

Mutiny

Trenches of the Tundra

The media hysteria in February over flying objects and weather/spy balloons flying over American and Canadian airspace points out the increased military importance of the skies of the far north. These objects have left NATO higher-ups embarrassed over the fact they weren't detected sooner, confirming paranoias of a blind spot in the "underfunded" NORAD system. Prior to these events, military strategists have long been urging politicians, to some notable success, of the need to shore up the alliance's northern military capabilities. This comes amidst greater and greater escalation in tensions amongst the world powers.

For almost a year now, the slaughter in Ukraine has marked a fundamental shift in the world imperialist system. Entrenched in economic crisis, capitalist blocs now seek to consolidate around common enemies: their imperialist rivals and the working class. The Canadian state has taken on a unique position in this wave of militarization, with more JTF2 (Canadian special forces) military advisors present in Ukraine than any other country prior to the outbreak of war. Press reports note that JTF2 is still operating in Ukraine (neither confirmed nor denied (!) by the defence ministry). Canada is now being seen as a key pillar of NATO strategy as the distance across the arctic sea seems shorter.

In August last year, Trudeau and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had a joint tour of the Canadian arctic to shore up a vital front of the alliance's defence. With speeches of reconciliation and opportunity (to live next to airstrips and radar facilities), Trudeau committed \$5bn in the coming 6 years and \$40bn in the next 20 years to Arctic militarization. Canada and the rest of NATO sees itself as lagging behind Russian military capacities in the Arctic with Putin recommissioning old USSR bases while the NORAD

system has been left in disrepair. With nuclear rhetoric in the air, generals are once again coming to the stark recognition that the Arctic is the shortest route for a devastating exchange with Russia. In order to catch up, Canada is allocating these funds to a vast expansion of infrastructure in the Arctic territories and rebuilding satellite surveillance over the area so as to detect Russian missiles and jet fighters.

With the melting of the ice caps, Russian and Chinese capital has invested heavily on the Russian side of the arctic. Next to trillions of dollars of untapped mineral and energy deposits, in a period of supply chain disruptions, the Northern Sea Route following the Russian coast is estimated to cut shipping time by 40%. Russian capital has been banking on this unique opportunity as its old resource extraction stagnates and its tech industries flatline.

Across the pole, Canadian capital sees lucrative prospects in mining and other forms of resource extraction in its far north. Canada is already a dominant imperialist player in world mining with 75% of mining companies headquartered in the country. Not only can Canadian capital boast large domestic deposits but it also finances and oversees global mining operations from Cuba to Chile to Indonesia. Canada is a leading producer of nickel, gold, copper, iron, titanium, uranium, lithium, cobalt, potash, niobium and zinc, and in 2003 diamond deposits discovered in the northern territories allowed it to surpass South Africa in diamond production. Next to this, the retreating ice caps present the Northwest Passage as accessible to global shipping, providing a natural Panama Canal.

The current economic crisis and the war in Ukraine has compelled the NATO imperialist bloc to reconstitute competition according to its rivalry with Russia and China. Whereas, for decades, the U.S. and Canada viewed

each other as economic competitors in the Arctic, the recent NATO trip to the far north shows that Canada is putting aside these inter-alliance disputes in order to face a greater enemy. The solution to the crisis no longer appears solvable through ordinary capitalist competition, by who can build the next nickel mine or deep-water port, but rather is tending towards total destruction of key rivals. Not only is it imperative for Canada and the United States to prevent Russian access to potential new resources in the Arctic, but block the Russian bourgeoisie from what it sees as its economic future. This, of course, corresponds to military-strategic positioning.

The vast expansion of infrastructure in the Arctic Circle to support increasing militarization will in turn assist greater and greater resource extraction. While the economic resources of the far north make it a far more significant military-strategic location, the rapid development of roads, airways, and ports will only increase the economic importance of the region. These two major thrusts northwards will result in the militarization of everyday life for the territories' indigenous population.

The importance of the support of the northern indigenous peoples is not lost on Trudeau and his generals. The majority of the Canadian Rangers (the foremost military body in the Arctic) is mostly composed of First Nations and Inuit peoples. The Rangers are getting a significant upgrade in military equipment and their survival skills are seen as critical for training the wider military in Arctic operations.

Canada's turn to the north will result in military expenditures dictating the social geography of its Arctic territories. Just as rails and roads in the old colonies were directed towards exporting goods to the metropole, the air, land, and sea infrastructure in the territories will be even more tailored to the needs of the military and extractive economy.

Corresponding to this, the economic life of the indigenous population there will be further integrated into Canada's imperialist project: Defense Minister Anita Anand presented this a great "opportunity" for them, saying that "will ensure Indigenous-owned businesses benefit from these investments throughout the supply chain." Thus the image of Trudeau and Stoltenberg meeting with an Indigenous elder becomes clear: what reconciliation really means is the domination of militarization; clean water on the condition of contributing to the northern front of Canadian imperialism.

The flare up of imperialist conflict is not merely taking place in a distant land. The working class across the globe is being asked to pay for the economic effects of its supply chain disruptions be it heating in Berlin or food security in Cairo. The deterioration of real wages is being met by a more proactive state in crushing strikes from the American rail workers to Ontario educators and Newfoundland paramedics. And with the above, it becomes clear that, in the tundra, both the NATO alliance and Russia are digging in as ICBMs in the Kola Peninsula and Nebraska aim at each other.

With the direness of the situation facing our class so apparent, the Internationalist Communist Tendency launched the No War But the Class War initiative to serve as a space for internationalists forces to work together against the militarism and economic attacks of the capitalists on our class. To sum up the view of these committees we will quote Lenin at length:

"The war has undoubtedly created a most acute crisis and has increased the distress of the masses to an incredible degree. The reactionary character of this war, and the shameless lies told by the bourgeoisie of all countries in covering up their predatory aims with "national" ideology, are inevitably creating, on the basis of an objectively revolutionary situation, revolutionary moods among the masses. It is our duty to help the masses to become conscious of these moods, to deepen and formulate them. This task is correctly expressed only by the slogan: convert the imperialist war into civil war; and all consistently waged class struggles during the war, all seriously conducted "mass action" tactics inevitably lead to this. It is impossible to foretell whether a powerful revolutionary movement will flare up during the first or the second war of the great powers, whether during or after it; in any case, our bounden duty is systematically and undeviatingly to work precisely in this direction."

To hell with Canada, to hell with NATO, to hell with Ukraine and to hell with Russia!

Workers of the world, unite!



The Terrace Mutiny of 1944

Despite being the largest mutiny in Canadian history, the 1944 mutiny of Terrace is given little thought in school textbooks and the general imagination. For us this is no surprise since it is the history of our class. The base around the village of Terrace in British Columbia was quickly constructed for Pacific home defence and to serve as a troop transport hub. Its squalor and mundane condition is reflected in shortages of gasoline and coal in the bitter cold of northern British Columbia to the point that soldiers elsewhere were threatened to be sent to Terrace for misbehaviour. The Francophone battalion stationed at Terrace was often cited as having particularly “poor morale,” no doubt suffering under the yoke of barking Anglophone officers.

Finally, in 1944, the powder keg of Terrace exploded after threats of being sent to the front were made. The three battalions stationed there organized around their discontent. Rather than a riotous group of drunken sailors, the mutineers of Terrace marched through the town with rifles loaded and immediately occupied key barracks and positions. Quickly, the soldiers began reorganizing the camp collectively,

allotting canteen and guard duties. A few officers who attempted to maintain control and guarded the ammunition depot. Perplexed by their dutiful efforts being ignored by the mutineers, they opened the depots to find that they had already been cleared.

The army command stationed in Prince Rupert, BC were alarmed by the news of the mutiny. Several

attempts were made to rescue the officers in the camp and transport them to Prince Rupert but none of them arrived. One group of officers was able to hop on a train to army command after hiding in the brush and being searched for by a truck-load of the mutineers. Meanwhile, in the camp, the number of soldiers was steadily depleting as soldiers jumped on freights and simply deserted.

The mutiny was ended by the threats of one officer sent to Terrace with a clear message. After being met with machine gun muzzles and being told he could move no further, he told the soldiers the army had planes at the ready and were prepared to bomb the town and that any attempt to hold the base or even leave without authority was futile. Faced with the threat and their decreasing number, most of the soldiers agreed to hand in their rifles and board the troop trains—only the Francophone battalion left Terrace fully equipped.

The mutiny of Terrace is just one of many in our class’s history which dismisses the myth that the Second Imperialist War was a period of social peace on the home front. With today’s imperialist tensions, it serves as a reference against the notion of national unity for the great, justified and heroic slaughter of our class. When the veneer of civilization was coming apart, two class perspectives opposed each other. While not a single officer was harmed at Terrace and not a single building damaged, the soldiers were threatened with the bombardment of an entire town. Lest we forget the class heroes of Terrace.



The “Good War” of WWII: Class Struggle

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 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.



Available from radical bookshops or through us at the Klasbatalo email address.

What Does Klasbatalo Fight For?

We fight for the political independence of the working class, which means we reject all cross-class alliances with the capitalist class, including its left-wing. We believe the working class must fight on its own terrain: first, to defend itself against the bosses’ attacks; and, second, to achieve its ultimate task, that of establishing the world communist future which will rid the planet of exploitation, oppression, and war. It is towards this goal that we fight for the creation of the world communist party, whose purpose is to clarify the confusions among the class and to unify it towards its ultimate end; we believe this party to be the most potent weapon of our class. While we are for the party, we do not believe ourselves to be the party, nor do we believe that our organization alone will become it; rather, we see it as the product of both the wider class struggle, and of the real work of revolutionaries, of which we see ourselves as only one of many elements. We do not see this party as a government-in-waiting, for the emancipation of humanity depends on the active struggle of the whole working class, and this struggle cannot be replaced by the dictates of a minority.

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