12
05 2025

Internationalist Notes

Broadsheet of the Internationalist Workers' Group

MAY DAY 2025
AGAINST CAPITALIST CRISIS, AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR
NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR

May Day, 2025 finds capitalism, no matter who's in charge, drenching the world with the working class's blood. It's now 50 years since the end of capitalism's post-war boom. After decades of declining profit rates in the "real economy" the situation is becoming more and more dire as war becomes increasingly the only option for states to confront capitalism's insoluble crisis. Imperialist wars are burning across the world from Ukraine, the Middle East, the African Sahel, the Congo and elsewhere, and a generalised world war looms on the horizon. The international working class has no interest in these wars caused by the capitalist system. They bring increased class repression, privation, displacement, death and genocide: all for a system far past its historical sell-by date. This crisis has no reformist solution: the solution of the working class can only be revolution.

What Peace?

Two of the bloodiest conflicts within global imperialism, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, were promised to be ended by Trump within a short time of his taking office. Already, it is clear that "peace" for Trump (and the rest of the capitalist class) means more bloodshed down the road.

We find in Trump's talks with Putin and public dressing-down of Zelensky a chance for the United States to redirect its resources towards its main imperialist rival, China, while, with Putin, completely plundering Ukraine. While Zelensky is pressured to concede Ukraine's mineral wealth to U.S. companies (and make no mistake, the Biden presidency was committed to doing the same by having BlackRock and JPMorgan Chase oversee Ukraine's post-war reconstruction), Russia is looking to seize eastern Ukraine's large natural and industrial resources.

Though it is clear that the war in Ukraine was fought between NATO and Russia, with the American strategy of making Russia fight a war of attrition down "to the last Ukrainian," the outcome is less certain. Whether Trump's plan to break the alliance between a now-weakened Russia and China is possible will be borne out by future events. Surely, the European capitalists are concerned as their "coalition of the willing" pledges billions of dollars in further arms to Ukraine and the EU shifts towards a rearmament strategy.

In Gaza, too, "peace" was never more than a cover for massacre. During the ceasefire from January 19th to March 17th, at least 170 Palestinians in Gaza were killed, and, in just one week after Israel began its bombardment again, over 700 were killed. And as Trump was gesturing at a ceasefire in Gaza on one hand, he was devising plans to remove the whole of the Palestinian population in Gaza – many of whom are in refugee camps at the border with Egypt – in order to create a "riviera of the Middle East", if only he could force Egypt and Jordan to accept a deal on the logistics of the ethnic cleansing of the region.

The Road to WWIII

Ultimately, despite the rich talk, the United States has no interest in peace. The seemingly strange manoeuvrings of the Trump administration toward Russia, and also Iran through a new nuclear deal, are really about isolating China. The Chinese state is the true leader in this alliance of convenience which the US intends to break up. For almost two decades, US policy toward China has thus been one of belligerence, and the current tactics under Trump are no different than those under Obama and Biden – protectionism against the Chinese economy, the undermining of China's allies, and the preparation of the NATO countries for war. Chinese economic and military might is seen by the US as the greatest threat to their hegemony. The People's Liberation Army is the world's largest military, and the Chinese economy surpassed that of the US in 2014 when adjusted for purchasing power parity and is expected to surpass the US gross domestic product in the coming decade. In spite of its strength, China has seen indicators of slow growth and has for years sought to expand its markets in fierce competition with the US. In the pursuit of an ever-expanding need for profit, both powers find themselves at odds and these differences are irreconcilable.

It is not clear that US rapprochement with Russia will work, as it could very well fail and leave Europe more vulnerable as the US begins withdrawing its military support for the continent. In any case, the motive is to drive a wedge between Russia and China and this is something that is easier said than done. Russia is economically reliant on China, as China has been its most powerful public backer and has aided Russia by sidestepping sanctions. Both have a shared interest in promoting trade outside of the dollar. The same goes for Iran–despite its power in the Middle East region, Iran is hobbled by international sanctions. Although China has supported Iran with sweetheart fossil fuel deals which help to hold the Iranian state together, the Iranian economy is weakening and its political sway in the Middle East is being undermined as its proxy forces are being weakened.

The War-Proofing of the Capitalist State

The civilian Russian economy has been hollowed out by the long and bloody war in Ukraine. It has been able to survive years of conflict by converting to a wartime economy–one where the defense industry is central to the economy as a whole, and where self-reliance is prioritized to weather any sanction or potential blockade. In times of world conflict, global trade takes a major hit and production is brought home where possible. Countries like Russia and China are more prepared for a global conflict in this sense–whereas Europe and the United States are fully dependent on international trade. Additionally, although defense spending in Europe has been increasing in the past decade, it has been perceived by its US ally as inadequate. And while social services have seen a decline over the last half century, there has been consistent spending and indeed deficit spending to keep social services running.

Trump is making no secret of the fact that 'the Europeans' are going to have to pay for their own defense. For the US and Europe, the turn toward a wartime economy has already begun in the form of promises to spend big on defense. Europe has outlined a planned 800 Billion Euros in additional defense spending, approaching the nearly $850 Billion called for in defense in the US Budget. Of course, Europe and the US are also reeling due to the massive spending required to handle



Covid, placing many of these countries well past the 100% mark for debt-to-GDP ratio, something that serves as an indicator of future crisis. War looms on the horizon whether there is room in the budget or not, so it is likely that further austerity measures will be levied on the working class, who will not only bear the brunt of lost services but who will also be expected to head to the front lines in the event that war breaks out.

In the US, the Trump administration has favored extreme protectionism combined with a closed-door immigration policy and deep cuts to the Federal government's non-military spending. This "fortress America" approach breaks every rule for what has kept capitalism profitable for the past fifty years. However, this autarkic United States would be capable of producing the necessary equipment to fight a war with China without the concern for supply chain disruption. Even the outwardly bizarre threats to annex Greenland and Canada (and aid the attempt to secure control of newly opened Arctic sea routes), as well as Panama can be rationalized as attempts to control critical resources for defense production and to gain total control over trade in the Western Hemisphere. By imposing high tariffs on China and allies in Europe and Canada, the US can break its reliance on overseas trade and force its allies to do the same, it will be the working class that pay the price. Add to this that the United States is preparing cuts in programs such as Medicaid, Social Security, and foreign aid simply because there is very little else left to cut to make room for soaring defense spending in the years to come. Again, it will be the working class who will be expected to pay the price.

Internationalism in the Face of Rising Nationalism

These recent conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, fought between proxies of the US and China, have wrought great suffering but still pale in comparison to the possibilities of a direct confrontation–what could only be described as a world war if it were to break out. There remains one question we must ask ourselves if the world gets dragged into a war of this scale: Which side are we on?

Nationalism is surging throughout the world as we appear ready to descend into barbarity. The call will always look the same; it is necessary to sacrifice, ration, take a cut in wages, or perhaps get conscripted. Those who do the bidding of the capitalists will be given high praise as "patriots" or "defenders of democracy". But there is no greater lie than the lie of nationalism. Even the nationalism of the underdog is a deception meant to herd workers into the capitalists' camp. Any fight against capitalist war will have to recognize that the working class must fight against the entire system of imperialism, in which each and every country falls into. The antidote for nationalism is internationalism. It will never make sense for the working class to kill one another on behalf of their rulers. It will never be the capitalist's caskets lowered en masse into the cold graves in the military cemeteries.

To answer the question above, our side is the working class in its war waged against the capitalists. The international working class must resist the call for the slaughter of its class and turn its ire on the capitalists who give them their marching orders. This May Day we should look to those workers who chose to fight the class war and who collectively brought down empires before they could fire another shot at their comrades, as in the First World War. Whilst today we can take heart from current examples of resistance, such as the Palestinians protesting against Hamas, the Israeli soldiers refusing to fight, and the Russians and Ukrainians deserting from the war fronts. Despite their limitations, they are an important signal for the future.

The fight begins anew with every strike, every moment of self-activity of the working class. Our class is constantly facing general attacks from the capitalist class, be it precarity or bullets, inflation or bombings. What is needed is a general fight back of the entire working class, outside of the confines of the unions so that it can fight as a single, solidified, class.

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However, for this fight to be carried to its logical conclusion, the revolutionary victory of the working class and the end of this system of profit and war, each step must be linked to our class's political objectives. It is for this reason that the ICT has helped form No War But Class War (NWBCW) committees across the globe, grouping together internationalists of various political tendencies to defend working class politics within the wider struggle which so desperately needs it. Even more necessary is a true political reference point within the working class, one that is able to build deep roots inside of it and lead it towards the revolutionary finale of this nightmarish saga. With the formation of an international revolutionary party, the slogan No War But Class War will one day be made reality by the revolutionary action of the entire working class.

No War but Class War!



THE ONLY WAY OUT: YOUR OWN STRENGTH!

On this international day of the working class, it should not be a groundbreaking revelation that we are (and have been) facing a drastic attack on our living standards. Inflation, speed-ups, rent hikes, tariffs, deportations, a possible recession, and the threat of war all make us wonder if we are able to carry on this way.

But what do we do? The answer, obviously, is not individual. You can't negotiate with your boss one-on-one to do away with the systemic pressures bearing down on our class. The answer, then, lies in the collective struggle of the working class. A new problem arises: if things are so bad, where is this mass working class struggle? Why is the working class, on the whole, so passive? This line of questioning leads us to the ICT's position that the working class, as of now, is fighting the capitalist class in their own game. It must instead rediscover and invent its own proper tools for class struggle, the working class's self-organization built on its own strength outside of and beyond control of the unions.

What is self-organization?

The term may seem abstract, but for us self-organization simply refers to the struggle against the capitalist class as coordinated by the workers themselves, rather than this task being delegated to some corporate body that claims to represent them. Because it's such a broad term, self-organization varies greatly in both form and scope. Historic examples range from mass assemblies and strike committees that organized specific struggles to councils or soviets that ran the political and economic affairs of revolutions.

Why these organizations are so important will be discussed later, but for now it is critical to note that the foundations of self-organization are not far-fetched- they are present in the current conditions of the life of our class. At our interventions in strikes, we have often encountered militant workplaces full of workers with different ideas of how to win the strike. What was typically lacking was their coordination and organization to actually change the strike's course.

The first steps can be extremely simple. Creating an email chain or group chat of your coworkers. Meeting at a café before work or at a bar after work. Instead of marching back and forth on the picket line for hours while waiting for word from the union rep, take some time to discuss strike tactics. What is important is to open up a space where workers can rely on their own strength and act accordingly.

Why is self-organization so preferential?

We argue that self-organization is the only way the proletariat can adequately fight back against the capitalist class. It unlocks a whole new terrain for a struggle as a class, allowing for new militant tactics, overcoming sectoral divisions, and transforming a purely economic struggle into a political struggle.

The workers' struggle is dominated by the trade unions, permanent organizations designed to negotiate wages, benefits, working conditions, in effect, how our ability to work is sold to the capitalists. Though the unions were once defensive organizations of the working class, they are now bound by a thousand ties to the state and its legal apparatus due to their permanent nature. In a word, they've been captured by our enemy.

At best, unions blunt the edge of workers' struggles and recuperate them back onto "legal" (read: bourgeois) terrain. At worst, they are the direct and most efficient enforcers of attacks on our living standards. How many strikes are killed before they ever began, only for raises below inflation and cuts to benefits to be rushed through "negotiating" over the heads of workers? Negotiating against the working class as to how much they are to lose, more like. How often is it that the unions limit when and how to strike based on legal restrictions? The unions depend on this framework, they operate on ground alien to our struggle.

Opposed to the charades of workers' "representation," self-organization is the struggle of the workers themselves, based on their real demands and real capacity to fight. Fighting on our own terrain opens up a whole avenue of new tactics. Instead of having to wait years for the collective bargaining agreement to elapse, organized workers can strike on a dime against fresh assaults on their living conditions. Workers at a restaurant can, if banded together, threaten a strike against sexual harassment from the manager, win, and be still ready for tomorrow's battle. The raises won two years ago to combat inflation will no longer jeopardize the demands for protection from the next economic crisis. The point is to keep the initiative always in the hands of the workers.

With self-organization, the strike itself becomes a much more dynamic and powerful tool of struggle. Most strikes today are guided by what is legal, or worse, what is safe. This must change so that strikes are defined by the real balance of forces of classes. How to direct the strike can become something decided upon by the workers themselves, after taking into account just how much they can get away with and what is most effective. This can be completely mundane, such as, during a strike at a library, having your family and friends check out the maximum number of books and return them all at once to swamp management, or extreme such as sabotaging the subway system during a mass strike of hundreds of thousands.

What does self-organization lead to?

Since the success of a self-organized struggle depends on the collective power and strength of the workers, what becomes critical is that our class is able to struggle beyond sectoral divisions. It is not sufficient that the teachers organize as teachers, the gig-workers as gig-workers, the laborers as laborers, the bartenders as bartenders, and so on. The unions thrive on this division, with some workplaces having over four different unions, but the working class does not. Not only does our power grow exponentially once different workers of a single workplace unite (the cashiers and the janitors, the masons and the roofers), but we find its ultimate expression in the struggle as a class. Each strike brings out demands that are shared widely amongst our class, and also the potential for it to blossom beyond any one workplace. Workers everywhere are being attacked by the same crisis, workers everywhere should therefore fight back as one.

The generalization of the struggle beyond sectoral divisions would open up new political possibilities, as shown by the history of our class. The highest points of the working class's political independence from the capitalist class, where a new historical agenda could be posed, corresponded with mass generalized movements. From strike committees to regional workers' councils, struggles took on a political character against the capitalist system. No longer a defensive reaction to the constant ways the standards of living are eroded, the working class struggle shifted to an offensive in the fight for a new system free of class oppression.

For those of us who believe that battling symptoms is not a cure, who recognize that fundamental, revolutionary change is the only true escape from the predicament we find ourselves in, and who find only the class-conscious proletariat capable of making that change, self-organization is of utmost importance. The working class's historic mission is to overturn this capitalist system by taking power and installing a classless, moneyless society, communism. This can only be done through the proletariat's mass action, ultimately a movement of billions. The connection between this future revolutionary action and the need for self-organization today should be clear enough.

We must keep in mind that the proletariat self-organizing its struggle, while necessary, is not sufficient to get out of this mess. Equally needed for our defensive struggles to be transformed into an offensive struggle against the capitalist class and its state is a political reference point and leadership formed on the basis of revolutionary politics. An international party of the proletariat that can have deep roots within the class struggle will be able to directly politicize the mass movement and sharpen it so that the blade is aimed at the heart of the capitalist system.

It is a long road to there from here, and we are aware that the workers who take up struggle by their own actions will face many difficulties. This does not make that step any less necessary. If you broadly agree with what you've read so far, and are interested in intervening within the wider class struggle, consider reaching out.

Who We Are

"The IWG stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organizations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organization - a 'party' for want of a better word - not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation. As the working class, the majority of the world's population, is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system, it will have to unite and overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites."

The Internationalist Workers' Group is the US affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

For more information about our organization and answers to frequently asked questions: https://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us

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Internationalist Notes, Volume 1, Number 12, Spring 2025
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