

# REFLECTIONS

A JOURNAL FOR THOUGHTS

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## **About Reflections**

**T**his is an online journal reflecting some of the world events with a socialist and Marxist perspective.

**H**umanity is suffering from wars, injustice, inequality, poverty, racism, environmental catastrophe, corruption, suppression and genocide. The list is endless.

**P**rotests, demonstrations, resistance, strikes, uprisings and struggles occur to combat the sufferings. Meetings, conferences and marches are organised to make the world a better place.

**W**hat is the cause of all this devastation?

**I**s there a way out?

**W**ill our children see a brighter future?

**W**e reflect on these important issues by analysing the events as we see them.

**M**ake your contributions. Write to us. Comments are welcomed.

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**8 MARCH**

**INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S DAY**

- **Azar Majedi & Sussan Lari talk about Women's Liberation in Iran**
- **The role of women in overthrowing the Islamic Republic of Iran**
- **The resonance of a rise in the movement against gender apartheid in Iran across the Middle East**

## **Unveil Iran**

**Could you give us an overview of the situation of women in Iran?**

Azar:

It is over 40 years since the Islamic regime came to power. A clear and strong movement for women's freedom, liberation against gender apartheid and Islamic rule existed in Iran. This movement came to life on 8 March 1979, less than a month from when the Islamic regime took power in Iran. Khomeini stated on 8 March that women had to observe the Hijab in public places. Women instead took to the streets and demonstrated strongly against it and against suppression of women. One of the interesting slogans that women shouted on that day was "women's rights are neither Eastern or Western". By Eastern they meant Soviet Union. They chanted that "women's rights are universal". This phase lasted for a week which led to the regime to retreat but to attack them a year later.

I have always said that a strong movement for women's freedom movement was born in Iran on that day. It has continued fighting against the regime ever since. It has had a lot of ups and downs. During the first decade of the Islamic regime's rule about 100000 political prisoners, mostly left and communists were killed. Women's rights movement had to go underground and later became more vocal.

In the past three years we have been observing another surge in a strong movement by workers and people against the regime, against poverty, suppression, censorship and as a result women's movement has become lively again. There have been a lot of actions by women's rights activists. Some have been put in jail. Although Hijab is still compulsory in Iran and women who deviate from it are arrested and beaten, a lot of women do not observe it. This defiance is so vast that the security forces are unable to do anything about it. The fight against Islamic laws has been very vibrant in the society.

I have always said that women's liberation movement in Iran is the antithesis of the Islamic regime and Islamic movement. This regime cannot really see one peaceful day while there are so many protest movements, such as anti poverty and women's rights movement in the society. Women's liberation movement will not stop while this regime is in power.

**Would you say the focus of the women's liberation movement should be against the Hijab? Is it a core demand in Iran? Or do you think it should be against all kinds of misogyny and suppression in Iran?**

This is a very political movement. Fight against the Hijab and gender apartheid are the main logos of the women's liberation movement. Maintaining the Hijab is the official banner of the Islamic regime and Islamic movement. We have seen it in Iran, in Afghanistan, Daesh and in the whole region. So



opposing gender apartheid and the veil are the two main and important demands. It is clear that the regime will change in some ways either by people's revolutionary and protest movement hopefully taking control or by regime change policies of the Imperialist governments and pole of terrorism like US bringing another right wing government that can say no veil or gender apartheid. The emergence of a right wing government is a danger we are facing. So it is very important to keep these two slogans very strong and demand the complete equality and freedom of women and try to strengthen this movement in a way that does not allow any superficial slogans and actions by so called activists affiliated with the US foreign office to sabotage the movement.

It is tricky but we, in Organisation for Women's Liberation have tried to fight against Islamic regime and gender apartheid. I must mention that the term gender apartheid is from our movement. Now it is universal and everybody is using it. We have to, at the same time clearly expose all the right wing movements from the previous regime (the monarchists) and the US led Western powers. We have to expose them so that we will not become victims and part and parcel of a regime change policy by the West.

**You talked about the sabotage of the women's liberation movement. Could you expand on that? Is it inside or outside Iran? Or combination of both?**

It is a combination of both. There is class struggle in the society. You have right and the left. You have Marxists on one hand and right wing on the other. In Iran, socialist and anti capitalist tendency is very strong among the workers and people. Workers' movement is engaged in building "councils" and General Assembly movement in Iran. However, what could happen is that the West (Imperialist powers or terrorist pole) under the leadership of USA would try to change this regime and bring another right wing regime in Iran. It is not the first time they have done it. They organised a coup-de-ta in the fifties against the nationalist government, and brought the Shah; in 1979 the Islamic Republic was not the result of the revolution. It was actually the West, specially the US that brought Khomeini to Iran. They asked Saddam Hossain to send Khomeini from Iraq to France, where he had meetings with the western officials who then brought him to Iran. They took the Shah away and put the Islamists in his place. Brzezinski and Carter called it a Green Belt in the region against the Soviet Union. Just like what they did with Taliban and Mujahideen in Afghanistan. Or just like what they did by creating ISIS or Daesh 10 years ago. They can do it again. We know that and we have to actually warn people and activists that such scenario can happen. We have to be ready and clear not to allow that to happen.

One of the things they can use is women's rights movement. The reason is that women's right's moment is rightfully very focused against Islam and Islamic rules. However, we have to go further. We have to be aware of the fact that we cannot have freedom under another dictatorship, be it this time a secular one. I don't even think they will go that secular because they do need Islam and religion. Just look at the world. All the right wing governments have religion as one of their attributes. Shah's son who very much likes to be the next Shah and his fans try to make him into a



## **8 March 1979 Tehran**

*International Women's Day march against the Islamic regime of Iran*

leader, actually defends Islam. They know that they cannot be against Islam and totally oppress and suppress the leftists and workers. So this is the tricky situation that we need to be aware of.

**In a sense any progress by women's liberation movement against the Islamic regime in Iran will actually shake the pillars of the regime as a whole. Will it not?**

Yes it will. In the past year many of the regime officials, specially the Mullahs, say they cannot walk out in the streets with their Islamic Mullah clothes. They say they are constantly being attacked. Women attack them. The Mullahs keep saying that "women should be put in their places". They constantly talk about anti-Islamic moment in Iran specially by the women. As I said before women's liberation movement is the antithesis of the Islamic regime and movement. Islamic regime and women's liberation movement cannot live peacefully together. You cannot talk about women's liberation and have an Islamic regime or even accept some of their rules.

One of the basis of ta progressive regime specially in this region is secularism. Religion must be separate from state, legislation, executive power and education. Religion should be made totally into a private matter that cannot interfere with people in the society. We specially say Hands Off children. This is a very important demand now and for the future.

**8th march in Iran. You mentioned about the thousand strong demonstration that happened in 1979 against the newly formed Islamic regime. How is the women's movement since then? There has been ups and downs. Some years they were stronger, some years they were brutally suppressed. How is it now? Can they organise any sort of events in Iran?**

There have been times when women had small meetings, gatherings and demonstrations. Twenty years ago we had meetings in big halls in some cities of Iran. No, the activists have not been able to organise any open events. Our organisation has invited the activists to organise some sort of events or demonstrations in the streets. The class struggle in Iran is active which has made the regime to have set backs. The regime is still very suppressive. It arrests activists and tortures them but not the way it used to. For example, in the past months, there have been teachers, pensioners and workers (Steel workers, Haft-Tapeh sugar cane factory workers and Oil workers) protest movements. So I think we can venture out and have some public meetings or demonstrations for 8th march. We have to see.

**Shall we move on to International Women's Day. What is the history of 8th March? How did it come about?**

International Women's Day is a communist day. Clara Zetkin, in 1910 in the Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen suggested this day to be International Women's Day. It was in commemoration of textile women workers who lost their lives when the factory in NewYork caught



**Iran**

*Anti Hijab protest*

fire. As from the following year it was celebrated as International Women's Day. If I am not mistake, the UN in the 70's decided to overtake the day. It took it from the leftists, communists and Marxists. Now it is celebrated in many countries. People in some places don't know the history of it or choose not to mention it. It is good that it is international. Just like 1st may which is a communist day, 8th March is also a communist day. This day is about complete equality and freedom of women. This cannot really happen completely and unconditionally in a capitalist world. It can only happen in a socialist world.

Capitalism has been operating for 3 centuries. Since then women's movement has emerged, specially in Europe. Women and activists fought for change in the family law, votes for women, and equality between men and women. We had the suffragettes and later women's movement in the 60's and 70's in the West. One of the most important women's movement was in Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution. It managed to have great achievements in the first 10 years after the revolution. Socialism was defeated in the 30's in Soviet Union, state capitalism came to power and Stalin took over and many of those rights were taken back.

We have seen all of this throughout the history and are still talking about women's rights. The situation might have changed in the US and the West but it has not in most of the world. Look at Africa, Middle East, Central and South America. There, women are still suffering from inequality. What has happened in the past few years, under the social media era, with emergence of identity politics, we see a lot of superficiality in women's movement. There has been a lot of hatred created between men and women. This is not how we address women's equality. The latter does not come about by hating men. We need equality and freedom in a world and system that does not need exploitation, inequality or hatred of different sections of the society in order to survive. That is why I am saying the only way women reach complete freedom and equality is by trying to get rid of capitalism and creating a socialist world.

**It was good that you mentioned the revolution in Soviet Union and the effects it had in Europe. Would you say if the women's liberation movement in Iran rises and achieves its demands it will have an immense positive effect in the rest of the Middle East?**

I'm sure it will. Women's liberation movement resonates in the Middle East. Women and men in countries under the rule of Islam fighting for their rights look at the women's movement in Iran and get inspired by it. I have been in a lot of international conferences where women from Syria, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries attended and talked to me about how brave the Iranian women are. They really feel inspired by the movement in Iran. I believe once we get rid of the Islamic regime if we can have a progressive regime in power, if people can take the power in their own hands, and not another right wing government, we will be able to expand that movement in the Middle East. Specially in Afghanistan, our neighbour. Look what is happening to them. Even before Taliban the situation of women in Afghanistan was horrible. After Taliban it got worst. Almost all women have been forced either to choose Hijab or it has been forced on them. The situation of women has regressed in north Africa and the Middle East, where Islam has had such devastating role to play.



## IRAN

*Haft-Tapeh Sugar cane workers on strike in Iran for the right to independent workers' organisation*

I hope we can inspire the whole region to get rid of Islamic moment and bring about secularism and progressive regimes into power and defeat all this tyranny being religious, political or economical.

**If you were in charge what would be the first thing you do to bring equality?**

The first thing would be to take out all the backwardness and inequality out of the law. Then try to create opportunities for women and specially young girls to take advantage of the progressive laws.

**Azar Majedi**

**Chairperson of Organisation  
for Women's Liberation-Iran**

# UKRAINE

## WHO ARE TO BLAME?

- War in Ukraine, Russia vs Nato
- The World at a crossroad
- The devastating consequences of the war on the people in Ukraine and rise of racism

The war in Ukraine has caused many death and destruction and must be stopped. In this article we try to look at the root causes of the war and the political climate created after the war. However, before going further we must unequivocally condemn Russia's aggression, demand an immediate ceasefire and start of negotiations to find a more permanent solution for this conflict; Nato's expansion must stop. The real victims in this war are firstly Ukrainian people and Russians. The people of both countries have no interest in this war; they are being sacrificed and used for the interests of not only Russian ruling class but Ukrainian and Nato especially the USA. This is a war between rival capitalist states who are trying to get more shares of the profit and power.

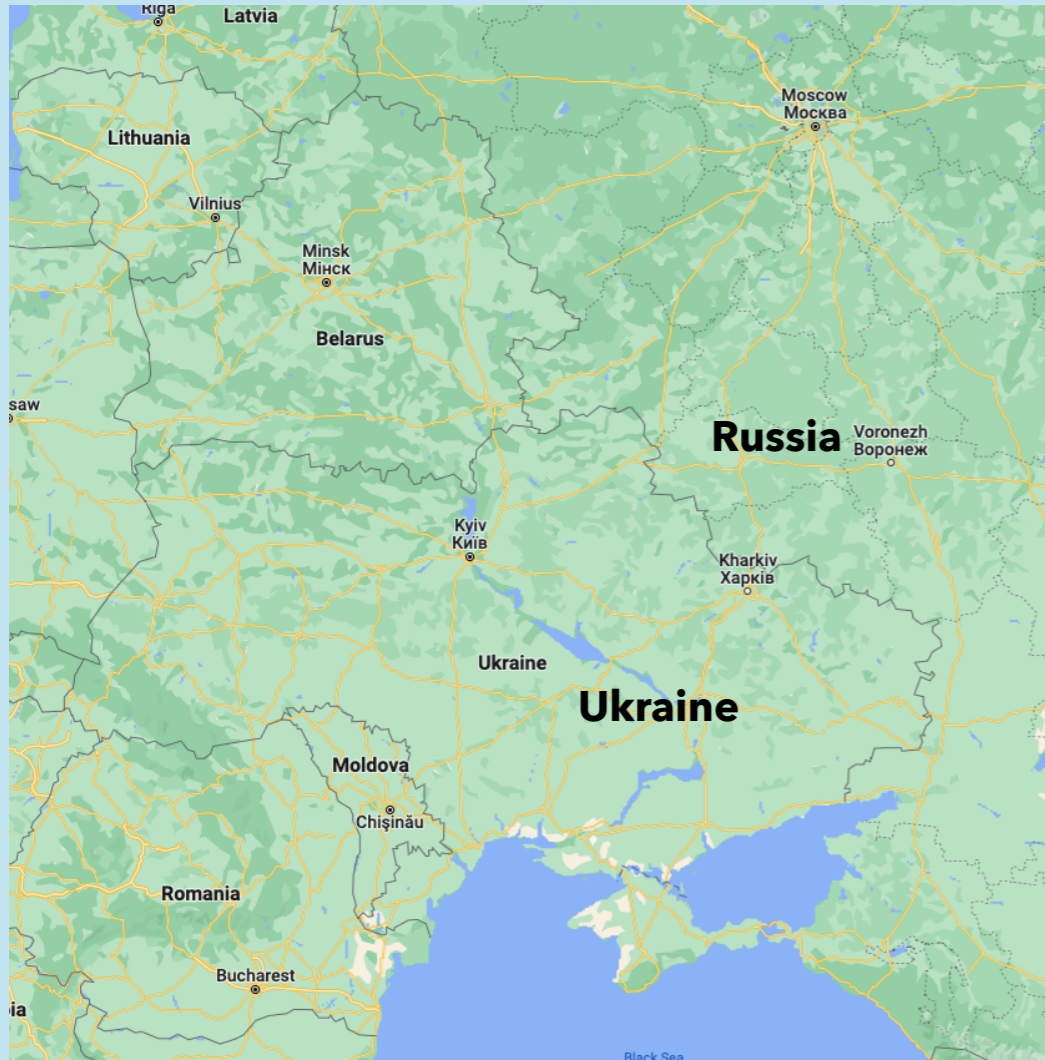
In this century many wars have been waged, millions have died; many more injured and been displaced. Particularly since what came to be known as the "Arab Spring" we've witnessed a humanitarian refugee crisis which resulted in drowning of tens of thousands in the Mediterranean, being sold on the slave market in Libya, freeze to death behind closed hostile borders in Europe, jailed and the lucky ones been racially abused and stigmatised. What is different about war in Ukraine? Why have the Western world, the Nato countries, leaders, media and ideologues all been mobilised to condemn the war and shout for the punishment of the aggressor? Why are they creating this toxic Russo-phobic atmosphere? What distinguishes the vast war torn regions of the Middle East and North Africa from Ukraine? What is the difference between the Ukrainians fleeing a fifteen day old war from Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians, Sudanese, Yemenis, Palestinians and Somali people fleeing years of war, bombs and destruction, that the former is being welcomed not only with open borders but with open arms and the latter thrown into the sea, slave markets and let die behind closed borders? Why are Western governments so eager and in a rush to punish the aggressor in Ukraine and so oblivious towards the aggressors in the Middle East and North Africa? This cry against the war and for human lives is sheer hypocrisy; coming from those who have waged war after war and have ruined a whole region and killed millions.

The war in Ukraine gives rise to many important questions. We need to go deeper than the surface to find the answers to many important socio-political questions as well as politico-economic world order. We cannot stop at "Russia has attacked Ukraine, therefore Russia is responsible and must be punished." This is the Nato's narrative; a self-serving oversimplified answer to a more intricate question.

### **Nato and the war in Ukraine**

Russia is definitely responsible but so are Ukraine and Nato, particularly the main powers in Nato. One should address the question as how and why Nato came into existence: Nato was built after the Second World War in 1949 in the era of the cold war; it was claimed that the creation of Nato was an act of self-defence against the threat of the Soviet Union. The Eastern bloc in response launched the Warsaw Pact in 1955. So, then why wasn't Nato abolished after





the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact? Why was it not only dismantled but expanded? What was the reason or excuse for that?

Soon after the cold war, the world came to the realisation that all the sweet talks about creation of a free democratic and prosperous world for all after the end of the cold war was only an illusion, a big lie, a piece of propaganda. The imperialist powers under the leadership of the US began waging wars across the world in order to create a New World Order where US is the super power and the main bully, exerting control over the whole world. The one pole world became even more dangerous than the previous 2 pole world. It only took a bit more than a year after the collapse of the Soviet Union when a brutal murderous war was waged against Iraq. As a result of this war and subsequent sanctions millions died in Iraq, many of whom were infants, children and elderly. This was a glimpse to the New World Order, a gory world.

Soon after, Nato, under the leadership of the US instigated a war in Yugoslavia, in order to take it apart. Ethnic hatred was spread like plague in this previously relatively calm and peaceful country. In a country where people from Serb, Croat and Bosnian background lived peacefully next to each other, the West's involvement caused ethnic hatred to spread and neighbours were set against each other, encouraged to torch and murder their neighbours over ethnical differences. This war finally came to an end by bombing Belgrade in 1994. Then all the Western media hailed victory; they praised the bombardment; none seemed to be at least bothered by the fact that bombardment was taking place in Europe; the first one after the Second World War. No one seemed to be bothered how many people would die in Belgrade, or their lives would be ruined. It was all celebration.

The imperialist powers did not even for a second contemplate the dismantling of Nato. No matter how many times Russian government objected or pleaded with the western powers not to expand Nato to their borders, they turned a blind eye and a deaf ear. All US presidents, Clinton, Bush, Obama and now Biden have only pushed the boundaries of Nato. The whole Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries have joined Nato and they've been pushing for Ukraine and Georgia to join. In 2014 Obama administration organised a coup d'état in Ukraine, overthrowing an elected pro-Russia government and replaced it with a rightwing pro Nato government with close ties to NAZIs. As a result Russian language has been banned in Ukraine, despite the fact that more than 17% of the population has Russian background and speaks Russian. Donetsk region, home to many Russians has been bombed, its people continuously harassed, torched and attacked by the Ukrainian government and its fascist allies. They have organised pogroms against the Russians in Ukraine. In the past year Ukrainian application for joining Nato instead of being outrightly rejected, has been left open. Russian government that had pleaded and warned Nato over and over to stop the expansion of Nato saw the current situation as the last straw. This total provocation is the main reason for the war.

In the past 2 and a half decades many American and Western, political strategists, analysts and politicians have warned against the expansion of Nato. Even one of the most right-wing US



*Devastation in Ukraine*

politicians, Henry Kissinger had warned against it. In an article for Wall Street Journal in 2014, Kissinger pointed out that “Ukraine cannot act as an outpost for either parties but rather should act as a bridge between the west and Russia...” “Ukraine should not join NATO. . . . Internationally, they should pursue a posture comparable to that of Finland,” carefully avoiding institutional hostility toward Russia.” (Cited in bostonglobe.com March 2 2022)

Ted Galen Carpenter wrote in the Guardian: “Russia’s military offensive against Ukraine is an act of aggression that will make already worrisome tensions between Nato and Moscow even more dangerous. The west’s new cold war with Russia has turned hot. Vladimir Putin bears primary responsibility for this latest development, but Nato’s arrogant, tone-deaf policy toward Russia over the past quarter-century deserves a large share as well. Analysts committed to a US foreign policy of realism and restraint have warned for more than a quarter-century that continuing to expand the most powerful military alliance in history toward another major power would not end well. The war in Ukraine provides definitive confirmation that it did not. . . .”

“George Kenan, the intellectual father of America’s containment policy during the cold war, perceptively warned in a May 1998 New York Times interview about what the Senate’s ratification of Nato’s first round of expansion would set in motion. ““I think it is the beginning of a new cold war,” Kennan stated. “I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else.”” (Ted Galen Carpenter, Many predicated NATO expansion would lead to war. Those warnings were ignored, The Guardian.)

You cannot call someone a bully, a dictator and keep poking them in the eye and expect nothing to happen. This is only common sense. It was obvious by expanding and threatening Russia, you are igniting a war. And who pays the price? People of Ukraine. Therefore, Nato and the Ukrainian government who have constantly provoked Russia are just as responsible in this bloodshed. It seems that Nato leaders wanted a war. Capitalist world cannot survive without wars and conflicts.

## **Hypocrisy, Double Standards**

One of the most disturbing and disgusting products of this war has been the propaganda campaign launched by the western governments and media. The campaign of war mongering clearly shows that they do not want the war to end. Billions worth of arms have been shipped to Ukraine, mounting provocation are only aimed at fuelling the war, not ending it. If the West really cared for Ukrainian people it would call for an immediate negotiation. All Russia wants is a guarantee that Nato will not expand to Ukraine. Is that so difficult to reach? Hypocrisy and lies are dominant in the media broadcasting the war, western governments and ideologues’ statements. They scare the world of a possible Third World War and at the same time fuel the war and push for it to escalate.



*People fleeing their homes in Ukraine  
for the neighbouring countries.*

*Lives shattered.*

They call Putin a dictator who suppresses people, censors the media, imprisons the opposition, (which he is guilty of) but then they close Russian TVs broadcast in English into Europe accusing it of misinformation; a clear act of double standard. You cannot pride yourself of defending freedom and at the same time shutting down media whose broadcastings you oppose. But this is not new. Biden not only defended but also encouraged the shutting down of the opposition media in Ukraine and imprisonment of the opposition leader in 2021.

We've been lectured over and over again by sport organisations, the western governments and ideologues "not to mix sport with politics." When Israel attacked Gaza and killed hundreds of Palestinians including many children, some football players raised the Palestinian flag in stadiums; The TV cameras immediately turned their lenses and those players were criticised, some called for their punishment. Even over protest against racism there were long debates whether football should be mixed with politics. However, from the day one of the war Ukrainian flags have been raised in stadiums and carried by the players, T shirts condemning Russia and defending Ukraine have been worn by the players. UEFA which has raised the Ukrainian flags in most European stadiums had punished the Scottish football club Celtic for raising the Palestinian flag. In fact they don't have any problems with football mixing with politics, as long as it is in favour of their politics.

Banning Russia from all international and European competitions when World cup is to take place in Dubai, one of the most oppressive countries, and where the football stadium has been built by extreme exploitation of migrant workers, leading to the death of several hundred workers is making a mockery of any humanitarian principles; a sheer double standard and hypocrisy. The owner of Chelsea club is forced to sell the club because of his ties with Russian government, while another club has been bought by the Saudi government, not a ballooner/ oligarch with ties with the government, but the government itself; one whose crimes against humanity is a known fact to all. 8 years of bombing of Yemen killing hundreds of thousands of Yemenis; chopping a dissident body into pieces in the Turkish embassy and carrying the pieces in suitcases to Saudi Arabia; killing and beheading dissidents; the list is long.

The demonising Russo phobic campaign has reached farcical level; banning cats which were born or raised in Russia from international competitions; banning of teaching Dostoyevsky's work by a university in Milan and a concert playing Tchaikovsky's music in UK! Valery Gergiev, the conductor of the Munich philharmonic orchestra was sacked because he refused to condemn Putin. All these have taken place in one week. It is scary! How much further are they ready to go?

## **Racism**

Perhaps the most disturbing manifestation of this war is blatant and open racism demonstrated by the western governments and media. They have torn any reservations; they are not even trying to keep an appearance. Talking and reporting about Ukrainian refugees they have

The redeeming feature of war is that it puts a nation to the test. As exposure to the atmosphere reduces all mummies to instant dissolution, so war passes supreme judgment upon social systems that have outlived their vitality.

Karl Marx

thrown mud at African and Middle Eastern ones. Below we quote some of the reports broadcast/published by the media regarding the refugees from Ukraine and those from the Middle East and Africa published in The Guardian.

“While on air, CBS News senior foreign correspondent Charle D’Agata state last week that Ukraine ““isn’t a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilized, relatively European- I have to choose those words carefully, too- city, one where you wouldn’t expect that, or hope that it’s going to happen.” (One wonders what words he would have chosen if he was not careful!)

“The BBC interviewed a former deputy prosecutor general of Ukraine who told the network:”“It’s very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blond hair ... being killed every day.”” What was the BBC host’s response? “I understand and respect the emotion.”

“On France’s BFM TV, a journalist Philippe Corbe stated this about Ukraine: ““We’re not talking here about Syrians fleeing the bombing of the Syrian regime backed by Putin. We’re talking about Europeans leaving in cars that look like outs to save their lives.””

“An ITV journalist reporting from Poland said: ““Now the unthinkable has happened to them. And this is not a developing, third world nation. This is Europe!”” An Al Jazeera anchor said: “Looking at them, the way they are dressed, these are prosperous ... I’m loath to use the expression ... middle-class people. These are not obviously refugees looking to get away from areas in the Middle East that are still in a big state of war. These are not people trying to get away from areas in North Africa. They look like any ... European family living next door.”” And Daniel Hannan writing for the Telegraph wrote: “They seem so like us. That is what makes it so shocking. Ukraine is a European country. Its people watch Netflix and have Instagram accounts, vote in free elections and read uncensored newspapers. War is no longer something visited upon impoverished and remote populations.” (Quoted in “They are “Civilised” and “Look Like Us”, Mustafa Bayoumi, The Guardian 2 March 2022)

Shame on you for these blatant dehumanising words against people of the Middle East and North Africa! Shame on you for regressing to the slavery era! Shame on you for crossing any descent boundaries! We never doubted the reactionary racist reality of the dominate ideology and the ruling classes, but when it comes so unveiled to the fore it sends shocking waves through one’s spine. It is scary. What will the world come to? How are we to visualise the world after the Ukraine war?

### **A side-product or part of the plan?**

After 2 years of pandemic the world is facing an economic crisis. Handful of billionaires has amassed more billions and millions of ordinary people have been pushed into poverty. Soaring

**A NATION  
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CONTINUE TO  
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NATIONS.**

**ENGELS 1847**

prices of energy, petrol, food have pushed millions into sheer poverty. The wave of protest movements in the West was looming; 4.5 million workers have quit their jobs in 2021. The wave of discontent has taken over the West. In the UK the conservative government was about to be taken down. The paedophile Prince and the minimum 12 million pounds paid from taxpayers money to get him out of the court had become a dominant issue. Biden had become very unpopular in the US having taken back all its campaign promises. The war in Ukraine and the propaganda campaign pushed all these urgent politico-economic issues aside. The prices soared even more; but everything became secondary to the threat of Russia.

One must ask are these just a side-product of the current politico-ideological climate or was the main aim of the war escalating campaign launched by Nato governments. The capitalist ruling classes have always resorted to war and creation of outside enemies to push aside internal conflicts, particularly the class conflicts.