

The dogmatic and sectarian approach to war we need to leave behind

“Marxism has built a scientific program upon the laws that govern the movement of capitalist society, and which were discovered by it. This is a colossal conquest! However, it is not enough to create a correct program. It is necessary that the working class accept it. But the sectarian, in the nature of things, homes to a stop upon the first half of the task. Active intervention into the actual struggle of the workers’ masses is supplanted for him by an abstract propaganda of a Marxist program.”

Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International. Leon Trotsky 1935

Introduction

For many years, the international organisation to which we belonged - the CWI - cruised along as one of the largest Trotskyist organisations. Emerging from the ideological debates and splits which surrounded the Fourth International after the death of Trotsky, the ideas and perspectives that were developed by the then RSL*/Militant proved largely correct for a period.

*Revolutionary Socialist League, not to be confused with the RSL that existed before 1940. The RSL was the name adopted by the post WW2 organisation before it became popularly known as Militant.

In the couple of decades after the launch of Militant in 1964 it succeeded in transforming the programme into an actual instrument used by the working class in struggle during the school strikes, the Liverpool City Council struggle and the 1984-85 miners’ strike, culminating in the Poll Tax struggle.

When these successes of the British section were fading into the past, other sections, most notably the Irish, and to some degree the US, demonstrated in practice how to intervene in a transitional way in working class movements, winning significant victories.

In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, Ted Grant would promise that the revolution would take place within 5, 10, 15 years. This was based on the perspective that after the revolutionary wave in the years following 1968, the working class would continue to strengthen, with a strong revolutionary current developing within the Labour Party and wider labour movement, and at a certain stage, the rejection of reformism would lead to a new revolutionary crisis.

But these perspectives lost their validity as the wave of revolutions, albeit deformed, in the former colonial world accompanied by major defeats of the working class - such as the British miners and US air-traffic controllers - was drawing to an end.

Increasingly capitalism went on the offensive. The post-war era of Keynesian 'consensus' ended with Pinochet, Reagan and Thatcher spearheading the counter-revolution that later became known as neo-liberalism.

Experiences of war during the neo-liberal epoch

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 provided a huge propaganda victory to Western imperialism. The CWI formally opposed the intervention, but argued that the Soviet Union was still capable of developing backward Afghan society, so opposed calls for Soviet withdrawal, which, it argued, would be another propaganda boost for imperialism.

What actually happened was Afghan society did not develop, fundamentalism backed by the US gained a foothold, and the cost of the war severely undermined the Soviet system during the decade before its collapse. In hindsight, the approach was based on a failure to understand how far the bureaucracy in the USSR itself had undermined the advantages of the planned economy.

If the war started by the Argentinian Junta invasion of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in 1982 had lasted more than ten weeks, there would almost certainly have been a debate within the organisation over the British section's position.

Although formally correct in analysing the causes of the war: the attempt by the Argentinian dictatorship to cut across the increasingly revolutionary struggles by the working class, and which was used by Thatcher to whip up a patriotic wave in Britain, the programme it presented against the war was far from convincing. It was motivated by opposition to the pacifism of a section of the reformist left, attempting to apply what in reality was a continuation of the WIL's** WW2 policy, but in a completely different objective situation.

**WIL - Workers' International League - one of the two Trotskyist groups that existed in Britain during WW2 before their merging into the RCP.

It failed to support calls for the withdrawal of the British fleet, arguing that such a call would have required a general strike to win. It offered no convincing positive alternative except to call for the election of a socialist labour government. The credibility of this was undermined by the fact that, although the Labour left was at the peak of its influence, Michael Foot, the Labour leader - widely seen as a 'pacifist' due to his long-standing support for nuclear disarmament - capitulated and gave uncritical support to Thatcher's decision to send the British Fleet to the Falklands.

At the same time arguing that a different emphasis was needed in Argentina, it called for the full revolutionary mobilisation including the arming of the Argentine working class to overthrow the dictator. In this context, this position was at best abstract and at worst difficult to differentiate from Foot's social chauvinism, especially in Argentina and the rest of Latin America.

A year later, an armed insurrection broke out in the Tamil regions of Sri Lanka, precipitating a major international discussion about the position of the Sri Lankan section, the NSSP. The NSSP majority had illusions in India, as a more 'progressive' imperialism, a position which had led them to welcome Indian intervention in Bangladesh's 1971 war of liberation. This led it to support calls for an Indian military intervention into the Tamil region. After many discussions the NSSP split from the CWI.

As the 1980s unfolded, so too did the crises in the Soviet bloc, which for decades had been seen by many lefts, and in particular by many in the post-colonial world, as a non-capitalist alternative to imperialism. Strangled by the dead-weight of the totalitarian bureaucracy the regimes collapsed under the pressure of mass movements. Out of the initial eight states, 26 newly independent capitalist nations emerged, accompanied by an economic depression, deeper even than the 1930s Great depression and, in many parts, brutal ethnic and civil conflicts.

New phase of neo-liberalism

The neo-liberal onslaught and defeats of the working class in struggle combined with the collapse of the "socialist" states fed into a deepening ideological confusion and then retreat of the political consciousness of the working class.

The 1990's was a turning point requiring a radical review of perspectives. The conservative and dogmatic grouping around Ted Grant, who denied the need for change, departed in the 1991-2 split. In hindsight, what remained as the CWI, despite making some revisions, failed to draw all the necessary conclusions.

In reality, the CWI failed to recognise the depths of the retreat in organisational and political consciousness of the working class. To its credit, it did understand the qualitative change - the complete 'bourgeoisification' of the former mass workers' parties. But it clung to the perspective that eventually workers, as they move into struggle, will return en-mass to the unions, forming the basis for new mass workers' parties, and in the meantime, we should fight for a position in the unions, maintain an electoral presence, however insignificant, and eventually be in the correct place to lead a new mass movement.

This perspective, which underestimated the extent to which this new class balance of forces had strengthened the integration of the trade union apparatus with the capitalist class and its state, relied upon, and indeed strengthened an increasingly 'economist' approach to work in the traditional trade unions and wider movement.

As if this wasn't enough, the weaknesses the CWI inherited from its early founders including the blindspot in relation to forms of oppression, from that of women to colonialism were exacerbated. Increasingly, it was argued, they would be resolved 'come socialism'.

This led to a mistaken strategy. Rather than wait for the current structures to fill out, there should have been a struggle to reconquer and rebuild the unions, in which anti-oppression struggles would play a critical role.

Despite a series of splits and setbacks, the CWI survived the 1990s and 2000s largely due to the momentum, authority, and material resources it built during the 1980s. What were once relatively healthy debates over perspectives and tasks were replaced by superficial and increasingly anglo-centric analyses, more akin to a collection of anecdotes from each country rather than a dialectical analysis. Organisational tasks fell into routinism.

Another turning point

When the neo-liberal epoch began its retreat after 2008, tensions within the CWI began to grow, leading to the split and formation of ISA in 2019. The split coincided with the start of the pandemic, which speeded up the deglobalisation processes, and then Russia's imperialist invasion of Ukraine.

The dramatic change in the global situation turned the spotlight onto the weaknesses of the CWI/ISA's analysis and programme, and in justice, to those of basically all other organisations that claimed the banner of revolutionary marxism.

The sectarian approach that had already been apparent in the CWI's dismissal of questions of oppression was now clearly appearing in other aspects of our work. The correct instinct of the mainly younger Russian comrades to oppose Russian imperialism's invasion of Ukraine clashed with the dogmatic and sectarian approach of the ISA majority. Major debates over our approach to war and what demands we should use developed. In opposition to the ISA majority's sectarianism, the Russian section made clear its opposition to the Russian invasion, but in correctly supporting the right of Ukraine to defend itself, wrongly crossed a line by calling on western imperialism to arm Ukraine.

What has become increasingly apparent since 2008 is that in those organisations with roots in the early CWI - today's CWI, ISA and IMT(now RCI) - despite all the talk about the need for an independent working class position, they all to one degree or another lack confidence that the working class can play an independent role.

The ISA majority analyse events through a "geopolitical" prism, failing to understand the importance of a correct orientation to those sections of the working class at the forefront of struggle. The IMT, based on the conservative breakaway from the CWI in 1991 has done a complete ultra-left somersault with its 'communist' turn to students.

Today's CWI bases itself on the more conservative layer of the [English] trade union leadership and working class, often reflecting their prejudices. [It even recommends voting for Galloway's "Workers' Party"](#) which campaigns on an anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-trans programme highlighting racist demands such as "Stop the boats- tough on immigration". At the time of writing Galloway is in Moscow together with Alex Jones and Erron Musk [Elon's father] attending a Kremlin backed conference directed by the fascist ideologue Alexander Duggan.

They all fail to understand that the most oppressed layers of the class have moved further ahead than the more cautious, conservative layers of the traditionally male dominated and older sections of the working class.

This failure was harmful enough in countries with strong trade union traditions. In those countries in which the trade unions are historically very weak this led to confusion and

an increasingly sectarian approach often more akin to a conspiracy theory than Marxist analysis.

Roots of sectarianism

The first signs of this were seen during the break up of the Soviet Union. The Grantites did not understand how far the benefits of the planned economy had been destroyed by the bureaucracy, and how desperate the masses, spearheaded by the miners, were for change. Grant's support, at least during the first hours, for the 1991 coup against Gorbachev if it had been maintained would have put them in the same camp as the ultra-sectarians of the time such as the Spartacists and what is now the WSWS, who in much of their material about those events differ little from the Stalinists.

A decade later many of the left developed this sectarian approach further when the coloured revolutions spread across the former Soviet bloc. The political consciousness of the working class in Eastern Europe had been so damaged by the experience of Stalinism that strong left forces were largely absent, and the explosions of anger from below at poverty and authoritarian rule had strong cross-class characteristics.

The participation by the working class could be quite significant, but at best it lacked a clear political programme, and as the decade passed working class participation increasingly tail-ended bourgeois forces. As a consequence the colored revolutions usually ended up merely replacing one section of the ruling elite by another - more often than not with each section of the elite aligned with one or other of the imperialist forces.

The opportunist trends in the left tail-ended the liberal bourgeois opposition while the ultra-sectarians, along with the Stalinists usually dismissed these movements often saying they were conspiracies led by Western imperialism. They failed to understand that many workers and youth in the region had illusions in "the west", usually in the EU as they saw higher living standards and a freer society than offered by the authoritarian leaders. Left wing forces should have intervened, presenting democratic demands in such a way as to counteract the false claims of the bourgeois opposition.

Not surprisingly the position of the IMT echoed the position of the ultra-sectarians. During the 'Bulldozer' revolution against Milosovic in 2006 [it argued](#) that workers should not be involved, leaving the bourgeois opposition to lead the movement.

To its credit, at least in the earlier period, the CWI avoided a sectarian pose in part because it had comrades in the region who understood the situation. Nevertheless, early [statements by the CWI](#) - for example during the 'Bulldozer' revolution - were exceedingly optimistic and one-sided - over-emphasising the key role of the workers in the protests, but practically ignoring the role and danger of other class forces.

CWI's turn to Russia!

Increasingly though the CWI's position became abstract, despite its fine words, began to defend not an independent class position but one based on the enemy (Russian imperialism) of my enemy (US imperialism) is my friend. It is clear from comments made by an IS member at the time that this was in part due to a fear of coming into conflict with trade union leaders such as Alex Gordon and Bob Crow with whom the British section was working with at the time, or Steve Hedley who was actually a member of the SP for a period, and who did not disguise his support for the pro-Russian militias in East Ukraine

As, following Euromaidan in 2014, the Crimea was taken over by Russian forces and a referendum under gunpoint was organised, clearer differences began to emerge.

Comrades from the region [were writing reports](#) exposing the hypocritical role of both imperialist forces and demanding an end to all imperialist interference and military interventions in Ukraine and Crimea. We opposed the calling of the referendum at gunpoint and called for "the right of the people of Crimea to freely and without any hint of coercion decide their future, be it enhanced autonomy or independence."

We called for a democratically-convened constituent assembly, representing all sections of the working class, overseen by elected committees of working people so the rights of the region's 300,000 Tartars and other minorities could be guaranteed, including their language and religious rights. This, we said, would not be possible under capitalism..."

Yet just two weeks later, the [IS published its position](#). It jubilantly declared: "96.77% voted 'for' integration and turnout was 83.1%. Tens of thousands celebrated in Simferopol, the capital of Crimea". A more credible result was revealed later by an article that appeared on the Kremlin's own site - barely 50% voted yes on a turnout of between 30-50%. The IS statement went on to explain that the "Parliament of majority Russian speaking" Crimea had first voted to join Russia. The IS did not even register that that vote had taken place after the elected Parliament, which had opposed leaving Ukraine, had been occupied by Russian troops and the Government replaced at

gunpoint. When a Russian comrade speaking at that year's CWI Summer school pointed that out, Peter Taaffe complained angrily.

Although not immediately clear to many readers, the implication in the article was that although the "hugely popular vote among the majority of Crimeans" for union with Russia will lead to problems in the future, it was a better option than staying with Ukraine with its pro-western and extreme far-right government.

This impression was soon confirmed after a letter written after the seizure of Crimea by a leading member of the German section was passed on to the Russian section. It correctly criticised a caricature initially used by the Russian comrades, but which had been quickly withdrawn.

But the whole letter was endorsed by the then International Bureau of CWI [email from BL 05/03/2014]. It stated:

"Putin's strategy is a defensive one....The Putin regime is not trying to go on the offensive and to get hold of the whole of Ukraine. The truth is that the EU and the US supported the Maidan movement and the coup against Janukowich to widen their sphere of influence over the Ukraine and to push Russian imperialism backwards."

Rather than class analysis, lesser evilism

This demonstrates where the IMT, CWI and ISA have problems. Their historical trend away from a dialectical analysis has led them increasingly to view the growing conflicts in Eastern Europe through a geopolitical prism, dismissing the role of the masses [the word "masses" is used intentionally here to describe the wider movement with elements of cross-class character], and the working class as a conscious force.

To different degrees each view the events in Kyiv in 2014 as a "coup", or a conspiracy organised by western imperialism. A coup is normally understood as a sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government usually by armed forces.

While we should in no way view through rose-tinted spectacles the Euromaidan events in which the far right and liberal bourgeoisie played a big role, they started as mass protests against corruption and increasingly authoritarian government, and escalated out of control after the police killed dozens of demonstrators. The government was forced to resign and an election was held to form a new government.

Significantly not one of these organisations describes the seizure of the Crimean parliament by Russian soldiers [deniable troops who later formed the basis of the Wagner group] and the forced replacement of the elected Crimean President as a coup.

They correctly talk about how NATO has expanded across Eastern Europe but despite their often muted criticisms of the Putin regime, they clearly underestimate Russia's aggressive imperialist policies, and in reality treat it as the lesser evil.

The Ukraine war

The material written particularly by Alan Woods on the IMT site about the war in Ukraine demonstrates how far that organisation has moved from a sectarian "neutrality" to, under cover of revolutionary phrases, a Russian-apologist position, viewing the war almost solely as one driven by Ukraine and the US.

Today in their social media, some CWI sections openly and uncritically carry pro-Russian propaganda - for example a repost from the Kremlin's propaganda machine "[Russia Today](#)" of statements by Tucker Carlson, or most recently a repost of Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov's press conference.

The ISA majority emerged from the CWI tradition, and lacking even the theoretical orientation of the CWI, has drifted in an even more extreme sectarian direction. Leading figures speak of the US led coup in Kyiv in 2014, and in recent articles echo the Alan Woods approach, viewing the war as one driven by Ukraine and the US with barely any criticism of Russian imperialism. The [latest article by ISA on Ukraine](#), for example, uses the word 'imperialist/ism' 24 times overwhelmingly linked to the US. It does not once describe Russia's actions as imperialist!

An era of sharp changes

It should be stressed that the programme is not a fixed entity which is simply summed up in the need for socialist revolution. It has to be rooted in the dialectical analysis of current events based on the balance of class forces, developed in dialogue with the working class and particularly its most oppressed and politicized layers in order to connect to consciousness, and as Trotsky explained, it has to be explained in such a way so as the working class can understand and accept it.

Sharp changes in the objective reality such as the outbreak of war put the programme and tactics of revolutionary organisations into the spotlight. Unfortunately our predecessors have been found wanting.

The ISA majority brought the weaknesses in the analytical approach of CWI/IMT/ISA to their logical conclusion. Having consistently and dogmatically opposed the arguments of the ISA minority that the volatility we see in this age of increasing disorder will depend on, and can be changed by the intervention of the masses, particularly the working class. Speaking at meetings in the summer of 2023, leading members, supported by the ISA majority, concluded that the third world war had already started, that the world has been polarised into two clearly defined blocks, and in articles wrote that “it would be wrong to think the blocs are still fluid, not yet clearly formed. That would be living in the past” [\[Vincent Kolo, June 2023\]](#)

There could not be a better illustration of how dogmatism sank deep roots in the CWI/ISA. Within months the election of Trump forced the ISA, not just into a 180 degree turn in its perspectives, but left it in a tail-spin, unable to develop any form of transitional programme and demands. They were, as Trotsky put it, refusing to struggle for transitional demands - i.e. the elementary interests and needs of the working masses - as for them, preparing for revolution means convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism.

In practice from the IMT through to the CWI and ISA, behind the obligatory statements about the need to take power and construct a global socialist society, their articles reflect their one-sided geopolitical analysis. They are dominated by criticism of the Ukrainian regime, place the main blame for the war on US imperialism rather than the Russian invasion, and aim their fire at other lefts, many of whom have a pro-Ukrainian position.

They underestimate the determination of Ukrainians to resist the Russian occupation and overstate and exaggerate any gains made by the Russian regime. In their latest article the author claims that Ukraine has lost “many of the gains they made in 2022”. Anyone who has followed the war knows this is complete nonsense. It is based on their refusal to recognise the importance of the national question in Ukraine, about more of which later. Reading the articles gives a clear impression of a hope that a Russian victory is preferable to Ukraine.

Rewriting history

The one-sided analysis of the role of imperialism in the Ukraine conflict is summed up by the comment in the [ISA's latest article](#) in which they grudgingly recognise that apparently just “a decade ago, the Ukrainian ruling class was already split between a pro-Western and a pro-Russian wing. Promoting this pro-Western wing was part of the relentless drive by the U.S. to push NATO ever further eastward”. As if this was simply a one-sided and recent process.

The reality is that since Ukraine first gained independence well over three decades ago, it has been a battleground between Russian and Western economic and political interests.

In the first decade, the 1990s, Ukraine's ruling elite balanced between Russia and the West, while Russia had a close relationship with the EU and even NATO, which used an airbase in Central Russia as its transit point for its operations in Afghanistan.

But this was the period of the break-up of the Soviet Union and its state. By the end of the decade, Russia's ruling elite needed a change of course. It ditched Yeltsin, and Putin stepped in, tasked with rebuilding a strong, capitalist Russian state and establishing imperialist control over the neighboring countries. He came to power on the back of the second Chechen war. In 2008 the Russo-Georgian war left Russia with de-facto control of two of Georgia's regions.

With a new leader and new found confidence, Russia began flexing its imperialist muscles. Attempts using fraud, corruption and intimidation in favour of Russia's preferred candidate in the 2004 Presidential election triggered the Orange revolution of 2004/5. Similarly in 2014, Euromaidan was launched after the government suddenly switched from a pro-EU course to one tying economic interests closer to Russia. In both cases, they were fuelled by mass opposition to the corruption and authoritarianism of the then in power pro-Russian figures.

Sectarian confusion and the national question

Most importantly, the Orange revolution and Euromaidan were fuelled by opposition to the domination of Ukraine by Russia. Ukraine suffered both in the pre-1917-revolutionary Russian empire, then under the Stalinist dictatorship, in particular during forced collectivisation and the Stalinist purges. Clearly the desire of Ukrainians to defend their right to self determination must be an essential part of any dialectical analysis of the political situation, including the current war in Ukraine.

Yet increasingly, the dogmatism of the CWI/ISA denied any need to understand the national question in Ukraine. Even the far from Marxist military strategist von Clausewitz understood the importance of psychological factors involved in defending homes and territory from foreign invasion. This, of course, is contradicted by the ISA who in their latest article waste no time in stressing that “The current war in Ukraine has had very little in common with a genuine war of national and social liberation”.

This is the clearest possible example of what Trotsky in his [writings on Ukraine](#) in 1939 referred to when he wrote: “The sectarian simply ignores the fact that the national struggle, one of the most labyrinthine and complex but at the same time extremely important forms of the class struggle, cannot be suspended by bare references to the future world revolution.”

It is crystal clear that to analyse any war we should start by understanding the complex and dialectic interaction between the different imperialist forces, and those social forces driven mainly by a need to defend their rights to live free of occupation. As Trotsky put it in the “Transitional Programme” on the eve of WW2: “Imperialist war is the continuation and sharpening of the predatory politics of the bourgeoisie... But not all countries of the world are imperialist countries. On the contrary, the majority are victims of imperialism.”

Yet ignoring what both Lenin and Trotsky said, who argued that the approach of Marxists in the oppressor country must differ to that in oppressed countries, the sectarian approach today boils down to a one size fits all solution summed up in the call for “a mass internationalist, working class-centered antiwar movement that is consistent and opposes all sides in the inter-imperialist conflict” and for “the working class to take power out of the hands of the capitalist class and begin constructing a global socialist society”.

Correct demands, wrong approach

Both of these demands are absolutely correct and essential when presented as part of a transitional programme and revolutionaries should do all in their power so that they are realised. However, when they are presented in isolation they become completely devalued, and reflect a combination of pacifism and sectarianism.

This approach is not due to laziness, but as we saw in the [final statement on the Ukraine war passed by the ISA leadership](#) it was a conscious rejection of a transitional approach. Whilst the statement is in places correct, it leaves the impression that once

the war is over, the military occupation ended, only then the working class can organise to resolve other issues including the national question.

But what demonstrates that this impression is correct is what the ISA leadership refused to include in the statement, by voting down the following addition:

“Genuine self-determination for Ukraine, with the complete withdrawal of all Russian forces, can only be brought about by mass working class action, both in Ukraine and Russia, as well as internationally, to end the causes of the war, capitalism and its persistent drive to imperialist expansion. By driving all imperialist forces out of Ukraine, an independent working-class force would base itself on workers’ unity irrespective of nationality or language, arguing for international workers solidarity. Only such an approach, guaranteeing equal language rights and the right to autonomy, even if necessary, separation for regions, could cut across the attempts by the oligarchs and national/imperialist forces and their governments to use the national and language questions to divide the working class. In the same way a workers’ government would allow the people of Crimea to decide their own fate based on the withdrawal of all military forces, and the conduct of a constituent assembly in which all national groups on the peninsula are represented.”

It is because Radek had used a similar approach to that of the former ISA leadership that led Trotsky to suggest he had “skipped over the boundary that separates Marxism from opportunism, the revolutionary from the pacifist position.” Radek had argued that all that was needed to prevent or end war was for the global working class to put the bourgeois under pressure, saying that Trotsky was wrong for only taking “into consideration the proletarian revolution exclusively”.

Under certain objective conditions, when the bourgeois is in a weakened position, working-class movements can put the bourgeois under pressure and check its action, only for the bourgeois to restore its position at a later stage. To end war it is necessary to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

As Trotsky pointed out in [reply to Radek](#), an end to war, like the fate of an independent Ukraine, is indissolubly bound up with the world socialist revolution. But, he said, “this general perspective, ABC for a Marxist” is used by sectarians “to make a recipe of temporizing passivity and national nihilism. The triumph of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is the end-product of multiple movements, campaigns and battles, and not at all a ready-made precondition for solving all questions automatically.”

This clearly reveals the problem with the way the sectarians pose the question - yes they call for an international anti-war movement, yes they say this needs international socialism but they present no strategy or programme of how to transition between the two. In other words they present no bridge in the form of demands that can lead those who agree with the need to end war to develop the organisations armed with the political approach necessary to establish socialism.

Revolutionary defeatism misunderstood

Of course the sectarians comfort themselves by claiming to base themselves on Lenin's "revolutionary defeatism", but in doing so they miss the key lesson of Lenin's approach. Peter Taaffe, for example, in his [2014 article on Lenin and WW1](#) quotes Lenin's first iteration of "revolutionary defeatism" - "the defeat of the tsarist monarchy and its armywould be the lesser evil by far" and in [a later article](#) generalised this by saying it meant "preferring the victory of the enemy, rather than your own side".

But this is a crude and one-sided distortion of Lenin's position. Realising that his approach had been mistakenly interpreted as meaning he wanted the victory for Germany Lenin corrected this impression. Speaking at the Conference of the RSDLP Groups Abroad in March 1915 he explained that revolutionary defeatism applied in all imperialist countries.

The RSDLP at that time was still split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The latter supported the Russian government in the war and were dropping the banner of class struggle. It was in this context that Lenin explained that "The struggle against the government that conducts the imperialist war must not halt in any country before the possibility of that country's defeat in consequence of revolutionary propaganda".

In other words, Lenin was not arguing in a positive way for the victory of one's enemy or the defeat of one's own country, but that revolutionaries should continue to do all in their power to overthrow their own bourgeoisie **even if that meant** defeat of the country.

It was precisely because Lenin's supporters in Russia interpreted "revolutionary defeatism" correctly and stepped up their work in building the revolutionary alternative that the Bolsheviks were in a position to win the support of the working class in 1917.

It is the failure of sectarians to understand this that means genuine anti-war sentiments are sent down the blind avenue of pacifism disguised under radical demands for immediate disarmament and an end to militarism.

The national question during inter-imperialist war

Moreover, failure to analyse wars in a dialectical way, taking into account all the factors that caused the war and all the elements within it, leads the sectarians to view all wars as simply inter-imperialist without paying any attention to any national interests. As a consequence, this approach deprives those who are in the midst of war and genocide, in Ukraine or Palestine for example, of any agency in themselves struggling to defend their rights.

Criticising Junius [Rosa Luxemburg], Lenin scathingly dismissed the claim that in the epoch of imperialism there can be no national wars, which was: “very harmful in a practical political sense; it gives rise to the stupid propaganda for “disarmament ... and the still more stupid and downright reactionary indifference towards national movements. Such indifference becomes chauvinism when members of “Great” European nations, i.e., nations which oppress a mass of small and colonial peoples, declare with a learned air that “there can be no more national wars!”

In his arguments Lenin concluded that the Russian party was correct to oppose the slogan “Defence of the fatherland” in the imperialist war, while criticising the Polish party for their opposition to “Defence of the fatherland in general” including in national wars. Those fighting annexation in Belgium, Galicia, Armenia or Serbia, he said, would be justified in calling their revolt “defence of the fatherland” even if it involved the national bourgeoisie.

This of course in no way meant submitting to the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. “We must combine the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary programme and tactics on all democratic demands: a republic, a militia, the popular election of officials, equal rights for women, the self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, these demands—all of them—can only be accomplished as an exception, and even then in an incomplete and distorted form” Lenin continued.

Trotsky’s invaluable theses “[War and the Fourth International](#)” of 1934 appeared when a new inter-imperialist war was looming, a process which could only have been cut across by the victory of the proletariat in any key capitalist country, or by the political revolution in the Soviet Union.

He scathingly described the 'more "revolutionary" pacifists' who spoke of insurrection to end the war but understood nothing about how the class struggle and revolutionary party needed for an insurrection should be built. In the imperialist states, the revolutionaries' key strategic task was to turn the war into a civil war. In small nations and in regard to the national question in which the working class 'is not indifferent to its own nation', the revolutionary party must warn that reliance on national bourgeois forces and/or those linked with imperialism will lead to a new form of subjugation, and demoralisation of the working masses.

Rejecting the dogmatic approach to war

In this way it is clear that a non-dogmatic approach to analysing the war in Ukraine is to base it on the clear inter-imperialist conflict between western imperialism and Russia, as part of the wider unfolding global conflict, but also requires a clear understanding of the role played by the decades long struggle by the Ukrainian people for self-determination.

This leads to the conclusion that in the openly, including Russia, imperialist powers "revolutionary defeatism" as proposed by Lenin with the use of class struggle methods to oppose the imperialist aims of the ruling elite, and ultimately to overthrow the imperialist governments, is the best approach.

Naturally in Russia that means stepping up all support for the anti-war movement, whether during the first phase of protests against mobilisation, or support for the relatives of those mobilised who are demanding their loved ones can return home.

But in a country that has been occupied by an imperialist power, in which there has a decades long striving for genuine self determination, the emphasis has to be different - any programme that is posed has to give positive solutions to how a genuine independent working class alternative can be built, one that would not weaken or diminish the struggle for self-determination, but actually strengthen it, stressing that it cannot be achieved under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie, or with the support of other imperialist forces.

A more detailed explanation of what programme could be useful was outlined in the article "Restoring the revolutionary transitional approach to war" which was eventually and very reluctantly published in the last International Members' Bulletin 30a, before the ISA split. An edited, updated version follows.

What is a transitional approach?

In giving our fullest possible support and solidarity to those fighting oppression, we also have a responsibility to do everything possible to build working class organisations, with a revolutionary leadership.

This is necessary because the only way that Ukraine can be genuinely free is through revolutionary working class struggle, which would meet tremendous resistance from the imperialist powers, but would resonate hugely amongst the international working class, and lead to a real crisis in the Russian regime, as it would build bridges with the Russian working class and give it confidence to fight back against the Bonapartist regime.

Crucial to ensuring Ukraine's right to self-determination is the need for regime change in Russia. But changing the figurehead will not change the nature of the regime. Russian capitalism came into existence dripping in blood - in the first decade of its existence it waged two brutal wars in Chechnya, as well as conflicts in Georgia, Moldova and Central Asia, without even mentioning Yeltsin's brutal military suppression of his own Parliament.

Russian capitalism is merely an integral part of global capitalism. This is demonstrated by the approach of western imperialism which has regulated its level of support for Ukraine to ensure, at the same time, that the Russian regime can stay in power. Illusions that western imperialism is 'more democratic' and is itself against war have been dealt a serious blow by the increasing use of authoritarian methods and western imperialism's support for Israel's genocide of the Palestinians.

Now that Trump has taken leadership of the western imperialist camp, the rapacious, vulture-like nature of imperialism has been revealed to all. Willing to deal with the Kremlin while demanding access to Ukraine's natural resources, he has shown that imperialism will not support a genuinely independent Ukraine.

Once again it is becoming clear that to actually defeat the Kremlin - not deal it a blow from which it can later recover, maybe with a different leader - but actually get rid of the dictatorship and the capitalist system that created it, an organised struggle by the Russian working class is needed.

This may appear to be an unrealisable task in the current circumstances, but it is the only way to defeat the bonapartist clique. The first signs of the development of a wider working class protest were seen in the initial protests against war, and then mobilisation. Even though repression during the war has acted to suppress the number

of workplace protests, the number in 2025 already exceeds that reported in 2024 - many of which are due to the non-payment of wages. With new attacks on the rights of women and the LGBTQ+ community developing, alongside inflation and budget cuts, the potential for new workers' organisations is clear.

As has been clear from the start of the conflict, and is increasingly entering the consciousness of the Ukrainian working class, the complete defeat of the Russian occupation using military means alone is not possible. As negotiations stagger along, the most likely outcome will be a stalemate or frozen conflict, postponing for a period new attacks.

The significant early success in forcing the Russian forces to retreat from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson and elsewhere combined with the bloody and stubborn resistance preventing any real significant gains by the Russians in Donbas, albeit at a huge cost in lives and equipment, have demonstrated to the world the determination of Ukrainians to defeat the occupation.

But this determination has been undermined by the government's failure to mobilise the necessary industrial resources, willingness to agree economic reforms including privatisation with western powers, and the widespread corruption and incompetence at all levels of government. It has been unable to create divisions within Russia because its support from and for NATO has allowed the Kremlin to present the war as one in which Russia is fighting for its existence against western imperialism.

It is because Ukraine is seen as so close to the interests of western imperialism that confusion has been created amongst the working class internationally and undermined support for its struggle against Russian imperialism.

It would be a completely different story if the Ukrainian working class was to take control of the situation into its own hands, the working class internationally would assure maximum solidarity, including the supply of all it needs for the independent struggle of the workers of Ukraine in defense of its own interests. And as importantly such a government would be immediately attractive to millions of Russian workers and youth, and help to build the forces needed to bring down the Russian regime.

So in Ukraine today this means being prepared for a period to swim against the stream, searching amongst the advanced layers of the working class and youth who understand the need to break the reliance on the national bourgeois and military chiefs, and who can orientate to the workplaces, the trade-unions, and within the fighting units to build

an independent working-class leadership to challenge capital and defeat the Russian occupation.

The Ukrainian working class desperately needs strong and independent trade unions that oppose any worsening of labour rights, wages and pensions, as well as budget cuts. Instead of privatisation, key industries should be nationalised under workers' control with the expropriation of war profits, as well as the wealth of Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs used for reconstruction.

The attempts to build international solidarity between organisations of the working class, particularly trade unions are very important, although the narrow trade-unionist outlook of many western unions if transferred to Ukraine will limit the possibility for effective change. The workers' movement should be at the centre of the struggle of all oppressed, including the women who face increased exploitation at work, and the threat of new violence at home, as well as groups such as the LGBTQ+ community.

This includes ensuring that workers mobilised into the army do not lose their jobs and championing the right of independent organization of soldiers in trade unions and political groups. Demands would include the provision of all necessary supplies and protective equipment to soldiers before being sent to the front, for a limit on the length of mobilisation, for the election of soldiers' representatives to control conditions in barracks and the trenches, and the election of the officers, commanders and technical specialists by democratically elected soldiers' committees.

With negotiations now staggering on, any settlement that takes place without the complete withdrawal of Russian troops is, by definition, a denial of Ukraine's right to self-determination. As a minimum, the workers' movement should be campaigning for full transparency during negotiations around the demand for the complete withdrawal of Russian troops without annexations, the expropriation of the oligarch's wealth – both Russian and Ukrainian – to pay for the restoration of Ukraine, the annulment of all conditions and loan repayments demanded by Western imperialism.

Many workers internationally will welcome a peace deal, as it will be seen as lessening the threats to food supplies, and inflation, as well as easing the pressure for increased militarisation. But any deal that is based on the need for "peacekeepers" and "security guarantees" – whether provided by, the for now still, more liberal Western powers or authoritarian, and in the latter case full-on dictatorial, regimes such as Turkey and China will neither lessen these dangers, nor assure any long-term peace in Ukraine.

Socialists in all countries should support the struggle of the Ukrainian people against the Russian invasion and in defense of its right to self-determination, without in any way supporting the war aims of the imperialist powers.

Now governments are cutting back on resources to help refugees, and introducing racist policies in an attempt to divide the working class. We should insist that families who have had to flee should be welcomed, protected from profiteers, by guaranteeing them decent living conditions, education for the children and working conditions that are no less than those of the whole working class. This means stepping up united working class campaigning to ensure decent housing and jobs for all.

Rather than accept the claims by imperialist governments that they are helping Ukraine with military, humanitarian and financial aid, socialists should be exposing the real aims of these governments, revealing the real nature of the aid they are providing.

The delivery of solidarity to the Ukrainian working class should be done in such a way as to avoid any outcome that strengthens nationalist moods, leads to increased military spending, or boosts support for the ruling parties and imperialist blocs, even if only temporarily.

The only force capable of stopping this war, and destroying the conditions that lead to new wars, is international workers solidarity, workers of the world united in the struggle against their own national ruling classes, and on a global level against militarism, environmental destruction, imperialist warmongering and to replace the capitalist system that spawns them with a free, and voluntary federation of democratic socialist societies.

Since the start of the war however the left internationally has been divided into two camps. One wing, supporting Ukraine has campaigned for western imperialism to arm the country, the other - hiding behind an anti-war position - calls for an end to all arms supplies, ignoring the fact that this only harms Ukraine, as Russia has its own supplies of weaponry. Neither puts an independent class, that is revolutionary, position.

The latter, the sectarians, proud of their "revolutionary" principles start their dialogue with Ukrainian workers and youth by attacking their demands for western aid - in the same way as a sectarian who first approaches a workers' picket line immediately condemns their leaders. Any possibility of dialogue is quickly shut down. The former, while campaigning for imperialist weapons may begin by warning of the role of western

imperialism, but soon drop those warnings and create illusions that western imperialism is somehow better.

A revolutionary approach to begin a dialogue with Ukrainian workers and youth does not start by creating unnecessary barriers to dialogue, it means opening discussions with proposals and demands that show a way forward in their struggle. In supporting the armed defence of Ukrainian self-determination, the issue should not be separated from the need for the struggle to be led by the organized working class.

Until this happens, it is quite understandable that many Ukrainians believe they need weapons from the West to defeat the Russian occupation. The objective reality is that western imperialists will send weapons to Ukraine as long as, and only as long as it is in their interests to hold Russia at bay, and warn China to refrain from action.

Instead genuine solidarity to Ukraine's struggle could have been delivered, and far more effectively not by hanging on the the coat-tails of the imperialists, which in reality has little impact on the volume of weapons delivered, but by waging a militant campaign directed at the blocking of any trade with the Russian military machine - the oil currently being transported in 'grey ships' docking in Amsterdam and elsewhere, the microchips produced by Intel and others used in most Russian missiles. It has now been revealed that the drones used by Russia to bombard Ukraine day in, day out rely on US produced computers and Canadian navigation systems.

Such a campaign would have helped cripple the Russian war-machine, and exposed the hypocrisy of the western powers who publicly support Ukraine, while quietly continuing to help Russia arm itself. And, unlike the current Ukraine solidarity actions, could have been linked up with the attempts to block arms supplies to support Israel's genocide. It would boost a class appeal to the Russian working class to end the occupation because instead of Ukrainian workers pushing for more weapons to kill Russians, they could point to their attempts to restrict the number of Russian weapons that could be used to kill Ukrainians.

At the same time such an approach could be linked to a campaign against the political, economic and even military conditions attached to the weapons and other aid supplied by the Western imperialist powers. While Trump demands access to Ukraine's natural resources, the EU is greedily pushing for the sale of land to foreign companies, and the privatization of industry.

And it would undermine the current drive to escalate militarisation, and expand NATO, and expose how the profits of the arms manufacturers are being boosted.

Workers should not pay for the war. We call for militant action against any attempts to cut jobs, wages, social budgets, for all of Ukraine's external debts to be cancelled, and for all aid to be free of charge, without conditions. The energy, agro-business and arms companies should all be nationalized under workers' control and their horrendous profits expropriated to bring down energy and food prices.

If approached in this way our demands will help to expose the aims of imperialism and the Ukrainian bourgeoisie. It can be accompanied by patient explanation that the imperialists only support Ukraine for its own ends, that it is unreliable and will abandon Ukraine when it suits them.

These transitional demands create a basis for the unified struggle of the working class in Ukraine fighting Russian occupation, the working class in Russia suffering the effects of war and dictatorship, as well as the working class of NATO countries, who face increasing militarization, and attacks on their economic and increasingly political rights, as well as the proletariat in the less developed world who suffer poverty, authoritarian rule and ethnic conflicts which remain as the legacy of imperialist rule.

They lead the working class globally to the need to organize and fight against capitalism and imperialism in all their forms, and establish a revolutionary alternative based on an end to reactionary nation states replaced by a democratic and voluntary federation of socialist republics.

What is a transitional approach?

~~Whilst giving our fullest possible support and solidarity to those fighting oppression, we also have a responsibility to do everything possible to build working class organisations, with a revolutionary leadership.~~

~~That means participating in the actions and activities of the wider movement, but being prepared for a period to swim against the stream, searching amongst the advanced layers of the working class and youth who understand the need to break the reliance on the national bourgeois and military chiefs, and who can orientate to the workplaces, the trade unions, and within the fighting units to build an independent working class leadership to challenge capital and defeat the Russian occupation.~~

Rather than creating unnecessary barriers to dialogue with Ukrainian workers and youth, it means opening discussions with proposals and demands that show a way forward in their struggle:

As is becoming increasingly clear, defeating the Russian forces using military means is not possible. As the negotiations progress, the most likely outcome will be a stalemate or frozen conflict, postponing for a period new attacks:

The only way that Ukraine can be genuinely free is through revolutionary working class struggle, which would meet tremendous resistance from the imperialist powers, but would resonate hugely amongst the international working class, and lead to a real crisis in the Russian regime, as it would build bridges with the Russian working class and give it confidence to fight back against the Bonapartist regime:

The Ukrainian government is continuing its anti-working class policies and, in conjunction with its imperialist allies, is planning more for the future. Government advisors talk of “creating the foundations for rapid economic growth” by cutting spending, legalising zero-hour contracts and overhauling the labour code—all euphemisms for attacking working conditions. The privatisation programme suspended at the start of the war has been restored. As if this wasn’t enough, now Trump is making an openly imperialist grab for Ukraine’s rare earths and other natural resources:

Support for workers’ organisation in Ukraine

In this situation, the Ukrainian working class desperately needs to build and strengthen independent trade unions that oppose any worsening of labour rights, wages and pensions, as well as budget cuts. They should ensure that workers mobilised do not lose their jobs. Instead of privatisation, key industries should be nationalised under workers’ control. They should fight for the expropriation of war profits, and for the wealth of Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs to be used for reconstruction:

Building international solidarity between organisations of the working class, particularly trade unions is very important. It should be stressed though that the narrow trade unionist outlook of many western unions if transferred to Ukraine will limit the possibility for effective change. The workers’ movement needs to place itself at the centre of the struggle of all oppressed, including the women who face increased exploitation at work, and the threat of new violence at home, as well as groups such as the LGBTQ+ community:.

The vast majority serving in the Ukrainian army are workers or from a working class background. Over time they can become a threat to capitalist rule, as they discuss in the trenches, know how to handle weapons and defend their communities, particularly as they experience the difference between their sacrifices and those of the incompetent officers. But unless challenged by a conscious political intervention in the army, its whole hierarchical structure, its strategy and tactics, its outlook and methods will remain those of a bourgeois military.

Workers' organisations need to champion the right of independent organization of soldiers in trade unions and political groups, the provision of all necessary supplies and protective equipment to soldiers before being sent to the front, for a limit on the length of mobilisation, for the election of soldiers' representatives to control conditions in barracks and the trenches, the election of the officers, commanders and technical specialists by democratically elected soldiers' committees and for the formation of democratically elected local committees (rada) involving trade union, community and soldiers representatives to oversee the supply and distribution of materials and weapons for the front and within communities.

If the Ukrainian working class was to take control of the situation into its own hands, the working class internationally would assure maximum solidarity, including the supply of all it needs for the independent struggle of the workers of Ukraine in defense of its own interests.

The only force capable of stopping this war, and destroying the conditions that lead to new wars, is international workers solidarity, workers of the world united in the struggle against their own national ruling classes, and on a global level against militarism, environmental destruction, imperialist warmongering and to replace the capitalist system that spawns them with a free, and voluntary federation of democratic socialist societies.

Looming negotiations

With Zelensky's strategy based on a military struggle increasingly unlikely to end the Russian occupation, without an independently organised working class capable of pressurising the regime, any negotiations will only serve the interests of the different imperialist powers, and the subservient Ukrainian ruling elite will have to accept what they decide.

Many workers internationally will welcome a peace deal, as it will be seen as lessening the threats to food supplies, and inflation, as well as easing the pressure for increased militarisation. But any deal that is based on the need for “peacekeepers” and “security guarantees”—whether provided by for now still more liberal Western powers or authoritarian, and in the latter case full-on dictatorial, regimes such as Turkey and China will neither lessen these dangers, nor assure any long term peace in Ukraine.

By definition, any settlement that takes place without the complete withdrawal of Russian troops is a denial of Ukraine’s right to self-determination. As a minimum, negotiations should take place with full transparency, leading to the complete withdrawal of Russian troops without annexations, the expropriation of the oligarch’s wealth—both Russian and Ukrainian—to pay for the restoration of Ukraine, the annulment of all conditions and loan repayments demanded by Western imperialism.

As long as the current left and workers organisations tailor their activities to avoid direct confrontation with the Zelensky government, the right-wing Ukrainian nationalists are using the war to further their agenda. They are assisted in this by the Kremlin, with its vitriolic anti-Ukrainian propaganda.

The working class has different interests to those of the oligarch elite and right-wing nationalists — it needs decent living standards, safe homes, an efficient health service and education system with democratic rights and freedoms and an end to oppression, inequality, exploitation and the rule of the oligarchs. To get these requires not just the defeat of the Russian occupation, but the overthrow of capitalism in Ukraine and internationally.

While right-wing nationalists and the capitalist governments defend Ukraine’s ‘territorial integrity’, the working class has no interest in forcing people to live in Ukraine. Right-wing nationalism is, in fact, a poison in that it lowers the consciousness of workers, making them feel that they are separate, different and masking their common international identity of interest.

In supporting the right of Ukraine to self-determination, and to defend itself from Russian aggression we warn that genuine independence will not be possible if tied to the interests of western imperialism, or those of the Ukrainian oligarchs and capitalism. It will only be possible through struggle by the united working class, the building of a working class political alternative to the Zelensky government and capitalism and by taking control of Ukraine in the interests of the working class.

~~Within a genuinely independent Ukraine, there should be no discriminatory language or culture laws, no single state language. Regions that wish autonomy or even secession should have that right. That could only be realized with the withdrawal of all military forces from the region, a period to allow refugees and those kicked out of their homes to return and genuine negotiations and referendums conducted by locally elected commissions to oversee democratic voting. It is clear there is only one force in society capable of organizing that — a working class uniting all ethnic groups in common struggle.~~

~~Socialists in all countries should support the struggle of the Ukrainian people against the Russian invasion and in defense of its right to self-determination, without in any way supporting the war aims of the imperialist powers.~~

~~Now governments are cutting back on resources to help refugees, and introducing racist policies in an attempt to divide the working class. We should insist that families who have had to flee should be welcomed, protected from profiteers, by guaranteeing them decent living conditions, education for the children and working conditions that are no less than those of the whole working class. This means stepping up united working class campaigning to ensure decent housing and jobs for all.~~

~~Rather than accept the claims by imperialist governments that they are helping Ukraine with military, humanitarian and financial aid, socialists should be exposing the real aims of these governments, revealing the real nature of the aid they are providing.~~

~~The delivery of solidarity to the Ukrainian working class should be done in such a way as to avoid any outcome that strengthens nationalist moods, leads to increased military spending, or boosts support for the ruling parties and imperialist blocs, even if only temporarily.~~

~~This means opposition to the aims and actions of the different imperialist blocs, demanding the dissolution of military alliances such as NATO, AUKUS, and those ████████████████████ partnerships established in the interests of Chinese and Russian imperialism such as RCEP, BRICS.~~

~~The sanctions imposed by the imperialist powers against their opponents are a form of collective punishment against a nation, seriously affecting the living standards of ordinary working people, while the oligarchs and warmongers find ways to by-pass the sanctions. They allow the reactionary regimes to promote the idea of the whole nation being under attack. In fact the BBC has now revealed that the NATO countries have paid~~

far more to support Russia in the war by purchasing its energy, despite sanctions, than the aid they have given to Ukraine.

Sanctions imposed by the working class however are different. Rather than aligning with the government who are sending arms to Ukraine, trade unions and workers' organizations could be far more effective by using the maximum possible monitoring of shipments and transactions, to expose how big business is avoiding sanctions, and act to ensure that nothing which facilitates this brutal invasion and reactionary war by Russia is shipped. [REDACTED]

When supporting the armed defence of Ukrainian self-determination we should not separate the issue from the need for the struggle to be led by the organized working class. The bitter experience of three years of war has shown that the national bourgeoisie led by Zelensky, hugely supported by western imperialism, is not capable of militarily ending the Russian occupation, let alone assuring a genuinely free Ukraine, as long as capitalism exists. Only if the Ukrainian working class steps up, politically and organisationally, can this situation be changed. Until this happens, it is quite understandable that many Ukrainians believe they need weapons from the West to defeat the Russian occupation.

The objective reality is that western imperialists will send weapons to Ukraine as long as, and only as long as it is in their interests to hold Russia at bay, and warn China to refrain from action. It is therefore unfortunate that a significant section of the reformist left quickly lined up with imperialist forces to support assisting Ukraine with weapons, without linking the question to the need for independent working-class action. Now the far right in a number of countries have been able to exploit the discontent amongst a significant section of the working class at the money spent on weapons when the health and education systems are in such crisis.

Rather than hang on the coat tails of the imperialists, which in reality has had little impact on the volume of weapons delivered, a militant campaign directed at the blocking of any trade with the Russian military machine—the oil currently being transported in 'grey ships' docking in Amsterdam and elsewhere, the microchips produced by Intel and others used in most Russian missiles—would have been far more effective, and exposed the hypocrisy of the western powers who publicly support Ukraine, while quietly continuing to help Russia arm itself.

~~Such a campaign, unlike the current Ukraine solidarity actions, could have been linked up with the attempts to block arms supplies to support Israel's genocide.~~

~~This approach undermines the capability of the Russian occupation, still being kept viable by the actions of western capitalism. It would boost a class appeal to the Russian working class to end the occupation because instead of Ukrainian workers pushing for more weapons to kill Russians, they could point to their attempts to restrict the number of Russian weapons that could be used to kill Ukrainians.~~

~~The political, economic and even military conditions attached to the weapons supplied by the Western imperialist powers to the Zelensky government demonstrate even further that they are only acting in their interests. They greedily push for the sale of land to foreign companies, and the privatization of industry. The war is used to increase militarisation, and expand NATO, while feeding their own military machines and to boost the profits of the arms manufacturers.~~

~~Workers should not pay for the war. We call for militant action against any attempts to cut jobs, wages, social budgets, for all of Ukraine's external debts to be cancelled, and for all aid to be free of charge, without conditions. The energy, agro-business and arms companies should all be nationalized under workers' control and their horrendous profits expropriated to bring down energy and food prices.~~

~~If approached in this way our demands will help to expose the aims of imperialism and the Ukrainian bourgeoisie. It can be accompanied by patient explanation that the imperialists only support Ukraine for its own ends, that it is unreliable and will abandon Ukraine when it suits them.~~

~~Most of all international solidarity means building real links with workers' organisation in Ukraine as they fight the labour laws, wage cuts and privatisation and to assist them directly with real material and humanitarian aid, helping it to create its own alternative organisations and independent political line. This is the only force, linked with the international working class that can ensure genuine self determination, and a Ukraine free from exploitation, repression and militarism, run in the interests of the working class, not the oligarchs and their imperialist (whether Western or Russian) backers.~~

~~These transitional demands create a basis for the unified struggle of the working class in Ukraine fighting Russian occupation, the working class in Russia suffering the effects of war and dictatorship, as well as the working class of NATO countries, who face increasing militarization, and attacks on their economic and increasingly political rights,~~

as well as the proletariat in the less developed world who suffer poverty, authoritarian rule and ethnic conflicts which remain as the legacy of imperialist rule. They lead the working class globally to the need to organize and fight against capitalism and imperialism in all their forms, and establish a revolutionary alternative based on an end to reactionary nation states replaced by a democratic and voluntary federation of socialist republics.