

Against militarism and imperialist war

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Capitalism repeatedly causes wars. Hundreds of millions died in the wars of the last century. A third world war would be unimaginably destructive, threatening the very survival of our species. The USA and its NATO allies resort to bloody air attacks and full scale invasions to control oilfields, strategically important areas and generally to intimidate the subordinate states of their informal empire.

Between wars, a vast proportion of social production is devoted to 'defence' spending. Vast areas of land are made unusable or highly dangerous with minefields, toxic chemicals and radiation. In 1991, the world's rulers proclaimed the end of war and a vast 'peace dividend'. Yet, only a decade on, the USA is leading the world into a new wave of rearmament. Only capitalism's final and total abolition can bring peace to the world.

In all countries, the working class must insist 'not a man or woman, not a cent for the military machine'. In the imperialist countries, 'defence of the homeland' is a gigantic fraud to get the workers to defend the ill-gotten gains of their own oppressors 'stolen both from themselves and from the workers and poor of the oppressed countries. The words of the Communist Manifesto remain completely valid: 'the working class has no fatherland'. The workers of all countries are sisters and brothers. If we need our international solidarity and organisation in times of peace, we need them all the more in time of war.

But the resistance of the countries exploited by imperialism to its attacks is justified and must be supported by the world's workers 'even when brutal military dictators lead this resistance. It is not these regimes that we support but the victory of their countries and their peoples over imperialism.

In the imperialist countries, the working class must use all the methods of the class struggle to work actively for the withdrawal, retreat and defeat of 'their own' armed forces. We do so by building a huge anti-war movement based on the mass organisations of the working class, and rallying around it young people, women, the progressive middle classes and the immigrant communities.

This movement will probably contain many people motivated by religion and by pacifism. Whilst we will march alongside them against the bosses' wars, we are not ourselves pacifists. We do not spread the illusion that war can be abolished under capitalism if men and women of all classes simply will it. We ourselves do not condemn all wars or all those who wage them. We support the resistance struggles, including full-scale wars, by the exploited and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors.

Britain's war against Argentina over the Malvinas, that of the US-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War, that of the US and its allies in Afghanistan, pursued predatory goals. Such wars can do no good for the working class at home and only strengthen reactionary forces abroad. Workers should campaign for their rulers' defeat in all these wars.

Should the imperialist powers once more come to blows with one another 'as happened twice in the last century' workers must be unswerving in their opposition to their rulers' war, continuing the class struggle.

Whilst not working for the victory of the other side, defeat for our rulers would be a lesser evil than a victory gained with the workers' support.

The sufferings of the masses ? due to casualties, destruction and hunger ? will lead to open hatred for the war. Thus, our slogan is not for ?peace? but for ?revolution? and ?all power to the workers? ? in order to put an end to the war.

The reformist mass organisations become ferocious patriots once war comes into view. The union bureaucrats demand that workers' gains and rights should be sacrificed wholesale to the needs of the ?nation? ? speeding up production and suspending the right to strike. Here, our slogan is, ?the main enemy is at home?. By intensifying the class struggle, defending every working class gain, making no sacrifices of wages and conditions, we aim to turn the imperialist war into a civil war.

In the event of war between semi-colonial countries, such as India and Pakistan we do not support the victory of either state and continue to prosecute the class struggle irrespective of any consequences this has for the war effort. Nevertheless, concrete conditions may alter this: if one combatant is acting as an agent for imperialism and the other defending its independence, then it is necessary to defend the latter.

In no case can we support imperialist intervention even when ? as in Rwanda, Bosnia or Kosova ? the pretext is to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide, to restore democracy and human rights or deliver humanitarian aid. We warn the oppressed not to call for such intervention, not to make alliances with the imperialists, not to express the slightest confidence in them and to demand their withdrawal.

The ability of the imperialists' war machine to massacre millions at a stroke strikes fear and alarm into the hearts of billions. Faced with this threat, left reformists and pacifists preach the need for world disarmament through the United Nations and the banishing of war from the planet. This, however, leaves unanswered the questions, ?How are our rulers to be disarmed and by what means??

They will never give up their arms voluntarily as a result of a vote of the United Nations or in an international disarmament conference. That they must be disarmed is certain. But who can disarm them? Who is powerful enough? Only the working class and the oppressed masses can do this.

How? By social revolution! By wresting control of the armies and police forces from the generals and by winning over the soldiers and destroying the paramilitary police bodies. These are not defenders of the people but instruments of repression at home and of plunder abroad. In times of social crisis they are the weapons of dictatorship. They will have to be replaced by the armed people.

When movements which challenge and undermine armaments programmes mobilise tens of thousands of workers and youth in direct action, revolutionaries fight in the front rank of such actions. We argue at the same time against the utopian slogan of ?disarmament? and for the need to take the weapons from the hands of the ruling class by taking away their control over the men and women who wield them, overthrowing the general staffs along with the capitalists.

The war industries are immensely profitable for the ruling class. We fight to expose their business secrets, to confiscate their military profits and to expropriate them under workers' control. In opposition to their obscene armaments programme, we demand a programme of useful public works.

Even in times of peace, the imperialists construct pacts to defend their own interests, by the threat of military intervention. We demand the dissolution of all imperialist dominated military alliances ? and, in the first rank, NATO. All secret treaties and agreements should be exposed and published.

We denounce the mistreatment of soldiers by their officers. We support the struggle for full citizens' rights for soldiers, the setting up of soldiers' committees and unions, the demand for the election of officers.

We oppose the draft and military service under the control of the bourgeois state and its officer corps. Instead, we demand universal military training under the control of the workers and popular organisations. However, where there is universal conscription we, the revolutionaries, join the armed forces to carry out revolutionary agitation among the working class conscripts. A class that wishes to free itself from slavery must learn military skills.

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