

COLOMBIA: PETRO DEEPENS CAPITALISM AND USES THE MASSES IN INTER- BOURGEOIS CONFRONTA TION

After decades of armed conflict between the Colombian State and guerrilla movements, and after the broad mobilizations of different social strata against the high cost of living, and the policies of the government of Ivan Duque; came to the presidency of Colombia Gustavo Petro, an opportunist leader in the field of the so-called "left", without any link to the revolutionary and communist positions, who at some point assumed the guerrilla struggle. He took advantage of the wave of mass protests proposing a polyclassist program, for the deepening of capitalism in Colombia and the growth of the industrial sector. He was able to add multiple social organizations to his campaign, mainly in rural areas, achieving enough votes to become president of the republic and took office in August 2022.

Having completed the first 150 days of government, it is convenient to review the advances of his policy which, as we have already stated, is a bourgeois policy oriented to protect the rate of profit, to dynamize the agricultural land market, to expand the reserve industrial army, to lower the cost of labor force and to liberate territories where capital investments have been hindered, due to the armed conflict. All to the detriment of the traditional landowning class and in favor of the bourgeois-industrial class. Petro sets in motion his bourgeois program and the working class has only to discard the illusions, aggrandized by promises and demagoguery, and prepare for the struggle.

An important element of the government program is the proposal for agrarian reform. This seeks the purchase of land by the State for subsequent distribution to small peasants. However, there is strong pressure from cattle ranchers and large landowners who have historically opposed such reforms, which is why they have proposed to buy the land instead of expropriating it. In an interview the president stated that this would be done with 60 billion pesos, through treasury bonds or other means. This represents a large transfer of

wealth to the Colombian landowning sector in general and to the cattle ranchers' Federation (Fedegan) in particular, in order to integrate the interests of the large landowners with those of the current government; achieving a reluctant and unstable cooperation between the two. Finally, increased taxes on oil, mines or other natural sources of income are sought, along with an increase in surveying projects, to support a property tax regime and future possibilities of increases in land income taxes on the horizon.

This attack on the purchasing power of the latifundista sector, gives continuity to the historical project of the Colombian industrial bourgeoisie, and does not break with the past, as was proposed in the electoral campaign. The agrarian reform of President Lleras (1966-70) had equivalent objectives. It attacked land hoarding, making land cheaper, making it more costly to accumulate. In addition, it encouraged land improvement, which under normal circumstances allows for an increase in rents to the owner, thus discouraging any improvement by rented peasants. Then, an attempt to put an end to the armed conflict, by fulfilling one of the major demands of small peasants, on whose class the guerrilla groups are based. This would make the natural resources of the Colombian countryside cheaper and more available, attacking the rent of already exploited properties.

The end of the armed conflict has become a political goal of the current government. Although it is too early to see the consequences of the so-called "total peace", some trends can be observed in it. Mainly, its scale. Through Law 2272, an increase in the power of the Executive has been granted allowing to agree and execute peace processes with armed groups and organized crime, together with greater guarantees for its compliance; in comparison with previous processes, marked by non-compliance and limited scale. Additionally, it is proposed to strictly comply with the 2016 peace process, which shows the commitment of this administration to the reintegration of armed actors into society.

These economic and social changes will undoubtedly save many lives, however bourgeois peace is based on the subjugation of the proletariat and its immolation in the temple of the exploitation of wage labor. These reforms seek to remove the obstacles to the accumulation of capital in the countryside, by reducing rent, and encouraging increases in agricultural productivity. Such accumulation will free up the rural labor force for use in the cities, leading to a reduction in wages in the short term (increase in the supply of the commodity labor force relative to demand) and a decrease in the relative social position of workers in the long term. By keeping these social reforms within the horizon of general commodity production, capital accumulation has this consequence. Within this framework, increased production and productivity are linked to the

more intensive exploitation of labor and capital, which is the purpose and objective of this reform.

Another major reform on the table is the tax reform. This seeks, among other things, to increase taxes on the mining-energy sector, by increasing its income taxes, based on the prices of the products in international markets. In total, this represents up to 57% of the reform's revenues, capturing part of all the income from these lands in the State's coffers. Additionally, another important element is the elimination of exceptions for special sectors, such as tourism. And finally, it seeks to collect more money from people with high incomes, through higher taxes on occasional profits, wealth and income.

These tax increases seek the domination of the industrial sector over the State, and pretend to be presented as an answer to the claims of the masses in the streets during 2021. In the first place, because they seek to improve the fiscal sustainability of the State at the expense of landowners and individuals, reducing their income through new taxes on natural resources and income, without further affecting industrial companies. For the latter, a reduction of their taxes would be sought in the future. On the way to this are the agrarian reform and various social programs. These are implemented taking as a reference the protests of 2021, where the working class and different oppressed and/or impoverished strata, decided to fight against the government in a social outburst, which today is used by the government to justify its program and policies, and thus confront its weaknesses in parliament and legislative spaces. Likewise, with this policy the government maintains any possibility of independence of the workers' movements, whose leaders, traitors, decided to form popular fronts with the president, abandoning an independent program, under the promise of "progressive" reforms, channeling the anger of the workers towards the defeat of one fraction of the bourgeoisie and the uprising of another.

The reorganization of the Colombian bourgeoisie brings with it the confrontation of both capitalist sectors; on the side of the class of traditional landowners this confrontation assumes various forms, the most used against Petro, so far, being the criticism of the devaluation of the peso. Until November there was a rapid devaluation of the peso against the dollar, faster than the parallel devaluations that happened in other countries, such as Mexico. This devaluation was used in the traditional media as a hammer with which to hit Petro's administration, together with attacks to measures such as the agrarian reform, attacks against the oil policy, or others, blaming the government for generating uncertainty in international investors.

The current devaluation of the Colombian peso has several reasons. The increase in interest rates of the U.S. Federal Reserve increases the upward pressure on

the dollar. However, Banco de la República raised interest rates much higher and aggressively, without slowing down this devaluation. For this reason, we must also consider the expectation of a crisis in international markets, due to which investors will seek to sell the bonds in their possession, fearing that they will not be able to give their expected value, buying safer bonds, such as those collected in dollars, the most common reserve currency. Added to this is a speculative nature, having additional pressure from investors who expect a cessation of oil exploration in Colombia, and an expenditure on land purchases, and therefore sell their Colombian bonds. By taking a stance against the fall of the peso, it promotes oil exploitation and condemns agrarian reform. Confrontation that allows the government to assume a "popular" or "populist" or "progressive" pose, while favoring capitalist exploitation with anti-worker policies.

In conclusion, Petro's coming to power was marked by massive protests and discontent of the workers, however this discontent was channeled, as seen before, towards policies that promote the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie, with demagogic policies that seek to maintain the favor of the workers, due to the unstable political environment of the current government and the need for popular support. Petro pursues these policies to the extent that they are currently convenient, maintaining a coalition led by industrialists. However, when these are no longer needed, the dominance of the industrial bourgeoisie is secured and the dominance of traditional sectors is uprooted, the iron hand of the bourgeoisie will be shown without kid gloves. The only solution is the search for a proletarian program, through an independent movement, of the proletariat by itself, which does not compromise its interests to those of the bourgeoisie, which are expressed in political opportunists like Petro. This can only be achieved under the leadership of the communist party and the resumption of the workers' struggle.

- From El Partido Comunista, N. 30, January 2023

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 maneuverings

newspaper of the
International Communist Party

January 2022
Issue 50 | 25¢ 25p 0,50€

China's COVID Powder Keg

The recent protests in China against the government's anti-pandemic policy have been greeted with enthusiasm in the West, even to the point of comparing them to the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989, inflating the magnitude of the current protests. China is an imperialist power aspiring to partition the world imperialist order anew, and imperialist rivals, led by the United States, seek to take advantage of every difficulty, from the protests in Hong Kong, to the Uyghur issue, and the question of Taiwanese sovereignty (which Beijing considers an internal affair). In a curious parallel, the Chinese security apparatuses claim that the protests are being led by foreign forces, a "color revolution" just like the Hong Kong protests, agitated in order to undermine the order set by the ruling Communist Party of China.

Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, our Party has paid close attention to news of the social movements that have shaken the vast and populous country, trying to analyze them according to the correct Marxist doctrine, the enemy of both Eastern "deniers" and Western "falsifiers" of Marxism.

Protests against "zero-COVID" policy

At the recent CPC congress, of October 16-22, Xi Jinping's report, reviewing the achievements of the past five years since the 2017 congress, devoted only a few words to the counter-pandemic policy, stating that the "dynamic zero-COVID policy" would save lives and prevent the spread of contagions: "an all-out people's war to stop the spread of the virus."

The government's imposed zero-COVID policy, based mainly on mass testing, quarantines and isolation, yielded

better results in the fight against the spread of the virus than other countries, especially the Western capitalisms, but at the same time it hit China's economy hard, so much so that for the first time since the 1990s growth was lower than the Asian average. The worrisome performance of the national economy is prompting the government to change course. But easing of measures has led to a surge in contagions, particularly dangerous in a country with such a massively concentrated population.

All over the world, the imperative not to stop the infernal machine of capitalist production and the need to avoid an uncontrolled spread of the virus, which would overwhelm national healthcare systems and result in large numbers of deaths, have led to contradictory policies from governments. Even in China after the 20th CPC Congress, signs of reversal in COVID containment policy emerged, while, by early November, its symptoms were described in the CPC press as mild and short-lived, foreshadowing to prepare the population for an easing up of the zero-COVID policy.

But the easing of anti-COVID measures soon saw an

increase in the number of infections, and as a result, local authorities once again imposed COVID-containment measures on a population now tired after nearly three years of harsh restrictions. Within days, protests against these government impositions were staged in the streets of several cities.

On Nov. 5, isolation had been introduced in some areas of Guangzhou (Canton), such as in the Haizhu district with 1.8 million inhabitants, mainly migrant workers. On the 14th there were street protests in the district with protesters destroying isolation barriers; on the 22nd, protests by Foxconn workers in Zhengzhou; on the 24th, a fire in a building in Urumqi. Xinjiang caused the death of a dozen people, provoking strong outrage among the population; and, from the 26th, street protests over how the containment blocks supposedly hindered rescue and escape.

After these incidents, protests spread throughout China, inside major Chinese metropolises - Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing, Wuhan, and Nanjing.

The government responded with some concessions. At the

local level, "unnecessary" quarantines were abolished, the possibility of home quarantine introduced, less frequent nasal swabbing, and so on. At the same time, arrests and deployment of law enforcement against gatherings were intensified.

The protests seem to have subsided, but the situation remains volatile. Contradictory policies in this new phase of viral containment are expected, as the government is unable to reconcile the economic needs of capital, which push for the end of restrictive measures, and the risk of generating an uncontrollable health situation, where within a few weeks there could be tens of millions of contagions, hospitals taken by storm, and hundreds of thousands dead. What worries the capitalists are not these deaths but the possible spread and generalization of the revolt to the working class.

Workers' protests at Foxconn

The protests in China certainly took place under a strong anti-government sentiment, but they were mainly about its anti-pandemic policy and only demanded greater

Moving forward with The Communist Party newspaper.

One of the *International Communist Party's* organizational principles (organic centralism) is there are to be no surprises. In that spirit, we want to alert our readers of some coming changes in **The Communist Party** newspaper.

The last three years, **the Communist Party** newspaper has been published on a monthly basis. Despite the hardships caused by COVID we stuck to our monthly schedule, to highlight the class struggles which developed during the pandemic conditions.

We will be stepping back from our current monthly publishing schedule in order to facilitate party wide editorial coordination - the *ICP* has added new languages to our work and we need to work on that coordination.

In the near future we are planning to publish a bi-monthly newspaper in a true newsprint format. This will allow us to print many more copies for distribution. We believe this will allow us to better conduct work in the class.

individual freedom of movement, without any class connotation, as has been the case in other countries where discontent and social malaise have expressed themselves in a diverse movement against the governments' health lines.

But even the capitalists cannot tolerate stoppages of production and the movement of goods, and they're forcing millions of proletarians around the world to work without the slightest protections from contagion.

It's the re-emergence of the proletariat's class struggle that the Party expects from China, of which the recent protests by Foxconn workers are a significant episode.

The Foxconn factory in Zhengzhou is a gigantic plant where some 200,000 workers work, often referred to as "Iphone City" due to its size and the fact that Apple has about 70% of its phones assembled there. The plant was already hell for workers, but its depravity has been further compounded by the dangers associated with the spread of COVID. The imperative of production has prevailed even in the face of contagion.

Managerial despotism has further intensified by forcing workers to remain in the factory even after work.

Despite this, the virus spread(s) among the workers.

In the face of these terrible conditions, there was a mass flight of workers from the factory toward the end of October. This resulted in a severe labor shortage, putting production at risk just as the consumerist hysteria of Black Friday and Christmas approached. To maintain production levels in early November, Foxconn promised bonuses for workers and launched a recruitment campaign for new staff.

However, the situation spiraled because, in addition to the spread of contagion among workers, the disbursement of these bonuses was deferred for 30 days and taken away in case of contagion. In addition, new hires were made to approach seasoned employees, increasing danger of infection.

Starvation wages, confinement in the factory, bad and shoddy food, poor sanitary conditions, danger of contagion, failure to meet bonus payment deadlines, combined set off proletarian anger. Between November 22 and 23, protests broke out. They were first confronted by factory security personnel, then, overwhelmed by

worker resistance, police, including from nearby locations, stepped up in force to suppress the revolt. On Nov. 24, Foxconn issued a statement that the delay in payment was due to a "technical error", offering in the same day 10,000 yuan to those among the newly hired workers who quit.

No matter how much the Chinese bourgeoisie tries to cover up the savagery of capitalist exploitation with a red flag and the name of socialism, in the so-called "factory of the world" that is China, the capitalist discipline that dictates the continued production of goods at the expense of workers' health and for starvation wages is in force. The irreconcilable interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat result in the clash between classes, and China, where capitalism is fully developed, is not exempt. From the country that Chinese false communists say is based on "socialism with Chinese characteristics", we see no national peculiarities that would make the path of the proletariat any different from that of its class brethren in other parts of the world.

The class war against the domination of capital, and for the dictatorship of the proletariat, awaits us everywhere.

Peru: The Blood of Proletarians and the Oppressed is Spilled in the Street in the Inter-Bourgeois Conflict

In Peru, the deepening economic crisis of capitalism and its impact on the wage-earning masses and the oppressed strata, those whose standard of living is deteriorating, fuels an ongoing clash between the various bourgeois parties in parliament that represent the interests of different sectors of employers and the economy. Whether these parties call themselves left, right or center, they are all, without exception, political tentacles of the ruling class.

But these inter-bourgeois contradictions, which are reflected in the clash between the different parties that make up the parliament, are not only an expression of the struggle for the control of business and contracts and for access to the money of corruption. It is also the struggle

between parties, institutions and trade unions to find the most effective method to keep the proletariat demobilized, disorganized and divided, the class that carries on its shoulders the heavy burden of hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, low wages and lack of health care.

But the bourgeoisie will never find a party or political front capable of channeling and appealing the discontent of the masses. Peru, in which there have been five presidents in the last five years, is an example of this. That is why it's always ready for the alternative of coup d'état and open dictatorship.

This time the parties in parliament succeeded in bringing down President Pedro Castillo, who's been accused of a coup and intent to dissolve parliament. Castillo was placed in preventative detention, which could be extended for 18 months, pending investigation for orchestrating rebellion and abuse of authority. Vice President Dina Boluarte was named the new president and immediately appointed her ministers.

Heater clashes with Congress forced the new president to call for new elections once more in April 2024 to make room for other political forces.

However, the streets were filled with protesters demanding Castillo's reinstatement. In response, Boluarte immediately declared a state of emergency where the protests were loudest, denouncing them as part of Castillo's attempted "self-coup" plan. According to the protesters, however, the coup was ostensibly carried out by Congress and parties opposed to Castillo. Clashes escalated and hundreds of protesters were injured while dozens were killed.

Prior to Castillo's attempted "self-coup", the Fujimori-majority Peruvian Congress had discussed the introduction of a "presidential vacancy", but didn't have enough votes to approve it.

The Fujimorist political gang attacked Castillo from his first day in office and tried to remove him. In a year and a half, three motions sought to affirm his "moral or physical inability" to continue in office. But all the political concessions made to opponents, both nationally and internationally, were of no help. Finally Castillo, on December 7, announced in a televised message that he would dissolve Congress

and form an emergency government, impose a night curfew, and rule by decree. The Peruvian Constitution gives the president the power to dissolve Parliament. Immediately, the media loyal to the Fujimori gang announced that Castillo had implemented a "coup d'état".

Pedro Castillo was but another administrator of the interests of the bourgeoisie, a representative of corporate economic groups, despite his previously having been a trade unionist or teacher. He was yet another of the bourgeoisie's endless attempts to find some trickster, a "pied piper", to delude the masses into submission to bourgeois politics.

But the various representatives of the bourgeoisie

in parliament couldn't agree on a modicum of institutional stability. Castillo posed no threat to the interests of the bourgeoisie, but he was still a casualty of inter-bourgeois contradictions.

The workers have nothing to gain by raising the banners of defending democracy or demanding Pedro Castillo's reinstatement as president. These illusions only lead workers to defend the capitalist regime that exploits them.

The General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP) proved that it works for the bosses, a mere apparatus of the bourgeois State, when it called on workers to reject the "insult to democracy" and to mobilize for "political reform", a new constitution and early general elections. The CGTP leadership, while cynically declaring that "Congress doesn't respond to the interests of the working class and the people" and that the current parliament is useless, nonetheless entices workers to place their hope on the election of new deputies and senators, as if that will stop the process of exploitation and impoverishment of the masses. Parliament does not and never will represent the interests of the working class. Congress, in Peru and throughout the world, is just one of the institutions of bourgeois democracy in the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. It's one of the institutions that must be swept away by the proletarian revolution, through class struggle, and not through the sacrosanct "constitutional path" of elections and laws as proclaimed by the traitors and politicians of the CGTP and all parties that live in Parliament or seek votes to enter it.

The Agricultural People's Front of Peru (FARP), which groups peasant and indigenous organizations, called a national strike and declared itself in "popular insurrection", making the same demands as the CGTP, but in addition demanded Castillo's freedom, the closure of Congress and the establishment of a Constituent Assembly. This "popular insurrection", raising democratic-bourgeois flags, drags the workers into an interclass, entirely bourgeois program in which the demands of the wage-earners are so watered down that they're totally abandoned.

Meanwhile, proletarians get injured and die in the streets, in the occupation of infrastructure, maiming the barricades, and in violent clashes with the military and police apparatus of the bourgeois Peruvian State.

Unsurprisingly, Peru's "Communist" Party immediately recognized the new ruler, aligning itself with the Fujimorist gang and the governments of Spain and the United States. In contrast, the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico and Bolivia expressed support for Castillo and denounced the coup by his opponents in the government. These alignments are merely expressions of the political fronts that traditionally compete to be the stewards of the interests of the bourgeoisie in all countries. Peru is no different.

prices and a rise in the unemployment rate.

The years '21 to '22 saw an apparent reversal, where, however, inflation masked the real dynamics of GDP. In 2022, GDP peaked at \$1.930 trillion: hardly a great power figure.

For comparison, Germany's GDP in 2021, expressed in dollars, is about 4 trillion, the U.S. is number one with 18,000 and China follows with 11,000. These numbers show the economic clout of Russia compared to the other capitalist brigands.

Considering that the EU's GDP in 2021 totaled \$14.5 trillion, it's clearly seen how the potential Russia-EU link, via the Germany pivot, was a danger that the U.S. had to absolutely avoid.

In Russia, public debt as a percentage of GDP continued to grow: from 2018 to 2022 it rose from 10.3% to 19.9%; but this was perfectly in line with all other mature capitalist states.

However, despite its growth, it's always been contained and, in the last 20 years, has never exceeded 40% of GDP. Moreover, Russia's total sovereign debt is expected to stand at \$300 billion according to IMF estimates, with a steady surplus in the state budget.

Another positive figure is the growth of total exports from over \$380 billion since 2018 to \$467 billion in 2022, while total import volume peaked in 2021 with \$248 billion and then plummeted to \$157 billion in 2022, a clear effect of sanctions.

Apart from these reassuring considerations, however, it should be noted that the overall market shares of world exports, in percentage have always hovered around 2-2.5% medium-low values, where moreover it's thought that a large part of these percentages comes from energy-related exports.

The current account balance, which is small but always positive, gives a clear indication of Russia's very little weight in terms of capital export; it's an "old-style" imperialism, more tied to territorialities than modern imperialism, which is mainly based on the export of capital and "debt".

But, at least before the deflation of the so-called "Special Military Operation", Russia was considered reliable and its state debt well accepted by the financial market. In fact, total Russian debt is relatively modest. As of the first half of 2021 it amounted to less than \$500 billion, of which about \$360 billion was in foreign currency, most of which had been purchased from the United States.

The critical issue is precisely the fact that private and state debt is held in foreign currency.

Trade balance as on the same level, growing from \$165 billion in 2018 to \$305 billion in 2022, with a severe decline in the 2019-20 pandemic period. The interesting fact is that it has always remained positive: that is, Russia is essentially, with respect to trade, an exporting country. And, at least before the invasion and the subsequent sanctions, also of good reliability. A

financial situation that made it possible in April, when interest on debt held abroad came due, not to trigger the default set up by the West.

The first reaction to the sanctions on energy exports was the demand to pay for gas in rubles, a decision that would have forced Western importers to sell dollars or euros against rubles, with the effect of supporting the ruble's exchange rate, which had actually appreciated after the announcement. Then the gradual tightening on direct imports reduced this effect.

Although European countries have sharply reduced their dependence on gas from Russian pipelines, they have for now increased their dependence on LNG, which shares 16% of European seaborne imports, paid for in euros at about 20 billion. In addition, the EU still imports 45% of its diesel from Russia. At least until the next "set" of Western sanctions.

This, in the narrowest terms, was the economic position of the invader.

Then came the sanctions, which a US-led West imposed as a weapon of war on Russia, and to which the states gravitating around it bowed. Sanctions, however, have not yet yielded the desired results; GDP has not collapsed as the sanctioners expected, although it has diminished. In addition, many industries have considerable difficulty producing without Western components. But this is a problem Russia will certainly have in the coming months if the war continues to consume resources as it is doing.

These sanctions are harsh enough that, at least at this early stage, they've hurt the sanctioners more than the sanctioned. The imperialism that imposed them was the only one to benefit: currently 42% of gas for Europe comes from U.S. LNG supplies at 4 times the cost of what was exported from Russian pipelines, with gains so substantial that some European governments have felt the need to protest, in kind, against this way of punishing aggression that benefits one sanctioner to the detriment of others, damaging them even more than the sanctioned.

But the effects of this practice can be seen precisely, for both Russia and Europe, with next year's figures. For now, Russia has managed to offset the financial damage both by raising energy prices and by opening up other markets. And there's been no shortage of ways to circumvent the sanctions, with a financially good position.

On the other hand, a very significant figure to highlight the gravity and depth of the ongoing confrontation is the sanction of movable, land and financial assets owned by Russia and Russian capitalists located outside Russian national territory. As far as financial values are concerned, it's \$300 billion frozen by order of the United States, as they'd already done for Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, and Venezuela, in addition to the freezing of 20 billion in personal assets. The mechanism of financial strangulation was then

completed with sanctions on the SWIFT channel for international payments, which is totally managed by the US.

Far more dramatic are the economic and financial values for Ukraine.

According to Western estimates, Ukraine needs \$5-6 billion a month to sustain the war.

Ukraine had inherited, for the worse, the same corrupt form of the Russian economy. A poor country, despite substantial natural resources, with a backward production structure and endemic unemployment generating heavy emigration.

Economic and financial data paint a fairly critical situation. The external debt required payments of 30-40% on the annual spending commitment with a volume of almost \$60 billion, about half of GDP.

The blow of the Russian invasion then compounded this situation.

The highest GDP value was reached in 2021, on the eve of the invasion, at 182 billion, definitely low for a developed capitalist economy. There had been a slight recession, from 135 billion to 132 billion in 2019-20. Inflation for consumer prices had been ever-present, spiking from 14% in 2017 to 10% in 2021, perhaps the best period for Ukraine – albeit with the ongoing civil war that the West pretended not to see, even though it was already actively working to support it – until it soared in 2022, with a 30% increase.

Likewise, unemployment, which had remained at a level of 9-10%, reached 20% after the invasion, moreover in the general mobilization regime that's in place in the country.

The trade balance has always, from 2017 to the present, had negative values, reaching a negative maximum in 2019 of 12.3%; today it is 5.5%, but this is insignificant for the small volumes involved.

Public debt is 90% of GDP this year. Practically a failure. Such percentages can be afforded by the big imperialist states, but not derelict Ukraine: U.S., year 2021, public debt/GDP 127%, but tractable disregard for the damages this causes on economies in the rest of the world; the problems of the dollar are the problems of others, not the U.S.

In this situation there's little point in talking about prospects and forecasts. The volume of aid, in terms of armaments and financial supports, which allow the war to go on for as long as it has, make any projection unreliable.

But, as "Il Sole 24 Ore" wrote, things are not so bad for Ukraine. Its currency, the hryvnia, hasn't become waste paper, inflation is at the level of Baltic countries, which are not at war – but all of Europe, broadly speaking, is at war – foreign exchange reserves are holding up and GDP has not collapsed.

Ukraine has received as of October, but other disbursements are awaiting approval by Western governments, as much as \$23 billion, 12% of its prewar GDP,

in addition to arms supplies, and in 2023 the United States has committed to monthly disbursements of \$1.5 billion. Clearly, data cannot be well estimated under such artificially held conditions.

How much of a hold on the industrial component can then be estimated with the bombing of the electrical infrastructure is unknown. The "grain corridor" continues to be open, allowing its export, thanks to brokered agreements with Turkey. This provides for now, at least as long as this agreement holds, a good backdrop for Ukraine.

The paltry charity of Western finance has agreed to a \$3 billion interest freeze on its debt with European countries until the end of 2023, while with U.S. investment funds, to which Kiev owes 75% of its debt, the figure is considerably higher, just under \$20 billion.

Figures in themselves are not stratospheric, but when added to the debts for the maintenance of current expenses, continuous and massive supplies of weapons and war

infrastructure, troop training, spare parts and so on, the fiscal burden becomes enormous.

Back in 2015, during the domestic conflict, the finance minister had managed to postpone the payment of \$19 billion scheduled in years 2015-22 to 2019-27. These too would now have to be paid, in addition to everything else.

Ukraine has already failed as a bourgeois State, and it's totally in the hands of Western finance. American finance in particular, which can do with it as it wishes. For now, all work takes the form of an anticipated Marshall Plan. What distinguishes the current one from the past one is the tragic difficulty in this historical phase: in 1947 the reconstruction of war-torn Europe was an American investment in an upward cycle of capitalist recovery, the current one take place in a generalized crisis that more or less rapidly develops toward a worsening outcome for capitalism.

In the light of these summarized economic data about the conditions of the two direct belligerents (the indirect ones we haven't considered here, although they're fundamentally important in this dynamic) it's clear that a disaster is set for Ukraine. This is the case even should it prevail militarily in some area, that it succeeds in "liberating" the invaded territories and maybe even Crimea.

The Russian state has also spent itself out of pocket in the preparation and maintenance of the war.

But for the two States, of which one will end up in the arms of the American-led West, existence will still be guaranteed.

On the contrary, those who are truly sacrificed in the war are and will be the proletarians, class brothers forced onto opposing fronts, on whom the whole burden of the postwar period will weigh after the unlikely peace. For them the world of bourgeois peace brings only more suffering and mourning, after all that was endured in wartime.

Sept. 7, 1952).

The activist waits for class consciousness to arise spontaneously from the pacifist movement and sees in these small isolated groups the first steps of revolution, in the bankrupt spirit of anarchist propaganda of the deed. Instead, revolutionary action against the war requires a unified international understanding, otherwise every effort is dispersed in the particular demands and supposed specificities of local groups.

The Party must be able to control every aspect of its life, carry out each of its organizational roles in such a way that nothing strikes it as unexpected, incomprehensible or mysterious. Passing off as positions of the Left that terrorism is a "gleam of light" for the proletariat; that the folksy political traditions of extremist factions, with their lumpen-intellectual student base, represent a "revolutionary camp"; that the idea of "workers committees" is fanciful and that working within them is "activism" or "economism"; and then immediately to state exactly the opposite, not because anything has actually changed but due to impatience and disappointment that no immediate gains have been made; that such oscillations represent the "tactics" of the Left only disorients militants, sows discord in the Party, erodes the organization, and compromises decades of hard-earned, consistent work ("The Party Does not Arise from 'Circles'", 1980).

The small activist circle is the practical equivalent of the broad united front: it seeks to recruit people of all kinds not into a cohesive and defined party but into action for action's sake. It claims to compensate for its political inconsistency with numbers.

From the fourth congress, which took place at the end of 1922, the Left stood by its pessimistic prediction and its vigorous struggle to denounce dangerous tactics (united front between communist and socialist parties, the watchword of "workers' government") and organizational errors (attempts to increase the size of the parties not simply through an influx of those proletarians who had abandoned the other parties with a social democratic programme of action and structure, but by means of fusions that accepted entire parties and portions of parties after negotiations with their leadership, and also by admitting to the Comintern, as national sections, parties claiming to be "sympathizers", which was clearly an error in its drift towards federalism. Taking the initiative on a third issue it was from this time that the Left denounced, and ever more vigorously in the years that followed, the growth of the opportunist danger: this third issue was the international's method of internal working, whereby the centre, represented by the Moscow executive, resorted not only to the use of "ideological terror" in its dealings with the parties, or the parts of them that had made political errors, but above all to organizational pressure; which

amounted to an erroneous application, and eventually a total falsification, of the correct principles of centralization and absolute discipline with no exceptions" ("Theses of Naples", 1965).

The Ukrainian Economy

There is, in so many reports and studies by the journalistic prostitutes in the pay of the Western ruling classes, a fear that the hoped-for victory over Ukraine's invader might prelude the collapse of the Russian empire with its disintegration into many small State units lacking strong control, much like those over which the United States of America is able to exert itself in the rest of the world, especially over the European states. A collapse that, in this temper of war and recurrent crisis of world capitalism, could induce a situation of social chaos, with unpredictable outcomes. Joy at the "victory", but at the same time fear of the consequences. Among other things, the huge atomic arsenal in the hands of the Russian state could disperse, in that scenario, among various actors, with all the ferocious risks that come with that.

But we are convinced that just as feared is the social upsurge that may result from such a dismemberment; and it potentially spreading to the Western populations, themselves exhausted by the effects of the crisis of capitalism, the grinding down of the middle classes, and generalized unemployment.

This, too, is probably taken into account. The Party doesn't take this possibility into account as an inducing event of

the world revolution, for which, we reiterate, we consider the Party's presence and entrenchment in the very core of the international proletariat essential.

Thus, at least for now, on the side of the American and European rulers, the war cannot be extended beyond a certain limit.

This war can be explained on three levels, all of which are valid and interconnected.

It can be read as aggression of one State against another, for different and differently justified reasons.

One is the defense of an ostensible national minority languishing under the heel of the Ukrainian State, which has led to a never openly denounced, but no longer creeping, war fought for years by the Russian-speaking strata in the east against the central government. This consideration can be reversed by attributing its initiation and development to Russia, framed up as a civil war, but whose result was the de facto annexation of the most developed and raw material-rich part.

With an equal amount of historical reasonableness one can consider what's an inter-imperialist clash between NATO and Russia as an interpersonal one, with Ukrainian proletarians being sent to the slaughter instead of citizens of Western countries.

Finally, as the rupture between Russia, with its extraordinary wealth of raw materials, and Germany, which would bring its great industrial potential as a tribute to this marriage, mixed with the exacerbating fact that Germany is, or was, the leader of a united Europe, thus a potential imperialist competitor of the US, with Russia, and China.

The latter two reasons are the crux of the path of imperialist confrontation on the horizon of this millennium.

Studies, forecasts and politico-military indications from the American side present unconstrained indications of how the world's leading imperialism is preparing for the coming clash

and gathering allies for this purpose.

The war on the European borders has a global figure far higher than the many others going on in the world, including those even bloodier than this one. It's a crucial event in the process of the world crisis. Its effects on capitalism, in terms of production, trade, consumption and financial dynamics mark an irreversible path.

From the great crisis of 2008, which the bourgeoisies were able to control and dampen, to the current one exacerbated by three years of pandemic, there have been successive phases of recovery and subsequent relapse, always at smaller intervals, reflected in a propensity to solve the crisis with war, almost in preparation for the ultimate conflict in the years to come. By 2014, war was brewing in Europe, to give vent to the imperialist tensions that walked hand in hand with recurring crises.

To speak of "reasonableness", of finding pacifying agreements between imperial brigades, figuring that as early as 2008 war could have been avoided with the right treaties, such as those drawn up in Minsk, is to have no idea of the monstrous force of the contrasts between capitalism, which go beyond all human will.

Only the international proletariat, with its party, could have, and in the future certainly will have, the strength to oppose the madness of the final stage of capitalism.

Under the present conditions, to speak of "victory" for either side is pure nonsense, a slogan to confuse and deceive the proletariat.

The economic and financial data give an idea of the road Russia and Ukraine have had to travel to get to this point, and indicate the development of the situation.

In Russia, with a fairly stable population of about 150 million, between 2019 and 2020 the GDP growth rate fell sharply, essentially due to the effects of the pandemic, while at same time interval inflation caused a significant increase in consumer

The conceivable outcomes, e.g., consolidation of the new government, reinstatement of Castillo, Constituent Assembly, early elections, etc., are all bourgeois-democratic solutions that not only do not break with the capitalist order, but continue wage exploitation and mercantile domination.

No to political reform, no to a new constitution, and no to an early general election! Yes to a general strike for higher wages and pensions, for the reduction of working hours, for the reduction of retirement age, for the payment of full wages to the unemployed, for the improvement of working conditions and environment, and against the repression of workers' struggles!

It's necessary for workers, in the midst of their struggles, to rebuild a true class union. The class union unites all wage-earners without distinction of industry, sex, nationality or race. The class union organizes outside the workplace to unite the class at the territorial level. The class union takes back the strike as its main form of struggle, ready to confront bourgeois parliamentary laws and government repression. It undertakes indefinite strikes, without notice, without minimum services and outside the conciliatory mechanisms imposed by all governments with the support of the bourgeois International Labor Office.

Essential for a qualitative leap in the struggles of the proletariat is the presence of the red Communist Party, the only true expression of any non-individual revolutionary will.

We communists attentively follow the evolution of the workers' movement and readily prepare for the transformation of all united struggles for the demands of the working class into political struggle, for the seizure of power, for the destruction of bourgeois democracy and its parliamentary regime, for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the full implementation of the communist program.

- From **El Partido Comunista, N. 30, January 2023**

“Anti-Fascist Prejudice”

When speaking in generic terms about the "extreme left" in Italy, one perpetuates a serious misunderstanding. Almost all of the formations included under this label are plagued by the ideology of the dominant class and cannot but act accordingly in defense of the established order.

Very moderate in ideas, accustomed to musing over clichés and prejudices, they are extremists only when they have to combat revolutionary Marxism, which they rightfully fear as a mortal threat to their dubious political practice.

For example, now that there is a government of "the right", they do everything in order to divert onto the sterile and slippery terrain of anti-fascism every manifestation of discontent from the workers in order to prevent them from struggling for their own economic interests. The goal is a "less right-wing" government.

The slogan "we are all anti-fascists" wants to make believe an outright lie, that the vile "left-wing" of capital would be less hostile to the working class than its "right". In reality, the bourgeois political class, whether "right" or "left", differs only in a few exterior aspects, but in substance is tied together by the same interests and is always united in a permanent war against the workers.

Whoever in trade union demonstrations shrieks "we are all antifascists" pleads the bourgeoisie to assume a more democratic facade and deceives the workers by distracting them from pursuing their own immediate interests — higher wages and fewer working hours — and their historic one, the abolition of wage labor.

Internationalist communists do the exact opposite of the so-called "extreme left", not making one bourgeois faction prevail over the other, but rather ditching "extreme left" is not only unable to conceive of the overthrow of the ignoble and rotten regime of capital, but is not even capable of sustaining the economic struggles of proletarians for higher wages and reduced working hours.

Electoral Fairy Tales

The fairy tale says that finally the Italians had expressed the firm will for a strong, compact government legitimated by popular vote. The Woman of Destiny, invoked by popular will, was preparing to give a decisive signal on the institutional front by appointing the presidents of the Chambers. And here is a couple of aces falling from the sleeve of the premier in pectore as further confirmation of the historical attachment of the deep belly of the Italians to the traditional values of God, Fatherland and Family.

Then, however, something is wrong in the "family" of the center-right, the natural majority, they say, that exited from the polls: a miserable "personalism" is impeding the birth of the right-wing government!

In effect, this hindrance has

profound reasons, more than in the character of the ex-premier in the substantial web of interests over which the fellow finds himself at the head. Capital for us is an impersonal force, despite the fact that the zealous functionaries who want it and must serve it often end up having to lend their own face to what they are enslaved by, even if their nominal wealth makes that of Croesus fade away into obscurity.

We don't have to trouble ourselves with complex and unseemly conspiracies when, at the peak of funny disputes, the "young" premier goes to say in front of the reporters' microphones that she "can't be subjected to blackmail". Maybe she is utterly convinced she's saying the truth, believing in her character as a champion of the "sovereign people" against the omnipotent and odious "strong powers". But the blackmail exists, in fact, and she will end up giving into it.

What is this "blackmail" to which she—who-cannot-be-blackmailed will not be able to fail to substantiate? They are precisely the slices of power in the new executive to be partitioned among the representatives of the mighty web of bourgeois economic interests, i.e., the temporary holders of the position of mere bystanders whose sole purpose is painting as impudence what is instead, covered by a thousand veils of mystification, always at the head of our world: its Majesty, Capital.

This final little word allows us, without offending some knights, to exit from the fairy tale of the enemy class and enter into our own. It is capital, which others call "the powers that be," but which we call by its real name, which managed the electoral campaign, by voting by proxy, directing towards the act of subjection to the ballot box the indistinct amalgam of different classes which goes by the name of "the people" and which, due to its heterogeneity of interests, does not know and can never express a common will.

Now it only remains to be understood which course capital will want to impart on the formation of the new government. But only the lovers of fairy tales and simplifications can see it as a unified whole, when, due to its nature, it is an ensemble of contradictions which also make it live and allow it to keep together its thousand ruffled limbs.

Then considerations are made on the nature of the "challenges" of the future government to better serve the interests of the Italian bourgeoisie. First of all, there is worry about rising energy prices which "will penalize families and businesses", or, in other words,

the latter will be less competitive while the former risk spending a winter in the cold. Hasn't the filthy job of adopting strongly anti-popular measures been assigned to the "left" for at least 50 years now? Why burden the "right" and, above all, the most eminent representatives of the "social right" with such a nasty errand?

Then there is the other cure, not to be neglected, which demands ductility and wisdom at the same time: how to deal with Russia, today pariah of the international community, and which for many years has been one of the most important economic partners of Italy? What a mountain of business was put at risk by the war, by the sanctions and marginalization of Russia! But above all what harm to the economic strategy of a country whose competitive edge on the world stage was based in large part on the low cost of Russian gas! Perhaps the election of the President of the Chamber, who loves to proclaim himself a fervent Catholic, homophobe, and friend of Russia, is a way to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, one Moscow and the other Washington.

Needless to say that the Italian bourgeoisie cannot and will never solve old dilemmas and get out of the basic ambiguities of a second-rate power always ready to sell itself "on the spot" to the highest bidder.

We are therefore inclined to see in the new government, which at the end of an exhausting labor will still have to be born, a substantial continuity in the worst tradition of the country's history. Only a small portion of the members of the political class have changed; others have risen from the background to the role of protagonists.

The popular and bourgeois "left" cries fascism at their profaned democratic institutions. Exactly 100 years ago, that same liberal "left" voted confidence in the government of Benito Mussolini. Twenty years later it rewarded those stalwart ones with the presidency of the Republic and the government. Now they pretend to be scandalized while they prepare for collaboration in the name of "the best interests of the Fatherland".

- From **El Partido Comunista, N. 414, January 2023**

The Communist Party is printed and produced by

Associazione La Sinistra Comunista - Casella Postale 1157 - 50121 Firenze - Italy
I.C.P. Editions - c/o 96 Bold Street - Liverpool L1 4HY - United Kingdom
C.L. Publishing - POB 14344 - Portland, OR 97214 - U.S.A

international-communist-party.org

Party Meetings in the US

CL Publishers - PO Box 14344 - Portland, OR 97293 - clpublishers.com

Party Meetings:

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- Denver, CO - First Saturdays at Copper Door Cafe, 2890 Fairfax St, Denver, CO 80207: 11 am.
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Army Called in to Break Strikes

A Further Wave of UK Strikes

As workers across Britain prepared for strike action over pay and conditions, it has emerged that 2022 has been the worst year for real wage growth in nearly half a century.

Analysis of official statistics by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) found real wages – the amount people earned in relation to their cost of living – fell by an average of £76 a month in 2022 due to pay not keeping pace with inflation, and that key public sector workers are now £180 a month worse off in real terms than they were a year ago.

It means workers have seen the sharpest fall in real wages since 1977 and the second worst since the end of the second world war.

Due to the inevitable discontent generated by the latest economic crisis, numerous sectors of workers – with many lower paid workers finding they have to supplement their wage by attending food banks – embarked on a further wave of strikes, picking up the momentum from those in October. This time, with an increasing sense of the different sectors converging, it was the nurses, ambulance workers, border staff, rail workers and postal workers, and driving instructors among others, who were out.

On Thursday 15th December, nurses at hospitals across Britain went out on strike, the biggest in their history, with over 100,000 participating. Already they'd won the valuable support of pharmacists, who declared their intention not to be used as surrogate nurses when the action took place. Ambulance workers went out on 21st December. Border staff at airports and ports struck from 23rd December to Boxing Day, Monday 26th December, and on the 28th to New Year's Eve. Rail workers and Royal Mail staff also held more strikes over the holidays.

The government's dark threats to introduce (even more) stringent anti-strike legislation did not materialized, but they are merely biding their time. The army was called in, along with

sections of the civil service, to act as blacklegs (in other words, scabs). Several hundred soldiers received a week's training, which was supposed to equip them to cover for the striking border staff at ports and airports over Christmas. Apparently only 5 days training was been deemed sufficient for a further contingent of soldiers to cover for ambulance drivers during their action on the 21st!

But getting the army involved was not without risks.

The English daily newspaper, *The Guardian* (12/12/22) commented: "With about 1,000 [army] personnel due to miss Christmas breaks as they fill in for ambulance crews and border staff, military sources and retired senior officers warned about the potential impact on troops who have also seen declining real-terms pay". In the paper's 'Analysis' column, it is further noted that "Last year's pay award to the army rank-and-file was 3.75%, which is well below the 11.1% rate of inflation – and soldiers cannot join a union to fight for better terms and conditions".

So, soldiers were expected to undermine strikers at the very same time as they are being affected by a fall in their own real wages, and by declining working conditions, themselves, and precisely at a time when "public opinion" is broadly on the side of striking workers, because, as most people reason, what choice do the strikers really have when they have only one economic weapon to wield: withdrawing their labor? Who in their right mind would opt to continue to be a punching bag for the capitalists instead?

The fact is, morale is not great among soldiers either, and they might not relish being part of the "military assistance to civilian authorities", or Maca arrangements, as this blacklegging arrangement is called. They missed their third Christmas in a row, after the military was called in to help with the COVID crisis and other deployments. Quoting from *The Guardian* again: "Maca used to be the last resort Now it's the go-to. Bad government planning equals soldiers missing Christmas", said one military source, reflecting what they said were repeated grumblings they had heard from junior ranks".

Lord Dannatt, former head of the army, further warned that soldiers being forced to miss Christmas with families could damage morale and result in some of them quitting. "Soldiers might decide they've had enough of bailing the government out of

the muddles it gets itself into. They might think, 'I joined to be a soldier, not a strike-breaker'".

And one sector of strikers who the designated soldiers were ordered to undermine are those in the health sector, who the army, having worked alongside them during the pandemic, might view as making a righteous protest; a sector, moreover, which has clearly won great sympathy from 'the general public', and whose ranks were severely decimated during the pandemic by the cold hand of death – and affected far more than among many other sectors due to their direct and ongoing exposure to coronavirus infection, especially in the period before vaccines were developed. The very sector, in fact, who we were invited, in order to celebrate their bravery, their heroic and self-sacrificing service to the community, to make weekly appearances on our doorsteps to take part in a community clapping session; which sat very uncomfortably beside the government's repeated rejection of even their most modest requests for wage increases. No wonder some of the placards on display during the strike featured the slogan "clapping doesn't pay bills".

Nurses were asking for a 19% pay increase (5% above inflation, to make up for previous declines in the real value of their wages). The derisory offer made by the government, 4.5%, which the nurses union, the Royal College of Nursing, rejected, was set by the official NHS pay review body last year. This body has been quite clear that this figure was set before many of the factors that triggered the massive inflation that has devalued pay. In fact, just before the strike went ahead the nurses' union said it might call off the strike if the government was prepared to intervene and enter discussions, but when the health minister point blank refused to discuss any deviation from the pay award, the strike went ahead, and dates were set for late December and January as well.

But keeping up with inflation is not the only grievance of the nurses. On the picket line nurses also declared their anger about the withdrawal of the government grants that used to pay for their training. Now nurses joining the profession are saddled with debt from the very start, and due to less people joining the profession (partly as a result of this and partly due to Brexit) there is a constant shortage of staff and a consequent expectation that existing staff will constantly 'fill the gap'.

Compounding the pressure on existing staff, the current wages and conditions are so bad in the health sector that a mass exodus is also taking place. Over the years various governments have been pillaging the health

system in Britain by means of its so called 'Private Finance Initiatives' or PFIs, by means of which, similarly to in the education and transport sectors, to name just two, it is parceled out to private businesses and finance companies in order to generate as much profit as possible, leaving many NHS trusts with huge strains on their budgets just to pay the year on year interest on borrowing for new buildings, etc, let alone – failed – the costs of administering to people's health needs and meeting staffing costs. The result of all this put together is an absolute shambles, with staff shortages so extreme that the latest scandal is agency doctors being paid up to £5,200 a shift! Freedom of information requests to every NHS trust showed they paid £3bn to agencies for staff during 2021-22, that is, 20% higher than the previous year. On top of this, trusts spent £6bn on so-called bank staff, in which NHS employees are paid to carry out extra shifts.

The point has now arrived where all the jaded old arguments about strike action being incompatible with 'economic reality' no longer convince because people simply don't care whether it is or not! It has clear to broad masses of people that there is something wrong with the present 'economic reality', with 'the system' itself, even though many find it difficult to articulate exactly what.

Workers' wage demands do indeed clash with the requirements of capital, as do their demands for improved conditions. From which (barring the various attempts to 'reform' it – a completely failed experiment), there is only one conclusion to draw: either the system remains as it is, and suits the capitalists but not the workers, or the capitalist system is replaced by a new system, that doesn't suit the capitalists but does suit the workers (that is, communism – the real movement for communism – and not the State capitalist regimes that have masqueraded under that name for the past century).

For this to happen, and indeed also for the working class to be able to attain its immediate economic goals, albeit only temporarily, it needs to fight alongside other sectors of workers, and it needs to do this locally, nationally, and internationally, and work in conjunction with its own class party.

Its party, however, is certainly not the Labour Party, a party which proudly boasts that it is 'the party of business'; which sings monarchist anthems at its congresses, and which will most likely be voted into power at the next election, when it will seek (and fail) to make austerity measures – and capitalism itself – more palatable to workers. No.

The party of the working class is the International Communist Party.

We refer to capitalism as 'the corpse that still walks'; and what is for certain is that it needs to be firmly nailed into its coffin and buried as quickly as possible!

But capitalism's grave diggers, Marx's evocative description of the working class, are up to the task, and 'the logic' of every strike ultimately leads in that direction. It will be the working class, collectively, by means of its most determined and conscious elements, who will have to deal the death blow. And the way it prepares itself for that, in the time before the final reckoning, will be by continuing on its way, fighting for its own needs rather than for those of the capitalists; who supposedly 'give us work' whereas it is us, after having been forcefully chained to 'their' means of production because we need to work to survive, who provide them with the capital they use to exploit us!

Eventually the incompatibility between the two classes will become too glaring, too incompatible with the needs of the vast majority, and the battle lines will become more clearly drawn; when the sheer pointlessness of eking out an existence just in order to generate profits for a progressively smaller clique of entitled, socially-useless, but filthy rich wheeler-dealers, will be seen for what it is.

The new strike wave that has just commenced in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, following a brief pause, is now underway, and during the battles to come, every participant is sure to learn valuable lessons, and in particular that in solidarity there lies strength. But with the government of the capitalists planning to attack the working class as a whole, with its threatened anti-strike legislation, we can only hope that the momentum of the current, and coming, strike actions will be enough to frustrate these plans, and indeed, push back some of the anti-union legislation that is already in place. Such a move would give the class far more room for maneuver, by loosening the current anti-strike legislation that ties the hands of trade union actions, and rendering it less effective.

The British Labour Party and the CBI

The Confederation of British Industry, or CBI, representative body of the British industrial capitalist class, held its annual conference at Birmingham the week beginning 21st November 2022. The appearance of the Labour Party leader is an annual

event – whether in government or opposition the usual attitude is that we want to work in partnership with CBI for the "good of the country". This year the very respectable Labour leader, Keir Starmer, conducted himself as if was attending a job interview – we are a Government in waiting. "Ready to give Britain the clear economic leadership it needs. Ready to work with you to drive our country forward."

Labour is now proud of being pro-business and understands that backing private enterprise is the only way Britain pays its way in the world. "This is a different Labour Party and there is no going back". This may surprise the naive and those with illusions in "old Labour", but it merely replaces the fake socialism of the state sector with the mirage of a fairer, greener capitalism.

Starmer then elaborated the economic problems of a decade of stagnation (the worst for two centuries); disposable income down to 2013 levels, and the UK being the only G7 country poorer than before the pandemic. And what faces people is a winter like no other; it is clear that many will go without heating and proper food.

Just to ensure that the issue wasn't all one-sided, Starmer was quick to point out he "know[s] that people in this room are struggling as well." Businesses are hit by higher borrowing rates, higher energy bills and small businesses are going under at an unprecedented rate.

The solution: a new business model. Starmer said that this would be a hard but necessary task for transforming the economy and increasing productivity. The new mantra of the US Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, was proclaimed: "modern supply-side economics".

Migration and the needs of industry were looked at where the people with the skills needed were lacking. He was looking for industry to perform the necessary investment and training.

And the solutions to the economic woes of the country can be found in economic stability, higher skills and "green" growth.

A declaration was made for a Green Prosperity Plan, using private finance to transform and clean up the planet. That is what industrial strategy and partnership must deliver – in a nutshell.

The CBI was very thankful for Starmer's speech, as many of the issues, such as migration, and skills they had been calling for for more than a year.

All this shows the Labour Party even further in the capitalist camp than ever before. The sooner those who have illusions in the Labour Party really see what is going on the better.

The Slogan of Civil War Illustrated

by VI Lenin
Published in *Sotsial-Demokrat No. 40, March 29, 1915*

On January 8 (New Style), Swiss papers received the following message from Berlin: "Of late the press has repeatedly carried reports of peaceable attempts made by men in the German and French trenches to enter into friendly relations. According to *Tägliche Rundschau*, 106 an army order dated December 29 bans any fraternization and any kind of intercourse with the enemy in the trenches. Disregard of this order is punishable as high treason."

Thus, fraternization and attempts to enter into friendly relations with the enemy are a fact. The German military authorities are showing concern over the matter, which means that they attach considerable importance to it. The British Labour Leader of January 7, 1915, published a series of quotations from the British bourgeois press on instances of fraternization between British and German soldiers, who arranged a "forty-eight-hour truce" at Christmas, met amicably in no-man's land, and so on. The British military authorities issued a special order forbidding fraternization. And yet, with the utmost complacency and the comfort-able feeling that the military censorship will protect them against any denials, the socialist opportunists and their vindicators (or lackeys?) have assured the workers, through the press (as Kautsky has done), that no understanding on anti-war action by the socialists of the belligerent countries is possible (the expression literally used by Kautsky in *Die Neue Zeit*!).

Try to imagine Hyndman, Guesde, Vandervelde, Plekhanov, Kautsky and the rest – instead of aiding the bourgeoisie (something they are now engaged in) – forming an inter-national committee to agitate for "fraternization and attempts to establish friendly relations" between the socialists of the belligerent countries, both in the "trenches" and among the troops in general. What would the results be several months from now, if today, only six months after the outbreak of the war and despite all the political bosses, leaders and luminaries who have betrayed socialism, opposition is mounting on all sides against those who have voted for war credits and those who have

accepted ministerial jobs, and the military authorities are threatening that "fraternization" carries the death sentence?

"There is only one practical issue – victory or defeat for one's country," Kautsky, lackey of the opportunists has written, in concord with Guesde, Plekhanov and Co. Indeed, if one were to forget socialism and the class struggle, that would be the truth. However, if one does not lose sight of socialism, that is untrue. Then there is another practical issue: should we perish as blind and helpless slaves, in a war between slave-holders, or should we fall in "attempts at fraternization" between the slaves, with the aim of casting off slavery?

Such, in reality, is the "practical" issue.

Activism and Spontaneism in the United Fronts of Inter-Class Pacifism

There's no shortage of political groups denouncing the progression of world capitalism toward an imminent world war. But the problem, as always, besides understanding what's really going on, is knowing how to respond.

Large pacifist movements are forming in support of given political parties. Because of their "big tent" structure, these fronts are unable to express unambiguous positions: their real purpose is recruitment for their target parties.

"The Marxist thesis states: it isn't possible, first of all, for consciousness of the historical road to appear, in advance, within a single human brain. This is for two reasons: firstly, consciousness follows, rather than precedes, being, that is, the material conditions which surround the subject of consciousness itself; secondly, all forms of social consciousness – with a given delay allowing them time to get generally established – emerge out of circumstances which are analogous and parallel to the economic relations in which masses of individuals find themselves, forming a social class. Historically the latter are then led to "act together" long before they can "think together". The theory of this relationship between class conditions, and class action and its future point of arrival, isn't required of persons, in the sense it isn't required of a particular author or leader; nor is it asked of "the class as whole", in the sense of a fleeting lump sum of individuals in existence at a certain time or place; and much less can it be deduced from an extremely bourgeois "consultation" of the class." ("The False Resource of Activism", from the General Meeting of