

Mutiny

International Workers' Day:

Down with Nationalism and War: Workers Have No Country!

Yet again, May Day — the day of workers' international solidarity — sees millions more lives tormented and lost in war. From Ukraine to Congo via the Middle East, the Red Sea, Sudan and beyond: the escalation of violence cannot simply be put down to a surge in nasty political regimes. War is a knock-on from capitalism's economic crisis — a crisis which is deepening and increasing the threat of a new world war.

Economic crisis fuels nationalism and war

Global capitalism may be in mortal crisis, but it will not die a natural death. Falling profit rates are making it increasingly difficult for capital to find productive investment outlets. At first the easiest way out seemed to be to set the printing presses going and flee into financial speculation. However, the bursting of the financial bubble in 2007/8 brought further weakening of the productive base. So the worldwide crisis only got worse, bringing with it the progressive rise of intra-imperialist conflicts.

Against this backdrop, the capitalists are trying to solve their profitability problems by pushing down the price they pay for labour power, i.e. wages. At the same time, social benefits are being pared down and drastic spending cuts in education, healthcare and pensions are being enforced. Clearly the aim is to make workers pay for capitalism's crises.

Furthermore, workers all over the world face a merciless under-bidding contest where production is relocated to places with significantly lower labour costs, more lenient tax systems and where particularly tough anti-strike laws are a magnet.

When these measures are not enough, and they are not enough, the continuation of the now systemic crisis in all latitudes leads to the devastating and violent recourse to war. Initially war is waged by proxy, with the imperialist powers pulling the strings behind the scenes. Finance and weapons are provided and lofty promises of future aid are made, which, if they are honoured at all, come at an immense price for those who receive them. The outcome is a world where imperialism is continuously fuelling or igniting more wars. It is a dynamic that is difficult to control and almost impossible to contain, bringing with it the increasing danger of a direct military confrontation between the great powers. Thus a scenario where imperialist players such as Iran, China, the United States and the European Union openly confront each other in a generalised war is becoming increasingly likely.

Against all nationalist ideologies!

In these circumstances, talk about the self-determination of peoples, of wars of national liberation, of the independence of peoples is a

dangerous illusion. An illusion which feeds the competing nationalisms of Hamas and Israel. An illusion which encourages the idea that the Houthi dynasty has political and economic autonomy when it buys Iranian guns with Qatari money — just like the conflicting nationalist claims in the war in Ukraine. In their different ways they are all useful supporting actors, tools to be used in proxy wars, if not as victims destined for massacre.

It is impossible to contribute to the resurgence of revolutionary internationalism by taking sides in imperialist wars. One cannot fight against war by taking part in it, whatever the pretext or justification. On the contrary, the first task of internationalist political organisations is to liberate the working class from the thousand tentacles of the national bourgeoisies and international imperialism. This requires the rejection of all forms of nationalism and all wars and the defence of a revolutionary alternative to capitalism. Anything else amounts to counter-revolutionary politics and the preservation of the "status quo".

The terrible cruelty of capitalism's wars spares hardly anyone. But for the eventual "winner" there is the prospect of eliminating market competitors and appropriating their territories, all useful for a modern economy in deep crisis. It means more oil and gas, thus slowing down an urgently needed ecological transformation. It means a battle for lithium and "rare earths". It means an attempt to raise the rate of profit and finally it means the destruction of capital assets and value enabling the accumulation cycle to start anew. Whether this takes place with or without nuclear bombs will depend on the current war situations in Ukraine and Gaza, where the ongoing massacre and the crisis in the Red Sea are already threatening the possible expansion of the war to the rest of the Middle East and beyond. The new scramble for Africa, and the Chinese and US manoeuvres in the Pacific will not be limited to military moves by their proxies forever. The future that imperialism is preparing for us is a future full of destruction, death and cruel barbarism never seen before. Who will pay the price?

The working class and the war

The answer is obvious: those who have to go to war under the banner of their own bourgeoisie or their imperialist allies. The civilian population that is literally decimated by the inhuman bombing that destroys everything and spares nothing. Those desperately trying to escape poverty and fleeing the consequences of climate change and the devastation of imperialist proxy wars.

The one force that can oppose the danger of more generalised war is that of the exploited, the international proletariat, the huge masses of dispossessed brought about by the crisis of capitalism. These wage slaves produce the social wealth of every

country with their labour power, but get only a few crumbs in return.

This force, exploited in peacetime and cannon fodder in wartime, can be the most powerful antidote to imperialist war, provided it acts as a class on its own terrain against capitalism, its crises and its militarism. But to do so, it must first free itself from the dominance of the ideology of the ruling class. Wars are caused by the crises of capitalists, but they are fought by proletarians following ruling class ideologies. These range from the defence or export of "democracy", the defence of "national interests" to "universal" religious principles that must be enforced by force. Not to mention all the old and new racist and homophobic ideologies that idealise war as an instrument for "purifying the nation".

The ideological armoury of the bourgeoisie to make the proletariat identify with its interests, is richly stocked, especially in war. For these reasons, it is essential that the class produces an international political organisation with its own tactics and strategy. The nature of imperialism and its deadly actions are international. That is why we need an international party, a new International, which unites all our forces for a single goal: the struggle against capitalism in all its economic and social manifestations. The path to it is paved with pitfalls and not all of them are a direct product of bourgeois reaction.

There is no "right side" in imperialist war!

First of all, it is obvious that quite a few "left" forces, especially those that claim to be "revolutionary" and "internationalist", are themselves caught up in the bourgeois ideology that is reproduced by capitalism on a daily basis. They try to choose "the right side" or even support a supposedly "lesser evil" in every war. For example, reference is often made to Russia's excessive military power in order to take a stance in the interests of Ukraine's "defence of the fatherland". Others refer to the military potential of NATO in order to call for the "defence of Russia". And why defend a political formation

that is the product of jihadist, fascist nationalism like Hamas? All these positions are based on a logic that is as simple as it is reactionary: In imperialist conflicts, "the lesser", the "semi-colonial country" or "the nation state under attack" must be defended, depending on terminological taste, in order to be "in the right" according to the ideas of bourgeois morality. Such positions trample the suffering of the victims of war underfoot and are the purest poison for the proletariat's struggle for freedom!

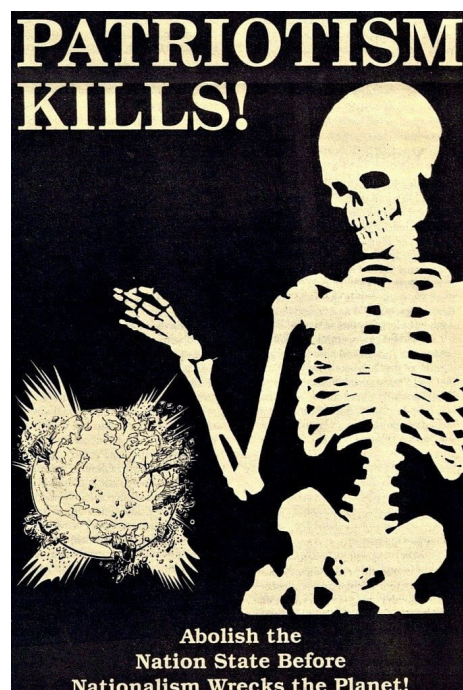
Imperialism is "not the work of any one or a few states, it is the product of a certain degree of maturity in the further development of capital, an inherently international phenomenon, an indivisible whole that can only be recognised in all its interrelationships and from which no individual state is able to escape." (Rosa Luxemburg). The decisive criterion is to determine which class is waging the war. The tragic common feature of every imperialist war is the bloody clash of the exploited on both sides. On both sides, people die for "their own bourgeoisie", for interests that are not their own!



No War but the Class War!

For this reason, we as the ICT support the No War but the Class War initiative to defend the fundamental internationalist principles within our class. Principles that have been forgotten or, worse, distorted by the political heirs of the degenerated Third International and large sections of anarchism. The gravity of the situation — the danger of a generalised war — forces internationalists to this form of cooperation. We must act in a class that has been driven onto the defensive by a century of Stalinist counter-revolution, decades of upheaval and political-social attacks by the international bourgeoisie. Despite the systematic deterioration of its working and living conditions, our class has so far not reacted, or reacted only inadequately, to the attacks of the bourgeoisie. Only the awakening of this "sleeping giant" can ensure that the political message of the internationalists does not remain a lonely cry in the desert. Only the resumption of the generalised class struggle will enable the political maturation and strengthening of the internationalist forces, leading to the formation of the indispensable political instrument for the revolutionary overcoming of the capitalist system: the international party of the proletarian revolution.

For a full version of the 2024 May Day Statement of the Internationalist Communist Tendency see leftcom.org



The World Party in Canada

The first great revolutionary wave of the working class still occupies the militant consciousness despite its long passing. As our class today faces the looming threat of generalized war, next to an ever-increasing tempo of economic attacks by capital, our greatest defeat still serves as a reserve of our richest lessons. Yet, if it is to be said that the Russian revolution was defeated in Berlin, Rome, and Paris, then it must also be said that it was defeated in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. The Canadian experience offers both particular and general lessons in the class battles of the period. As working-class militants today fight for the creation of a new world party, looking back at the formation of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) can inform our efforts.

Prior to the formation of the CPC, the Canadian working class was primarily organized around two different political parties; the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC), and the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC). There was also the Socialist Party of North America (SPNA), which was geographically concentrated in the cities of southern Ontario and had fewer members than the SDPC and the SPC. It is these three organizations which the future membership of the CPC passed through, inside of and parallel to the rise and crescendos of workers' struggles of war-time and the post-war years, but particularly in 1918-1919, the peak of the wave in Canada. Their respective limitations, as well as ultimate historical trajectory, highlight the need for a revolutionary party of the working class, but also how its formation depends on its proper embedding within the wider class and intransigent commitment to communist politics.

The SDPC, like the Socialist Party of America, was a federated organization. The majority of its membership was constituted by its various language federations, particularly among Eastern European workers, most notably Ukrainian but also Lithuanian, Finnish, etc. These language federations were also the heart of the party's left wing. Many of these workers would've had a militant past in Tsarist Russia, would have been familiar with figures like Lenin and Trotsky, and would in fact contribute to the first attempt to form the CPC. In spite of this, the SDPC leadership was nearly entirely composed of an Anglophone minority, and thus led by what would often constitute the party's right wing. With the outbreak of the war, the SDPC would officially come to an anti-war position. However, the SDPC did not draw an explicit defeatist outlook, and as the war waged on, its leadership would waffle and eventually fall in line with the jingoism of capital nonetheless. In comparison to the

SDPC's waffling on the war, the SPC took a much stronger anti-war position, and remained committed to it. However, the SPC was ideologically founded on the impossibilist tendency and generally focused on a slow intellectual education of the working class. Principally, the tendency dismissed the value of, and even questioned if revolutionaries should engage in economic struggles. Nevertheless, between 1912 and 1913 a new generation of militants came to prominence in the SPC who were leading figures in the unions of western Canada. Despite their firm anti-war stance, the SPC remained saddled with impossibilism, and therefore lacked a proper conception of the nature of workers' revolution. Lastly there was the SPNA. What distinguished this party was its intransigent commitment to workers' revolution. Rejecting the reformist approach of the SDPC, it argued for nothing short of socialist revolution. Like the SPC, it had an impossibilist past and would even take aspects of the tendency to the extreme, though it nonetheless would break with the SPGB over interventions in economic struggles. It's biggest shortcoming remained its size and geographical isolation, piling in comparison to the SDPC and SPC.

The limitations of these groups would come to the fore during the great wave of strikes from 1918 to 1919. The first such strike kicked off in Vancouver, where the murder of a labour activist would erupt in a general strike. Quickly resolved by military intervention, the swelling of workers' struggle persisted nonetheless. In 1919, Toronto was rocked by a general strike and union halls were filled with cheers for the social revolution. On May Day, 3,000 workers in Montreal marched down Saint Catherine's street singing the Internationale. Later that same year, thousands of ship-building workers in Montreal walked out in solidarity with striking workers in Toronto. From butchers in Toronto to Barbers in Victoria, the strike wave reflected a deep level of combativity inside the class beyond the scope of large industry. But it was in Winnipeg, dubbed "the Petrograd of Canada", where the two classes most fiercely confronted each other. Here more than anywhere the question of class rule was posed most clearly by both sides of the class barricades. In January 1919, a union hall meeting of seventeen hundred workers in Winnipeg had shouts of "Long live the Russian Soviet Republic! Long live Karl Liebknecht!". On May 15th, the city's building and metal workers went on strike after employers had refused to negotiate. Almost immediately in solidarity 500 telephone workers, primarily women, went out on

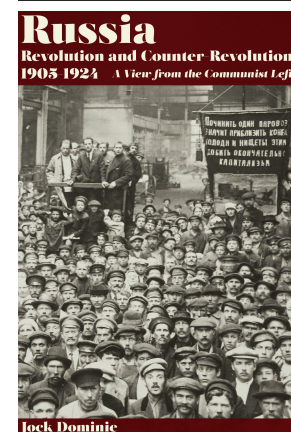


strike as did 700 bakers in solidarity. Soon 30,000 workers would be on strike in a city of 179,000. Despite a lack of initiative by the trade unions themselves, thousands of non-unionized workers would actively participate. 60,000 workers alone in Vancouver would go on strike for months in solidarity with the general strike in Winnipeg, demonstrating the significance of this event.

The Winnipeg general strike of 1919 therefore demonstrated a categorical shift in class consciousness and fighting willingness. By nearly the outset of the strike the strikers themselves were running the city. The strike committees began to organize food distribution next to the production of strike propaganda. Rather than capital being able to divide the soldiers from the workers as they hoped, the soldiers organized a "soldiers parliament" which met daily. Nearly two hundred mass meetings took place during the strike demonstrating that mass, active, conscious, and qualitative change had taken place. The strike wave demonstrated the power of class unity and revealed the balance of forces was shifting in favour of the working class. It was during this change in terrain that the first attempt to form the Communist Party of Canada appeared. Inspired by the success of the Russian revolution, the SPNA explicitly adopted a Bolshevik outlook, breaking with impossibilism. In connection with the left wing of the SDPC they would make the first strides towards a genuine revolutionary party. But despite being at the high of the revolutionary wave in Canada, the future of the party was still up in the air as to whether or not it could successfully lead the wider class. The long practice and roots inside the class enjoyed by Bolsheviks hadn't been developed in Canada by any of the

relevant groups. Tragically, state repression quickly killed the party in its cradle, as large swathes of its membership were arrested in police raids. The formation of the communist party would wait two more grueling years before properly being formed in a barn in Guelph, Ontario. But by 1921, not only had the wave of workers' struggle begun to crest, but the revolution in Russia was suffocating from its isolation and the effects of economic crisis and civil war.

The defeats of our class can serve as our greatest lessons. Today our class stands at a dire crossroads. Massive economic attacks by capital are driving down our standard of living. Wars are raging across continents and on the horizon is the threat of generalized imperialist war. In the face of these threats working class militants must connect their activity to the formation of a new communist international which is an indispensable weapon. Forming such a party at the height of workers' combativity, let alone after, would be too little too late. The party must have a real and active life inside the working class. It needs to be a factor inside the class struggle guiding it to the revolutionary conclusion.



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.

FB: <https://www.facebook.com/Klasbatalocollective>

Email: klasbatalocollective@gmail.com

