

UKRAINE: MODERN WAR, DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

1) The war in Ukraine is the first one since the end of the last rising proletarian political cycle (that is, since 1980) which has taken place in a developed capitalist country, even if it is a second rank one. But first we have to qualify this. The war in Ukraine is a normal war between two capitalist states. We have defined it as a colonial expedition¹ aiming to consolidate, on the military plane, the outlines of a state, the Russian Federation, which still endures the centrifugal consequences of the collapse of Stalinist imperialism. Its process of dismemberment was formally achieved, on 25 December 1991, with the resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev. It is a classic capitalist war therefore, whose objective is not the long-lasting occupation of the whole of the country being attacked but the destruction of its army, its “strategic” infrastructure, and its government, and the annexation of its ports on the northern coast of the Sea of Azov. This war is the expression (and not the cause) of the separation of Russia from its European markets and its movement, both geostrategic and economic, towards the East, particularly China. In this sense, this bloody episode is not the start of the world war to come but rather a factor accelerating the constitution of the blocs which will clash in the South China Sea. The Ukraine war is thus a political war in the sense that it is the continuation of diplomacy by force. Economic determination is the backdrop as always, defining the limits of politics, but it is not what launched the conflict. The conquest of the Ukrainian market, at the cost, moreover, of the likely loss of juicy European markets, cannot explain the Kremlin's operation, any more than can the seizing of the Donbas businesses which were already integrated into the Russian economy. For at least ten years, Russia has been

diversifying its foreign markets, its foreign exchange reserves and its trade agreements, and redefining its foreign policy according to this. In addition to its strictly military purposes described above, the aggression against Ukraine sends a clear message to Russia's western border countries and, further afield, to NATO and the English-speaking countries that make up the spine of the Organisation. This message is intended to show the capacity of Russia (and its Belarusian puppet ally) to open a front in Europe with the aim of a possible, increasingly probable, global armed confrontation with its epicentre in the Far East. The first target is the arc of northern countries clustered around the UK², whose offensive capabilities have increased considerably since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2) The redeployment of Russia on the world market is not a recent affair, as we mentioned above. We can situate the turning point in 2014, when Moscow broke the partnership established with NATO: *“For more than three decades, NATO has tried to build a partnership with Russia, developing dialogue and practical cooperation in areas of common interest. Practical cooperation has been suspended since 2014 in response to Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, Ukraine, which NATO will never recognise.”*³ This cooperation was formalised in 1994, with the signing of the “Partnership for Peace” (PfP) followed, in 1997, by the Basic Document of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

¹ See: “UKRAINE: Russia's colonial expedition accelerates the course to world war”, Mouvement Communiste, Bulletin no. 22: <https://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Leaflets/BLT2202ENvG.pdf>

² In 2015, the UK established a military cooperation with Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the three Baltics with the aim of forming a Joint Expeditionary Force, JEF.

³ See: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50090.htm

In 1996, Russia and NATO together organised the intervention in Bosnia in the framework of SFOR (Stabilisation Force) and in 1999, Russia participated in KFOR (Kosovo Force), the peace-keeping force in Kosovo. These “friendly” relations were reinforced again in 2002 by the Rome Declaration. However, post-Stalinist Russia had already begun to re-enter into collision with NATO from 1991, with its war in Georgia, and then the next year in North Ossetia and in Tajikistan, and then, in 1994, in Chechnya, and again in Chechnya in 1999, and again in 2009, in the North Caucasus.

The annexation of Crimea in 2014, accompanied by the informal annexation of part of Donbas, and the intervention in Syria the next year on the side of Assad, completes the tableau of armed conflicts that Russia has provoked or encouraged over more than twenty years. The armed strengthening of its borders has seen, starting in 1999, NATO significantly reinforcing itself in Eastern Europe which the integration of Czechia, Poland and Hungary, followed by Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the three Baltics⁴ in 2004. In their turn, Albania and Croatia joined NATO in 2009, followed by Montenegro in 2017 and Northern Macedonia in 2020. Looking at these dates, we can see that the enlargement of NATO came after its partnership with Russia. This means that Moscow did not fear NATO, which established its bases in the first three Eastern European countries in 1999. In the same way, the demand for NATO membership by Georgia did not prevent the signing of the Rome Declaration two years later.

On the other hand, the integration of the Baltics certainly put Moscow on the alert because of their strategic position. We can thus say that it was from 2004 onwards that Russia began to adopt a hostile foreign policy towards NATO, which saw its acme in 2014 with the Euro-aidan attempted insurrection, which drove out the pro-Russian government in Kyiv. The operation in Donbas and Crimea materialised this radical change of geopolitical course corresponding to the accelerated rapprochement with China. This rapprochement is welcomed by Beijing in view of a geostrategic polarisation

with the countries allied to the United States in its area of immediate influence.

3) The war plan in Ukraine was meticulously prepared by the Kremlin. This plan is in line with its firepower and its achievements in the strategic field in numerous military interventions in the last twenty years. In the course of these confrontations, the Russian army has been deeply transformed according to the political nature of its engagements. With the exception of the war in Afghanistan, where Moscow suffered an outright defeat, all its military interventions in its near abroad have been successful. But the war in Afghanistan was based on a mission statement inherited from the old Stalinist imperialism: war of occupation; installation and support of a puppet regime with its watch set to Moscow time. The failure of the former Red Army in Afghanistan was the failure of regular warfare by armies based on the dominant model of the Second World War in the face of rural and mountain guerrilla warfare. Sparsely populated territories, difficult to reach and even more difficult to encircle, little known or completely unknown (maps insufficient), extending over large distances, brought the Russian military apparatus to its knees. It gradually withdrew into the capital and a handful of other centres.

The humiliation suffered in this Central Asian country prompted the Kremlin to rectify the situation and to make in-depth changes to military doctrine, troop organisation, distribution of resources among the three armies (ground, air, sea), logistics and, above all, political rules of engagement. Russia ceased to be a power with imperial aims by scaling back its army. From then on it was devoted to fundamentally defensive political and diplomatic missions, because the Kremlin's undisguised warlike inclination did not meet the needs of projects of territorial expansion and/or conquest of external markets and resources. The Kremlin's troops acted to stop the break-up of the former Soviet Union by creating satellite enclaves of Moscow by force. These were a kind of fortress, garrison mini-states, threatening the sectors of the dominant classes, more or less followed by the populations that wanted to take advantage of the centrifugal movement of the former empire to emancipate themselves from Russian tutelage.

⁴ Albania was accepted as a candidate for EU membership in 2009.

The text approved by Vladimir Putin on 25 December 2014, and entitled the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, shares the Kremlin's analysis of the global geostrategic situation:

*“World development at the present stage is characterized by the strengthening of global competition, tensions in various areas of inter-state and interregional interaction, rivalry of proclaimed values and models of development, instability of the processes of economic and political development at the global and regional levels against a background of general complication of international relations. There is a stage-by-stage redistribution of influence in favour of new centres of economic growth and political attraction. Many regional conflicts remain unresolved. There is a continuing tendency towards their resolution with the use of force, including in regions bordering the Russian Federation. The existing international security architecture (system) does not ensure equal security for all states. There is a tendency towards shifting the military risks and military threats to the information space and the internal sphere of the Russian Federation. At the same time, despite the fact that unleashing of a large-scale war against the Russian Federation becomes less probable, in a number of areas the military risks encountered by the Russian Federation are increasing.”*⁵

In summary, the defence of Russia's borders involved the multiplication of armed sites created by the army which stop the fragmentation of the Federation, while leaving open the possibility of intervening far abroad to increase the international influence, as in Syria, for example.

4) The new doctrine of the Russian army high command is now well defined. And it has been precisely applied in Ukraine. This doctrine is based on several aspects of the three military arms. The increased capacity for movement is expressed in incursions deep behind enemy lines to avoid the transformation into a war of position. The BTGs are the main instruments of this type of tactical orientation. Composed of 600 to 900 professionals, the BTGs of the land army enjoy relative freedom of manoeuvre and only light control. *“Battalion Tactical Groups (BTGs) (an idea dating back to the 1990s) were introduced in 2012 to generate effective combat power from brigades, by concentrating contract personnel into a battalion-sized grouping. BTGs generally comprise a tank or infantry battalion reinforced with armour or infantry and with artillery, air defence, electronic warfare and*

*other combat support assets.”*⁶ Today Russia has around 130 BTGs. The increase in their numbers continues and corresponds to one of the strategic axes identified by the new military doctrine of the Russian Federation adopted on 21 April 2000, refined in 2010 and again in 2014. This has encouraged a growing professionalization of the land army.

*“As of 2021, conscripts reportedly comprised about 30% of the Russian military's active-duty personnel; in April of 2019, the Russian Government pledged its intent to end conscription as part of a decade-long effort to shift from a large, conscript-based military to a smaller, more professional force.”*⁷

The transformation of the land army has been accompanied by that of the navy. The modernisation of the navy is in turn led by the principle of reinforcement of combat capacities close to Russia's coasts.

*“The navy retains vestiges of a blue-water role, relying predominantly on its larger, ageing Soviet-era surface platforms and more modern submarines. However, more recent additions to its surface fleet are better suited to defending the Russian littoral and its near waters, as well as supporting and protecting the submarine-based deterrent.”*⁸ The experts of IISS consider that *“Russia's ‘blue-water’ naval capabilities remain limited and still largely reliant on legacy Soviet platforms. Likewise, notwithstanding recent deployment activity, amphibious capabilities remain an area of relative weakness.”*⁹

As for the air force, Russia is somewhat behind in putting into practice its plans for modernisation. The main gaps are, according to several experts, the insufficient number of “smart” bombs, combat drones and complex and sophisticated communication systems.

⁶ “Russia's military capability in 2022”, IISS: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2022/02/if-new-looks-could-kill-russias-military-capability-in-2022>

⁷ See: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/russia/#military-and-security>

⁸ “An introduction to Russia's military modernization”, IISS: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/09/rmm-introduction>

⁹ “If New Looks could kill: Russia's military capability in 2022”, IISS: <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2022/02/if-new-looks-could-kill-russias-military-capability-in-2022>

⁵ See: <https://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>

In Ukraine, “Military experts have seen evidence of a lack of Russian air force coordination with ground troop formations, with multiple Russian columns of troops sent forward beyond the reach of their own air defence cover.”¹⁰ And again: “Russia’s failure to take out Ukrainian air defences “is becoming a serious hindrance”, says Rob Lee of King’s College London. It will probably be regarded as one of the “key mistakes” of this war, he reckons. It means that Russian planes cannot freely patrol the skies to ward off Ukrainian ones, and that attack aircraft cannot provide proper air support to troops on the ground. Ground-surveillance and airborne early-warning aircraft must stay back from the battlefield, reducing the flow of intelligence.”¹¹ All in all, the Kremlin’s armies are already capable, as they have proved for more than twenty years in the numerous conflicts in which they have participated, of carrying out large-scale operations but in relatively circumscribed territories and in the face of enemy forces which are weak in terms of firepower and number of combatants.

5) The war against the Ukrainian army, still organised like the Russian army before the reforms of the 2000s and 2010s, has shown the strengths and weaknesses of Russia’s war potential. Strengths because the Russian high command has understood very well that the modern war is essentially a war of movement when the objective is not the long-lasting occupation of territory. It has also integrated the informal dimension of wars of this type. Hence the reinforcement of the so-called special forces, elite troops responsible for carrying out missions of reconnaissance and sabotage, subversion and sedition, counter-terrorism, counter-sabotage, counter-espionage, guerrilla warfare and counter-guerrilla warfare.

The Kremlin has two main structures in charge of these tasks: the Special Operations Forces (SOF), with between 2,000 and 2,500 men, and the older Spetsnaz GRU (Special Forces of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces), which, according to “Western” sources, number some 30,000 men. In addition to these two components, there are the mercenaries of Wagner, around 5,000 men, employed within a strict political framework by the Kremlin.

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/what-happened-russias-air-force-us-officials-experts-stumped-2022-03-01/>

¹¹ <https://www.economist.com/interactive/2022/03/08/curious-case-russias-missing-air-force>

“In an important article signed in 2013 by the Chief of Staff of the Russian Army Valery Gerasimov, combat units assigned to special operations (or missions) will see themselves given a crucial role because of the ‘new rules of war in the Twenty First Century’¹². The distinction between ‘peace time’ and ‘war time’ being blurred, states must have recourse to military operations more supple, more rapid, more localised and targeted. Consequently, the role of ‘non-military measures’, including extended use of measures political, economic, informational, humanitarian and others’, has taken on a considerable importance, while ‘frontal assaults between large formations of forces’ belong to the past. The art of war, continues Gerasimov, will see the growing use of ‘dissimulated’ military means; thus, states who want to mask or deny their military presence on a territory of operation will have recourse to Special Forces of intervention.”¹³

But also weaknesses because apart from the under-performance of aviation, the Russian army in Ukraine has discovered the other great weak point of its armed forces: logistics.

“Russian army logistics forces are not designed for a large-scale ground offensive far from their railroads. Inside manoeuvre units, Russian sustainment units are a size lower than their Western counterparts. Only brigades have an equivalent logistics capability, but it’s not an exact comparison. Russian formations have only three-quarters the number of combat vehicles as their U.S. counterparts but almost three times as much artillery.”¹⁴

6) The war in Ukraine is a real headache if we consider only the military aspect. Started as a classic regular war with lessons taken from the imperialist military missions of the post-WWII period, it quickly turned out otherwise. The Russian army confined itself, in the very first episodes of the conflict, to avoiding the constitution of long front lines with the enemy. This type of approach, made possible by the reorganization of the army, where both the BTGs and the Special Forces are given the biggest role, worked rather well. The battle around Chernobyl is probably the main success of this tactic. The Ukrainian Army, which had concen-

¹² V. Gerasimov, “New challenges require rethinking the ways and means of warfare”, published in Russian on 26 February 2013: <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>

¹³ “Spetsnaz, contractuels, volontaires: qui sont les ‘hommes de guerre’ russes en Syrie?” - Note de l’Ifri, December 2017: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/fainberg_hommes_de_guerre_russes_syrie_2017.pdf

¹⁴ <https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/feeding-the-bear-a-closer-look-at-russian-army-logistics/>

trated a lot of forces in this territory, was fairly quickly dislocated.

After this breakthrough and other smaller incidents in the north and southeast from the Crimea, gradually the Ukrainian armed forces were dispersed over the vast territory of the country in symbiosis with the so-called territorial defence units composed of at least one million volunteers and reservists. The general mobilisation which followed, with the conscription of men between 18 and 60, certainly played a role in the military relatively holding its ground against the invader. The Russian army was thus faced with a great deal of fighting, scattered and certainly limited, but involving almost all areas affected by the confrontation.

The gap in firepower in all three theatres - air, sea and land - to the net advantage of the Russian armies was partly filled by the influx of weapons systems supplied by the NATO countries most committed to confrontation with Russia, the US and the vast majority of JEF countries plus Poland (where, according to several polls, the population overwhelmingly supports direct involvement in the war to the point of making the government do a 180-degree turn). Another detrimental role for the occupiers was played by the Russian army's own organisational and logistical problems.

However, the decisive factor that prevented the Kremlin from quickly cutting into Kiev was certainly the voluntary commitment of a significant part of the Ukrainian population to resist the Russian invaders. On the ground this commitment means the constitution of small nuclei of fighters, the majority of whom are supervised by the command structures of the territorial defence, therefore by what is still functioning of the Ukrainian state. These small resistance structures are under-armed, not very mobile and have little or no training in urban guerrilla warfare. But they have a formidable asset: the very massive and often active support of the population, which still believes in military victory and has a perfect knowledge of the territory in which they operate.

The reluctance of the Kremlin's armies to engage in urban guerrilla warfare is a result of the Russian General Staff's awareness of this situation, a situation that had obviously not been properly anticipated before the outbreak of hostilities. The only alternative the Kremlin has to break the resistance is destruction, terror and siege of the cities. Bombing them, cutting off

their food, water and medical supplies, depriving them of energy and communication and using refugee flows to weaken the determination of the resistance are the concrete application of this method. The martyrdom of Mariupol, a port city of half a million inhabitants on the shores of the Azov Sea, is the culmination of this tactic by the Russian army.

7) We can see that while the war in Ukraine began as a classic war between capitalist states, it is in the process of transforming itself into a war of one occupying capitalist state against an entire civil society whose state is almost only hanging on by the resistance of the population, the proletariat at the forefront. This means that the capitalist war in Ukraine cannot be reduced to the schema of a war of fronts outside the cities where the exploited classes are passive victims of armed confrontation. This transformation sees the proletariat of the occupied country become personally involved and, as a result, suffers even more from the effects of the war.

This was the case here and there during the Second imperialist slaughter when the winning imperialist countries armed, supported and organised "the Resistance" in the areas occupied by the losing imperialist countries. These resistances were mostly composed of proletarians in revolt against the excesses of the occupiers and/or the fascist regimes that deprived the population of individual liberties. The winning powers were able to exploit these revolts perfectly by bringing them into the framework of the imperialist war. This is why the advanced elements of the working class hardly yielded to the temptation to join these "resistance" structures.

However, those who, in the name of Left Communism¹⁵, chose to retire to their armchairs and wait for better times, while droning on about principles so abstract as to be useless, *de facto* abdicated their essential political responsibility: the work of sketching out, even from an ultra-minority and against-the-current position, the concrete proletarian response to the imperialist war. Yet, even in that time, nuclei of proletarians, in Italy, in France and Spain (only against the Francoist state), tried and sometimes succeeded to stand out within the armed struggle, and not only within the ranks of the Re-

¹⁵ For example, the Bordigist current, but not only them.

sistance controlled by the victorious states. And they always paid for it dearly¹⁶.

Returning to the revolutionary proletarian response to capitalist war, it is well known, and does not have to be invented again: revolutionary defeatism, fraternisation and transformation of the imperialist war into class war. Revolutionary defeatism in Ukraine today means refusing being enrolled into the territorial defence units or what is left of the regular army. It is also a matter of calling on the proletarian and revolutionary forces available to organise themselves on the terrain of force outside the capitalist armies present, against the Ukrainian state and against the occupation troops. If such a project becomes concrete, even on an embryonic level, we would quickly see a confrontation with the Ukrainian state as well as, naturally, the soldiers of the Kremlin.

In Russia, a magnificent example of revolutionary defeatism was provided by anarchist comrades who destroyed army recruiting offices in several cities¹⁷. In Belarus, the sabotage of railway lines by rail workers opposed to the regime, which prevented Russian military convoys from taking men and war supplies to Ukraine, is another¹⁸. Other actions pointing in the same direction are those by dockers in the USA, Sweden and the UK who refused to load or unload Russian ships¹⁹.

Fraternisation means the most aggressive possible pressure being put on the occupying troops with the aim that they stop pointing their weapons at the population of the occupied country. The spread of mass demonstrations in the towns occupied by the Kremlin's army is a

step in this direction, even if the marches are awash with Ukrainian flags. As for the transformation of national war into class war, it is a process which must start today in and by a resistance which is independent of states and which is under the flags of the proletarian revolution and which will continue well beyond the capitalist war by the large-scale revival of the class struggle in the productive territories ravaged by the conflict. It's a safe bet that the post-war period in Ukraine, and perhaps in Russia and Belarus, will be at least as hard on proletarians as the current war. A post-war period of general militarisation of civil society, of low wages, of overwork, of high living costs. But only those, in the proletarian camp, who have distinguished themselves during the war as forces of concrete opposition to the occupation and to the Ukrainian state will have a chance to be listened to, to inspire the reflection and the action of the oppressed. Perhaps they can be inspired by Lenin's forecast:

"Today the imperialist bourgeoisie militarises the youth as well as the adults; tomorrow it may begin militarising the women. Our attitude should be: All the better! Full speed ahead! For the faster we move, the nearer shall we be to the armed uprising against capitalism. How can Social-Democrats give way to fear of the militarisation of the youth, etc., if they have not forgotten the example of the Paris Commune? This is not a "lifeless theory" or a dream. It is a fact. And it would be a sorry state of affairs indeed if, all the economic and political facts notwithstanding, Social-Democrats began to doubt that the imperialist era and imperialist wars must inevitably bring about a repetition of such facts."

Lenin, *The "Disarmament" Slogan*, October 1916²⁰

8) The project of creating proletarian resistance forces independent of the states at war is far from coming to anything, even if, in Russian and Ukrainian libertarian milieus, the discussion exists. Our contribution to this debate is first of all to clarify its terms. The autonomous resistance cannot involve the sharing of military means with the territorial defence, nor the adoption of military tactics associated with it. At all times, revolutionary proletarians can only count on themselves, including on the terrain of force. There is no question of asking pro-Ukrainian imperial powers to arm the pro-

¹⁶ We are thinking of the comrades of *Partito Comunista Internazionale*, Mario Acquaviva (1900-1945) and Fausto Atti (1900-1945), both murdered by the Stalinists. See, respectively: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fausto_Atti and https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Acquaviva

¹⁷ See: <https://www.anarchistfederation.net/russia-new-guerrilla-attacks-on-military-recruiting-agencies/>

¹⁸ <https://www.railtech.com/infrastructure/2022/03/24/belarusian-special-forces-guarding-railways-following-sabotage/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ship-technology.com/news/industry-news/us-dockers-refuse-to-work-on-russian-ships/> and <https://globeecho.com/news/europe/war-in-ukraine-swedish-dockworkers-mobilize-to-block-ships-linked-to-russia/> and

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/06/ukraine-angry-dock-workers-in-the-uk-are-refusing-to-unload-russian-oil.html>

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<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/oct/01.htm>

letarian resistance. Nor is there a question of calling for more and harder sanctions against Russia, whose effects hit hardest against the exploited classes in Russia and reinforces the hold of the state over them.

The only “sanction” which could have some chance of hurting the Kremlin would be, for example, to sabotage the gas pipeline which crosses Ukraine. Because, since the start of hostilities and up to mid-March, and despite the generalised destruction which has mostly been aimed at the working class neighbourhoods around Ukraine’s cities, and very little at factories (around half the businesses continue to work²¹), the gas pipeline (passing through Kyiv and Lviv) is going at full blast to take precious hydrocarbons to Western European countries. In the countries not directly involved in the war, it is objectively playing into the hands of the occupiers not to distinguish between the occupying army and the resistance of the Ukrainian population.

Proletarians across the world must take the side of their class brothers and sisters who fight the occupying troops, without sparing criticism of the nationalism that largely dominates the population's resistance to the occupation. And without sparing criticism of the state pacifism that believes the Kremlin’s terrorist propaganda on the risks of generalised nuclear war and calls for an immediate ceasefire (the result of which would be to ratify the annexations and military occupation) and the organisation of improbable peace conferences under the aegis of international organisations of the world’s gangsters, such as the United Nations or the OSCE, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, with 57 participating states, including all the direct or indirect belligerent states.

In the list of the most dangerous counter-revolutionary hypocrites, we can find Stalinists, Maoists and some Trotskyists who amalgamate the resistance of the Ukrainian population with the fascist and nationalist battalions present in Ukraine. This argument, largely shared amongst many anti-vaxxers and campaigners against vaccine passports, serves to justify being close

to the proto-fascist Russia of Putin and its arguments which claim that Russia invaded Ukraine to “de-Nazify” it in response to Kyiv’s aggression in the Donbas.

8) In this context, the underlying problem which precedes that of the war currently going on is the relation of the proletariat to mass inter-classist democratic movements. It is not a mystery that one of the roots of the war in Ukraine can be found in the movement in the Maidan square which began on 21 November 2013²². The occupation of the main square in Kyiv was provoked by the pro-Russian government of the time deciding not to sign the protocol agreement between Ukraine and the EU, voted for by the great majority of the Parliament, instead favouring the integration of the country into the Eurasian Economic Union dominated by Russia.

The initially peaceful pro-European protest became violent, starting in December and leading to armed street fighting in January. One month later, the occupation of several public buildings and more street battles ended up with the resignation of the government and the installation at the summit of the state of successive governments oriented towards the EU. The transformation of a peaceful bourgeois democratic movement into an armed insurrectional movement whose spearhead was made up of fascist and nationalist political forces sealed the end of the movement itself and opened the way to the non-formalised Russian occupation of Donetsk and Lugansk, in the Donbas, then the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The absence of class struggle and the politico-military victory of the most nationalist forces following the Maidan movement, a victory indirectly amplified by the double Russian aggression in the Donbas and Crimea, buried the destabilising potential of the initial democratic protest.

²¹ “About half of all Ukrainian enterprises have stopped functioning and a myriad of logistical problems have beset the country, starting with the acute lack of fuel.”, Ukraine’s War Economy, *Kyiv Post*, 14 March 2022: <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/ukraines-war-economy.html>

²² See: “UKRAINE: a victorious democratic insurrection led by nationalists”, *Mouvement Communiste*, Bulletin n°6: <http://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Leaflets/BLT1403FRVG.pdf>

While it destabilised the state and brought about a significant change in the government, unlike other democratic movements that have taken centre stage in the world since the 1980s, the Maidan movement did not contribute to the creation of objective conditions for a proletarian struggle to flourish. On its ruins, patriotism and the state were strengthened.

But this scenario is not doomed to be repeated the same way every time, as the attempted insurrection in Kazakhstan²³, the riots in Colombia and in Chile, the Algerian *Hirak*, or the repeated demonstrations and strikes in Tunisia, have shown, to cite just the most recent episodes. The rapidity of the radicalisation of the fight, in Maidan, determined by the furious response of the government and its most loyal armed bodies delivered control of the streets to the fascists and destroyed the peaceful democratic movement. The absence of any proletarian movement, even its first steps, left the way completely open to the nationalist confiscation of this movement which had had a cosmopolitan aspiration. The lessons of 2013 will be particularly precious for the post-war period. If the exploited classes who are often fighting with bare hands against the Russian colonial expedition accept the explanation of the weakened government which will justify its effective capitulation by the “betrayal” of friendly powers, it is very likely that reputation of nationalism will emerge even stronger from this war. If, on the other hand, sectors of the proletariat are able to understand that the defence of the state has nothing to do with the defence of working class neighbourhoods of the populations subjected to the savage Russian aggression, if the proletarian fighters of today know how to rely on their extraordinary strength and determination expressed in the guerrilla war and in the demonstrations against the occupation troops like in Kherson, Berdyansk and Kakhovka, to trace their own path, that of the class struggle. And if they wage it against a state that has survived only by virtue of their sacrifice and against their “national” capitalists, very active in

the luxury hotels of Dubai while proletarians were under a deluge of fire, then the polarisation of Ukrainian civil society will finally be able to take place according to the classic dividing line: workers against capital, workers against the state.

Brussels, Paris, Prague, 3 April 2022

²³ See: “KAZAKHSTAN: The democratic movement stands on the shoulders of the insurrectional movement of the proletariat”, Mouvement Communiste, Bulletin no. 22: <http://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Leaflets/BLT2201ENvF.pdf>