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# Internationalist Notes

Broadsheet of the Internationalist Workers' Group

## RIGHT "POPULISM" RETURNS AND THE THREAT OF WAR LOOMS LARGE



In 2016, a New York City billionaire ran an unusual campaign for the Republicans. Fox News, a reliable mouthpiece of the Republican Party, initially fought against his rise, but when it became clear that there was no stopping this movement, the network and the American right drifted from distaste to tepid support, and quickly growing into fanatical devotion. This new GOP supported isolationism, protectionism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and new "populist" appeals to the "real" American working class. Despite inflamed rhetoric and talk of polarization, the two parties both feign hatred for one another while working in a bipartisan fashion to continue dismantling the welfare state and massively increasing defense spending.

The four years under Joe Biden were promised to be a real "return to normal," an embrace of institutions and bipartisanship under the slogan "nothing will fundamentally change." Despite the fact that the "normality" of the capitalist system is one order of class oppression we must fight, not even this was achieved in the face of capitalist crisis. The assault on the working class continued with global inflation (driven by the drive for maximum profit in the face of the global pandemic and disrupted supply chains), and when unemployment shifted from historic highs to near-historic lows, interest rates skyrocketed to "cool the labor market." This, coupled with a resurgence of crocodile tears around crime and immigration, and a rapidly senile Biden, proved a formula for Trump's return to power.

Even in spite of Biden stepping down and being replaced by a younger, more cogent Kamala Harris, the Democrats quite proudly offered nothing but more of the same. Globally, in nearly every case of a competitive election in the 2021-24 period, the incumbent party lost, and often lost big. The Democrats didn't lose quite like the Conservatives in the UK, but the Republicans did in fact gain a slim "trifecta" of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Presidency.

This new (old?) administration follows the formula of right-wing populists everywhere. On social issues, it pushes an agenda of drastic anti-immigration policy, eroding access to abortion, clawing back security for transgender people, and promoting "patriotic education" and prayer in public schools. The international-national right wing populist movement blames immigrants for social ills, rails against the liberal press, and pushes an isolationist and protectionist agenda. Trump shares commonalities with Viktor Orban and others of this ilk in his disdain for the press and the opposition in government.

To what degree Trump will be able to completely convert his party to this program is unclear—already he is hitting headwinds in getting his most radical loyalists into positions like Attorney General and Secretary of Defense.

However, it is not just Trump who is moving to common positions with Orban or Meloni—on the critical issues of the drive towards war and attacking the working class, the Republicans and Democrats are heavily aligned. The Biden presidency was in many respects a continuation of Trump's — from demanding capital divest from America's Chinese rivals and increasing tariffs to deporting a record number of immigrant workers. The new Democrat coalition in fact positioned itself as to the right of Trump on migration. Meanwhile, while both parties courted the support of trade unions, they have both done their utmost to crush the working-class struggle through federal injunctions (see the rail "strike" of 2022). In the face of imperialist competition and the deepening of capitalist crisis, the result, no matter the party, is clear: wages will stagnate or decline in the face of inflation, the looming threat of war will continue unabated, the climate will continue its destabilization, and social services will be weakened, means-tested, cut or abolished as the forces driving the need for profit put the capitalist class at the top of the priority list for the rule-managers of capital.

Trump's most heinous campaign promise is a plan to deport at least ten million undocumented immigrant workers from the United States. As has become the norm in capitalism in decline, the U.S. is dedicated to ridding itself of an "infectious" other. Though to what degree this will be implemented is uncertain as the ruling capitalist class has long benefitted from the oppression of migrant workers with reduced rights and working conditions, this threat cannot be perceived as a total bluff. There has been a bipartisan assault on immigrant workers, and although deportations are at record levels under Biden, the numbers Trump speaks of would necessitate national guard or military involvement, and likely would require the construction of even more concentration camps at the border. The response from the electorally-minded will be nothing but to watch in horror and hope that in four years, maybe we can make the camps more humane or make the deportation wait times shorter. The left-most politicians race to be the toughest elected official when it comes to

"the border". These politics serve no purpose other than to divide workers along national, racial, ethnic, and language barriers just long enough to pick their pockets.

In spite of how long and how expensive campaign season has become, the working class has always been more or less disinterested in the electoral process in the United States. The number of working-class voters peaked in 2020 and declined back near-2016 numbers in 2024. And those numbers paint a picture of a working class that abstains from the electoral process at about the same rate as they support them. Political analysts seek to explain voter disinterest as "failing to message" to these people. Insufferable wonks hope to use statistical tools to identify some or another selling point to get these people to the polls, often by breaking the working class into constituent groups based on race, gender, religion, job classification, and education levels. In spite of all of the efforts of this vast industry, Trump won an election where few switched tickets; instead, he likely won because millions stayed home, since "No one" isn't a choice on the ballot.

The working class is called ignorant for rejecting electoralism. This brow beating serves no purpose but to further turn us off from the bourgeois-democratic process, and for good reason. The working class is perhaps aware of something about which the capitalist class is in denial—there is no room for workers in the agenda of capitalist political parties. Decades of decline in wages, health care coverage, life expectancy, the loss of a future retirement, and the guarantee of decline in every sphere of life is not a promise that animates the working class. This decline is not over, and will continue with velocity under Trump, as promised. Even if there was some pathway to a working-class mobilization into positions of power, we know from history that one cannot simply take hold of the ready-made state machinery and commandeer it for our purposes. Instead we must fight our own fight against the capitalist system, here and everywhere. Working-class political power only comes through a rejection of the capitalist system as a whole, and any movement to protect the institutions from a "threat to democracy" only serves to prolong this system of immiseration and decline.

Maintenance of this system will not only mean further degradation of services. As other nations in the world find themselves in a similar competition over resources in their fixation on profit, the more precarious nations will find themselves compelled to integrate further into the financial and political

web of the more powerful countries, leading to blocs of nations with common interests and in-common enemies. Indeed the tensions between the NATO-aligned nations and those aligned with Russia, China, and Iran have graduated from "cold" forms of warfare, such as sanctions and cyber warfare, to conventional warfare fought by regional proxies. The forces that have brought the world to the brink of war are not subservient to any politician. Despite promises from Trump of a swift end to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, this is hardly feasible in the long-run as capital heads towards a third generalized imperialist war. The President-Elect's "deal-maker" mindset is no match against the need for capital accumulation. There is simply no beneficial deal to be made by Russia or Israel, two countries that are fully mobilized for war and have grown reliant on destruction and bloodshed. And while the US may wage a pressure campaign on NATO allies to "pay their fair share" in defense spending, this would only ratchet up tensions as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom arm themselves with the intent to strike.

In this period, the threat of total war is being felt across the world. And although there may be pockets of disorganized resistance, these will be met with waves of repression and propaganda in the event that war breaks out beyond the bounds of the current regional conflicts. War will be characterized as inevitability, and patriotism will be defined by one's commitment to honor the nation. Workers will be called on to fight on behalf of the class that wages this war to annex highly prized land or to defend the laughably eroded liberal-democratic order. In either case there will be many justifications fabricated in the nick of time to ensure the necessary support. And just like every war, it will be the working class called to the slaughter. In the First and Second Great Imperialist Wars, millions of poor factory and farm laborers fought and died, and many cities were turned to ruins. In these great wars, many looked on in horror at the efficiency of the machine of death, only to hope that such a violent upheaval of this magnitude could never happen again. The First World War was called the war to end all wars, only to be followed with an even greater slaughter twenty years later. The Second World War ended with atomic weaponry used on civilians, and with much of Europe and Asia reduced to rubble. Any war that would be fought today on a similar scale comes with even more powerful weaponry. And although there was a "peace" of nearly 80 years since the last conflagration, we now find ourselves still tightly in the grip of imperialist capitalism that is holding the workers of the world hostage. There is only one way out of this dilemma, and it is to break this very system that nourishes itself on our blood.



# WAR IN LEBANON: ANOTHER MASSACRE OF THE WORKING CLASS

On October 1st the IDF invaded Lebanon with the brutal objective of creating a security belt south of the Litani river. The Lebanese army withdrew, with some return fire, from the 'blue line', and hours later Iran launched retaliatory missile attacks with some piercing Israel's various anti-missile systems. For Iran, the killing of Hassan Nasrallah was the final straw following the assassinations of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and many IRGC generals. During the preceding weeks, the Israeli secret intelligence agency, Mossad, had sabotaged comms devices, assassinating Hezbollah militants, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians in the process, to cause disarray in Hezbollah's chain of command. The Lebanese death toll already includes over two thousand civilians, and Israel has lost dozens of soldiers, though undoubtedly one of the greatest catastrophes is the more than 1.2 million displaced within Lebanon.

Ever since the war in Ukraine, the world has seen a sharp rise in imperialist tension the world over, indicating a push towards generalized war. Lebanon is notably important in this development. The roots of this clash span almost a century, though the systemic cause remains imperialism as a condition of capitalism. Following political conflicts within Lebanon in the 70s, Israel invaded in 1982 with US support to dismantle Palestinian and pro-Palestinian groups. The IDF met with disappointment and eventual defeat. Israel remained in South Lebanon until 2000, after Hezbollah's offensive left them in disarray, and the IDF's occupation failed to halt the missiles fired into Israel. Hezbollah's integration into mainstream Lebanese politics as a result of this historic role is now backfiring in the midst of growing political and economic crises, with blame piling at their feet. The economy is fragmented; like Lebanon's political system, sectarian parties circle over workers and what few scraps of capital can be salvaged like vultures after carrion. Far from any alternative for the working class, Hezbollah demands the proletariat to march on behalf of bourgeois power politics.

Since their exit from Lebanon, Israel has maintained Hezbollah as one of their great boogymen, alongside Iran and Hamas. It has become a convenient tool for the ruling class to continue forcing their workers into a siege mentality. These boogymen can be repeatedly invoked to push away perennial crises and their symptoms. For example, Netanyahu's exorbitant corruption and the mounting housing

## Trade Wars turn into Shooting Wars



The US-China Trade War and the preparation for generalized imperialist war

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crisis are key issues that the capitalists can 'solve' by pointing at these adversaries and forcing workers to the front lines to kill other workers. This is how the ruling class can justify its endless siege on Gaza, and how they can continue rationalizing the thousands of dead piling up in the streets. However, the problems that generalized war aims to solve are systemic in nature; with or without Hamas or Hezbollah, the Israeli ruling class (like any other imperialist power) will always feel the pressure to turn to war when the contradictions of capital begin mounting.

While many workers around the world are preoccupied by calls for ceasefires, the historical basis for this conflict precludes any long term peace, because it lies at the root of capitalism. So long as the accumulation of capital is the ultimate necessity, it creates the ultimate political means to send workers to the front lines, alongside all the horrors that can be found there,

including genocide. Therefore, only the total defeat of capitalism at the hands of the international working class can truly end the atrocities before our eyes. For both Israel and Hezbollah, workers are variables on a balance sheet, and whether in peacetime or war time, workers are always held by the throat to preserve bourgeois order, either offensively or defensively.

It is also far more than just a localized conflict, as it unfolds at the intersection of imperialist blocs. For instance, the US is dependent on Israeli technical aid for waging war in the Middle East; Israel sees this and Iran's current weakness as the golden opportunity to deliver a serious blow against Iran's 'Axis of Resistance'. As a result, the US has no other option than to support Israeli aggression ensuring even greater mayhem and working-class bloodshed the world over. It should not be forgotten also, that although Iran is recoiling for the moment, the option of total war may seem preferable to its ruling class over death by a thousand cuts from its proxies being knocked out one by one. Such an unfolding would therefore open a second major confrontation between a US led bloc, and the alliance of convenience between Russia and Iran; given that any such conflict would take place across the intermediary country of

Iraq, no 'great power' would sit around while the havoc unfolds.

It is in times of crisis such as these that communism (a world without borders, states and exploitation) offers an antidote to war. To fight for it workers around the globe must assemble on an international platform and mobilize for the defeat of all nations as part of their revolutionary objective to overthrow capitalism once and for all. Workers must struggle against domestic war efforts through the combined strategy of strikes, stoppages, and slowdowns on a political basis. Workers in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran, Europe, America, etc., can cease the rain of hell upon our class brothers and sisters by these means, but only if this becomes a revolutionary assault against the bourgeois state can capitalist barbarism be ended for good. As the world revolutionary wave of 1917-1921 sparked in Russia showed us, the mass organization of the international working class can not only provide an effective opposition to war but kick it into the dustbin of history.

**No War but the Class War!**

**Workers of the World Unite!**

## 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 answered questions: <https://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us>

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