



A New Year and the need for a new International

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As we enter 2022, the struggle for the redivision of the world between the old and the recently 'promoted' imperialist powers is intensifying.

The NATO states, under US leadership, are threatening further economic sanctions against Russia, which is massing its troops on the border of Ukraine with the declared aim of blocking any further NATO expansion on its eastern and southern borders. The old and new Cold War alliance aims to bring its geostrategic rival to its knees. Though Russia under Putin is still militarily a 'great power?', it is much weaker economically and vulnerable to the massive sanctions that the US and the EU can deploy.

Bilateral talks between Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin, plus formal NATO-Russia negotiations, form the diplomatic accompaniment to this inter-imperialist confrontation. Tit-for-tat expulsions of embassy staff, mutual accusations of disinformation and propaganda lies, preparations for war and a new arms race, illustrate the potential for this new Cold War, to explode into a hot one.

Behind the growing antagonism in Eastern Europe, and in many other regions of the world, lies the central antagonism between the USA and China, which is becoming more acute in the Pacific and is increasingly determining international relations.

This struggle over access the markets, raw materials, production hubs and trade routes threatens to take on increasingly dangerous forms in 2022, whether in Europe, the Middle East, in a new 'Scramble for Africa' or in the confrontation over Taiwan.

Exactly what forms this conflict will take, to what extent the EU, under German and French hegemony, will succeed in consolidating itself as a third great power, will ultimately be decided within the arena of class struggle, something that cannot itself be settled without massive political crises.

Despite the defeat of Trump and his replacement by Biden, the world has not become more peaceful and US policy has not become less aggressive. Biden only presents his version of "America First" differently, as a struggle of an ostensibly progressive democratic camp against the "dictatorships".

It would be difficult to deny the Bonapartist character of the Chinese and Russian political regimes or not to sympathise with the campaigners against national oppression and for democratic rights there. The dismantling of democratic rights, increasing surveillance, internal nationalist mobilisation, however, also characterise many of the Western democracies, not to mention their vassal regimes in Eastern Europe, Latin America or the Middle East.

The numerous barbaric interventions, the sealing of external borders and their brutal enforcement by the USA, Britain and Fortress Europe, as well as the fomenting of racism against migrants, show what the "democracy" of these powers is really like.

The working class and the oppressed must not side with any "camp" in this growing inter-imperialist confrontation. Whether in the USA, Germany, France, Britain, Japan and Australia, or in Russia and China: the main enemy is at home. The same goes for the regional powers, that is, those semi-colonies seeking promotion to the imperialist status

already achieved by Russia and China. In countries like Turkey, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa and Iran, the struggle of the workers and their allies must be directed against "their" state, against "their" ruling class, including support for the liberation struggle of oppressed nations like the Palestinians, the Kurds, and other ethnic and national minorities.

Only through such an independent class politics will the global proletariat, a growing majority of the world's people, be able to form itself as an independent social force and give leadership to all those oppressed because of their ?race?, nationality or gender.

The global economic crisis

Even if certain countries have recovered somewhat from the deep crisis of the world economy triggered by the Pandemic, which drove almost all nations into recession in 2020, this "recovery" is extremely fragile. In the western imperialist countries, it was mainly brought about by an expansion of state and corporate debt. It is more like a flash in the pan. Large parts of the world, above all the semi-colonial countries, have not even begun to recover from the crisis, but are facing currency and financial crises and state bankruptcies. Moreover, their increasing global rivalry makes any concerted policy by the imperialist countries much more difficult, indeed, it tends to make it impossible.

No one should be blinded by the social promises of the governments of the USA, China or the EU Commission which accompanied the state borrowing spree. Neither Biden's American Jobs Plan, nor the EU's Green Deal, nor China's "Common Prosperity" will save the working class. Above all, these are programmes for the reorganisation of total capital, garnished with some promises for the workers and for the protection of the world climate.

The working class, the peasantry, but even large sections of the middle classes, too, will be expected to pay for the debts of the pandemic and a major crisis in the coming period. The attacks will come in the form of inflation devaluing their wages and savings, unemployment, restructuring, further restrictions on social rights, cuts in public services or privatisation.

Racially and nationally oppressed people, women, LGBTIAQ people, youth and the elderly are already particularly hard hit by the crisis, both in terms of their economic situation and the spread of brutal forms of violence against women and minorities, of sexism, racism, nationalism and chauvinism.

The pandemic and the health crisis

Closely linked to the economic crisis is the Covid Pandemic. For two years, despite the speedy development of vaccines and huge state spending in the imperialist metropolises, capitalism has proved incapable of managing an acute crisis of global health systems, one that has now cost the lives of more than five million people, even according to official figures.

In the semi-colonies, hundreds of millions are still denied access to vaccines. The monopolisation of vaccine production and distribution by rich countries is exacerbated by the profiteering from the vaccine. Years of neo-liberal "health policies" and ecological devastation by agribusiness are showing their destructive effects in the pandemic.

Capitalist priorities oscillate between the determination to maintain capital circulation, production, accumulation and world trade and the need to contain the spread of the virus sufficiently to prevent a collapse of the health system. Therefore, policies also fluctuate between a cynical acceptance of widespread infection, supposedly to allow ?herd immunity?, in large parts of the semi-colonial world, or limited and selective restrictions and lockdowns (flatten-the-curve strategy).

No bourgeois government, whether Western democracy or Bonapartist dictatorship, can provide a solution to these burning problems. To solve them, the working class needs a policy which does not hesitate to override the rights of private property when it comes to patents and making know-how accessible to all, which does not shy away from temporarily halting non-essential production or diverting it to vital social priorities and which forces states and the super-rich to pay to secure wages and living standards.

The ecological crisis

Closely linked to this is the ecological crisis. The Glasgow COP 26 climate summit, like all its predecessors, produced little more than worthy aspirations. Of course, all the major countries now say they are committed to the goal of climate neutrality by sometime in the second half of this century., but that is all. Meanwhile, the battle is being waged over who should bear the costs of environmental destruction. The sure losers are already the countries of the so-called Third World, which are being deprived of the means to combat the acute effects of climate change and other ecological catastrophes. Millions upon millions are already losing their livelihoods due the destruction of their living conditions.

Like imperialist competition, the threat of war, global economic crisis and pandemic, the question of ecological crisis raises the need for an international, anti-capitalist solution, a programme of transitional demands to secure the livelihoods of humanity, to reorganise production and distribution according to the needs of people and nature.

The crisis of bourgeois politics

The multiple crises of humanity are accompanied by a deep crisis of bourgeois politics. This is generating a real polarisation as ruling classes oscillate between a policy of incorporation of the wage-earners and their organisations and one of open confrontation and populist mobilisation.

Governments of the "centre", the "democratic" bloc of liberals, moderate conservatives and Greens and including social democracy, are opposed in many countries by right-wing populist (including fascist) parties and movements. These present the bourgeoisies with the alternative of a harder line, which relies on more national chauvinism and tries to establish a reactionary unity through demagogic mobilisation against the women's movement, against migrants, the racially oppressed and, recently, even against Corona measures.

Such a right-wing, reactionary, petty-bourgeois movement is at the same time available as a reserve for the bourgeoisie against the working class or movements of the racially oppressed.

Against the backdrop of a shift to the right in recent years, there is the threat of further right-wing advance and a turn towards authoritarian, anti-democratic forms of rule, although this development is by no means inevitable. In every period when the equilibrium of the world order, the traditional relationship between states as well as between classes is profoundly upset, the present conjuncture is also marked by great political vacillations and an increasing polarisation between classes.

Since the defeats of the Arab revolution, the Greek working class or the refugee movement, this polarisation emerges today mainly as a skewed polarisation between right-wing and right-populist movements and parties on the one hand and cross-class movements, alliances of left parties and openly bourgeois or petty-bourgeois mass movements (such as Fridays for Future) as well as economic struggles.

As an independent political force, the working class is in a deep, historical crisis, a crisis of its leadership, which has affected its existing organisations and traditions but has not yet led to their replacement by a new global political formation which can meet these challenges.

New International!

There is no lack of important, encouraging, imposing mobilisations: Strikes of millions and millions of Indian workers, the enormous economic militancy of the Chinese working class, the upsurge of strike struggles in the USA, revolutionary uprisings like in Sudan, electoral victories of left candidates like Boric in Chile, illustrate the willingness of the working class to fight and mobilise and its potential to intervene in national life.

Movements like the environmental movement, the women's strikes and cross-border trade union struggles like Amazon, show the necessity and the feasibility of common class actions on an international level.

If we want to face the big challenges of the coming period; the increasing imperialist competition and threat of war, the global economic, ecological and health crisis, we need one thing above all: class-struggle and revolutionary

internationalism.

We need an internationalism that is more than the sum of national, political and social struggles. An internationalism that recognises that none of the great problems of humanity can be solved within a national framework. An internationalism based on the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, the expropriation of the expropriators, as the indispensable precondition for the solution of these problems. Only in this way can the economy be reorganised according to the needs of humanity and nature. We need an internationalism that starts from the realisation that what is needed is a programme and an instrument of struggle: a global revolutionary party of the working class, a new, Fifth International.

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