemployment insurance, and while real wages have been falling for months, the government demands new sacrifices to remedy the supposed future deficit of the pension system. At the same time, it is increasing military spending by a third for the period 2024-2030, bringing it to 413 billion euros. What a bright future it holds for us! After having given our sweat, will we have to give our blood for their profits!

DEMONSTRATIONS, HOWEVER IMPORTANT THEY MAY

BE, WILL NOT BE ENOUGH. The strategy decided by the trade union leaderships leads us to failure, as experience has already shown many times. The scenario seems to be written in advance and the roles are well distributed: the reformist unions are waiting to accept adjustments to the reform; the so-called radical unions are already preparing to cry betrayal, in the meantime they are organizing various symbolic actions and blockades for the most determined who will thus find themselves isolated in their companies.

As for the left-wing organizations, they are trying to push the movement in the hope of getting the credit for it. We can easily guess that through the proposal of an alternative reform to that of the government, they hope to channel the anger of the exploited towards the next elections. A field on which we will always be disarmed, left to the maneuvers of the various bourgeois stables. For the time being, they are still lining up behind trade union unity, which history shows still and always prepares... for a bad future. THE UNITY OF THESE FORCES HAS NEVER BEEN LACKING TO FRAME THE PROLETARIAT AND CONTAIN ITS ANGER!

LET'S RELY ONLY ON OURSELVES. As long as the trade union leaderships have a stranglehold on our movement, we won't get anywhere. It is illusory to try to push them to really fight, they are organs of mediation between capital and labor, their role is to negotiate the price of our labor power with the bosses and the state. We have nothing to negotiate with those who attack us but to establish a relationship of forces. Our interests are irreconcilable.

- LET'S TAKE OUR STRUGGLES IN HAND. LET'S ORGANIZE OURSELVES AT THE BASE. LET'S DISCUSS AND DECIDE TOGETHER IN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES OR STRUGGLE COMMITTEES WHAT TO DO WITH OUR MOVEMENT.

- IT IS ONLY BY FIGHTING INDEPENDENTLY OF ALL FRAMING FORCES AND BY RESOLUTELY DEFENDING OUR CLASS INTERESTS THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO PUSH BACK THE GOVERNMENT.

Bilan et Perspectives, ICT, leaflet distributed February 7th
2023

IGCL Letter to *Bilan et Perspectives* (February 16th 2023)

The IGCL to *Bilan et Perspectives* (copy to the ICT),

Dear comrades,

In your February 7th e-mail, which included the French-language bulletin on the occasion of the street demonstrations in France, you indicate to your correspondents that you are “interested in hearing [their] criticisms and comments.” We take the liberty of responding quickly to this invitation, hoping to specify and clarify agreements and disagreements, which are of a quite secondary order for the latter. The bulletin includes three texts:

- the leaflet *Neither petitions nor processional demonstrations will make the government back down! Let's organize at the base to be able to really fight!*
- the text *The world bourgeoisie on the war path* ;
- and a call to join the NWBCW committees *So what can we do?*

We express our agreement and support for the last two texts. Any observations would only concern emphasis, or even be of an editorial nature only, and would not express any divergence, or even significant political nuance. The leaflet, on the other hand, poses a certain number of problems for us from a political point of view.

The January 18 Leaflet and the Situation in France

Let's remember that we made the *Bilan et Perspectives* leaflet of January 18 our own, to the point of distributing it – in collaboration with your militants in Paris – in the massive demonstrations organized by the unions on the occasion of the mobilization against the umpteenth pension reform in France. Its two slogans “from tomorrow, let's continue the strike [and] let's organize delegations in order to extend the struggle to other companies and administrations nearby” constituted the answer – the alternative – that the communists had to put forward **at that time** in the face of the days of union action. We will come back to the formulation, more confused in our opinion, of “let's organize at the base”. From our point of view then, the absence of autonomous dynamics or even of a particular workers' initiative, such as the wildcat strikes of the spring and summer of 2022 in Great Britain had been able to express, for example, encouraged us to think that the bourgeoisie²⁷ kept all control over the situation and over the discontent and the relative, but real, combativeness of the proletarians in France. In particular, the planning of union days of action, once again, allowed the unions to occupy all the

²⁷ . That is to say the whole of its state apparatus of which the unions are an essential **political and anti-worker** component;

space or field that a consequent workers' reaction could take, up to the most “radical” grounds. We will not elaborate here, as it seems to us that we are in agreement on this particular point. In this sense, the slogans of *continuation of the strike* after the day of action and of *sending delegations in order to extend*, remained the only ones that it was appropriate to advance then – even if we could consider/suppose that they were already out of **immediate** reach, **for that moment**, of the proletarians in struggle, because of the relation of forces existing then and established by :

- the absence of any particular workers' initiative – no wildcat strike, no particular struggle in a workplace that could serve as a focus of reference, or even unification, for the struggle, no constitution (to our knowledge) of any struggle committee in one form or another such as *inter-professional assemblies...* ;

- the occupation of the field by the unions, national days of action and announcements by the most *left-wing* unions (CGT-SUD) of *radical* actions, of *blocking the economy*, even of *renewable strikes...* at later dates and split by sector with, in parallel, the political game between the government and the left-wing opposition and the parliamentary debate, aiming at focusing the attention of the proletarians on the bourgeois field.

It seems to us that the slogans of January 18 were still valid for the day of January 24, so much so that we continued to distribute it. This day and the absence of a renewal of the strike the next day, or of any particular workers' initiative, definitively buried the unlikely possibility – **for this moment or that episode of the mobilization** – of a surpassing of the tactics of the days of action and of a real workers' push. In doing so, both slogans lost their topicality and no longer corresponded to the immediate situation, from the point of view of agitation and *political leadership*. We stopped distributing the leaflet – as did you, it seems – and concentrated on distributing our *communiqué*, which was in fact more propaganda – on the war in particular – than immediate agitation. As of today, February 15, on the eve of the 5th day of union action, we can consider that nothing has changed in the dynamics of the ongoing workers' mobilization and that no new perspective, let alone a particular orientation and slogan, is emerging from the proletarian point of view.

The February Leaflet of the Bulletin

The criticisms – let's repeat: minor ones – that we are going to make about the February leaflet, about the bulletin, are of another type and do not concern the analysis and the understanding of the dynamics of the struggle itself. They are essentially of two kinds, the first being much less important than the second. The text makes well the link between the attacks undergone

by the proletarians and the imperialist war: “*the bourgeoisie, everywhere in the world, multiplies the attacks against the proletarians to save its profits, facing the economic crisis and the direct and indirect consequences of the war in Ukraine.*” Just as is clearly opposed on the one hand the anti-worker attacks and the explosion of military spending on the other. As far as we know, the ICT and the IGCL are the main, if not the only, communist organizations to clearly make this connection and focus their intervention on it. Nevertheless, the imperialist war is presented in your leaflet as an element on par with the crisis. Certainly, there is no doubt that the crisis is at the origin of the imperialist war and that the two feed each other. However, the imperialist war, materialized by the war in Ukraine and the march to the generalized war, has become – or in a more nuanced way: is becoming – the primary factor, certainly not the only one, dictating the economic, political, ideological and repressive attacks of each national bourgeoisie. And this is what we believe should be emphasized. Indeed, in the present circumstances, “*capitalism's ineluctable drive towards war is expressed today in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat.*”²⁸ As a result, “*for those proletarians who, without being directly called to arms, belong, together with their bourgeoisie, to an imperialist front which has direct, immediate or only future interests in the war, the discourse changes, but only for the immediate conditions in which they are called to move.*” (ICT, *La route difficile de l'impérialisme européen*²⁹). As you can see, the divergence is minor and does not change the class and... effective political vanguard nature of your statement.

The second criticism of the leaflet refers to a more important political question. It concerns the character and function we attribute to the unions and, incidentally, to the left-wing forces in the state apparatus. “*Let's rely only on ourselves. As long as the trade union leaderships have control over our movement, we won't get anywhere. It is illusory to want to push them to really fight, they are organs of mediation between capital and labor, their role is to negotiate the price of our labor power with the bosses and the state.*” And “*as for the organizations of the left, they seek to push the movement hoping to draw the chestnuts from the fire.*” (emphasis added) Instead of considering the unions as full organs of the capitalist state, with an anti-working class and counter-revolutionary **political** vocation and function, the formula **organs of mediation between capital and labor** opens the door to the idea that they would not be completely bourgeois and that they could still represent, at least in part, the immediate

²⁸ . ICT 2020 Platform.

²⁹ . We have translated this article of *Battaglia Comunista* in French and English. Its Italian version is on <https://www.leftcom.org/it/articles/2022-11-20/la-difficile-strada-dell-imperialismo-europeo-un-aggiornamento>.

interests of the class since they are situated *between the classes*, as *intermediaries* or *arbiters between capital and labor*. The same is true in a certain way with the forces of the left that would *seek to push the movement*. But both the unions and the left forces of capital do not try to *push the movement* but to manage it, to control it, to sabotage it when there is a danger, indeed a real dynamic, of extension and unification, to extinguish it, so that it ends in an economic and political failure of this particular battle of the struggle between the classes. And this **for capital and against labor**.

In that sense, we would certainly refer, for our part, to the PCInt Platform of 1952, which is politically clearer on the union question: “*the party categorically affirms that in the current phase of the totalitarian domination of imperialism, the unions are an indispensable tool of this domination, to the extent that they even pursue goals that correspond to the bourgeoisie’s aims for its own preservation and war.*” (our emphasis)

Political Implications of the Position on Unions Understood as Mediators

This criticism may seem to have no real militant stake, a simple political or even theoretical nitpicking. All the more since your February leaflet is clearly situated on the proletarian side of the class barricade of the moment. However, the position on unions as *mediators* can have political implications and consequences as to the immediate intervention, orientations and slogans that the party must put forward in any workers' mobilization. Indeed, it is likely to miss or underestimate the directly anti-working class and counter-revolutionary political dimension of the unions – and of the forces of the capitalist left, including leftists. In doing so, one does not always understand well what concrete and immediate stakes their successive policies and slogans try to advance in the course of the struggles, according to the moments and the places. Obviously, it would be appropriate to take each particular proletarian mobilization to illustrate our point; to grasp what are the immediate class stakes of such or such particular battle; and to understand the immediate political meaning of the different slogans of the unions, official and those called *base* or *radical*. In particular, when they come, especially the latter, to call for *renewable strikes*, *assemblies*, *coordinations*, or even... *self-organization*; or still on certain occasions for the extension itself.³⁰ In general

³⁰ . To cite only one example, this was the case in January 1987 at the end of the wildcat strike, without union notice and especially against the unions that opposed it, the CGT in the first place, of the railway workers of December 1986-January 1987 in France. There are other examples of sudden and extreme radicalization of the unions and the left forces that the proletariat will inevitably have to confront in the future, in particular in the pre-revolutionary and even revolutionary

and to make it simple here – no doubt we will have the occasion to come back to it – they aim not to build on such or such workers' dynamic to *negotiate the price of the labor power* but on the contrary to suffocate it, to sabotage it and to extinguish it. And this is what the communist vanguard, assuming its role of *political leadership*, should respond to by offering alternative orientations to the different moments of the various sabotages and union maneuvers.

In the current massive workers' mobilization, which so far is similar to the previous ones of 2003, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019, the priority objective of the unions is to prevent the emergence and development of any dynamic of real extension of the struggle to different sectors or corporations, in particular by means of the *renewable strike*; that is to say, to prevent any dynamic of *mass strike*. It is therefore in the light of this stake and according to the concrete and successive conditions in which it is posed, that we must understand the action of the unions, the different moments and terrain of the political confrontation and advance orientations and immediate slogans accordingly. In this sense, making *self-organization in itself* a slogan for action, “*let's take our struggles in hand*”, “*let's organize at the base*”³¹, does not allow us to provide a real alternative, except in exceptional cases and in particular concrete situations, to the political control of the unions over the struggles. Even worse, very often and if there are risks of generalized extension, it is the unions and the left-wing forces of capital that can become the most determined advocates of *self-organization*³² in order to better enclose the workers in their workplace or their corporation. Isn't it a usual trade union practice that the proletariat and the communists are regularly confronted with, especially on the occasion of each workers' mobilization in France? Isn't it the object of most of the *inter-professional assemblies* that the leftists and *radical syndicalists* have never stopped setting up in a preventive way facing the possibility of the unions being overwhelmed?

In this sense, rather than calling for *organizing at the base*, a formula that is abstract to say the least, it is

periods. Germany in November 1918 provides us with its most tragic historical example.

³¹ . Without returning here to the councilist *fetishism* of self-organization which the ICC has now championed for two decades and which we cannot address here.

³² . *Self-organization* can also be used to justify the prohibition made to the political vanguards, to *the party*, to intervene as the impossibility for Rosa Luxemburg to address the congress of the councils in 1918 showed it to us because she was not a worker and only “*those who appear on the lists of the people working in the companies or on the military manpower*” could be delegates to the congress. (La Révolution allemande, Pierre Broué, 1971)

appropriate to call for this or that slogan, including a slogan of organization or *taking charge of*, according to and in view of the immediate, local and current needs of each struggle; needs that we can summarize here as those leading to the extension, the generalization and the unity of the struggle in order to aim at establishing the best possible relation of forces to the bourgeoisie and thus to make the immediate struggle itself as *effective* as possible, in terms of demands and proletarian experience; needs whose articulation according to the moments and places determines the immediate slogans and actions. It is therefore important to call the proletarians, especially when it arises concretely, to *hold a general assembly to*, for example, *put themselves on strike*, or *to organize mass delegations (etc) to extend the strike or the struggle*, to *constitute a strike committee for such or such task*, etc. Isn't this also what the historical experience teaches us, the one of the Bolsheviks between February and October 1917? When the party knew how to advance, then withdraw, adapt – by relying on the factory committees, and not on the councils anymore, from July to September 1917 – and take back with another concrete political content – the insurrection – the

slogan of *all power to the workers' councils*?

There is, therefore, a link between the understanding today of the trade unions as full political organs of the capitalist state and their full and complete **class bias**, anti-worker and totally bourgeois – not between the two classes – which allows us to grasp the true meaning of each of their actions and slogans and the needs of each workers' struggle. Not to grasp **the bourgeois political character** of the unions limits, when it doesn't forbid, the recognition of the different confrontations or particular battles that the proletarians have to face. It thus opens the door to abstract slogans, such as *self-organization*, which risks, *in fine*, making the intervention of revolutionaries lag behind the events, even being on the ground and timing of the bourgeoisie.

These, dear comrades, are the comments and critical observations that we wanted to bring to you, hoping that they are positive, while knowing that they are undoubtedly very far from closing this debate.

Fraternally, the IGCL, February 16th 2023

Bilan et Perspectives ' Response (March 20th 2023)

Bilan et Perspectives to the IGCL,

Dear comrades,

We are responding late due to our obligations in this period of struggle. We ask for your understanding.

Of course, we are “*interested to know your criticisms and comments*” on our interventions during the social movement against the counter-reform of pensions. We still welcome your willingness to intervene together and to point out our agreements and divergences; these are very precious supports for the defense and the diffusion of our common positions.

You make two essential criticisms of our leaflets in this period.

The first is that “*the imperialist war is presented in your leaflet as an element in the same way as the crisis*”, you write. And it is precisely we underline and confirm our position, unlike the IGCL. Political situations are never white or black, but multi-colored. There are indeed phenomena that are more determining than others, but they are never unique or exclusive in situations. There are clusters of causes. Therefore, we believe that the crisis is also to be taken into account in the present

situation. One could also have stressed that it is the economic crisis that precipitates the capitalist states towards war. But let's leave this aspect of the question. The major effects of the crisis of the system, illustrated recently by the debacle of the Silicon Valley bank and its repercussions in the financial system, are not going to stop, far from it. If this debacle deepens, we will see other consequences, first in the field of the war economy and then in geo-strategic confrontations.

We therefore urge you not to simplify the political analysis and to argue it on the basis of facts. *As you point out, “the difference is minor and does not change the class position and... of effective political vanguard of your position.”* For all that, we don't understand in what way the war in Ukraine would be a “*primary factor, certainly not unique, dictating the economic, political, ideological and repressive attacks of each national bourgeoisie*”, in relation to capitalism whose crisis of reproduction seems to be generalized in all its dimensions (without excluding, for example, the question of the environment).

The second criticism concerns the union issue.

The ICT platform states: “*Trades unions are organs of mediation between labour and capital. They arose as negotiators of the terms of sale of workers' labour power. They*

are not, and have never been, useful instruments for the overthrow of capitalism. In the imperialist era, the unions, regardless of their social composition, are organizations that work for the preservation of capitalism especially at the most crucial moments when it is under threat.”³³

One can also read in the brochure *For Communism* the following point of view: “

Unions betray nothing and no-one, least of all themselves. If they sabotage struggles, take us for a ride and, in this way, make themselves indispensable to capital as factors for negotiation and order, they are only acting consistently and logically in agreement with their original concerns, wishing to negotiate the business conditions of the sale of the labour power commodity with the capitalists “on the same level” (...) We do not call for the construction of new and better unions, which, sooner or later, will end in exactly the same politics of representation as the old ones. Permanent economic organizations of the working class must enter into negotiations with the capitalists, and thus, sooner or later, accept the rules of the game of the system of exploitation. At best this kind of “syndicalist experiment” would merely repeat the history of the last two hundred years in double quick time. The main issue is to understand that the unions’ framework for action, legalistic and fixated on the state, is a strait-jacket, which continually subordinates resistance and combativity to bourgeois economy, bourgeois right and bourgeois law.”³⁴

So we fully recognize, as you do, that the unions are organs of the bourgeoisie within the working class. Like you, we “consider the unions as full-fledged organs of the capitalist state, with an anti-working class and counter-revolutionary political vocation and function.” For all that, this does not exclude, and even implies, that they are capable of playing a mediating role in the working class. How else could they maintain their influence and finally frame the proletariat, if not by playing this role with a minimum of success? Here we suggest that you go beyond the simple and correct assertion that the unions are a pillar of the bourgeois state, to identify the conditions that ground their power in the class.

How is it that workers regularly let themselves be dragged along behind them? In spite of all the experience they have accumulated, the proletarians would be well It is the heart of the matter. And it is because they try to make people believe that they can defend them and bring them improvements in their living conditions that they still have the means to deceive and mystify them.

Once again, we urge you, comrades, not to simplify the issues. When we have understood one thing, the role of the unions, we still have to see how they act and above all what must be denounced in their actions at a given

moment. There is the role of “social assistant” on the one hand, and in the struggle, the role of divider to lead the struggle into dead ends, on the other hand. It is easier to denounce the divisive role in the struggles because all the workers can see it with their own eyes. It is more difficult to denounce their role as “social assistant” at the individual or collective level in the collective labor agreements. This is where they still try to keep some strength.

We have to admit that the credit of the unions among the proletariat is certainly diminished, but not null for all that. Their capacity of leadership in the current movement reminds us of this. We then ask the question: if the unions were only bodies purely external to the class, why would the class still trust them in part? This view can only lead to an idealistic understanding of the question, where deceptions and mystifications are the dominant factor; at the same time, the working class would appear to be very stupid to link its fate to organs whose entire experience leads to defeat.

On these two points, we wish on the contrary to lead you to reflect on the solidity of your analyses and your argumentation, which cannot lead from our point of view to really founded political conclusions. They are reminiscent of the simplifying and limited analyses of decadence or decomposition (which remains even more incomprehensible). We do not deny the decadence of capitalism, but it is insufficient to understand the evolution of capitalism, on pain of idealism. We must therefore take into account a whole range of events from other angles, parameters, etc.

You said that your criticisms were only secondary “critical observations”. For our part, we believe that there are differences in methods that we can discuss. They would raise real differences if you were not careful.

Fraternally, *Bilan et Perspectives*, March 20th 2023

³³ . <https://www.leftcom.org/en/node/36775>

³⁴ . https://www.leftcom.org/files/2019-for-communism_0.pdf

Do Trade Unions Have a “Social Role” vis-à-vis the Proletariat? What Was the Effective Political Action of the Unions in the Strike Wave in the UK? (March 30th 2023)

The IGCL to *Bilan et Perspectives*,

Dear comrades,

We would like to thank you for your answer, which allows us “to point out our agreements and divergences [as] very precious supports for the defense and the diffusion of our common positions”, as you rightly say. We would add that our debates and exchanges must be understood as moments in the process leading to the party of tomorrow being able to adopt the clearest possible program; and that it can benefit as much as possible from previous experiences in order to develop as quickly as possible its capacities for intervention and political leadership in the class struggle and the historical turmoil that is coming. Let us repeat, for us, the points of divergence that we address in our correspondence are of secondary order. To the point that some could, and certainly they do one way or another, cross each of our two organizations.

To tell the truth, we are not even sure that the first point – the one about the imperialist war becoming or not the determining factor of the historical situation – marks a real difference between the ICT and the IGCL. That is why we have quoted in our letter an extract from the ICT platform and from an article of *Battaglia Comunista*, which we have taken over. Both, it seems to us, rightly point out that the growing affirmation of the dynamic towards generalized imperialist war – and not the war in Ukraine per se as you have taken up and wrongly understood – “is expressed today in the universal attack on the working and living conditions of the proletariat.” For our part, we say that it tends each time more to “determine” the attacks carried out by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat according to moments and countries. We can say that at least until the Covid crisis, the attacks of each bourgeoisie against the proletariat were – globally and without excluding that there could have been other factors intervening according to the situations – determined or dictated in the first place by the defense of the national capital against the rivals first and foremost, not only, on the level of economic competition. Since then, and even more since the war in Ukraine, each national capital **tends** (and only tends) to define its “economic” policies and its attacks against the proletariat, not simply and only for the defense of the competitiveness of the national capital against its rivals, but for the needs of the dynamics towards the generalized imperialist war by means of the development of *war economies* as the French president Macron said. For example, this requires policies of *relocation* of so-called essential

goods in order to no longer depend on imperialist rivals, even if it means paying more for the price of labor power in the short term. It is therefore necessary to grasp these upheavals of an economic as well as a political nature, like those of the 1930s with the New Deal and the Popular Front, in all their magnitude and implications in order to best develop our intervention in the class and its struggles.

The union issue marks a real divergence between the ICT and the IGCL. It is neither of principle nor fundamental. Nevertheless, it can imply differences in the analysis of the development of the class struggle and therefore differences in the immediate intervention, as we will underline later. “*Trades unions are organs of mediation between labour and capital*”, says the platform of the ICT. We oppose this position on the unions as *mediators*. For our part, our platform and our basic positions defend that “*the trade unions as a whole, the leadership as well as the base sections, are nowadays full-fledged organs of the bourgeois state within the working class milieu. They aim at maintaining the capitalist order within its ranks, at framing the working class and at preventing, counteracting and sabotaging any proletarian struggle, in particular any extension, generalization and centralization of proletarian fights.*” (Basic positions of the IGCL)³⁵ This difference did not prevent us from developing the same orientations and slogans during the workers' mobilization in France at the beginning of 2023. On the other hand, this was not the case this summer during the beginning of the wave of strikes in the United Kingdom in the face of inflation.

Unions and Social Assistance?

But before addressing this point directly, let us quickly note the distinction done in your letter between the unions “*full organs of the capitalist state*” – a position as such which you share with us – and their “*social assistance role*”³⁶ in order to base the position on this mediating role of the unions. This role would explain why “*the class still trust them in part.*” Let's accept your ground for a moment, that of the social welfare performed on occasion by the unions “*at the individual or collective level in the collective labor agreements.*”

At the individual level, whether this or that union or shop

³⁵ . See our basic positions on <http://www.igcl.org/+Our-political-positions+> and our platform on <http://www.igcl.org/+Political-Platform+>

³⁶ . This particular point is worth addressing, even if we consider it totally secondary, especially for countries with a closed-shop union system, often Anglo-Saxon, where you have to be a union member to be hired or where unions manage the health or social insurance systems.

steward acts as a social worker, helps or defends an individual worker on this or that occasion, has only a very limited, insignificant effect in “*the credit of the unions among the proletariat.*” Good for him or her if the shop steward, or the social worker, or even the human resources manager, solves his or her particular problem. But, does the police bus bringing an injured driver to the hospital change the degree of trust of the proletariat, as a collective force, in the bourgeois police? Moreover, the argument seems to us politically confused. Indeed, it makes the individual and atomized worker, with a personal problem, an element, indeed an expression, of the relation of forces between the classes.³⁷ Now the class-union relationship, or more broadly class-State, is defined and must be understood as that of the proletariat collective body, even in the most isolated cases; that is to say, it must include this same individual worker in the collective in struggle, or potentially in struggle, of his/her workplace. And, by individual and militant experience, we can assure you that even the worker, often among the most deprived and suffering particularly from social atomization, having had to call upon some kind of social assistance, finds himself quite “different”, including in his relation to the social assistance or to the trade union delegate who helped him, when his workplace finds itself in a collective struggle in which he himself can participate and of which he can feel himself an active part – if only because it breaks, or tends to break, his/her daily social atomization.

The second argument, *at the collective level*, suggests that unions would retain their credibility with workers through what would be achieved in company collective agreements. “*How else could they retain their influence and ultimately frame the proletariat, if not by holding this [mediating] role with a modicum of success?*” And in support of this, you quote an ICT pamphlet, *For Communism*³⁸. But precisely, another passage of this brochure affirms that the unions are no longer **effective** tools, even a *minima*, for the defense of the immediate interests, *basic* ones says the brochure, of the proletarians: “*Today we can only declare the absolute failure of the unions to even defend the most basic interests of the workers.*” (emphasis added) We totally agree with this position. And the reality, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries where company agreements are institutionalized, is that very often, when they are combative, workers reject the agreements negotiated by the unions. Thus, far from being a factor of credibility for the unions, these negotiations are very often a factor of *discrediting* and denouncing the unions. And this is what communists must emphasize.

³⁷ . At best, it can be a very particular and limited expression of it, but by no means a factor as such.

³⁸ . https://www.leftcom.org/files/2019-for-communism_0.pdf

The Dangers of the Position on the Mediation Role of Unions

Let us now address the fundamental divergence with the ICT, not B&P only, that we should confront and clarify as best we can by exposing and discussing it. We are well aware that we will not convince the ICT, nor the comrades of B&P in particular, of the erroneous nature of this position and we share their concern not to enter into “*vain polemics*”, a danger that must always be avoided. However, this does not prevent us from debating it, in particular by pointing out the political implications of our positions. It is only in this way that we can, each from our respective positions, clarify and specify these ones and our own interventions. If we have shared the analysis and the same orientations of intervention to the point of intervening together in the proletarian mobilization in France, it is not the same for the understanding of the dynamics of workers' struggles in the United Kingdom since last summer.

As early as August, we thought it was appropriate to intervene directly and without delay by calling on the country's proletarians to join the strikes in progress³⁹, especially the wildcat strikes, and to renew them without waiting for the days of action planned by the unions. The comrades of the CWO, on the other hand, thought it was appropriate to wait for the situation to mature and, therefore, for the *hot autumn* that the British unions were announcing.⁴⁰ One of the reasons for this difference in appreciation, besides perhaps different practical experiences of intervention as vanguard and political direction of party, is due to our respective positions on the trade union question and the understanding, or analysis, of workers' struggles that can be derived from it. This is how the *Notes on the UK Strikes Wave*⁴¹ written by the ICT present us the dynamics of the workers' struggles of last summer:

“Undoubtedly, the immediate consequence of the rising cost of living coupled with stagnant wages has been the prime motive force. (...) Furthermore, the post pandemic labour shortage was expected to tip the scales on the labour market in favour of job seekers. A tighter labour market usually means more bargaining power for workers. Trade union leadership has sensed an opportunity and taken advantage of this situation, sending out strike ballots across many different sectors, largely over pay (pensions, casualisation, redundancies, etc., are also recurrent issues). This has affected both the public and the private sector, but mainly those workplaces where union density is higher (...). On a few

³⁹ . We refer to our leaflet of August 20th 2022: <http://www.igcl.org/Dynamics-of-Wildcat-Strikes-in-The-797>.

⁴⁰ . We refer to *Revolution or War #23* : <http://www.igcl.org/Workers-Struggles-and> and <http://www.igcl.org/Communique-of-September-9th-846>.

⁴¹ . <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-01-11/notes-on-the-uk-strike-wave>

occasions, workers have even taken the initiative themselves and did not wait for the union to go through the official process.” (emphasis added)

In our view, however, the reality of the dynamics of this wave of struggles, **the political reality**, was the opposite of what is described here. In fact, the British unions did not organize days of action to seize the supposedly favorable opportunity of the labor market to negotiate on wages. **No, they organized them, in the middle of summer, to face the growing proletarian combativeness and the emergence of wildcat strikes.** For them, as political organs of the bourgeois state, it was about countering this dynamic, to ride it out, then to control and extinguish it. What was first here, **politically**, were not the trade union calls followed by wildcat strikes, but the wildcat strikes as expressions of the discontent and the growing combativity of the proletariat in Great Britain. From the point of view of the proletariat, of its interests, including *basic interests*, and of its struggle, the call of the trade unions for days of action was a counter-offensive, or a counter-fire, if one prefers, in front of the danger – whether it was unlikely or highly likely does not change anything – of a generalization of the class struggle in the country.

The comrades concluded that it was necessary to wait for the situation to mature, whereas we thought it was necessary to rely without waiting on the immediate will to struggle **precisely because the unions were organizing the counter-fire of the days of action.** To think that the unions can be mediators between capital and labor today leaves the door open to the idea that they can seize and take advantage of opportunities – as the Notes say – to negotiate at best, here, on wages. So, their positioning, their slogans and their tactics of organization of strikes, days of action, their timing, cannot be understood, nor denounced and fought, **concretely, on the very ground of the struggles**, either as a moment of direct, or indirect, sabotage of these, or as moments of the offensive or counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie and the state against the proletariat during the very course of the struggle and the strikes. This does not allow to understand the real dynamics and the real places and moments of the different battles in progress in a particular mobilization because it is

precisely the unions that are the vectors of the main battles and concrete stakes imposed by the bourgeoisie during the workers' mobilizations.

That's why, before the bourgeois counter-offensive, carried mainly – not only – by the unions, was fully developed and effective, it was necessary to call without waiting the proletariat to enter in open struggle and in strike when it was possible; in the British case, that was in August (maybe even was it late). In this way, the intervention of the communist groups, tomorrow of the party, would have been in the forefront of the struggle and they would have assumed their historical and concrete-immediate role of political leadership of the proletariat. In this way, *the party* and the proletariat can dispute with the bourgeoisie the timing and the terrain this one chooses to attack or counter-attack, above all politically, during the struggles. In this way, and in an immediate way, by taking up the slogans put forward by the communist groups, the proletariat could have really *taken advantage of the opportunity* to develop and impose a balance of power that would be more favorable to it and, thus, make the strikes and the struggle more *effective* to the point of obtaining generalized wage increases and a halt, of course momentary, to the deterioration of its living and working conditions. Because only the methods and objectives of struggle put forward by the communists can allow the defense of the “*basic interests of the workers.*”

This, dear comrades, is what we wanted to share with you. We hope that we have not entered into a *vain* or useless polemic. In any case, this is not our purpose, nor our intention. These questions and the historical situation oblige us to move forward as much as possible on the path of the party of tomorrow. It is our responsibility to define as best we can the role of the party in the *mass struggles* that are coming and that will precede-prepare for the massive confrontations to come between the classes.

Obviously, the pages of our journal are open for any response, or even correction or clarification, that you would deem useful to bring.

Fraternally, the IGCL, March 30th 2023

Public Meeting in Montreal of the "No war But the Class War" Committee

Following the Internationalist Appeal of the ICT⁴², the third meeting of the No War But the Class War (NWBCW) committee was held in Montreal on March 26. Comrades from Klasbatalo, the Canadian section of the ICT, put up 500 posters in the streets of Montreal and, working together with the IGCL, hundreds of invitations were distributed at various events for this public meeting. It was agreed that a member of the IGCL would present Klasbatalo's text *The Tundra Trenches*⁴³ on the militarization of the Canadian Arctic. Before presenting the text, the IGCL affirmed its political agreement with this article. We also mentioned that the IGCL actively supports this ICT initiative and has been involved in organizing NWBCW committees in Paris and Toronto.

The Klasbatalo comrades then presented a first text on *The Terrace Mutiny* of 1944⁴⁴, relating the struggle of Canadian soldiers in British Columbia. The other presentation was on "*The Good War*" of 1939-1945⁴⁵ and dealt with labour struggles in Canada during the war. We can say that the meeting was a success with the participation of about twenty people. The interventions were either in French or in English and a translation from English to French was possible if needed. A third point on the agenda was added on the fight against the pension system in France.

A period of discussion directly followed the different presentations. A first comrade intervened, arguing that the unions are organizations in which the proletarians should gather to defend themselves and develop a relationship of force against the bosses and the state. A comrade from Klasbatalo replied that since the unions are integrated into the bourgeois state, they are not even able to ensure the simple day-to-day defense of the living conditions of the workers. An IGCL member gave the example of a workplace – *Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec* – where the proletarians are divided into two different unions of the same central, the CSN, and where the unions prevent with all their strength the extension of the struggle by organizing demoralizing half-day strikes on different dates.

A comrade mentioned that there are already a multitude of anti-war groups, associations and organizations. What then differentiates NWBCW from other anti-war

committees? It was answered that all the other committees have an outright pacifist orientation, while NWBCW is for revolutionary defeatism. In other words, all current anti-war organizations advocate diplomacy and negotiation so that, without touching the present social order, the various bourgeoisies will come to their senses and stop the war. Our perspective is that capitalism is war. So the only way to stop the war is to transform it from an imperialist war into a civil war, into a communist revolution.

One participant asked what we were really doing against the massacre of workers in Ukraine. He added that it was a privilege for us to gather and discuss while Ukrainians are suffering bombings and daily violence. In fact, under a radical phraseology, this participant was putting forward a frankly defencist orientation that can only lead to the defense of the Ukrainian democratic homeland against the Russian fascist invader. He was told that it is precisely the establishment of NWBCW committees in many countries and cities that is a way to attack our own bourgeoisies in their march to world war. Another comrade answered him – with panache and aplomb: we must welcome the political clarity of his intervention – that what he was basically asking for was a right of intervention in Ukraine for "humanitarian" reasons. The comrade recalled that the American intervention to get rid of Saddam Hussein in Iraq had also a humanitarian veil and caused the death of 500 000 Iraqi proletarians. The solution for the Ukrainian proletarians is not to fight the Russian proletarians under the leadership of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, but to fraternize with the Russian proletarians against their own Ukrainian bourgeoisie. And the Russian proletarians must do the same by turning their weapons against their own bourgeoisie. The enemy is not in the neighboring country, but in our own country!

One comrade suggested a boycott of certain products, especially those based on lithium, as a way to weaken the military industries. A comrade replied that it is more politically effective to promote collective struggle and the regroupment of all proletarians behind common political orientations – which is exactly what the NWBCW committees are aiming at – at the expense of individual perspectives that are ultimately sterile and have the direct result of demobilizing collective struggles. Another comrade added that the bourgeoisie and its governments use this individualistic argument to try to blame climate change on each individual. The bourgeoisie and its ultra-polluting industries can then

⁴² <http://igcl.org/Contre-la-guerre-imperialiste-pour-775>

⁴³ <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-03-27/trenches-of-the-tundra>

⁴⁴ <https://www.leftcom.org/fr/articles/2023-03-29/la-mutinerie-de-terrace-en-1944>

⁴⁵ <https://www.leftcom.org/fr/articles/2023-03-31/la-bonne-guerre-de-1939-1945>

disclaim responsibility and say to each small proletarian with a starving salary: “Climate change is your fault. You consume too much!”

A comrade asked for a clarification of the position of the Communist Left towards the USSR. A comrade from Klasbatalo replied that the CL had not supported any imperialism during the Second World War. The comrades of the Communist Left in Italy or in exile have intransigently rejected the defense of the USSR.

Finally, a comrade of the IGCL made a short presentation on the struggle of the proletarians in France against the pension reform. The struggle is tightly con-

trolled by the bourgeoisie, by its police, its left-wing parties and the unions. There is nothing radical about it. Everything has been done to prevent a mass strike and even to discuss the idea. The unions, supported by the left-wing parties, have put forward small one-day strikes spread over several weeks to exhaust the workers. The winner of this struggle is democracy with the debate on Article 49-3 of the Constitution ^(a) and the revitalization of the parliamentary circus. Another comrade pointed out that not everything was negative and that the working class would remember this struggle and use it for future struggles.

R/N, April 2023

Note ^(a): This is an article of the French constitution that allows the passage of a law without going through parliament.

Public Meeting of the NWBCW Committee in Toronto

The Toronto NWBCW committee held a public meeting on April 22. Only three people from outside the committee attended the meeting. The discussion focused on the political confrontation with one of them, a former member of the Trotskyist group *International Bolshevik Tendency* – a group that originated from the *International Spartacist Tendency*. For non-English readers, this group is characterized, among other things, by its support for the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR's “red army” in 1979. This highly politicized element led to discussion of various issues not directly related to the committee's function, such as the trade union question. For him, these have a “double character: that of protecting the rights of the workers and at the same time the bureaucracy sabotages the workers' struggles.”

But it is especially on the question of proletarian internationalism that the confrontation of class between the traditional Trotskyist positions and the positions of class proletarian was carried. The former member of the *International Bolshevik Tendency* criticized the slogan *No war but class war*, “in the name of the distinction to be made between military support and political support for the bourgeois state.” He defended that “revolutionaries should give military support to the Syrian state in the context of opposition to U.S. imperialism.” One of the other non-committee participants, apparently a former member of the *Stalinist Communist Party of Canada*, supported the Trotskyist's interventions, including this last openly non-internationalist position. As a result, these elements do not fit at all into the internationalist terrain that is the main criterion for participation in the NWBCW committees.

Even if the results of this meeting are not as positive as those of the Montreal meeting, the Toronto committee intends to continue its interventions, especially at strikes and picket lines as well as at street demonstrations, and to hold other public meetings. The fact that new committees are springing up in North America, in Chicago, in Florida, shows that the period is ripe for the constitution of such committees which, as a reminder, we consider for our part to be *struggle committees* whose criterion for membership is the consistent defense of proletarian internationalism.

S./J.

Struggle against Opportunism

Erratic Flight into Activism of The Group Emancipation

Those who have been reading us for some years already know the group Emancipation – originally known as *Nuevo Curso*. We return to this group today insofar as it has just published an article sanctioning its fall into activism and its undoubtedly definitive distancing from the International Communist Left, which we warned against in 2019 and 2020.

*“Promote the self-organization of the workers in every place and in every sphere we reach. And if that is our strategic orientation, the tactic would be to redirect hours and capacities towards its realization. That is why, a few months ago, we went from publishing articles in *Communia* almost daily, to publishing them a couple of times a week. (...) At work. Meet with co-workers outside the company to discuss the situation, how it affects you collectively and how to react. Invite trusted colleagues from nearby contractors and companies and expand the circle when a shared vision is sufficiently clear. In the neighborhood. Identify needs and help address them collectively. From offering remedial classes in order to resist the deterioration of education and the widening class divide in schools to organizing collective purchases to reduce prices of basic goods. Identify what solidarity systems could help in case of layoffs and closures in small companies or establishments in order to organize them in the future.”⁴⁶*

Instead of fighting for the direction and political orientation of each proletarian struggle to make it as effective as possible, Emancipation engages in the so-called “self-organization” of education of the children, collective purchases and solidarity systems in case of layoffs. *Nuevo Curso's party in the making* reduced to welfare... How did Emancipation get here?

The group in Spain *Nuevo Curso*, which later took the name of Emancipation, appeared in late 2017. Very quickly, it signaled itself with class political positions that clearly fought against the bourgeois political positions of leftism. Formally, the group was situated on the terrain of the class *frontiers* or positions that the political platforms of the ICT, the ICC and the IGCL defend. Our journal echoed these positions and this new group by republishing several of its statements.⁴⁷ Emancipation was also characterized by the intervention it developed within the proletarian camp, particularly on the question of the *party in the making*,

and the dynamism it showed for the regroupment of new revolutionary energies, specially in North America. The regroupments that took place in the United States from different circles around the Communist Left, particularly the ICT, but also Emancipation and ourselves, were the result of a dynamic that this group was able to encourage and animate among a new generation of militants.

As a new communist group without experience, it was up to us to favor its integration into the international proletarian camp as best we could and to work so that it could re-appropriate the heritage of principles and program of the Communist Left. Thus, in particular letters, and then publicly from February 2018, we invited the comrades to enroll in one of our central orientations, that of “to gather and focus all of the revolutionary forces around the positions and the debates of the Communist Left and its material expressions, political groups and circles, and more particularly around its main component today, the Internationalist Communist Tendency.”⁴⁸ And this was what *Nuevo Curso* then achieved by meeting with the ICT and ourselves. The result was *Nuevo Curso's 1st Organizing Conference in February 2019*, which defined a whole series of “three-year (sic!) goals” including “the integration (...) into the ICT.”⁴⁹

If we had saluted then this orientation, we warned the comrades against the danger, of immediatist order, of fixing *triannual* plans for the realization of such or such an orientation and of envisaging the adherence to the ICT without a process of debate and political clarification. “In this sense, the orientation of ‘regroupment towards the ICT’ established by the conference remains valid on condition that it is not understood, or considered, in an immediatist manner, but as a process and a historical struggle.(...) We fear that the comrades of NC and Emancipation will be discouraged by the observation that this orientation will probably not be achieved in the way they had envisaged, nor in the three years in which the conference planned it; or that they will question it and ‘condemn’ the ICT in the following. It would be a political mistake due to an immediatist and ‘short-term’ understanding that... the formulation of the conference by reducing the orientation to mere adherence and planning for three years, makes us fear.”⁵⁰

Unfortunately, our warning was not heeded and very

⁴⁶ . *Communia*, January 2023, <https://en.communia.blog/organization-2023>

⁴⁷ . The reader may refer to various issues of *Revolution or War*, including issues 9 and 10, in which we have reproduced positions taken by NC-Emancipation.

⁴⁸ . *Revolution or War (RW) #9*, February 2018, <http://www.igcl.org/New-Communist-Voices-Nuevo-Curso>.

⁴⁹ . To our knowledge, the results of this conference have never been published.

⁵⁰ . IGCL Letter to Emancipation, March 15th 2019, not published.

soon, five months later (!), our fears were verified at the 1st Emancipation Congress. Instead of joining the ICT, “the congress constituted Emancipation as a global and internationalist organization.”⁵¹ The report of the congress did not provide any explanation for this 180 degree turn. No balance-sheet of the previous orientation was made, not even waiting for the famous three years. Worse, the group began to deny both the role of the ICT as the main organization of the Communist Left and to ignore the existence of a proletarian camp, refusing all debate and political confrontation. It was also during this congress that comrades began to advance more or less openly not only the idea that there was a particular Communist Left in Spain, but above all that it came from the Trotskyist Workers' Opposition of the 1930s through the figure of Munis. In a letter of July 10, 2019⁵², we warned them against “the programmatic, theoretical and political dead end in which the claim of continuity with the 4th International [was] embarking Emancipación”, while proposing to openly debate it. We reiterated our invitation on the following November 19 in a letter⁵³, published in *RW* #14, which initiated the contradictory debate. The following issue of our journal published a critical presentation of Munis' theses on the Spanish War, *Spain 1936: Can There be a Proletarian Revolution without Insurrection and Destruction of the Bourgeois State?*⁵⁴, which exposed Munis' lack of a clear political break with Trotskyism.

From then on, Emancipation stopped corresponding with us, the only effective link it had left with a component of the communist Left, thus refusing any debate and, worse, weakening so any clarification of its own political position. In so doing, cut off and aloof to the Communist Left – alone in the world –, *de facto* Emancipation could only become locked into sectarianism, so favoring even more its activism and immediatism. Its 2nd conference – in place of a congress because of covid – of August 2020 reported of the bankruptcy of its orientation: “we are aware of the difficulty of organizing groups in a structure where trade union control, the development of precarious work conditions and the small scale of most workplaces all combine against us. In order to reach a wider sector of workers and gain organizational power, we must complement this work from the neighborhoods.”⁵⁵

In other words, in addition to the ICT adhesion, the three-year goal of February 2019, “to constitute a geographically significant network of worker nuclei in the

Iberian Peninsula and Spanish-speaking America”, had not been realized. But instead of drawing a balance sheet of the immediatist and activist vision that this goal overlapped, Emancipation relaunched this failed orientation by extending it to *the neighborhoods!* Two years later, it is this erratic flight into activism that the article *Impulsing Organization is a Priority* cited above comes to conclude. In doing so, Emancipation turns its back on the central international historical struggle to build the world party of the proletariat. In doing so, it abandons its original 2017-2018 ambitions, which we welcomed at the time and which it summarized as follows:

The success of the communist groups “will depend on their ability to reclaim and make useful the class program, all those lessons of the past that emerge from the very history of the labor movement. (...) Together, historical vanguards, workers' groups that re-appropriate the program and contingent vanguards that seek answers, form the real movement 'towards' the party,”⁵⁶ Nuevo Curso claimed in 2018. Today, it has turned his back on that orientation.

The result of all this, in addition to being a waste, is that it is probably too late for Emancipation to get off the fatal activist path it has embarked on despite our warnings.

RL, April 8th 2023

⁵¹ . <https://en.communia.blog/1st-congress-of-emancipation>

⁵² . IGCL Letter to Emancipation, *RW* #12, <http://www.igcl.org/July-10th-2019>.

⁵³ . IGCL Letter to Emancipation, November 15th 2019, *RW* #14, <http://www.igcl.org/Letter-to-Emancipacion-Nuevo-Curso>.

⁵⁴ . *RW* #15, <http://www.igcl.org/Spain-1936-Can-There-be-a>.

⁵⁵ . <https://en.communia.blog/2nd-organizational-conference>

⁵⁶ . *What is the Party?* by Nuevo Curso, reproduced in *RW* #10, September 2018, <http://www.igcl.org/What-is-the-Party-Nuevo-Curso>.

History of The Workers Movement Faced with Imperialist War

We reproduce below an article of the comrades of the ICT in Canada, the Klasbatalo group, which illustrates the maintenance of the class struggle and the capacity of the proletariat to fight for the defense of its living conditions even during the worst periods of counter-revolution and generalized imperialist war, in this case the Second World War. The fact that these strikes and struggles took place in Canada expresses the international and internationalist nature of the proletariat. At a time when the war continues to ravage Ukraine and all proletariats, especially those living in the so-called “democratic” capitalist and imperialist powers, are called upon to tighten their belts for the defense of Ukraine and the present and future war effort – the same is true on the other side, on the side of Russian imperialism and its supporters – the reminder of these unknown episodes of our class struggle must inspire the present proletarian generations.

Workers Strikes during The “Good War” of WWII in Canada (Klasbatalo-ICT)

Capitalist society is marked by the fundamental antagonism between two classes: the working class and capitalist class. Often, however, especially in times of crisis, the capitalists’ politicians and pundits make appeals to “social peace” to dupe the workers into falling behind the “national” effort.

Over the past few years, many attempts at this have been made: during the pandemic, it was “we support the essential workers whose wages we shall not raise,” while in France and England this year it is “take a pay cut and a higher retirement age to stick it to Putin”. Almost universally, an attack on the working class and its living conditions is couched as a sacrifice common to all. “Social peace” is identified by the left and right with the “good cause” of the nation: no better example of such a cause was the imperialist Second World War, wherein, as the story goes, all classes of the Allied powers set aside their immediate interests to defend “democracy” (whether that of the West or that of the USSR) and fight Hitler.

However, the “social peace” of WWII is simply a myth. Despite all propaganda, workers across Canada throughout the entire duration of the war engaged in numerous defensive struggles for better working conditions and against wartime restrictions on wages, the ability to strike, and collective bargaining.

At the onset of the war in 1939, the Canadian state established a series of wage and price controls. Ostensibly set up to prevent wartime inflation, in reality they posed a direct attack on the working class in preventing wage raises as unemployment decreased due to war

mobilization. Across Canada, regional labour boards as well as the National War Labour Board (NWLB) were established to “mediate” labour disputes, but in every case their main function was to stifle class struggle and enforce the bosses’ demands. Throughout this “conciliation” process, strikes were made illegal.

Despite the strict repression strikes during the war, the working class in Canada by no means sat on its hands for the war effort; instead, a strike wave menaced Canadian capital from 1941 to 1943. In this period, 425,000 workers participated in 1,106 strikes. In 1943, one third of unionized workers were on the picket lines. This was a direct response to wage controls and deteriorating working conditions as the state mobilized the economy for imperialist war.

Pitched battles in the class war were fought across the country; shipyard workers in Quebec and the Maritimes, workers at the transit system, steel mills, and an aircraft plant in Montreal, steelworkers in Sault-Sainte-Marie, ON, Trenton, ON, and Sydney, Nova Scotia, miners in Kirkland Lake, ON, and Ford auto workers in Windsor all took to illegal strikes in defence of their living conditions.

Ultimately, many of the strikes were defeated by repression of the labour boards, the intervention of the federal government, use of police and scabs, and sabotage by the unions. When the Sault-Sainte-Marie steelworkers rejected a scant offer by the NWLB, the CIO union “leaders” forced them to stand down anyways and give up hope of resuming the strike.

The Canadian state had no questions as to whether the



Thousands of women marching against the working conditions of the mines in Kirkland Lake (1941).

war effort was predicated on capital's victory against the workers. In 1943, during the steel strikes in Sault Ste. Marie, Trenton, and Sydney, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King met with the striking workers to convince them against pushing for a 55-cent minimum wage and wrote in his diary:

"I have told [the steelworkers] that they must realize that at the bottom of this whole war is the question of social security [read: social peace]. That all parts are whole in upholding that objective and that the place we will have to begin is at our own backyard at Sault Ste. Marie and Sydney."

Our class's fight during WWII lends us a direct lesson for today: reject "social peace," for the uninterrupted class struggle! The class struggle will never cease simply because the capitalists want it to; we must fight to extend it on all levels and have it take a direct, political character. As imperialist tensions only escalate, and as Canada and every other capitalist state gears up for conflict, we now more than ever must fight for an independent, working class perspective to guide our class towards its ultimate revolutionary victory over the capitalist system.

Klasbatalo

Pamphlets (orders at intleftcom@gmail.com)

IGCL Platform

Student Struggle and Assemblies of Neighbourhood (Internationalist Communists - Klasbatalo)

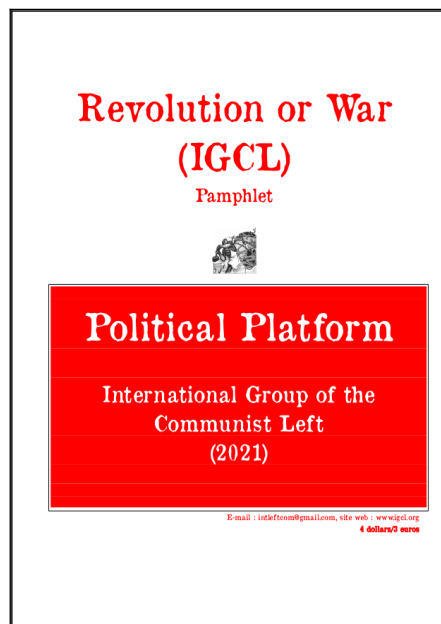
La dégénérescence de l'IC : le PCF (1924-1927) (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)

Groupe des Travailleurs Marxistes (Mexique, 1938) (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French and Spanish)

La question de la guerre (1935) (International Fraction of the ICC, only in French)

Morale prolétarienne, lutte de classes et révisionisme (IGCL from the IFICC, only in French and Spanish)

Unions Against the Working Class (1976, reprinted from the ICC Pamphlet).



Pacifism Ready to Intervene against Workers' Struggles Faced with Imperialist War

To date, the expressions of pacifism in the face of the imperialist war in Ukraine are still marginal. Certainly, the weakness of proletarian responses – despite a dynamic of reactions and struggles against the deterioration of living conditions, in particular due to inflation – explains this fact. The bourgeoisie has not yet had to use on a large scale the counter-fire of pacifism to prevent and divert any proletarian class movement against the consequences of the present war and especially of the generalized one to come. For all that, it prepares itself for it. Already, it sets up, in a preventive way, and through the left and leftist political forces, pacifist committees, launches pacifist petitions and even already organizes street demonstrations. This was the case in Germany on February 25 when 50,000 demonstrators marched in Berlin on the call of a former leader of the leftist party Die Linke, Sahra Wagenknecht, and a well-known feminist, Alice Schwarzer, in support of a Manifesto for Peace.⁵⁷ This was the case in the United States on March 18, in Washington in particular, at the call⁵⁸ of a multitude of leftist and environmentalist organizations, including Answer Coalition, but also local sections of Black Live Matters, the Socialist Party of America, numerous Trotskyist and Stalinist groups, and even... the former bassist of Pink Floyd, Roger Waters! In Europe and from December 2022, an international appeal called Stop the War⁵⁹ was launched, gathering several hundred members of leftist organizations, Trotskyist in particular, and trade union delegates, mainly in Germany, France, Spain, Italy... but also in Africa.

The first one calls “... on the [German] Chancellor to stop the escalation of arms deliveries. Now! He should lead a strong alliance for a ceasefire and for peace negotiations on the German as well as on the European level. Now! Because every day lost costs up to 1,000 more lives - and brings us closer to a 3rd world war.” (Manifesto for Peace from Germany)

For the second and “to preserve humanity, we must stop this march to barbarism. Putin's war, like that of Nato implemented by Zelensky, is not our war. We are not at war with the Russian people, nor with the Ukrainian people. We want peace for the Russian people and for the Ukrainian people. We sound the alarm: this escalation can lead to a global catastrophe. We will not be complicit in it. We call on all workers and militants in Europe to join forces to stop this deadly spiral and this butchery and for an end to the war and an immediate cease-fire!”⁶⁰

The fact that these appeals have not yet received much response does not detract from the need, on the contrary, to denounce without delay, and as clearly and frontally as possible, these “modern” expressions of pacifism in the face of imperialist war. In order to arm the proletarians and revolutionaries of today against this danger, we will recall the position of the revolutionary workers' movement on this question, a position that has always been internationalist and revolutionary – the one not going without the other – of which Lenin was undoubtedly one of the best defenders. The following excerpts were written in January 1917, one month before the outbreak of the revolutionary process in Russia, which was to continue until the October workers' insurrection and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The same one that imposed the end of the war in Russia. The same one that gave the signal and the impulse to the international revolutionary wave, to the strikes in the factories and to the mutinies in the armies, in Germany in particular, that imposed the stop of the generalized imperialist war.

Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism⁶¹ (Lenin, January 1st 1917)

Those who repeat the general, meaningless, non-committal, goody-goody desires of pacifism are not really working for a democratic peace. Only he is working for such a peace who exposes the imperialist nature of the present war and of the imperialist peace that is being prepared and calls upon the peoples to rise in revolt against the criminal governments. (...)

The congresses of the French General Confederation of Labour (Confédération générale du Travail) and of the French Socialist Party have just been held. The true significance and true role of socialist pacifism at the present moment were quite definitely revealed at these congresses.

This is the resolution passed unanimously at the trade union congress. The majority of the ardent chauvinists

headed by the notorious Jouhaux, the anarchist Broutchoux and... the “Zimmerwaldist” Merrheim all voted for it:

“This Conference of National Corporative Federations, trade unions and labour exchanges, having taken cognisance of the Note of the President of the United States which ‘invites all nations now at war with each other to publicly expound their views as to the terms upon which the war might be brought to an end’,

- requests the French Government to agree to this proposal;
- invites the government to take the initiative in making a similar proposal to its allies in order to speed the hour of peace;
- declares that the federation of nations, which is one of the guarantees of a final peace, can be secured only given the independence, territorial inviolability and political and eco-

⁵⁷ . <https://www.change.org/p/manifest-f%C3%BCr-frieden>

⁵⁸ . https://www.answercoalition.org/protest_march_18_19_peace_in_ukraine_say_no_to_endless_u_s_wars

⁵⁹ . <https://infos-ouvrieres.fr/2022/12/21/halte-a-la-guerre-2/>

⁶⁰ . *idem.*

⁶¹ . <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/jan/01.htm#ii>

conomic liberty of all nations, big and small.

The organisations represented at this conference pledge themselves to support and spread this idea among the masses of the workers in order to put an end to the present indefinite and ambiguous situation, which can only benefit secret diplomacy, against which the working class has always protested.”

There you have a sample of “pure” pacifism, entirely in the spirit of Kautsky, a pacifism approved by an official labour organisation which has nothing in common with Marxism and is composed chiefly of chauvinists. We have before us an outstanding document, deserving the most serious attention, of the political unity of the chauvinists and the “Kautskyites” on a platform of hollow pacifist phrases. In the preceding article we tried to explain the theoretical basis of the unity of ideas of the chauvinists and the pacifists, of the bourgeois and the socialist reformists. Now we see this unity achieved in practice in another imperialist country. (...)

Is it not ridiculous to talk of the “economic liberty of all nations, big and small”, and yet not say a word about the fact that, until the bourgeois governments are overthrown and the bourgeoisie expropriated, this talk of “economic liberty” is just as much a deception of the people as talk of the “economic liberty” of the individual in general, of the small peasants and rich, workers and capitalists, in modern society? (...)

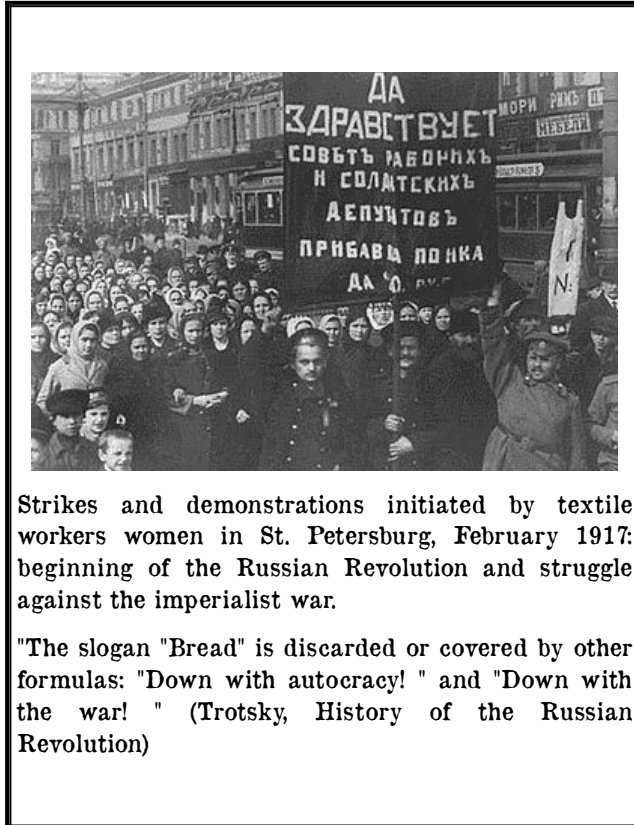
Bourgeois nationalists always and everywhere flaunt “general” phrases about a “federation of nations” in general and about “economic liberty of all nations, big and small”. But socialists, unlike bourgeois nationalists, always said and now say: rhetoric about “economic liberty of all nations, big and small”, is disgusting hypocrisy as long as certain nations (for example, Eng-

land and France) invest abroad, that is to say, lend at usurious interest to small and backward nations, billions of francs, and as long as the small and weak nations are in bondage to them.

Socialists could not have allowed a single sentence of the resolution, for which Jouhaux and Merrheim unanimously voted, to pass without strong protest. In direct contrast to that resolution, socialists would have declared that Wilson’s pronouncement is a downright lie and sheer hypocrisy, because Wilson represents a bourgeoisie which has made billions out of the war, because he is the head of a government that has frantically armed the United States obviously in preparation for a second great imperialist war. Socialists would have declared that the French bourgeois government is tied hand and foot by finance capital, whose slave it is, and by the secret, imperialist, thoroughly predatory and reactionary treaties with England, Russia, etc., and therefore cannot do or say anything except utter the

same lies about a democratic and a “just” peace. Socialists would have declared that the struggle for such a peace cannot be waged by repeating general, vapid, benign, sentimental, meaning less and non-committal pacifist phrases, which merely serve to embellish the foulness of imperialism. It can be waged only by telling the people the truth, by telling the people that in order to obtain a democratic and just peace the bourgeois governments of all the belligerent countries must be overthrown, and that for this purpose advantage must be taken of the fact that millions of workers are armed and that the high cost of living and the horrors of the imperialist war have roused the anger of the masses.

(Lenin, *Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism*)



Strikes and demonstrations initiated by textile workers women in St. Petersburg, February 1917: beginning of the Russian Revolution and struggle against the imperialist war.

"The slogan "Bread" is discarded or covered by other formulas: "Down with autocracy!" and "Down with the war!" (Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*)

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Summary of the journal #22 and #23

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Dynamics of Wildcat Strikes in the UK: For Wages Increases, Strike Everywhere and without Delay!

Quick and Incomplete Response to Some Critical "Posts" on our Intervention

The Cost of Living Crisis is a Capitalist Crisis (CWO-ICT)

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Correspondence with the Red Specter Collective (USA)

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Impasse and Contradictions of the ICC in regards to So-called Parasitism

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Commentary of the IGCL Political Platform

Fight against the Introduction of Anarchism within the Proletarian Camp

OUR BASIC POSITIONS

- The IGCL considers and defines all its activities, both internal and external, in relation to and as moments of the struggle for the constitution of the world political party of the proletariat, indispensable tool for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society.
- In addition to intervening in the proletariat's struggles, the IGCL leads this struggle especially in the international proletarian camp. This camp is composed of revolutionary political groups defending and sharing the class positions of the proletariat, in particular proletarian internationalism and the necessity of the class dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The IGCL claims the First, Second and Third Internationals and the struggle of the left fractions within them. In particular, it claims the struggle of the left fraction of the CP of Italy within the Communist International against its Stalinist degeneration and for the programmatic contributions that it has been able to develop and pass on us to this day.
- Only the proletariat, exploited and revolutionary class at the same time, is able to destroy capitalism and to establish communism, the classless society. The consciousness of this revolution, the *communist consciousness*, is produced by the historical struggle of the proletariat. So that it can materialize, defend and develop itself, the proletariat produces communist minorities who organize themselves in parties and whose permanent function is to carry this communist consciousness and to return it to the whole proletariat.
- As the highest expression of this consciousness, the party – or, in its absence, the communist fractions or groups – constitutes and must assume the political leadership of the proletariat. In particular, the party is the only organ that can lead the proletariat to the insurrection and to the destruction of the capitalist state, and to the exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- The party is organized and functions on the basis of the principles that govern the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, *proletarian internationalism* and *centralism* as moments of its international unity and struggle. From the start, the party constitutes, functions and intervenes as an international and centralized party. From its very start, the IGCL constitutes, functions and intervenes as an international and centralized group.
- The party, as well as the IGCL, bases its program, its principles, its political positions and its action on the theory of *historical materialism*. By explaining the course of history through the development of the class struggle and by recognizing the proletariat as the revolutionary class, it is the only world view that places itself from its point of view. It is the theory of the revolutionary proletariat.
- Only after the victorious insurrection and the disappearance of the bourgeois state will the proletariat be able to organize itself as a ruling class under the political leadership of its party. Its class domination, the dictatorship of the proletariat, is exercised by means of the workers' councils, or soviets. These can only maintain themselves as a unitary organization of the proletariat if they become *organs of the insurrection* and *organs of the class dictatorship*, that is to say, by making the party's slogans their own.
- The dictatorship of the proletariat consists in using the class power of its mass organizations, the councils or soviets, to abolish the economic power of the bourgeoisie and ensure the transition to a classless communist society. The state of the transition period, of the class dictatorship, between capitalism and communism is destined to disappear with the disappearance of the classes, of the proletariat itself and of its party, and the advent of the communist society.
- Since the First World War in 1914, generalized imperialist war and state capitalism have been the main expressions of the historical phase of decadence of capitalism.
- In face of the unceasing development of state capitalism, the proletariat can only advance the research for its unity in all its struggles, even the most limited or localized ones, by taking charge of their extension and generalization. Every workers' struggle, even the most limited, confronts the state apparatus as a whole, against which

the proletariat can only advance the perspective and the weapon of the *mass strike*.

- In the era of dominant state capitalism, the trade unions as a whole, the leadership as well as the base sections, are nowadays full-fledged organs of the bourgeois state within the working class milieu. They aim at maintaining the capitalist order within its ranks, at framing the working class and at preventing, counteracting and sabotaging any proletarian struggle, in particular any extension, generalization and centralization of proletarian fights. Any defense of the trade unions and trade unionism is counter-revolutionary.
- In the era of dominant state capitalism, all fractions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called workers', "socialist", "communist" parties, leftist organizations (Trotskyists, Maoists, Anarchists), or even those presenting themselves as anti-capitalist, constitute the left of the political apparatus of capital. All the tactics of popular front, anti-fascist front or united front mixing the interests of the proletariat with those of a fraction of the bourgeoisie, only serve to contain and divert the struggle of the proletariat. Any frontist policy with left parties of the bourgeoisie is counter-revolutionary.
- In the era of dominant state capitalism, parliament and electoral campaigns, and in general bourgeois democracy, can no longer be used by the proletariat for its affirmation as a class and for the development of its struggles. Any call to participate in the electoral processes and to vote only reinforces the mystification presenting these elections as a real choice for the exploited and, as such, is counter-revolutionary.
- Communism requires the conscious abolition by the proletariat of capitalist social relations: commodity production, wage labor and classes. The communist transformation of society through the dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean self-management or nationalization of the economy. Any defense of one or the other is counter-revolutionary.
- The so-called "socialist" or even "communist" countries, the former USSR and its Eastern European satellites, China, Cuba, Vietnam, or even Chavez's Venezuela, have only been particularly brutal forms of the universal tendency to state capitalism. Any support, even critical, for the so-called socialist or progressive character of these countries is counter-revolutionary.
- In a world now totally conquered by capitalism and where imperialism imposes itself on every state, any national liberation struggle, far from constituting any kind of progressive movement, is in fact a moment in the constant confrontation between rival imperialisms. Any defense of nationalist ideology, of the "right of peoples to self-determination", of any national liberation struggle is counter-revolutionary today.
- By their very content, the *partial* struggles, anti-racist, feminist, environmentalist, and other aspects of everyday life, far from strengthening the unity and autonomy of the working class, tend on the contrary to divide and dilute it in the confusion of particular categories (race, gender, youth, etc.). Any ideology and movement that advocates *identitarianism*, anti-racism, etc., in the name of the *intersectionality* of struggles, are counter-revolutionary ideologies and movements.
- Terrorism is an expression of social strata without a historical future and of the decomposition of the petty-bourgeoisie, when it is not directly the emanation of the war that the States are permanently waging against each other. It always constitutes a privileged terrain for the police manipulations and provocations of the bourgeoisie. Advocating the secret action of small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which is conditioned by the conscious and organized mass action of the proletariat.
- The IGCL fights, from today, so that the future party is constituted on the programmatic basis of the principles and positions that precede. The formal constitution of the party is necessary at the latest when the intervention, the orientations and the slogans of the communist groups or fractions become permanent material elements of the immediate situation and direct factors of the balance of power between the classes. Then, the immediate struggle for the formal constitution of the party is necessary and becomes urgent.