19%. Such overwhelming weight for the dominant imperialism gave great stability to world capitalism because no other imperialism, not even the USSR, could challenge U.S. dominance.

Today, things have changed because another imperialist monster has appeared on the world stage and is actively preparing to challenge U.S. dominance and take its place, or at least divide the world in its favor. It's China, which has overtaken the United States in terms of gross industrial weight.

Another element that emerges clearly from cycle to cycle is the continuous relative decline of all the old imperialist countries. The United States, for example, has seen its relative weight steadily decline from 36.6% in 1960 to 16.7% in 2018. Over the same period, the old British lion has seen its weight drop from 5.9% to 1.2%! Japan fell from 5.0% to 4.0%, still a respectable figure. Germany's share fell from 5.1% to 2.4%! France's relative weight fell to 2.2%, on par with South Korea, but is surpassed by Brazil, whose weight rose from 1.0% in 1960 to 2.3% in 2018, but with more than three times the population of France.

As for the USSR, its relative weight increased steadily until 1979, when it peaked at 15.0%, and then slowly declined to 14.6% in 1989, before its collapse. The new Russian Federation has seen its weight decline from 8.2% in 1989 to 4.2% in 2018, almost on par with Japan, whose manufacturing industry, however, has a much greater weight than Russia's and is more technologically developed.

The other spectacular change is the meteoric rise of China, which in 1960 occupied ninth place in the ranking, behind Italy, with 2.1%, to move up to first place ahead of the United States, with 26.9%, compared with 16.7% for the latter and 11.8% for Europe, which dropped from second to third place. China's progress was gradual at first, but it accelerated sharply from the late 1990s onward due to the substantial flow of capital from the United States, Japan, Germany, etc. While the U.S. and Europe are in recession due to the 2008-2009 crisis, industrial production will continue to grow in China, albeit at a much slower pace than before 2008, such that its industrial weight will exceed that of the U.S. as of 2011.

The fact that China has become the leading industrial power is confirmed by several criteria, including raw data: steel production in 2018, 928 million tons, compared with about 82 million in the United States; cement production 2207 million tons, compared with 84 million; etc. China's automobile market has become the largest in the world, with more than 26 million vehicles sold by 2021, compared to just over 17 million in the United States. In 2015, China produced 24 million cars compared to 12 million in the United States. The United States is still ahead in the technology and armaments sectors. But in 10 years the situation, at least in armaments, will be reversed.

The progress of other developing countries is less spectacular, but no less obvious: Brazil, which was in tenth place with 1.0%, has moved up two places, seeing its relative weight rise to 2.3%, ahead of France and South Korea. India is clearly doing better, as it was in twelfth place in 1960 with a relative weight of 0.9%, but in 2018 it jumped to fourth place with 5.7%, ahead of Russia, which is now only at 4.2%, and Japan with 4.0%. Iran, Turkey, and Indonesia are not to be outdone: these countries, which each accounted for only 0.1% in 1960, are right behind the United Kingdom with 1.1% in 2018.

The relative decline of all the old imperialist States is historically inevitable as other countries industrialize, but no less spectacular.

Demographic weight

Again, as capitalism has spread around the world, the demographic weight of imperialist countries has declined. Take the United States, whose population has dropped from 6.0% in 1960 to 4.3% in 2018. This is still a respectable figure compared to Russia's 1.9%. After the terrible overproduction crisis, which led to the breakup of the USSR, which was nothing more than a conglomerate of nations artificially maintained by the Kremlin's iron fist, Russia's population declined dramatically until 2008, and then gradually rose again, but without returning to the 1993 peak of 148 million.

The new big country, China, is also seeing its population decline relatively: after peaking in 1973 with 21.6% of the world's population, its weight is slowly but steadily decreasing, reaching 18.8% in 2018.

Another noteworthy fact is that India, which accounted for 14.4% of the world's population in 1960, is seeing its population weight steadily increase to 17.8% in 2018. At this rate, it will overtake China within seven years.

As expected, developing countries are seeing their demographic weight increase. For example, Indonesia's population increased from 3.1% to 3.5%, Brazil's from 2.4% to 2.8%, Mexico's from 1.2% to 1.7%, etc.

## Industrial intensity

Industrial intensity is calculated by dividing industrial weight by population weight. This parameter shows how far the young capitalist countries have to go and, for the imperialist countries, how much capitalism is in a state of decay. All the old imperialist countries, after reaching a peak, are regressing, a consequence of the relative decline in their industrial weight. The United States, which had an industrial intensity of 614 in 1960, has regressed to 389, which is still very respectable as it still dominates all other countries. China, which has seen its industrial weight soar, managed to overtake the United Kingdom with an index of 143 in 2018, up from 141, but behind Spain, which has an index of almost 168. In this, China is still far behind the United States.

In contrast, British capitalism is well past its time and has turned into a corpse that only continues to walk thanks to the tricks of imperialism. And what's true for Britain is also true for the old European, American and Russian imperialisms. The French, Japanese, German and Russian imperialisms are practically on par in terms of industrial intensity. If we take electricity as a measure of industrial weight and thus industrial intensity, the French and Russian capitalisms are advantaged by their overproduction of nuclear electricity, which they export. Let's say France should be behind Germany and not in front, with an intensity not of 247, but rather around 200-210. And Russia should also go down a notch, between 170 and 180, instead of being at 190.

All the developing countries have made progress, but they still have a long way to go before they reach the level of the old imperialist States. Hopefully, the international communist revolution will shorten the road for them.

Iran and Turkey, having multiplied their industrial intensity by 9.7 and 8.0 times respectively, are now tied at 107 and 106. Brazil and Mexico are also in a tie, but after starting from a much higher index, about 40 versus 11 and 13 for the two former countries, they are behind them with an intensity of only 80. Although they have a higher industrial weight, this is explained by a much greater demographic weight than Iran and Turkey.

It's worth noting that India's index is very low, 32, on par with Indonesia's, which is also explained by its huge demographic weight, despite its relatively high industrial weight.

This view shows us how far Europe and the United States have regressed at all levels in their counterrevolutionary cycle, while other peoples are advancing and developing the economic foundations that will enable them to move to a communist society, which of course will require a revolution.

We can also see how the inter-imperialist balance of power has changed profoundly. Russia has become a secondary power, like Japan, which can only align itself with one of the two remaining giants on the track. The rise of Chinese imperialism has profoundly changed the international situation.

We might venture to calculate how much time we have left before World War III breaks out by calculating how long it will take China to overtake the United States in terms of armaments. At a rough guess by this criterion we would still have about ten years ahead of us. Hopefully, the long-awaited crisis will shake the international proletariat out of its state of disarmament in the meantime.

Everything depends on China, which has largely saved world capitalism so far. In China, however, there is not only a sharp slowdown in capital accumulation, but also a crisis of overproduction in several key sectors, such as construction. This is compounded by significant corporate debt and an accumulation of bad debts in banks. In short, all the ingredients for a terrible overproduction crisis are in place in China; we just have to wait patiently.

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# The Communist Party

WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY – The line running from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Leghorn (Livorno) 1921, and from there to the struggle of the Italian Communist Left against the degeneration in Moscow and to the rejection of popular fronts and coalition of resistance groups – The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoevrings

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# Bologna, Saturday, October 22
# Unite working class struggles! For a united trade union class front! For a movement demanding strong wage increases against the rising costs of living!
# The first step to take today, to oppose the imperialist war

Capitalism is a society in full decay, a rotting mode of production. The reason lies in its economic base. The old Western capitalisms for half a century have been gasping for breath in the crisis of overproduction: an excess of goods produced to be absorbed by the market and a decline in the profit rate, that is, in the profitability of investment. In fact, these countries have been witnessing a so-called deindustrialization process since the mid-1970s.

The growing mass of capital, for these reasons, finds it increasingly difficult to be invested and seeks the path of accumulation in financial speculation. But it's illusory, fictitious growth, as the bursts of speculative bubbles periodically show. However, the cause of the economic crisis lies in the production process and not in financial speculation, which is only an effect of and trigger for it. One of the deceptions of bourgeois ideology – fully adopted by the opportunist workers' parties – is to pit financial capitalism against productive capitalism, to save both by saying it wants to attack the former.

The collapse of the world capitalist economy, worn down by the inexorable advance of overproduction, is inevitable but has been postponed by the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries mainly by three means:

• by increasing the exploitation of the working class: by increasing productivity and gradually destroying the achievements of the labor movement;

• by State and private debt;

• by shifting production to countries with lower wages, which in the meantime have gone from pre-capitalist societies, through anti-colonial bourgeois struggles and revolutions, youthful capitalisms, first and foremost is of course China.

We're now witnessing the epilogue of this process: youthful Asian capitalisms have become mature, already with one foot inside overproduction, as the bursting of the real estate bubble in China has shown. The economic tools for deferring economic collapse are worn out, and the consequence is capitalism's approach to its only way of salvation, which is both political and economic: imperialist war. It's by destroying cities, factories, infrastructure, that surplus commodities – including labor-power and proletarians themselves – are exterminated, breathing some oxygen into a new cycle of capital accumulation.

It was World War II – with 60 million dead – that brought capitalism out of the previous cycle of economic crisis and allowed it the post-war growth cycle, not the policies of State intervention and support for the economy, invoked today by the radical-bourgeois left, the opportunism of the false workers' parties and the bourgeois so-called social right, and then applied by both democratic bourgeois regimes and totalitarian Nazi-fascist regimes.

Those policies, useless in solving the economic crisis of capitalism, are, however, useful to the bourgeoisie in spreading nationalism among the working class, deluding it that it can find salvation within national boundaries and thanks to a strong – bourgeois – State, are useful in convincing it that the workers' fates are tied to those of its own ruling class and its own national capitalism, and finally in leading them along this path towards the war fronts.

False national fraternization between the class of wage-earning workers and that of their exploiters, social peace in place of class struggle, the acceptance of sacrifices by workers in order to defend the so-called "good of the country" – which is nothing but the good of national capitalism – is the path that prepares and leads to massacre between actual brothers, which is to say, between the workers of different countries.

Capitalism in decadence will drag the whole of humanity into barbarism if humanity doesn't know how to rid itself of capitalism. Poverty, from which – in a handful of imperialist countries – the bourgeois and opportunist parties had deluded the proletarians into thinking that they had emancipated themselves, is again rampant. Nature, despite the hypocritical proclamations of governments, continues to be devastated. Imperialist war, with its atrocious record of deaths and destruction, is the grave of any illusion of social progress under capitalism.

But it won't be a generic interclass, popular movement that originates from the denunciation of the evils of this society that will be able to liberate humanity from this anti-historical society. The only social force capable of breaking bourgeois political regimes – whether democratic or totalitarian – is the working class.

The most important social movements from recent years have confirmed this. It was the coming to the fore of the working class in Egypt in the Arab Spring of 2010 that, in a matter of days, forced the ruling class in that country to cast aside its representative Mubarak. Conversely, the movement in Iran against the oppression of women shook the ayatollahs' theocracy. But until the large, young and combative Egyptian and Iranian proletariat go into struggle those bourgeois regimes will remain in place.

Even the period of strictest confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020, when in Italy factories, logistics warehouses and ports were the last activities to be stopped – partially, for a very short time and only after workers' strikes to protect their health – showing how the heart of capitalism is in the hands of the working class. Only by stopping production and the movement of goods can the capitalist regime be resisted.

It's for this reason that in all capitalist countries – including those that still insist on usurping the title of socialist such as China, Venezuela and Cuba – the control over the working class is maximized. It's deployed through State repression and blackmail by the employers.

But the most important weapon of the ruling class is regime unionism, which in every way tries to keep the workers away from struggle, tries to prevent the unification of their struggles, to inculcate in the workers the bourgeois prejudice that if capitalism goes down the workers are doomed to drown with it, like the ancient slaves chained to galley ships!

Instead, if workers are unable to get out of the galley of national-politics in which the bourgeoisie and opportunist parties want to keep them locked in, they'll be drowned in the bloodletting of the new world war to which capitalism wants to lead them to in order to save itself; conversely, the working class will save itself and all humanity if it can break the chains that keep it tied to its own ruling class, to the so-called "good of the country".

The first step in breaking the chains that bind the working class to capitalism is to organize workers' struggle in defense of their own living and working conditions. The struggle against the exploitation of wage labor is a struggle against capitalism because it inherently rejects calls for sacrifices for the national economy, because what benefits workers necessarily harms Capital.

The necessary task, which must be fulfilled by anyone who wants to act consistently against capitalism, is to fight in order to converge and unite the struggles of the working class. To this end, it's necessary on the one hand to physically converge the strikes and demonstrations of workers, in time and space, and on the other hand to unite them with the demands that unite the entire class of wage-earning workers: the defense of and increase of wages, with greater increases for the worst-paid categories of workers; reduction of work pace, working hours and working life; full wages to unemployed workers!

Such a task can only be fulfilled by militant trade unions, opposing regime and collaborationist unionism. To unite workers' struggles, it's therefore necessary to strive for the unity of action of all militant unionism, which is to say, of the grassroots unions with the class-based opposition inside the CGIL and with the groups of combative workers still organized in the regime unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL), which aren't lacking, as for example recently demonstrated by the struggle at Ansaldo in Genoa.

THE GENERAL STRIKE THIS NEXT

DECEMBER 2 PROCLAMED UNITARILY BY THE GRASSROOTS UNIONS is a first step in the direction of building the unity of action of all class-based unionism, and combative workers and union militants must fight for to reach as far as possible, for the adherence of their union bodies to the strike.

Only a lasting and organic united action of militant trade unionism will make it possible to free the working class from the control that the regime unions in Italy still exert over it and to build a general strike movement against the increasingly high cost of life, for strong wage increases, like those developing in France and the United Kingdom right now!

The struggle for the defense of one's living conditions is also the first step in building workers' opposition to the imperialist war – which is now being fought in Ukraine and maturing all over the world – because it implies a refusal to pay the costs of the war, the first step in organizing the refusal to fight on the front tomorrow.

The war in Ukraine is an imperialist war on both fronts! It's a war whose cause is only vile bourgeois interests, it's a war against the proletariat, be it Ukrainian, Russian or international! Against war between States, for war between classes!

### International dockers movement lines up behind EUkrainian imperialism

# No War but the Capitalists' War?

### International dockers movement lines up behind EUkrainian imperialism

It's becoming increasingly apparent that the dockworkers' organizations are lining up to protect American/EU imperialism in Europe. This is somewhat disappointing given the strikes and work blockages against all weapon shipments by the COBAS/rRank- and-f File Unions in Italy as well as the dockers in the Greek port of Piraus/Athens.

In May, the Swedish Dockworkers' Union (SDU), Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet, an independent, militant, worker- run union gave notice about new industrial actions against Russian ships and marine traffic to and from Russia in all Swedish ports as a "nationwide solidarity action in support of Ukrainian trade union resistance against the Russian invasion." In a press release, they state: "The new blockade will start on the 26th of May and will affect all marine transports going to or coming from Russia as well as ships owned or controlled by Russian interests in all Swedish ports until the 26th of June."

The SDU press release later says: "Our trade union comrades in Ukraine have put a lot of effort into explaining the situation on the ground to our counterparts, to protect us from new attacks from the employers. All dockworkers have a very clear common interest at this point to cut off funding for this horrific invasion, as Russian bombardment as well as kidnappings and mass layoffs in occupied Ukrainian port cities is threatening to wipe out free trade union activity in the Black Sea, says [Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet], President Berg."

Unfortunately for the defenders of Ukrainian workers' unions, that country has become worse for labor organization than that of the Russians. According to an article from openDemocracy:

"In March, the Ukrainian parliament passed wartime legislation that severely curtailed the ability of trade unions to represent their members, introduced 'suspension of employment' (meaning employees are not fired, but their work and wages are suspended) and gave employers the right to unilaterally suspend collective agreements.

"But beyond this temporary measure, a group of Ukrainian MPs and officials are now aiming to further 'liberalise' and 'de-Sovietise' the country's labour laws. Under a draft law, people who work in small and medium-sized firms – those which have up to 250 employees – would, in effect, be removed from the country's existing labour laws and covered by individual contracts negotiated with their employer. More than 70% of the Ukrainian workforce would be affected by this change.

"Against a background of concerns that Ukrainian officials are using Russia's invasion to push through a long-awaited radical deregulation of labour laws, one expert has warned that the introduction of civil law into labour relations risks opening a "Pandora's box" for workers."

The SDU continues to try to be the best defenders of the EUkrainian imperialism. Also from the announcement of the action against Russia:

"Neither the Swedish Government nor the Swedish Parliament have so far been willing to go further than the EU's utterly useless port sanctions. This lack of political action allows the Putin regime to keep funding this invasion with profits from trade with Sweden. Therefore, we feel we have an obligation to do what we can as an independent working class organization, says Berg."

The International Dockworkers' Council stated at their 2021 semi-annual conference held in New Orleans, USA:

"The war in Ukraine has failed to resolve what is already best in all of us, dockworkers all over Europe and the world refusing to deal with any shipment, which is thus owned or afflicted by a Russian company. We play our part to support the Ukrainian people against Putin's aggression."

But what about defending the Ukrainian working class against their own capitalists?

An ILWU faction – mostly older and retired militants aligned around the Ttrotskyist "Internationalist Group" put out a statement:

"We, ILWU members and retirees, are very concerned about the Coastal Committee's March 3, 2022 public statement on the war in Ukraine. It departs from the many anti-war positions our union has taken even when it was unpopular to do so. The ILWU has always been critical of NATO's war actions. Since the end of World War II, we have opposed U.S. wars and coups in Korea, Vietnam, Angola, Serbia (former Yugoslavia), Cuba (Bay of Pigs invasion), Chile (coup), El Salvador and Nicaragua."

So far, so good! But what about the Russian bourgeoisie's attacks on their own workers? Evidently the Trotskyist "critical defense of the workers' motherland" goes well beyond the products' pull date, and the Militants defend Russia's actions as being provoked by NATO, etc, etc. They are correct in seeing the march to war as internal to US capitalism but somehow, inanely, outside and inflicted upon the Russian capitalist state.

But at the end of all these dead end defense of Russia and other equivocations, these Fellow Workers are correct "The ILWU must demand an end to the war. Above all, we must appeal to the port actions of the International Dockworkers Council (IDC) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) for port workers around the world to refuse to handle military cargo. Both opposed the Zionist massacre of Palestinians last year. Now they can call for an end to the war in Ukraine. International actions by workers who refuse to move military cargo can stop it."

And while these fellow workers end up in the right place, the logic they persue will end up supporting Chinese capitalism, since China is still a "workers' state" worth defending.

# An update on the Russian–Ukrainian war

In his first speech to the nation since the one in which he announced the invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared partial mobilisation (concerning 300,000 reservists) and support for the referendums on annexation to Russia organised by the pro-Russians in Luhans'k, Donec'k, Kherson and Zaporizžja in the coming days. Putin also accused the West of 'nuclear blackmail' and of wanting to destroy Russia, adding: 'We will use all means at our disposal to defend ourselves'.

This is Russia's response to the Ukrainian offensive in the Kharkiv and Kherson region.

The annexation of the 'rebel' republics to Russia will in fact cause a decisive change in the military policy of the Russian Federation because they will become an integral part of Russian territory, just as was done for Crimea. It is news from a few days ago that the annexation should also entail the inclusion of the combatant volunteers from those territories in the Armed Forces of Russia, with all the ensuing consequences.

The mobilisation of 300,000 reservists (less than 1.1% of the mobile reserve) in the Crimea will mainly concern citizens with combat experience and a military training specialty, who will be able to go to the front after three to six months training. This partial mobilisation will solve the main problem of the Armed Forces deployed in Ukraine, the shortage of numbers, and allow some breathing space for the forces currently deployed at the front.

The Duma also approved amendments to the Russian Criminal Code to toughen the penalties for deserters or draft dodgers in particular, in the case of 'mobilisation', 'martial law', 'wartime' and 'armed conflict'.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on his return from the Samarkand summit, declared, perhaps in order to remain the focus of international media attention, that Putin would be ready to negotiate peace with Ukraine, but there seems to be no prospect of reaching serious talks quickly as the Ukrainian government emboldened by recent victories continues to demand the return to Ukraine of all occupied territories including Crimea, while Russia proceeds on the path towards the annexation of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

## The Ukrainian offensive

The Ukrainian offensive in early September led to the reconquest of a portion of territory in the north-eastern oblast of Kharkiv, an area roughly the size, for those who know Italy, of the provinces of Siena and Grosseto. Approximately 8,000 square kilometres.

The announced Ukrainian counter-offensive in the Kherson oblast was an excellent diversion to facilitate the breakthrough into the Kharkiv oblast, where the Ukrainian Forces took advantage of the clear numerical advantage over the Russian and auxiliary troops (separatist militias and Wagner mercenaries) estimated at a ratio of 8 to 1, achieved thanks to the work of US intelligence.

The Ukrainian counteroffensive has been organised in recent months in close coordination with the US and UK military and intelligence leadership. The Americans and British

underway among the railroad workers of the United States, as the issues surrounding the national contracts between the carriers and the rail unions remain unresolved. The BMWE, which represents rail maintenance workers, and now the BRS, which represents signalmen, recently voted down the tentative agreement (TA) negotiated in an emergency session with the mediation of the federal government to avert a national rail strike.

Regardless of whether the other crafts support the TA or not, it is crucial that they act in solidarity with their siblings in maintenance and signals by joining any possible future strike for a better contract. Allowing the carriers to perpetuate and deepen divisions between railroaders along craft lines will weaken all the crafts and the working class in general. Their greatest strength against the employers is to be found in cross-craft unity, proven by action.

West Coast port workers are still laboring without a contract as negotiations between the ILWU and the port operators drag on. While the union leadership hesitates to use the strike weapon, much of the rank-and-file membership across the country – facing declining wages and working conditions and having worked for years without an agreement – is ready for action. For instance, around 800 workers and ILA members at the Port of Mobile in Alabama rejected multiple company offers this October, effectively opting for a strike, which was subsequently averted by the union and operator.

In the event of a breakdown in bargaining and a strike on the West Coast, the ILWU should coordinate with the ILA, whose members are also seeking to defend their jobs and wages against the same class of employers, to ensure that shippers cannot simply reroute ships to Gulf Coast and East Coast ports.

At the same time, large national strikes already broke out and are currently taking place in France and Iran, while smaller struggles are taking place in many more countries (such as Myanmar, where the government jails trade unionists, and Ukraine, where there is a wartime ban on strikes and companies have a legally-authorized right to suspend contracts and lay off employees without pay). Workers in the US should pay close attention to these events and express solidarity through their organizations whenever possible.

All these workers are unconsciously pursuing the same immediate interests by identical means —aiming for higher wages and better working conditions through direct action, i.e. strikes and demonstrations. Their opponents are all of the same class – the bourgeoisie – and in many cases, workers with no connection to each other struggle with the very same multinational corporation (e.g., Amazon). The employers, in contrast, are fully conscious of their common identity and interests, and they organize themselves and act accordingly, with unity against the working class.

Consequently, the international proletariat is increasingly made to pay for the same global economic meltdown. Every worker is enslaved to the same capitalist system, forced to sell their labor and enrich a tiny class of idlers for their own survival in times of normalcy, and confronted with severe wage cuts or unemployment, on the verge of starvation and homelessness, when that very same system predictably breaks down every few years.

Workers, who in the U.S. and other countries are showing a tendency to return to economic struggle, must unite their struggles by overcoming the divisions imposed by the capitalist economic structure, its political regime and the collaborationist trade unionism subservient to this regime. Workers must unite in action by overcoming the divisions between plant, company, category, territory, union membership, and finally of nation. The International Communist Party has among its fundamental tasks to intervene in the labor movement by fighting for this purpose against the bourgeois or opportunist leaderships propping up the divisions of the working class. It is in the struggle, in its development, that workers will return to the methods and principles of the class struggle and make these their own notions. This, all the more to the extent that the strengthening of the economic class struggle movement will foster the development of the Party, in which alone lies the complete knowledge of the necessities and historical course of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletarian class from capitalism. As the 1848 Manifesto states, " ... communists ... have the advantage over the remaining mass of the proletariat, of understanding the conditions, the course and the general results of the proletarian movement."

The methods of regime unionism are not adequate to deal with these crisis conditions, nor were they ever.

A significant part of the organized working class was already deeply dissatisfied with grievance procedures, mediation, and arbitration, but now such schemes are being exposed as utterly bankrupt. Collective bargaining agreements are sometimes useful, but have clear limits, especially when the purchasing power of wages is constantly being annihilated by inflation. Employers regularly violate contracts with impunity and unions lose all independence and initiative by refusing to break contracts themselves. Even when, in periods of economic growth of capitalism, such methods have improved the living and working conditions of a part of the working class, this has only come at the expense of: (a) the division of workers into groups with better conditions and groups with worse conditions; (b) the chaining of workers with better conditions to the company and the state; and (c) the abandonment of the methods and principles of class struggle.

Workers have been emptying the unions in the US for decades; by now, only 6% of private sector employees are unionized. This disintegration is a testament to the failure of collaborationism.

The solution is not to reject the union, but to transform it into a proper fighting instrument of the working class. Here and there, combative unions, rank-and-file caucuses, and workplace committees exist that could serve as nodes in a national network and become part of the skeleton of a real, militant labor movement. Once a critical mass of the working class is driven to rebel against their degraded conditions, they will aggregate around this framework and strengthen it, forming a true class union.

With the foundational economic organization of the working class in place, they can extract from the bourgeoisie whatever concessions are still possible under capitalism and ultimately implement a permanent solution to poverty and unemployment by abolishing the wages system.

# Industrial Weight and Intensity

We have updated the tables on the industrial weight and intensity of the main imperialist countries, to which we have added some developing countries.

Since we lacked sufficient data on the production of a given set of commodities, we calculated the weight for each country based on electricity production. The result isn't perfect. Some countries have an advantage, such as France, whose electricity production exceeds its consumption, thanks to nuclear power plants; Italy, on the other hand, imports. However, overall, looking at electricity production gives us a fairly accurate picture.

Another criterion that could be used industries' energy consumption. We'll try to compose a similar table as well.

Of course, electricity production, unlike the industrial production index, which is a composite index, does not include the whole spectrum of industrial production.

The development of capital in China has saved world capitalism, extending its cycle by at least 30 years. But capital flows from the United States, Japan, Germany, France, etc. haven't just gone to China. We can add India, Vietnam, Turkey, Mexico, etc to the list. So, alongside the countries we usually follow, we've added South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, India, Iran, and Indonesia, which, based on their industrial weight, are among the top twenty countries in 2018. Followed immediately by Vietnam, which is destined to become a new Japan.

Cycles of industrial production

The first table shows average annual increases in gross electricity production. It covers the period from 1960 to 2018. It is divided into six periods, according to cycles of industrial production. From one cycle to the next, there is a general slowdown in the increase of industrial production.

The first row refers to the World as a whole: the average annual increase in electricity production between 1960 and 1973 was 8%, then gradually declines from one cycle to the next to 2.3% between 1989 and 2000. It rises again to 3.6% between 2000 and 2007 to return to 2.7% between 2007 and 2018. The increases for the World without China between 1960 and 1973 are 7.9%, compared to 8.0%, then the decrease in increase is stronger: between 1989 and 2000 we get 1.9% compared to 2.3%. The difference isn't insignificant, as this is a world average. In the next cycle, between 2000 and 2007, there was a recovery: 2.3%, and 3.6% with China. In the last cycle, 2007-2018, which includes the great global crisis of 2008-2009, the decline is sharper: 1.4% versus 2.7%. It's clear how capital accumulation in China has pulled global capitalism forward.

The other countries, such as Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, etc., have participated in the resumption of the global increase, as can be seen because their increases are higher than those of the old imperialist countries; in the period 2000-2007, they range from 3.5% in Brazil to 5.4% in India, compared to, for example, 0.7% in the United Kingdom and 2.1% in Russia. The U.S. increase during the same cycle was 1%. It's therefore China, overwhelmingly, and other developing countries that have driven capital accumulation on a global scale.

Thanks to this "globalization" and "offshoring", our bourgeoisies were able to limit the damage and avoid collapse following the deflationary recession of 2008-2009! The intervention of central banks, which didn't hesitate to print money, as well as State intervention, which went into unprecedented debt, wouldn't have been enough.

The table by industrial weight

In these tables, countries are sorted in descending order of their relative weight in world electricity production in 2018.

In 1960, an overwhelming weight is held by the United States: 36.6% versus 24.5% for Europe, 12.7% for the USSR, 5.1% for Germany, 5.0% for Japan, 3.1% for France, and 2.4% for Italy. In a table we calculated back then (Il corso del capitalismo mondiale, p.83) based on UN data, in 1956 the U.S. accounted for 40% and the USSR for

over the working class. The Iranian ruling class can't keep a rebellious Iranian proletariat at bay by depriving itself of the widespread repressive device that seamlessly combines weekly sermons with truncheons and lead? To oppress and keep the class subdued, it is necessary to oppress and humiliate Iranian women, just as it is necessary to martyr the country's many ethnic minorities including Azeris, Kurds, Arabs and Baluchis. Any new bourgeois regime would soon have to reconcile itself with religious, conservative and nationalist ideologies. As in neighboring Turkey.

The reaction of the working class

On the trade union level, workers in a number industries, for example, pharmaceutical goods and sugar, have fought for their economic demands. The Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Workers' Union, which has a glorious record of protracted struggles for years despite ruthless repression, condemned Amini's murder and expressed solidarity with the uprising.

So far, the only component of the proletariat that has gone on strike in solidarity with the current uprising have been teachers. The teachers' union's condolence message denounces Amini's tragic fate as a threat against any woman, and any of their students, and compares Mahsa Amini to black American George Floyd. University teachers also went on strike, often in solidarity with their students boycotting classes.

The Oil Workers' Organizing Council spoke out in support of the protests, "We support the people's struggles against organized and daily violence against women and against the poverty and hell that dominates society," and said it would strike if police terror against rioters did not cease.

The Free Trade Union of Iranian Workers, another combative grassroots union that was formed as an evolution of the Union of Licensed and Unemployed Workers, also issued an appeal in support of the uprising: "We, the Iranian working class, have always been the main object of the exploitative and oppressive aggression of the rulers and their cronies, and the repressive institutions will continue to act at every level directly against us wage-workers. Therefore, as we have repeatedly stressed, we declare that we Iranian workers are and will be in the forefront of the struggle for freedom, together with the women who are fed up with this inhuman swamp. Comrades and brides throughout the country! Workers in the major production and industrial centers, workers in the oil and petrochemical industries, workers in the steel industries, workers in Iran Khodro [Automotive company – TCP] and wage earners all over the country! Ending this hellish condition that they have created for us and that drags our loved ones to death and destruction every day is in your strong hands. The eyes of society and the people look to us to end the existing hell by stopping the wheels of production."

Although the clarity of the Free Union of Iranian Workers in expressing the proletarian stance against the oppression of women and the desire for workers to take a central role in their struggle is admirable, the path it proposes to get there denotes a certain confusion that stems from the difficulty of relating to the inter-class character of the current uprising. "Overcoming the current catastrophic situation depends on the union of the wage-earners with other movements and every libertarian voice in society, in order to arrive at the final clash that will get to the root and allow them to get rid of the existing hell."

In the second week of October, workers at the Assaluye oil facilities in Bushehr province joined the protests. As soon as the regime hints at showing signs of weakness, Iran's combative working class took the opportunity to rise up and fight for their class interests. They too have chanted slogans against "the dictator" whom they want dead.

## Attempts at Regime Stabilization

The current crisis, however much it may lead to unforeseen developments, will not necessarily weaken the ayatollahs' regime so much as to cause its rapid decline. At other times it has been seen on the verge of succumbing but has managed to recover, a seemingly invincible bulwark of counterrevolution.

As the "Guide of the Revolution" rants at the foreign conspiracy, primarily the United States, here is where help may be coming from the Great Satan himself. The Iranian nuclear talks could turn out to be a helpfull intervention for the regime. On this all the parties, both bourgeois, and the Iranian opposition also have clear ideas. The head of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, Mustafa Hijri argued: "A new nuclear deal will only benefit the Islamist regime, as moreover happened in 2015 when the economic benefits of that deal were used to expand military projects and the missile program and to further strengthen the repressive apparatus of the Revolutionary Guards."

Recently, an agreement was mediated by the United States between Israel and Lebanon regarding exploring gas fields off the coast of the two countries. This is an attempt by the U.S. to reclaim its role as Middle Eastern arbiter. A position which had been partly obscured in recent years by Russia's diplomatic activism and military presence in the region.

Both the Iranian and international bourgeoisies will attempt to stabilize the theocracy in order for Iran's capital a larger share in world's production against the struggle of the proletariat.

The Iranian working class needs to break with non-proletarian movements and forming a single class trade union front where all Iranian workers' organizations that refuse to be subordinate to the regime can act together and independently of other classes.

Even for inter-class democratic demands, only by acting independently, without blending with other classes, can the proletariat really make itself a protagonist, even to the point of taking over the leadership of the current uprising.

In the old Communist Party of Iran, which was born on the world revolutionary wave following Red October, a split soon emerged between the proponents of social revolution and those who were only interested in the struggle against British interference and the shah's regime. Among the former was the delegate to the 2nd Congress of the Communist International (Sultanzadé, pseudonym of Avetis Mikailian, 1889-1938), who in a few very clear words outlined the characters and consequences of these two lines in inevitable collision: "The point of the theses which provides for support of the bourgeois democratic movement in the backward countries can be referred, in my opinion, only to the countries in which this movement is in its initial state. If, on the other hand, one were to follow the suggestion of the theses in countries with more than a decade of experience behind them or in those where the movement already has power in its hands, this would be tantamount to throwing the masses into the arms of counterrevolution. The problem then is to create and maintain a purely communist movement in opposition to the bourgeois-democratic movements. Any other assessment of factual reality could lead to unfortunate results."

Today the heirs of the positions of support for the national-bourgeois movements, which proved victorious as the counterrevolution of Stalinism took hold, are the parties and movements of the Iranian left, while the true advocates of social revolution are organized only in the International Communist Party.

1] Instrumentum regni (literally, "instrument of monarchy", therefore "of government") is a Latin phrase perhaps inspired by Tacitus, used to express the exploitation of religion by State or ecclesiastical polity as a means of controlling the masses, or in particular to achieve political and mundane ends (https://wikipedia.org).

# For the Class Union

The rot of capital continues to advance and deepen, manifesting primarily as increases in the cost of living.

The US is no exception, despite being the number one world power militarily, politically, and economically. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), between September 2021 and September 2022, the price of apparel has risen 5.5%, medical care services 6.5%, and housing 6.6%. Over the same period, food has gone up 11.2% and energy 19.8%. Average hourly wages have only increased 5% over those twelve months, which is a de facto wage cut.

Unemployment has stabilized around 4% since the massive spike at the beginning of the pandemic. As of September, the exact number was 3.5%, or 5.8 million unemployed persons in the labor force, i.e. actively looking for a job throughout the month preceding the BLS survey. However the real magnitude of the shortage of jobs for workers is even greater, albeit hidden. Another 5.8 million are not in the labor force who currently want a job. 1.6 million are marginally attached to the labor force – for example, workers who have become discouraged from seeking a job. Finally, there are 3.8 million part-time workers who would prefer full-time employment.

Similar conditions prevail in other countries, both advanced and peripheral: Germany, France, Ukraine, Iran, etc.

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The necessary result of the worldwide capitalist crisis is the revolt of the workers of all countries.

In the US, small, organic movements are observable which could serve as a basis for a well-organized national labor movement.

Workers at Amazon – one of the richest and most powerful companies in the world – have engaged in a number of walkouts across the country connected to independent grassroots organizing drives. Germany has also been the site of struggles by Amazon employees with very similar demands. We have examined this in closer detail in another article in this issue.

A victorious strike at the food distribution giant Sysco gave workers a new contract with significant wage increases, including a raise of $5 per hour in the first year. The strikers utilized aggressive picketing tactics to their advantage. At one point, a crowd of over 400 workers surrounded a Sysco facility to prevent the 100 strikebreakers inside from leaving. Police intervened and arrested up to 20 strikers, charging them with disorderly conduct and assault and battery.

Such a response to working-class militancy is only natural and should be expected given the class nature of the state, which exists to protect the private property of an insignificant minority of exploiters. Workers should organize struggles against the legal persecution of strikers and prepare to defend themselves against imprisonment and police violence.

A great ferment is still

provided information on command posts, ammunition depots, and other nodal points of the Russian military infrastructure. Washington has provided most of the weapons (with a total value of over $15 billion since the beginning of this year). Thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have been trained in Britain, Germany, and other countries. British special forces apparently coordinated the operations.

The long-announced push towards Kherson, which came into full swing in early September, met with strong resistance from well-equipped Russian defences and caused heavy casualties in the Ukrainian ranks, about which little is reported.

The second offensive, to the north-east, instead started secretly on 9 September, encountering only weak Russian defence (part of which had, moreover, been diverted to the south), and therefore led to a rapid advance.

## Russia's Response

While there is excessive euphoria in the West, among Russian analysts and strategists there is a prevailing conviction that Moscow still holds the reins of the conflict. If the situation on the ground is getting more complicated, they say in Moscow, it depends solely on the increasingly open support provided to Kiev by NATO, all the more reason to continue the war.

According to the Russians, this is a war between Russia and NATO, and as such represents an existential threat: a defeat cannot be contemplated. NATO's deep involvement is confirmed by the Pentagon's own sources, quoted in at least two articles in the New York Times.

The successful outcome of the Ukrainian counter-offensive was essentially caused by the weakness of Russian forces on the ground determined by the very nature of Russia's so-called 'special military operation'. Since the Kremlin wanted to maintain a low-profile military commitment in Ukraine, it still deploys a limited number of troops in the country: 150,000, other sources speak of 120,000, regular soldiers, and about 50,000 men from the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics and other corps.

These forces are deployed on a front of over 1,000 kilometres, which inevitably has poorly defended points.

The Ukrainians have mobilised the entire population and deployed thousands of well-equipped and freshly trained men at a point on the front, in the Kharkiv region, garrisoned only by men of the Rosgvardia (the Russian National Guard) and of the two separatist republics with a force ratio, it is said, of 8 to 1.

Taking note of the situation, the Russian military leadership simply decided to withdraw their forces to a more defensible front. The Ukrainians advanced in depth, virtually without a fight, but still suffering numerous losses from the massive defensive fire of Russian artillery. Due to both the losses suffered and the lengthening supply lines, the Kiev forces probably exhausted their propulsive thrust along that line.

This may explain the stalemate the two sides currently find themselves in.

The Kremlin's choice to conduct a low-intensity war, slowly recapturing the territory of the Donbass, also allows Kiev's Western allies to replace losses in men and material by sending new weapons and training more soldiers.

One might have thought that the Russian General Staff would have resorted to massive deployment of the only fully mobilisable force to try to block the Ukrainian advance, given the legal impossibility of deploying newly enlisted troops, i.e. the air force, but Russian air operations have proved sporadic and without results. According to some commentators, the reason is that the Russian commanders fear exposing their aircraft to Ukrainian anti-aircraft action, which has very effective weapons provided by NATO.

Kiev's renewed determination, the absence of chances for negotiation, and Russia's need to re-establish its military prestige after its recent defeat, are pushing all the actors involved towards a probable escalation of the conflict and a prolongation of the economic war connected to it, in the hope of forcing the adversary to give in first.

Militarily, as a first response, Russia's Armed Forces bombed the Kharkiv and Kremenčuk thermoelectric power plants, adding further energy distress to Ukraine, which is helplessly watching the last reactor of the Zaporižžja nuclear power plant shut down.

Moscow's strategy is clear: cut off Kiev's electricity at the gates of the cold season, while the occupied territories will enjoy the advantage of being connected to the Russian Federation's power grid.

But to adequately respond militarily, Russia will have to sustain a more pronounced war effort that could change the course of this war.

## On the Kherson front

On the evening of 14 September, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation bombed a dam on the Inhulec' River near the town of Kryvyi Rih (Krivoj Rog). The dam collapse was not an accident, but the result of a deliberate attack. The aim of the Russians was to raise the water level in the southern section of the river, obstructing its crossing. The Ukrainian soldiers engaged in the Kherson counter-offensive were not only forced to block the advance, but are now partly stranded to the east of the watercourse with no further connection to the bulk of the troops remaining on the west bank. The increased inflow of water on the course of the Inhulec' has wiped out the Ukrainian military pontoons in one fell swoop.

According to the Rivista Italiana Difesa, Moscow is pouring new troops onto the long Ukrainian border.

These would be units of the 4th Armoured Guard Division, one of the elite units of the Russian Army. Such a unit is generally stationed in the Moscow oblast and operates as a strategic reserve. The fact that it has been deployed close to the Ukrainian border suggests that one of the possible main lines of action may develop from here to push south and pocket Ukrainian units close to the separatist Donbass. With these forces, Moscow can threaten more areas and force the Ukrainian Forces to 'stretch' and garrison essentially every area of the border with Russia and Belarus, because the threat on the capital itself is far from negligible.

But this does not mean that Russia intends to invade the whole country. The forces in the field are not sufficient for such a complex and large-scale action, especially considering the size of the territory in question and the hostility that would be encountered west of the Dnepr river.

More likely, then, to envisage a circumscribed action whose objective would be to secure Donetsk (still under Ukrainian artillery fire) and take control of part of the area east of the Dnepr - the so-called Western Donbass - and of some strategic nodes such as the port city of Mariupol, the cities of Kherson, Kharkiv, etc. Areas, moreover, where hostility could be lower considering the high percentages of Russian mother tongue.

In this way, Moscow could expand its security buffer in Ukraine while at the same time guaranteeing itself complete control over a region that is very important in terms of mineral wealth.

## The Paradoxes of War

However, this war, despite being seven months old, has not lost its ambiguity, its paradoxes.

A few days ago, the Ukrainians themselves admitted that Russian troops were back in control of Kreminna, a town in the Donbass north of Lysychansk and Severodentsk in the Luhansk region, which they had evacuated the previous day; an actual occupation of the town centre by Kiev troops had however not been done.

Kiev sources confirm, without providing clarification, that the same thing happened in the same sector in Starobilsk and Svatove where the Russians were able to return in force, without Ukrainian troops taking control of the settlements that would have allowed them to consolidate their penetration into the Donbass territories.

Still on the subject of contradictory elements, the Russian company Gazprom reported that on 17 September, the Russian gas supply transiting via pipeline through Ukrainian territory amounted to 42.4 million cubic metres. More would have transited if, as the Russian energy company's press office specified, Ukraine had not once again rejected the transport of gas through the Sokharanivka (Luhansk) entry station, which has been under the control of Russian forces since 11 May.

Gazprom has stated that the transfer of all export volumes via the Sudzha entry point, accepted by Kiev because it is under its control, is technically impossible. Despite everything, the Russian company claims to be fulfilling all its obligations to European consumers and to have paid for all transit services.

As a matter of fact, after 7 months of war, no one has yet hit or closed the gas pipelines that cross Ukraine and supply energy to European countries, despite the fact that the European Union has renewed sanctions on Moscow, and arms and finances Kiev and Ukraine.

Even on the financial and energy fronts, ambiguities abound: the Russians pay their Ukrainian enemies the transit rights for the gas they sell to the EU, while the latter since the beginning of the conflict, on 24 February, has paid the Russians as much as 85 of the 158 billion euro that Moscow has collected from energy exports

So Europe, which risks an energy and economic meltdown in the coming months, with one hand is arming the Ukrainians and sanctioning the Russians, while with the other it has financed and is still abundantly financing the Russian military campaign in Ukraine with energy purchases.

## NATO's involvement

The victorious Ukrainian counteroffensive in the north certifies that the US has partly taken control of the war effort.

The American decision to openly flaunt its key role in the recent Ukrainian counteroffensive seems almost a provocation towards Moscow, a dangerous attempt to push the Kremlin towards greater military involvement.

A bitter tug-of-war between Kiev and Washington seems to have taken place in the summer. The Ukrainians wanted to deliver a defeat to the Russians to show that aid in arms and money was not useless. The Americans wanted the ally not to waste a decisive blow and especially did not want to touch Moscow's red lines. This is why they dissuaded the Ukrainians from focusing only on Kherson. Not only because it was more heavily guarded by enemy troops, but because it was a buffer for Crimea. The lands around Kharkiv in the north are less strategic than those around the peninsula snatched in 2014.

The US government has been pressing Kiev hard. It complained that it knew more about the

Russian moves than the Ukrainians. It expressed doubts that their army was really capable of regaining territory. He sent a general to the banks of the Dnepr to avert misuse of long-range weaponry. In any case, without American weapons, intelligence and planning, the Kharkiv uprising would not have been possible.

While acknowledging the success of the counteroffensive, current senior Pentagon and White House officials have urged caution, expressing doubts about the ability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to bring Russia back to the pre-war lines.

Kiev's intransigent stance is not likely to continue to receive the appreciation of the Ukrainian proletariat, provided it has it now. Many evacuees from the Kharkiv region (and collaborators) are heading towards the territory of Russia these hours, generating kilometre-long queues at border points. Already busy with the delivery of military supplies, an economically and energy-strapped Western Europe could ignore the aggrieved nation's pressing social problems (heating and electricity) and turn a deaf ear to the future reconstruction of its basic infrastructure.

## The role of Turkey

A central country in this war crisis is Turkey. Turkey's is the only government that devotes great energy to diplomatic activity aimed at finding a peace agreement.

At the recent Samarkand summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Turkey expressed its willingness to join the organisation, although it is hard not to notice that it was the only NATO member state to attend the summit and, if accepted, would be the only one to be a member of both organisations.

A not insignificant 'detail' considering that Ankara does not apply sanctions to Russia, sells (not donates) arms to Ukraine and will join a security organisation with China, Russia and Iran after buying S-400 long-range air defence batteries in Russia: all without anyone having asked it to leave NATO. Respect for the 'rules' in international diplomacy proves to be quite elastic.

Turkey has every intention of using the decision not to impose sanctions against Russia and its role as mediator in the war to its advantage, especially to extract lower prices on gas supplies.

In an attempt to convince Putin, Erdogan addressed harsh words against the West during his trip through the Balkans, accusing the countries that support Kiev of having provoked Russia and of being responsible for the ongoing energy crisis due to the sanctions imposed against Moscow, but on 20 September Erdogan himself declared that Russia must return all occupied territories, including Crimea, to Ukraine.

The sanctions have allowed the Turkish president to direct Russian capital towards his country, which is useful for replenishing the Central Bank's foreign reserves and being able to buy the Turkish lira on the financial markets. The sanctions regime imposed by the West has also led to an increase in Turkish exports to the Federation, which increased by 60% following the invasion of Ukraine.

But among the flows of money uniting Russia and Turkey there is also the 20 billion paid by Moscow for the construction of the first nuclear power plant in the Anatolian country, a project entrusted to the Russian state company Rosatom. The plant should guarantee Turkey greater independence from the foreign market, in line with President Erdogan's goal of transforming the country from an importer to a regional energy hub.

Turkey, faced with US Congress' reluctance to provide it with F16 fighter jets, accused Congress of siding with Greece and threatened to turn to Russia for the purchase of urgently needed aircraft.

## Germany's position

When the Ukrainian Prime Minister met with German Chancellor Scholz in early September, he demanded that Germany deliver modern armoured vehicles to Ukraine in addition to PzH-2000 self-propelled artillery. "We expect the US to supply us with Abrams tanks and from Germany we expect Leopard 2s".

On 6 September, however, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz rejected the request to send additional heavy weapons to Kiev, thus denying the supply of additional artillery vehicles and especially the delivery of the Leopard 2 tanks that Kiev was counting on.

Regarding the supply of equipment by the Berlin armed forces, Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht stated on 30 August that 'the German armed forces need to retain possession of all available equipment and armaments to guarantee national and alliance defence'.

This does not mean that Berlin no longer intends to supply weapons to Kiev, but that Ukrainian needs can be met with orders and contracts awarded to the defence industry, which, however, entails delivery times of a few years.

The refusal to supply the newly produced Leopard 2A7, however, also leaves room for the hypothesis that Berlin does not want to further exacerbate the already very tense relations with Moscow.

It could be Russian gas purchases that influence Germany's decisions. As Corriere della Sera has pointed out in these months of price emergency, Germany is paying much less for Russian gas than the rest of Europe. For example, last June German supplies from Gazprom had a unit cost of one third of what the rest of the EU, on average, and Italy pay for the same product.

Corriere sell Sera speculates that 'the German contracts enjoy special treatment in the context of the agreements on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines and the sale of Germany's largest storage centre to Gazprom in 2015'.

In recent days, an article in Il Giornale noted that 'after the invasion of Ukraine, Germany has not unilaterally withdrawn from the framework agreements for gas supplies from Moscow, nor has it seen Russia do the same. Of course, Russia is using energy as a weapon - in July it reduced gas supplies via Nord Stream by two-thirds and often uses Baltic pipeline closures as a weapon - but Germany is not the victim of a price offensive'. The article also adds the weight of a geopolitical and, at the same time, psychological effect: Russia has no incentive to sell at higher prices to Berlin, because it is precisely the maintenance of this residual share of dependency that can be the greatest of blackmail weapons towards Germany in winter.

In recent days, the Russian Energy Minister, Nikolai Shulginov, called it 'impossible' to sell gas or oil to countries that set price caps on raw materials. 'Definitely, we will not sell at or below cost,' Shulginov said in a TV interview. In this context, one can understand why Berlin is reluctant to impose a cap on gas prices as the Italian government demands.

The question of the heavy weapons that the Europeans can still supply to Kiev affects not only Germany, but now all NATO members who have exhausted the surplus of equipment in service or in warehouses that can be sold without 'disarming' their own units. A problem that also concerns Eastern European nations that still lined up or kept in reserve Russian/Soviet type tanks, combat vehicles and artillery and that have already been largely transferred to Ukraine.

## Russia-Iran collaboration in the military field

Another country that should not be overlooked and continues to have excellent relations with Moscow is Iran. A few months ago, Russia and Iran concluded a 20-year agreement on security and defence cooperation.

This agreement led to the purchase of Russian arms by Tehran to the amount of over $10 billion: the wish list included 24 Sukhoi Su-35 fighters and two batteries of S-400 long-range air defence systems.

The two countries seem more than ever to be working together in numerous sectors (defence first and foremost), without forgetting the further sign of collaboration that has arisen on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict considering the recent documented evidence of a supply of Iranian drones for the Russian Armed Forces.

## Trouble for Russia in Central Asia

The war effort in Ukraine is weakening Russia's commitment and focus on Central Asia (part of the troops deployed in Tajikistan have been deployed in Ukraine) even though Putin has confirmed that in Ukraine 'we are only fighting with part of the armed forces'.

A context that seems to favour the opening of new hotbeds of tension in the former USSR: from the border clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyz to those between Armenians and Azeris to the pressure from Georgian nationalist circles for military action to take control of Russian-protected North Ossetia. Unmistakable signs of turmoil seeking to take advantage of the Russian engagement in Ukraine.

China confirms its willingness to penetrate not only economically but also politically and militarily into the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and has said it is willing to guarantee Kazakhstan's security from 'external (i.e. Russian) intervention'. Kazakhstan is the former Soviet state that has distinguished itself more than any other in showing coldness to Russian military intervention against Kiev to the point of not recognising the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

In this vast region of Central Asia, the contrasts between Russia and China have escalated despite the extension of cooperation in many areas and the common need to defend themselves against the pressure of the United States and their allies.

## The position of China and India

Beijing does in fact support Russia against the United States and its allies, perceived as a threat also by the Chinese, especially after the latest clashes over Taiwan, but this does not mean that the two powers do not also have divergent interests that also affect the ongoing war in Ukraine and especially its prolongation with the related macro-economic consequences. However, it does not seem to us that these divergences have led to the 'frost' between the two countries as the press in the West writes.

It seems that China has not supplied arms to Russia, but military cooperation between the two countries has certainly been increased. Russia continues to export a lot of technology to China and Beijing's armed forces, besides being Moscow's customers, have developed many weapon systems, platforms, engines and other components starting from Russian products. After the Samarkand summit, the leaders of the Russian Security Council and the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party met to strengthen military and security cooperation by enhancing joint exercises and attention to the most critical scenarios.

It is clear that if the war continues, it will be the economies of European countries that will be hardest hit by the energy crisis, which will only add its negative effects to those of the economic crisis that is already underway. For the other industrialised countries, which all pay much less for energy than Europe, there could be important opportunities to acquire new quotas on the global markets, but China and India have significant trade and investments in Europe and risk significant damage, also taking into account that the economic collapse of the European countries could lead to a global recession that would also undermine the growth of the two Asian giants. This is why they are pushing for an end to the conflict.

However, the strategic objective of the Russians and Chinese remains that of stemming the US unipolar system (which has also encompassed the states of Europe that have proved incapable of assuming the role of independent geopolitical subjects) by aiming to counter Western penetration also with strengthened military agreements and to strengthen financial and commercial cooperation and fight the hegemony of the dollar in the global economy.

Russia, unlike its Asian partners, may have an interest in continuing the war not only because it is aware that Europe cannot survive economically without the ample supplies of Russian gas, but also because it probably estimates that the energy crisis will make many European governments wobble this winter with consequences that could undermine the ability and willingness to continue supporting Ukraine with weapons, and the internal stability of NATO, with possible rifts between the United States and its allies on this side of the Atlantic.

Russia therefore seems to have every interest in stalling on the Ukrainian fronts and it is no coincidence that Putin in Samarkand, declaring that "the special military operation will continue", added that Moscow "is in no hurry to achieve its objectives, which remain unchanged".

## China wants time and puts the brakes on war

China and Russia have grown closer in recent years in a friendship - not an alliance - "without limits" that has resulted in joint strategic action to counter US and Western global domination: the Kremlin's latest moves, however, have raised strong fears in Beijing that the situation could get out of hand and this has inevitably cooled relations.

This is why Beijing did not welcome the Kremlin chief's speech and the announcement of the partial mobilisation. According to an editorial in the Global Times, a CCP newspaper, the annexation of the independentist republics would give Moscow the legal pretext 'to threaten' the use of nuclear weapons to protect Russian territory. The article then sets aside the usual criticism of the US and NATO over responsibility for the crisis, urging 'an emergency brake on the situation in Ukraine at a stage when the scale of the war is still manageable. What is needed is a ceasefire and negotiations rather than an escalating showdown between Russia and Nato'. Because, the editorial concludes, between nuclear powers there can be no winners and losers: 'Anyone who attempts to completely overwhelm the other side can only be a fool'.

Beijing, which does not yet consider itself ready for a direct confrontation with the United States, fears, rightly so, that the continuation and deepening of the war could lead to its enlargement involving all the major world powers in a hellish cycle. That is why it throws its full weight on the scales to call on Moscow to be more thoughtful and prudent in the conduct of the war. Beijing must buy time to catch up with its main antagonist, the United States, especially in military power. From this point of view, certainly the war in Ukraine represents a very interesting opportunity to observe in corpore vili the functioning of the different war machines, and probably the Kremlin's Armed Forces have shown quite a few problems that could also affect China's.

## Conclusions

The Russian government cannot afford to go back on its decisions, despite the protests within Russia, still limited to small pacifist groups, and despite the warnings coming from its Chinese friend.

Even the Ukrainian government, despite the desperate state of the economy, despite the population being exhausted by deprivation, despite the approaching winter, can afford to accept negotiations that the United States and its allied governments are refusing for the time being.

The war, in the will of the governments concerned, will continue at least through the winter season during which the two armies will prepare to resume military operations with greater impetus in the spring.

But weighing on all this are the uncertainties of the consequences of the economic and energy crisis in the major industrialised countries and the reaction of the international proletariat to the worsening of its living and working conditions.

# The new wave of revolt in Iran

Iran's bourgeois regime shows its most repugnant face, with a ruthless and prosecutive oppression of women and the deliberate and explicit erasure of their dignity. This can be explained not only by the excesses attributable to the darker and more regressive side of patriarchy but also by the widespread sense of fragility of the regime in the face of a certain resurgence of workers' struggles, brought about by the conspicuous worsening of the population's living conditions.

It is necessary to examine these events in their immediate context, of which readers will find an in-depth discussion in our article "Iran's working class in revolt against the food crisis," in The Communist Party, n. 46, September 2022.

The antecedent: protests against rising prices

Although global media interest has muted expressions of discontent over the rising prices of essential goods, the proletarian masses have been taking to the streets since as early as last May in a wave of protests that started in the Khūzestān region and quickly spread and lasted throughout the summer. Already in the weeks leading up to Mahsa Amini's assassination, not a single day passed without street protests.

For the first time Ayatollah Khamenei, the "supreme leader" of the Shiite religious establishment, and thus the first authority of Iran's bourgeois theocracy, had had to take note of "people's dissatisfaction" and widespread discontent and was forced to speak of "people's protests," instead of characterizing them, as usual, as "riots" or "sedition."

The Iranians' demonstrations took on a partly inter-class character, as the proletarians fighting for bread, not mystified by being organized into class unions nor led by the Communist Party, were joined by the protest of impoverished layers of the middle classes, especially shopkeepers forced to close their small businesses. The shopkeepers' protest actions are called "strikes" by the Iranian left and democrats, who do not want to distinguish them from real workers' strikes.

Among them was a strike on oil platforms that spread to 12 contracting companies involving some 3,000 workers. In late July, while production was halted on the platforms, workers in the refinery maintenance department in Tehran joined the strike against increased working hours and reduced wages caused by rising prices. Economic unrest also affected other groups. Teachers organized protests across the country against the arrests of some of their trade unionists. The Coordination of Iranian Cultural Associations, representing teachers, called for the release of those arrested, equalization of school staff salaries, and the implementation of certain laws to protect their work. Bus drivers in Tehran and suburbs also circulated through their union a statement of solidarity with the arrested teachers' unionists and others, and joined the protests of school workers.

Reaction to the murder of a young woman

Mahsa Amini's murder triggered immediate protests in Tehran, in front of the hospital where the girl died, and in the city of Saqqez, in Iranian Kurdistan, where the young victim was originally from. Within days the movement spread to dozens of cities, turning into an uprising. Not even the Shiite holy cities of Mashhad and Qom were spared from the protest. The Internet shutdown did not slow down the movement.

Gender oppression was of course among the main concerns of the uprising, with women setting fire to their hijabs. Fierce from the start, the regime's crackdown did not flinch from any crime. Police have opened fire in many cities and killing more than 200 protesters so far.

In Oshnavieh, a Kurdish-majority town on the border with Turkey, after days of harsh clashes protesters took control of the town for a brief period. A few days later, clashes in the Kurdish city of Sanandaj also reached extraordinary violence: security forces had to withdraw from some neighborhoods in the face of the protesters' fury and could only regain control by employing heavy machine guns and airborne reinforcement troops. The greatest blood toll was in Zahedan, in the Sistan-Baluchistan region, where more than 80 rioters lost their lives in the incidents.

Of course, Kurdish and Baluch feminists and nationalists joined the bourgeois left's efforts not to allow the working class an autonomous movement. They set out to confuse it into the organizations and ideologies of "the people", of "nations", and of "nationalities". As with incorporating shopkeepers into the protests against the cost of living, students' classroom walkouts are called "strikes." The current mentality is for a "united people," consisting of individuals belonging to all classes, against dictatorship and for democratic institutions.

A diverse variety of bourgeois ideologies and political forces have spent of long hours to contain even the most radical protest movements within an inter-class framework.

We do not deny, in principle, that their tactics may also be the most appropriate for attempting to establish a bourgeois democratic regime in Iran, but we do not believe that such a regime change is so obvious any time soon, since the Iranian bourgeoisie is unlikely to give up the powerful instrumentum regni of the theocratic regime that, under the pretext of religion, imposes a ubiquitous and exceedingly oppressive regime of police control