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Reflections on the ongoing capitalist butchery (Russia/Ukraine)

“The absurdity of adopting war as a means of antifascist struggle is thus quite clear. Not only would it entail fighting against barbarous oppression by crushing the people under the weight of an even more barbarous massacre; it would even mean extending under another form the regime we want to suppress. It is childish to suppose that a state apparatus made powerful by a victorious war would alleviate the oppression that the enemy state apparatus had exercised on its own people; it is even more childish still to believe that a victorious state would leave in its wake a proletarian revolution in the defeated nation without immediately drowning it in blood. (...) particularly in the event of war, we must choose between obstructing the functioning of the military machine in which we ourselves constitute the cogs, or helping that machine to blindly crush human lives.”

Simone Weil, Reflections on War (1933)

The current stage of development of the capitalist productive forces, - which are no more than their destructive forces -, brings events in tow which occur one after the other, like an ever-growing spiral of its generalized crisis, in which converge the crisis of labor – which manifests in the expulsion of human beings from the productive process itself -, environmental devastation - of which the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are direct consequences -, and great migratory flows, among other catastrophes which have become daily occurrences. War and militarism are inseparable from this irrational dynamic proper to capitalism: today we find ourselves confronted with what they say is the greatest war mobilization since the Second World War, with the invasion by the Russian Federation of the Ukraine, under the pretext of confronting “nazification” and defending the separatist zone of Donbass.

As if the capitalist catastrophe and the forces of counterrevolution that it mobilizes weren't enough, we're seeing groups that call themselves anticapitalist openly, or in a veiled manner,

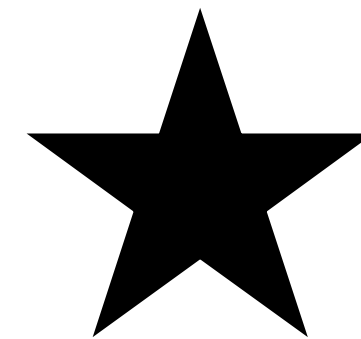
defend the bombardment and advance of russian troops upon ukrainian cities. Some due to a sort of rusophilia related to some kind of nostalgia for the USSR, others because they consider the political and military forces of the west that are in confrontation with Russia to be the absolute incarnation of evil, and others because they consider that the russian offensive does indeed have as its objective the defense of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic in Donbass and, therefore it constitutes some form of combat or support against the "fascism" of Ukraine. As such, sectors that run the spectrum from leninism-stalinism to anarchism didn't take long to align themselves in favor of a military invasion undertaken by the State of a world superpower and its ruling class, tossing aside internationalism and whatever revolutionary perspective, relativizing the motivations and the bloody consequences of this imperialist war. The anticapitalist historical experience, which shows us that imperialist wars are nothing other than the form in which capital is restructured on the basis of a bellic dispute between the different factions of the international bourgeoisie, in which the proletariat is used as cannon fodder, and the consciousness that no State will ever mobilize its troops for motives and interests that aren't those of their dominant class, turn to mush in the face of the temptation of defending a project of territorial autonomy – in the form of a republic, of course- against the "fascist" offensive that the ukrainian State and the irregular neo-nazi militias maintain against the Donbass region. The senselessness of these positions doesn't resist a minimal critical analysis, even under its own logic – the antifascist motivation – once confronted with reality, nor against a coherent anticapitalist and revolutionary practice either: this the development and result of the war will confirm.

From its booming years up until the current time, capitalist civilization has seated its might through war, among other forms, which is no more than the continuation of the economy through other means. Meaning, a perpetual competition between different factions of the bourgeoisie to appropriate the greatest possible portion of the mass of social surplus value, which in certainty is constantly falling due to the limit of internal accumulation which capital is butting up against. Bellic conflict has in a large part promoted development and industrial innovation, which in the same time made possible the development of the productive forces applied to the technical, scientific, and industrial "progress" of the military machine, with an eye to the conquest of natural resources, raw material, regions, competitive advantages in relation to other States and markets that allow the continuation of the ever increasing reproduction of capital and the power of the capitalist class. If capital is, above all, a form of social organization that places humanity and everything that inhabits the earth at the mercy of an unrestrained repression, with the sole objective of keeping the economy running and perpetuating the ruling class whose might depends upon it, it can be deduced then, that wars have no other purpose than to perpetuate this specific form of reproduction and its consequent social domination. Like so, the capitalist factions in confrontation for the attainment of this material basis in order to assure their more or less hegemonic position in capitalist domination, must assure this might on the military level.

In the case of this conflict that dynamic is particularly illustrative: the invasion of Ukraine is a strategical move by russian imperialism in the face of the advance of the USA-NATO western bloc. In recent decades, the technological and scientific development of the weapons industry has made possible the development of hypersonic missiles which could, among other things, reach atomic levels of potency. This implies that the State which achieves supremacy in this area of technological development could count on their guaranteed supremacy in the military arena, since this affords the possibility of putting an end to the critical infrastructure of the enemy power, immobilizing in short time their capacity of response, annulling the risk of a

continues trying to overcome its fundamental contradiction, accelerating the transformations of the capitalist mode of production and reorganizing the dominant capitals through armed force, which can only deepen the crisis – literally annihilating excess populations, expelling human labor from the production process and destroying the earth in order to try to valorize it -. The war between Russia and Ukraine is a direct consequence of this crisis which obliges the capitals and their States to wage the already classic disputes for resources, markets and territories, but with a destructive power of a reach never before seen: the arms race testifies to this fact. The confusion that it generates among radical sectors cannot be ignored, and facing this, it is necessary to defend the revolutionary principles indicating the nature of war in the current context and the social decomposition in that geographic zone since the fall of the USSR. The proletariat has only recently raised its head after the last defeat that it suffered following the cycle of struggles of the 60's-70's, and expresses that the material necessities of our existence now not only can't be resolved through capitalist social relations, but that these relations have introduced the risk of extinction⁷. We are, therefore, in a qualitatively distinct historical situation, where there doesn't exist anything similar to the old working class or its organized international movement: It must be assumed once and for all that these conditions will not return. The promises of security and well-being that capitalism publicized for decades are dissolving everywhere, and in their place lurks the permanent state of emergency and a growing degradation, without precedents, of our living conditions. Nevertheless, it is the same conditions that have imposed the dissolution of those old forms of socialization and the crisis of capital which have created the basis for an internationalism of a new kind: by placing the whole world in the same catastrophic situation, the structural crisis which we are bearing, it pushes us towards alliance between the exploited of the world as a necessary response in facing the crisis, in facing the devastation of the planet and the constant threat of war, the only realistic solution against the destruction imposed by the capitalist irrationality and its effect on the human beings that bear its socialization. It's becoming increasingly clear that there are only two options: international human community or capitalist apocalypse.

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⁷ See: "The Instauration of the Risk of Extinction" by Jaques Camatte (2021) (https://www.ilcovile.it/scritti/COVILE_B_554_Inglese_1_Instaurazione.pdf)

that time, in contrast to the activity developed by the proletariat at least half a century earlier, allowed for the emergence of an early internationalism in order to fight against the war and capital. The consciousness of the necessity for an international perspective and the conclusion that this can only be affirmed by opposing the totality of the bourgeois forces engaged in war is the logical premise for a movement of global emancipation. It is in the middle of this panorama that the most consistent sectors of the proletariat opposed, against the imperialist war in 1914, the slogan of revolutionary defeatism – despite the chauvinist and patriotic drift of the majority - : In the local territory, down with all factions of the local bourgeoisie. And yet, this position only resonated with thousands of proletarians mobilized on the fronts, when the war became an unsustainable burden on the living conditions of the working class in general. In the current bellic conflict between Russia and Ukraine, although it's possible there won't be any immediate results from calling for revolutionary defeatism ⁶, it's important to point out the internationalist perspective to, above all, confirm it against cycles of revolt at the global level which have been experienced in recent years: the crisis of consciousness has revealed itself tragically as the consciousness of the crisis.

Today, nevertheless, the material conditions have changed and add up a multiplicity of elements to take into consideration. In this context we are witnessing the proliferation and intensification of old reactionary and nationalist tendencies: the xenophobic attacks in the northern region of Chile, the emergence of new nationalisms and even the conservatism of radical islamism are symptoms of that. This development has a paradoxical dynamic since the more that capital, which is the empirical foundation of the nation state, enters into crisis, the more the conservative tendencies are exasperated as a response to the crisis, as forms of preserving by force a normality which is crumbling away on every side. With distinct motivations, the exasperation of the reactionary tendencies that blame “scapegoats” for the degradation of our existence, express a superficial, partial and truncated critique of the system, a breeding ground for the maneuvers of a neo-populism that displays itself as “rebellious” and “unyielding”. Lamentably, this fragmented vision also strikes at the revolutionaries. Yet, the development of capital, the restructuring of the labor/capital relationship and the deepening of the relationships based upon the commodity, as a global and interdependent social system, have created and demand a new basis upon which to propose the necessity for a human community liberated from the mediations that maintain their domination: the State and Capital.

What they call “geopolitical” reorganization is no more than an old inter-bourgeois dispute, aggravated by the profound crisis of valorization that has come to scourge us since 2008. The capitalist barbarity is present since its beginnings and in its progression it has overcome various limits at the cost of the blood and misery of the proletariat: today we see how it

6 In spite of what was pointed out earlier, it's necessary that the revolutionary minorities denounce the war without reserve, in the face of so much disorientation and programmatic bourgeois lackeyism into which falls the left, but also sectors of anarchism, facing bellic conflicts such as this one. Agitation and propaganda for revolutionary defeatism, sabotage and desertion, though it might not be immediately effective, is necessary as a revolutionary perspective. In this sense we recommend the following texts – among many others - :

- “A few fundamental positions of proletarian internationalism” by Grupo Barbaria

[TN: Machine translation: <https://barbaria-net.translate.goog/2022/02/26/algunas-posiciones-fundamentales-del-internacionalismo-proletario/? x tr sl=auto& x tr tl=en>] ;

- “Proletarians in Russia and in the Ukraine! On production front and military front... Comrades!” by Tridní Válka (<https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/proletarians-in-russia-and-in-the-ukraine-on-production-front-and-military-front-comrades/>) ;

- “The war has begun” by KRAS-AIT (<https://aitrus.info/node/5922>)

counterstrike of the same magnitude, so overcoming the military doctrine of M.A.D. (Mutually Assured Destruction) which took precedence and guaranteed a relative peace between the imperialist powers during the Cold War, on the basis of a matched capacity for atomic destruction at that time. Like so, the possible entry of Ukraine into the NATO military bloc and the subsequent deployment of armaments on its territory, puts the “security” of the area of influence of Russia in danger: this is the true immediate reason that provoked the conflict.

In this same sense, Russia doesn't intend to prolong the military and territorial occupation over the Ukraine, but it intends to impose by force the “neutrality” of the ukrainian State in the face of NATO, preventing its adhesion to this coalition. And in order to achieve this end, Russia will negotiate a compromise with Ukraine, and if it's necessary it will topple the current administration and will put in place a puppet government that follows the diktats of the Kremlin.

While Putin and the russian State affirm the presumably humanitarian character of their invasion, assuring that they are protecting the lives of the Donbass separatists, the leaders of the European Union cry crocodile tears for the civilians massacred during battles - who now flee by the hundreds of thousands from their homes -, but in reality, they are frightened by the idea of a war that generates a point of no return, that harms their businesses and their energy dependency. The truth is not to be found in the public declarations of any of the powers implicated, but in the movement of their material forces – economic, political, military – which constitute the real basis of this conflict.

Antifascist defense of imperialist war

As we know, the two self proclaimed republics of the Donbass region, Donetsk and Lugansk, have been besieged by the ukrainian army and by the militias for the last 8 years, when the pro-russian government was toppled as a result of Euromaidan. The pro-NATO character of the ukrainian government since 2014 and, in particular, the presence of fascists in their armed forces and the existence of irregular armed gangs of neo-nazis who made themselves visible in the Euromaidan protests and later in Donbass, and furthermore the “autonomous” and “popular” character of the separatist regions, mobilized the support of certain sectors of the international left. The militias which are composed of antifascist, marxist-leninist, and anarchist volunteers are numerous. But it is principally what is considered by many to be a battle against fascism which mobilizes the majority of these sympathies. Nevertheless, what is happening in the zone controlled by the separatists is much more complex and dissimilar than what many think to see.

What's certain is that not only antifascists and leftists are fighting in the defense of Donbass. The militias that fight and have fought in the defense of the autonomy of that region cover the whole political spectrum, including volunteers with ideologies that are antagonistic to those of the antifascist militias, such as some groupings of the russian extreme right, for example, the Russian Imperial Movement and the neo-nazis of Russian National Unity – among many others -, who have been sending fighters since the beginning of the conflict¹. It's clear that the groupings that fight for the autonomy of Donbass are heterogeneous, since their motivations go from the defense of the experiment of the autonomous republic, the protection of the

1 See “Antifascismo y extrema derecha: compañeros de armas en el Donbás”:

[TN: Machine translation: <https://politikon-es.translate.goog/2014/11/14/antifascismo-y-extrema-derecha-companeros-de-armas-en-el-donbass/? x tr sl=auto& x tr tl=en>]

inhabitants of the region who suffer constant aggressions from Kiev, certain forms of pro-russian nationalism, etc..., but, even without the need for an exhaustive analysis over the political composition of the front for the defense of Donbass, it's evident that far from being a united front and essentially antifascist – with all the limits that this perspective possesses: a defense of democracy and the state, support for a liberal bourgeoisie, interclassism, etc. –. Obviously, this doesn't mean under any circumstances that the region of Donbass isn't experiencing a humanitarian crisis because of the constant attacks which the the ukrainian army and other irregular forces make against it.

On the other hand: Does the Republic “form” represent a possibility for social emancipation from capitalist social relations?² Can a state, like the russian one, guarantee territorial autonomy in a region that it now uses as a justification for starting an imperialist war? If what it's all about is the defense of the lives of the human beings that inhabit Donbass against the crimes of the ukrainian State and its allies, then how is it that the attack by a superpower on cities in which a civil population resides, and the crisis that this supposes for millions of people in the ukrainian territory, a considerable aggravation of human misery in the middle of the war between economic powers, between different factions of capital doesn't represent a similar barbarity to those who sustain this perspective?

Furthermore, the crimes perpetrated by a State and by the savage neo-nazis, don't automatically turn the whole population that inhabits Ukraine into criminals, nor neo-nazis. Only someone who has been blinded by ideology could affirm that the human beings that live under the dominion of a ruling class and its State, are only simple extensions of that ruling class and that State. The relativization or simple omission by some sectors of the left and of antifascism in respect to this is dazzling. The senselessness and the contempt for human life which capitalist logic engenders permeates even those who claim to oppose the effects of this unhealthy socialization. Even if we wanted to imagine that the ruling class in the Ukraine is a reflection of its inhabitants, or if we wanted to believe that “In Ukraine they're all nazis”, as the pro-russian propaganda stupidly says, this mystification falls apart as soon as we try to comprehend its origin: the extreme right and neo-nazi movements actually existing in the Ukraine, and in particular the Azov Battalion, a grouping that became well known in 2014 for fighting the militias of the People's Republic of Donetsk, which later went on to form part of the ukrainian national guard, and which today boasts hundreds of active members. This has contributed to the characterization of the governments after Euromaiden as “neo-nazis”, a characterization which russian propaganda has contributed to enormously. But, although it's certain that democracy is where the different political factions of the bourgeoisie dispute the management of capital by means of the State, it's also certain that during the last presidential elections in the Ukraine of 2019, Svoboda ³ – “Freedom”-, the party which concentrated the

2 Not even the application of the leninist strategy of “the right of nations to self-determination” resists any sort of analysis; at the start of the 20th century, when the regimes of some colonies hadn't yet totally disintegrated the communitarian relations, it was already denounced as counterrevolutionary by comrades such as Rosa Luxembourg and the distinct communist lefts: “They did nothing more than lend the bourgeoisie of all the neighboring countries the best of pretexts, and even the banner for their counterrevolutionary aspirations”¹ Now, a century later, this proposal shows itself to be an excuse and a banner for the imperialism of the Russian Federation. On the other hand, the concept of ‘people’ to refer to the population of a country doesn't make any sense facing a society divided into classes at a global level.

3 Who defend antisemitism, the implantation of a sole national language, militarism, ethnocentrism, crypto-racism, homophobia, anti-abortion positions, and the nationalization of enterprises.

adhesion of the extreme right electorate, only obtained 1.62% of the votes. This should be enough to put the characterization, which in addition is rather imprecise, of Ukraine as a “nazi” or “ultra-right” nation into question, above all in respect to its civil population.

Since the war began we have heard and read affirmations like: “Anything is valid in the struggle against fascism” that justify the russian invasion or relativize it. Even, as they tell us, if the battle against fascism has the objective of preventing the advent of barbarity and making spaces for social emancipation possible, then how is it that the political, economic and military consolidation of a capitalist country – to the detriment of another – could bring us something different from what it was hoped to prevent? What makes them think that that a bourgeois faction in a period of crisis is going to guarantee a lesser grade of barbarity than that of their ideological opponents? Fascism, from the hand of Hitler, Franco, or Mussolini, implemented the measures that capital demanded of them in their epoch, measures which weren't fundamentally distinct from those that Stalin imposed on the proletariat in different territories⁴. If again the thesis of antifascism turns out to be unfeasible in the abstract, wanting to relive it 100 years later is completely anachronistic. For revolutionaries, and particularly for anarchists, the tragic experience of Spain in '36 should suffice to keep oneself free of illusions in respect to antifascism, which is no more than the defense of the democratic forms of capitalist management, reconciliation between classes, the option of the “lesser evil” and the abandonment of the revolutionary horizon⁵.

Given everything that's been expressed about the capitalist dynamic and the wars that it engenders, and also given the observations on the ground where this particular conflict unfolds, it's doubtful that the possibility for some sort of social emancipation could arise in the midst of a carnage directed precisely to perpetuate the domination of one of the blocs in dispute, which doesn't mean anything else than the worsening of capitalist domination, of the dictatorship of the economy over all that lives. And this is difficult to refute: two world wars, the genocide and the disappearance of entire villages, the psychic destruction of the individuals under its domain, and the destruction of the biosphere have already greatly demonstrated that the international bourgeoisie already made their choice long ago, and that they will not hesitate to continue expanding their destructive forces to unimaginable peaks in order to keep their productive machine running, knowing that the "pie" is getting smaller and smaller and is divided into fewer parts. This imperialist war will not bring anything but a global capitalist restructuration in the middle of a crisis that doesn't cease to deepen. Therefore, it's clear that those who defend a side in this war, despite their intentions, do no more than position themselves on the defending side of the existing order.

Crisis of consciousness and consciousness of crisis

The different phases of capitalist development engender their own forms of socialization and with them their corresponding limits of consciousness. In the genesis of the workers' movement, the imperialist wars found themselves faced with the conscious opposition of certain mobilized sectors of the proletariat. The rudimentary state of the capitalist society of

4 A hyper-centralized state, an omnipresent repressive apparatus, moral conservatism, chauvinism, the militarization of labor, concentration camps, the persecution of dissidence, etc.

5 In this sense we recommend: “Fascism / Antifascism” by Gilles Dauvé [<https://libcom.org/library/fascism-anti-fascism-gilles-dauve-jean-barrot>]; “Summary of Amadeo Bordiga's Thesis on fascism in 1921-22” by Augustín Guillamón. [TN: no english version available]