

Workers of the World, Unite!

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A Brief Report on the Political Situation in Bangladesh

1. The Bangladesh Awami League has been ruling Bangladesh for the last 13 years (2009-2021) under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina. This period of Sheikh Hasina's rule is governed mainly by her 'Blood and Iron Policy.' The police, RAB (Rapid Action Battalion), government intelligence agencies have killed thousands in the name of 'crossfire' during this period and hundreds have gone missing. Tens of thousands of political opponents have been prosecuted and arrested.

The Awami League (AL) came to power in 2009 in an election held on 29 December 2008, heavily supported by US imperialism and the Indian government. From the very beginning they planned to defraud people of their voting rights. They abolished the provision of parliamentary elections under the caretaker government through the 15th amendment to the constitution on June 30, 2011. Anti-government news and statements in the media were virtually prohibited. Multiple TV channels, newspapers and magazines were shut down. Through the control of advertisement of public and private enterprises, lawsuits against journalists and editors, threats and intimidation by different agencies, the Awami League government completely controls the media. The Special Powers Act, the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Speedy Trial Act, Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Digital Security Act are used extensively against anyone who opposes or criticizes the government.

This has been made easier, firstly, by the collapse of the organization of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the main anti-government ruling class political party, which was in government before the Awami League came to power. The collapse of BNP was due to the widespread theft, corruption, looting and mischief that it did while in power, and their lack of emphasis on maintaining organizational strength. Secondly, the democratic and revolutionary forces were unable to build any real resistance because of a weak political and organizational situation. Thirdly, to keep Sheikh Hasina in power, the

imperialist countries, especially India, adopted various tactics and continued with their conspiratorial activities.

The Awami League again formed the government on January 5, 2014 after being ‘elected’ in a voterless elections. The national parliament has 300 seats where elections take place. In addition, there are 50 seats reserved for women where no direct election takes place. In the 2014 ‘election’, no voting was held in 153 seats, because there was only one candidate in each of these constituencies. Different government agencies under the direct instructions from the PM’s office forced all but one candidate to withdraw their nominations in these seats. In some cases, the Election Commission did not even bother for any legality and simply declared the winners. In the remaining seats, most of the voters did not vote. So, that was no election, and the Awami League continued with its rule by virtually ousting the electoral process in 2014. It was relatively easy, as people at the time were hesitant to vote in the election. But what happened in the last national election held on December 30, 2018 was much more horrible than in 2014. Behind this was detailed planning and long preparation.

Since 2013, hundreds of opposition activists have been abducted and killed in captivity, shot in the legs and permanently paralyzed by torture, and thousands of opposition leaders have been jailed in thousands of cases – taking over control of the constituencies by the Awami League with police help long before the election.

Then, on the eve of the election, the government appointed returning officers for the election of the deputy commissioners of the district and summoned them to a meeting at the Prime Minister’s Office in Dhaka and instructed them on how to conduct the election. Although it was completely out of order, the Chief Election Commissioner said he had no information about it. When the candidates submitted their nomination papers, these returning officers across the country canceled 786 out of 3085 candidates. Among them were a large number of candidates of the opposition BNP-led alliance. There is no doubt that this was done as per the instructions of the meeting held at the Prime Minister’s Office.

The people of Bangladesh wanted to vote in the December 30 elections, through which they wanted to put an end to the fascist misrule of the Awami League. They wanted democratic rights, justice for crime in the country, and an end to terrorism and corruption. They wanted to use the election as a way to achieve this goal. Some of the aspirations that have been created in the society were seen in the

demonstrations of students in the big cities in July 2018 demanding ‘safe roads.’ Large numbers of working people from Dhaka city and surrounding industrial zones returned to their areas to cast their votes. This desire of the people to vote has not been noticed in this way in the last few decades. There was a possibility of an uprising of the people centered on the election.

Faced with this strong desire of the people for change, the main section of the ruling class led by the Awami League could not rely on rigging the election only on the day of the election. They made no attempt to restore the electoral system that was ousted in 2014. On the night before the election, with the help of the Election Commission, the bureaucracy, the police and the army, the goons of the Awami League stuffed the ballot boxes with 30% to 50% of the ballots. An environment of fear was created so that voters did not go to the polling stations. Those who went to the polls were chased away if they were not members of the Awami League. Voting had been delayed by deliberately creating gatherings at the polling station entrance, and the polling had been closed during lunch hours. Voters could not enter many polling stations after noon. The police force controlled the whole process. Local Awami League leaders and activists controlled the polling stations under the supervision of the police and cast fake votes. The army patrolled the area outside in vehicles, but did not enter the polling station, despite complaints from voters. Their presence rather created fear among voters which had been conducive to vote theft. And the Election Commission simply parroted that the election was going well, no problem anywhere.

In fact, with the election looming in late 2018, masses of people and the state apparatus were facing each other. The state apparatus decided to prevent the people from voting – in doing so the electoral system had been completely overthrown. By making the electoral system ineffective and effectively overthrowing it, the Awami League’s return to power had been ensured. Through this, the most reactionary, undemocratic, plunderer and terrorist section of the ruling class of Bangladesh has been able to continue to govern.

On the night before the election, on 29 December 2018, what happened was a coup d’état against the people of Bangladesh. The coup d’état was organized by high-ranking military officials, police forces, military and civilian intelligence agencies, the Election Commission and the bureaucracy. In other words, the state apparatus organized this coup. The media provided all kinds of support.

Generally, a coup d'état is organized to overthrow one government and establish another, leaving the existing state structure intact. Through this, one section of the ruling class overthrows another section. But the people were expelled from the entire election process through the coup d'état that took place in Bangladesh ahead of the elections. As a result, the path of change chosen by the people through elections has become completely ineffective.

Thus, the present Awami League government has come to power by overthrowing the electoral system completely. It is not possible for such a government to remain in power without the use of force, without fascist repression, and without the support of any imperialist power, and that defines the present political situation in Bangladesh.

2. The bourgeoisie forms governments mainly through bourgeois democratic elections or runs its own class rule through military rule. In many cases, the ruling sections of the ruling class continue their rule through massive electoral fraud. This happens especially in countries where the economic base of the ruling class is heavily dependent on theft, corruption and looting; where the main goal of the ruling coterie is to increase wealth through looting and corruption using state power rather than exploitation. This can be noticed in many countries in Africa. We have been seeing this in Bangladesh since the establishment of this state. In the first parliamentary elections of 1973, the ruling party, the Awami League, had a 100 per cent chance of an absolute majority without any rigging, and still they rigged. After winning the 1973 elections, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, stood in Parliament and declared, "There is no opposition party in Bangladesh." This declaration reflected the political character of Bangladesh's new ruling class.

In the bourgeois electoral system, the system of exploitation of the ruling class remains intact. The share of exploitation that bourgeoisie receives does not depend on which part of the ruling class is in power; it mainly depends on the relative amount of capital. But in the case of the ruling class which is dependent on plunder and corruption, the extent to which one can exercise state power, that is, the extent of power-sharing among the ruling classes, decides who can plunder and how much. Because of this, different sections of the ruling classes desperately try to be directly in the state power. In a country where the opportunities for looting and corruption are high, election fraud is also high.

The trading bourgeoisie of Bangladesh has established its control over all financial institutions including banks, insurance etc. and also over the industrial and agricultural sectors. Business groups having close connections with the Prime Minister have taken over the management boards of several private banks and insurance companies with the help of state intelligence agencies, and looting these at will. The bourgeois ruling class of Bangladesh exploits the capitalist process of production, but the main method of distributing their surplus is through theft, corruption, wealth grab and plunder.

The system of elections under the caretaker government for elections free of rigging and fraud, which was agreed upon by various sections of the ruling class in the 1990s, did not last, as there was no change in the basic character of the ruling class. Their reliance on theft, corruption, wealth grab and plunder has not diminished in the slightest.

3. The ruling Awami League has been continuing with its hold over power since the last national 'election'. But it is not just a matter of this or that party continuing its rule. The main determining force in society is the class, not any party. The Awami League has come to power as a class representative. The continuation of the Awami League rule led by its leader, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, by effectively overthrowing the constitution and the electoral system, has been welcomed by a large section of the middle class, big business owners, bank and insurance owners, big industrial owners, military, police, bureaucracy, judiciary, writers, artists, journalists, etc. In fact, Sheikh Hasina has been able to establish the Awami League as the leading and most reliable political representative of the trading bourgeoisie. Evidence of this can be clearly seen in the class character of the members of the National Parliament. Everyone in this parliament is either a business owner or connected to businesses and trading. Officers of the military, police forces, and government bureaucrats are also involved in various kinds of legal and illegal businesses.

The way in which high-ranking military officials, police forces, military and civilian intelligence agencies, the Election Commission and the bureaucracy have worked together to continue with the Awami League rule, shows that the Awami League has been able to assimilate all the agencies of the state. In other words, the Awami League itself has become part of the state.

In the last election, Awami League has again come to power not based on its own organizational strength, rather with the consent of

the army and the activities of the police. The role of intelligence agencies was important in nominating candidates. Rebel candidates have been cracked down directly from the PM's office – through the district police and military intelligence agencies. The role of the party was marginal in this case. The deputy commissioners of the districts were the returning officers only in paper; actual control of the polling stations was in the hands of the police. The police also distributed money among the Awami League workers. The district police superintendents called the Awami League candidates and gave necessary instructions and coordinated their activities.

On the other hand, the police force's own management and control system has also collapsed. The power and authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs is already limited. Before the last election, police officers at the district and even police station level were instructed and managed by the PM's office bypassing the police headquarters. With direct links to the PM's office, lower-level police officers have become politically powerful, able to control local committees of the Awami League. Local committees of the Awami League are being forced to obey the orders of the police. Police have also been seen playing a role in resolving party quarrels in the party's local committees. As a result, the party structure of the Awami League has weakened. After the last national election, the Awami League became a party heavily dependent on the police. The Awami League is the political ally of the criminal activities of the police – this relationship is now clear to the people.

The confidence of the people in the Bangladesh Army that we have seen in the past, because of the role of the Army in the 1971 War of Independence and the overthrow of 'one party' fascism of Sheikh Mujib in 1975, is no more after the last national election. People are beginning to recognize the army as part of the plundering ruling class.

Structurally, the military, the police and the bureaucracy are part of the state, and their members are part of the ruling class, but they maintain a relatively neutral image. However, with an increasing share in political power their share in exploitation, theft, corruption, looting and wealth grab is also increasing.

Bangladesh's trading bourgeoisie, its main political party, the Awami League, the military and the police, the bureaucracy, the election commission, the judiciary – that is, the class, the party and the

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state institutions – became entrenched in the last parliament election, and the people have started to recognize them as their enemy.

4. Despite the general public outcry and protests against the ruling class in general, and the Awami League in particular, the people have not been able to build any resistance centered on the last election. This lack of resistance is the most dangerous aspect of the current situation. The fascism of the ruling class in Bangladesh is now reckless. Organizations are needed to build the resistance. Even spontaneous resistance cannot proceed beyond a stage without organization. Because spontaneous resistance is not aware of its historical consequences, it has no specific goal in front of it. In fact, in the absence of organization, the protests of the people become worthless. It has been proved time and again that the people are powerless without organization.

The fascist ruling class of Bangladesh and its government are inextricably linked with imperialism. In the last election, India as well as China and Russia provided support and assistance to the Awami League. In general, the people of Bangladesh are against Indian aggression and interventions in the country. But, in recent times, public sentiment against US imperialism seems to be weaker than in the past. Bangladesh has long been under the control of US imperialism and its position in the army, police, bureaucracy, business community, financial sector and media is still strong enough. The U.S. has close ties with the two main ruling class parties, the Awami League and the BNP, as well as other political parties and individuals. When the Gana Forum, Citizens' Unity, JSD (Rob), etc., which were



identified as close to the U.S., formed an electoral alliance with the main opposition party, the BNP, there was widespread support among the people for this alliance. The close and inseparable relationship of imperialism with the ruling class of Bangladesh is not yet clear enough to the people, and they do not consider them as enemy and an inseparable target of their struggles. This is dangerous for the democratic struggle in this country.

The bourgeois opposition, the BNP and their alliance the National Unity Front, could not put up any effective resistance during the last national election. Torture, enforced disappearance, killings in custody, imprisonment and oppression of the opposition by the police force and different agencies over the last decade played an important role to that effect. But the main reason for the failure of the bourgeois opposition is that these parties belong to the ruling class. They do not have the solid footing on the ground, among the masses, to organize and build resistance to the fascist rule of their own class. Where the ruling class itself is fascist, no party controlled by them has the strength and ability to go far in the democratic struggle.

5. Contradictions and conflicts between different sections of the ruling class are still predominant in the politics of Bangladesh. The exploited and oppressed people have contradictions with the ruling class; their occasional sporadic clashes with them on the basis of these contradictions is not the main form of politics. It has no predominance in the whole political situation, not even significant influence.

Although the state and the ruling class seem to be much stronger than the people's struggle and resistance, in fact they are not so strong at all. Their strength is only relative. They have no backbone of their own. No ruling class that stands on looting, theft, corruption and terrorism can be too strong. They have survived because of the lack of organized resistance of the people and because of the cooperation of outside forces, that is, the imperialist forces.

The people of Bangladesh want democratic rights – the right to protest against injustice and oppression, the right to hold rallies for the realization of just demands, the right to criticize and the right to express their opinion. The people want to protest against foreign interventions, to build resistance. To exercise their voting right without any expectation of an end to deprivation and exploitation. The people want an end to the fascist rule of the Awami League and severe punishment for all kinds of criminals associated with them.

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It is not possible for any party of the ruling class of Bangladesh to carry forward the democratic struggle in this country. This work must be done by the revolutionary, progressive and genuine democratic forces of the country. This requires the strength of the organization. Building organization and gaining organizational strength is the biggest political duty before us now.

August 2021

The Land Is for Those Who Work It

By its nature as well as historically, capital is the creator of modern landed property, of rent; just as its action therefore appears also as the dissolution of the old form of landed property in. The new form arises from the action of capital upon the old. Capital is this – in one respect – as creator of modern agriculture. in the economic relationships of modern landed property, which appears as a process: rent – capital – wage labour (the form of the series can also be conceived as: wage labour – capital – rent; but capital must always be the active middle element), the inner structure of modern society, or, capital in the totality of its relations, is therefore posited. The question now is: how does the transition from landed property to wage labour come about? (The transition from wage labour to capital comes about of itself, for capital here has returned into its active ground.) Marx & Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 28: p. 206)

Starting from the “dissolution of the relation to the earth — to land or soil—as a natural condition of production” (*ibid.*, p. 421), all modes of production express as a synthesis various property relations over the land, the instruments of production and productive work. In Bolivia, as in other countries in the region, within the variegated capitalist mode of production (economically dependent and technologically backward) there are pre-capitalist production relations (communal and semi-feudal variants) subordinated to capital.

Social democracy and revisionism, on the one hand, seek to idealize abstract pre-capitalist community relations, ignoring its subordination to the capitalist market and, on the other hand, they insist from a mechanistic and anti-dialectical logic on the supposed need for capitalist development of agriculture. For the Marxist-Leninist communists to understand and correctly categorize the class struggle in the countryside, and to learn from the experiences of revolutionary transformation and the construction of scientific socialism, it is essential to concretely outline our political project.

The Soviet Kolkhoz: Socialized Land and Collective Labor

The debates that took place between the Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks before the Socialist Revolution of October, 1917, had as a central element the characterization of the type of revolution and the corresponding tasks that in their country, with a backward capitalism (compared to other European countries) in which pre-capitalist relations still persisted. While the Mensheviks proposed the limit of the possible, the accompaniment of a bourgeois democratic process, Lenin in his April Theses raised as a banner the agrarian program, “confiscation of all landed estates” and “nationalization of all lands in the country” (Lenin, 1917) under the power of the Soviets. After the triumph of the Revolution, the second decree of the Soviet government was on the land, eliminating all private property on land and establishing that it belongs to all the people and that it will be used by those who cultivate it.

The qualitative leap from a very disparate rural reality, which contained feudal, semi-feudal and capitalist relations of production, in which forms of oppression and exploitation ranging from religious, cultural, family and even national aspects were expressed, was a giant challenge for the government of workers and peasants. This complex sum of contradictions was not resolved only by decree, but the class struggle was seen in each battle of the revolutionary war; the Red Army of workers and peasants advanced throughout the country with the socialist banner against the white army of the kulaks and imperialist mercenaries. Through his writings during the Civil War, Stalin, at that time People’s Commissar for Nationalities, explained the importance of establishing the Soviet organization, the power of the workers and peasants, not only at the level of the Central State, but in the different national and autonomous territories. He wrote:

To grant autonomy in order that all power within the autonomous unit may belong to the national bourgeoisie, who insist upon non-interference on the part of the Soviets, to surrender the Tatar, Bashkir, Georgian, Kirghiz, Armenian and other workers to the tender mercies of the Tatar, Georgian, Armenian and other bourgeois— that is something to which the Soviet power cannot consent. (Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 4, p. 89)

The understanding of the law of combined and unequal development implies that the characteristics of each region translate into its

own form of assimilating the socio-economic transformations, and it is thus that the class contradictions between landowners and peasant workers intermingled with the contradictions of the centuries of national oppression by Great-Russian imperialism. The national ruling classes tried to take advantage of the situation of the revolutionary ascent to achieve an autonomy that would have allowed them to maintain exploitative relations within their national territory. Comrade Stalin's clear and forceful response allowed the Bolshevik Party to advance towards the consolidation of the USSR, without compromising with the local bourgeoisies, imposing as a principle worker and peasant power throughout the liberated territory.

The main contradiction between capital and labor that governs capitalism, due to the social character of labor, can only be overcome through the socialization of the means of production. In the Soviet case this was done through the decree on land (1917) and the Fundamental Law of the Socialization of the Land (1918), which established the social property over the land and the general guideline for the distribution of the use and cultivation of the land. Beginning in 1928, with the first five-year plan, the Soviet people advanced with a firm step towards the collectivization of agrarian work, under two models: the kolkhoz – the Soviet cooperative model and the state sovkhoz.

The effective overcoming of the contradiction between the ownership and work of the land when it was socialized gave rise to another series of contradictions that had to be overcome: the ownership of the means of production, the use of the land, the organization of labor, the technification of labor, the conditions of life in the countryside. The collectivization of the countryside in the Soviet Union had as a direct and immediate result a significant increase in productivity, but at the same time it transformed living conditions in the rural area: access to education, health, culture, electrification, road and rail integration and political participation.

The organization of work in the agrarian cooperatives (kolkhozes) started from the basis of social ownership of the land, that is, all the land was owned by the Soviet people and the right to its use was given to the collective of the kolkhoz indefinitely and exclusively. Plots of between $\frac{1}{4}$ hectare and $\frac{1}{2}$ a hectare were allocated (in some regions up to one hectare was allowed depending on local conditions) for the use of the family unit (orchards, gardens, etc.). If any family unit withdrew, they did not keep their land allocation, but had

to request some external land for their use. The main means of production (pack animals, machinery, seeds, compost, buildings, etc.) had to be collectively owned, with homes, personal animals and the tools necessary to cultivate family land being owned by individuals or families. The kolkhoz had to implement the state planning guidelines regarding land rotation, cultivation, fertilization, irrigation, and technical and agricultural guidelines established by the regional authorities (Soviet Legislation, 1935).

The admission of a new member to the kolkhoz was a decision of the general assembly of its members, allowing the entry of every man or woman of the working class over 16 years old, who had to make a contribution of 20 to 40 rubles to the collectively fund; kulaks or members of the exploiting classes could not enter. The procedure for the expulsion of a member of the kolkhoz also required the convening of a general assembly, but in this case the vote had to be two-thirds. The administration of the collective had as a basic rule, that between 25% and 50% of the value of the socialized property of the members should be constituted in the indivisible fund of the collective; the remaining percentage depending on the contribution of each member. Dividend adjustment among members was done at the end of the growing season.

The economic obligations of the kolkhoz were regulated, which had to comply with its credit payments to the State for machinery and seeds, the purchase of seeds and supplies for future management, a fund to assist sick, elderly or disabled people, the Red Army, and nurseries. By fulfilling these obligations, the collective could sell its products to the State or in the market, and distribute the remaining products among its members according to the days worked. On the other hand, the monetary income had to be used to pay its tax and insurance obligations to the State, the maintenance of the machinery and the medical treatment of the animals, its own administrative expenses, the expenditure on cultural needs for education, training, schools, radios, etc., the cost of construction, investment in livestock and machinery (between 10% and 20%); the rest of the economic income had to be distributed among the members of the kolkhoz according to the number of days worked.

The organizational structure had as its highest authority the general assembly, which elected the board of directors from among its members and dealt with the general problems of the community. The board of directors had the authority to be in charge of the daily

administration of the collective, to appoint the brigade chiefs and the members of each brigade. The labor organization was based on the brigades (livestock and farmers), which had to have the same number of members and the same land assigned; they could agree to hire external technical advisors as salaried workers, but only in emergency cases could they hire external workers for agricultural work as such or for the construction of habitats.

The transformation of agricultural work in the Soviet Union required a technical-technological, cultural and productive leap, going from pre-capitalist relations of production to industrialization, from the obscurantism of religious and patriarchal oppression to the full possibility of access to universal science and culture, and the consolidation of the rights of the cooperative peasants as full citizens in political, social and economic terms.

Albania: “Securing our own bread”

In the program of the First Government of the People’s Republic of Albania, presented to the People’s Assembly on March 24, 1946, Comrade Hoxha stated that the agricultural problem was one of the main problems facing the country and that it must be resolved in a timely and correct manner. The first measure taken was the Agrarian Reform Law, which in fact “gave the land to those who till it, first and foremost, to the poor and middle peasants”; up to 1948, as reported to the First Congress of the Party, a total of 172,659 hectares of arable land were expropriated and handed over to the peasant workers.

It is worth mentioning some of the quotes regarding the Agrarian Reform in Comrade Hoxha’s report; he stated that “the Albanian peasants should fight with the greatest severity against any trickery or injustice, or misinterpretation of the law [the Agrarian Reform] on the part of any irresponsible official.... The government will not any trifling with the land or the future of the peasants.” The evident susceptibility to possible injustices in the application of the reform prompted the Party to define a clear and transparent policy in this regard; it was not enough to establish the agrarian policy, but the Party had to be the one that tackled it until its realization. The program also raised the need not only to accelerate the distribution of land, but also the opening of an agrarian credit, the improvement of the agricultural machinery centers (at the service of farmers), the construction of canals and the draining of swamps, the creation of

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technical training schools, the diversification of production, the selection of seeds and fertilizers, and the mobilization of the people in voluntary labor to advance by leaps and bounds in agriculture.

“All these measures are aimed at raising our agriculture from its primitive stage to a more advanced level, tilling as much land as possible, increasing and improving agricultural production. Here our motto should be: ‘We must make our bread ourselves, and not depend on imports.’” (Hoxha, Vol. 1, p. 528)

The first great transformation of agricultural production in Albania had as its main and immediate political objective to overthrow a ruling social class that for centuries had carried out oppression and exploitation, which had established its political and economic traditions as its own in the country. The application of the Agrarian Reform, according to the Report to the First Congress of the Party, assured:

- a) the liquidation of feudalism;
- b) the creation of conditions for the transition of small individual economies, which engendered capitalism in the rural areas, towards a collective, cooperative and socialist economy.
- c) the creation of conditions for the improvement and modernization of agriculture, which are essential requirements for the healthy development of the entire popular economy.



The natural opposition of the landlord class led it to attack the Agrarian Reforms, on the one hand, alleging the need for a long technical process to carry out reforms, and on the other, made use of the religious discourse ‘the land belongs to Gods’. Faced with this attack by the economic and religious forces, the Party directed the organization of Poor Peasant Committees in order to advance and defend the redistribution of land. Along with the transformation of economic relations, the construction of People’s Power as a form of political organization in the People’s Republic of Albania meant a real exercise of democracy for the working people.

The international experiences in the construction of scientific socialism left important lessons for the Albanian process; on the one hand the opportunist policies of the Yugoslav Party had achieved a certain impact on the design of the Agrarian Reform Law, with dangerous precedents of pro-capitalist cooperativism; on the other hand, the experience of the USSR with the formation of the kolkhoz impacted on the political-ideological understanding of party work in the countryside, and the forms of labor organization under socialism. One of the most notable elements that opposed the Yugoslav positions to the Soviet ones was the relation of the distribution of dividends of the cooperative (the percentage for land ownership versus the percentage for productive work). In the First Congress of the Party, among the other errors and limitations identified in the process of the formation of socialist cooperatives, were: the lack of organizational work, the lack of leadership and work experience, the lack of detailed planning and incorrect distribution of the workforce and the lack of revolutionary vigilance. At the level of the class struggle, the importance of only poor and middle peasants forming cooperatives was confirmed, excluding the possibility that landowners could be participants in these collective organizations, so that there had to be permanent vigilance and purification of elements of the class enemies.

Small-scale individual agriculture has serious limitations in terms of planning, in terms of the economic capacity to advance in the mechanization of agriculture and because of the contradiction between the anarchy of the free market and economic planning. But the process of collectivization, of the formation of agricultural cooperatives, could not be established by decree, nor imposed as a mandate, but had to be the product of intense political-ideological and organizational mobilization. As the central axis of the five-year plans, the

Party drew the line of advancing in the formation of agrarian cooperatives; under that line until the Third Party Congress in 1956, 26% of the arable land in the hands of poor peasants was already organized into agricultural cooperatives, and by 1963 agricultural cooperatives accounted for 86% of the arable land in the hands of poor peasants. Along with the agricultural cooperatives, Albania, like the USSR, proposed the existence of state lands, industrialized, mechanized and worked in a planned and organized way (Hoxha, 1974).

A fundamental part of the Albanian model were the machinery and tractor stations, central points that offered rental and maintenance services of machinery and tractors at reasonable prices for the industrialization of agriculture, and simultaneously played a role of ideological diffusion and party organization. These stations contributed to an understanding of cooperation and of the rational use of resources between the different cooperatives and the state sector, since their objective was oneself. For Comrade Hoxha, the industrialization and collectivization of agriculture was not only an economic necessity but it was the fundamental exercise of national sovereignty, as expressed in the slogan of the 5th Party Congress (1966): “Ensure the people’s bread.”

Unfinished Agrarian Reforms in Bolivia

On April 9, 1952, the peasant and mining militias triumphantly entered the city of La Paz in triumph, having defeated the National Army, effectively marking the victory of the so-called National Revolution. The main slogans that were able to mobilize the great majority of urban and rural workers included agrarian reform, universal suffrage, access to education, and nationalization of the mines. It was a year later, in August 1953, that the Agrarian Reform was enacted, which, far from resolving the deep class contradictions in Bolivian agriculture, created new contradictions. In the highlands and valleys, community property that remained largely intact during colonialism was seized by the landowners during the first century of republican life under the model of pongueaje (semi-feudal relations of production); the Agrarian Reform of 1953 transformed the large land plots into a small land plots, the individual titling of small extensions of land; it broke with the community structures and facilitated the subsequent sale and concentration of ownership over the land. Between 1953 and 1992, the distribution and titling of land by the State reached a total of 59 million hectares, of which 68% remained in the

hands of medium and large owners (Böhrt, Romero & Peñaranda, 2009, p. 22).

The Agrarian Reform of 1953 fulfilled the objective of the Keenleyside Plan (1950) designed by Yankee imperialism to “temporarily reassure the peasants with the handing over of small plots and that, basically, was a means to lay the foundations U.S. ownership of the lands of Bolivia” (Ovando Sanz, 1984, p. 33). These measures served to co-opt the peasant union leadership for decades through the so-called Peasant-Military Pact, which lasted until 1979 when the Single Trade Union Federation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia, “Tupac Katari” was founded, independent of the military regimes of that time.

The imperialist ‘cooperation’ was a direct attack on food sovereignty by generating cycles of toxic dependence, through the USAID project known as PL-480; for more than half a century the United States sent wheat flour for bread to Bolivia and ‘oriented’ national agricultural policy. The landowning oligarchy in the eastern part of the country had benefited from the instrumentalization of the Agrarian Reform, and in alliance with the military leadership and the Yankee embassy they staged the 1971 coup, and consolidated their agro-industrial economic power (sugar, cotton and later soy). These “cooperation” projects also served as a pretext for the open intervention of the forces of the [U.S.] DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] in Chaparé, the eradication of the cultivation of coca leaf to impose a supposed “productive diversification” in the face of the resistance of the coca growers. The massive peasant mobilizations during the 1990s and early 2000s created an important joining with the indigenous-native movement, with a just and legitimate agenda that was summarized in: land, territory and dignity.

Social-reformism or the misnamed ‘21st century socialism’, faithful to its populist roots, raised the banners of struggle for the transformation of living conditions in the rural areas, even raising the need for a new agrarian reform or the agricultural community productive ‘revolution’. However, despite the constitutional text approved by the Constituent Assembly, the negotiating commission between the MAS-IPSP and the parliamentary right agreed to changes in the new Constitution to incorporate respect for the ‘pre-constituted private property rights’ in indigenous-original territory and the non-retroactivity of the agrarian law. Once the new Constitution was approved, the government of Evo Morales approved a special law that suspended for five years the review of the economic-social function

of the large estates, a suspension that was later extended for another five years.

The so-called agricultural community productive ‘revolution’, as a public policy, proposed the democratization of access to ownership of land and during the first 13 years of the MAS-IPSP government, 78 million hectares were titled with 2.3 million beneficiaries (Ministry of Communication, 2019, p. 3), and the possibility of accessing productive loans was expanded. But these policies by themselves did not transform the existing social relations of production; they only contributed to reaffirming the dominance of the capitalist market, and the logic of individual land ownership (it should be noted that although there are collective and community titles, these represent a minority compared to individual titles). Likewise, the policies created around the Food Production Support Company – EMAPA (now, Bolivian Food Company – EBA), instead of benefiting the small peasant producers, registered multimillion-dollar purchases from large agro-industrial companies and usurious collecting companies. The state policies approved between 2018 and 2019 aimed at strengthening the agribusiness sector with the prioritization of plant additives (biofuels) to the detriment of the country’s food sovereignty.

What should be done? The program of the PCR

The Agrarian Reform of 1953 and the agricultural community productive ‘revolution’ of the MAS-IPSP have not done more than to expand and strengthen capitalist relations of production in the countryside of the country, individual ownership and the advance of agribusiness that does not contribute to food sovereignty. Land titling is not enough; the modernization of agriculture, the collectivization of work and economic planning must be promoted under a logic of food sovereignty. The program of the Revolutionary Communist Party considers the historical legacy of peasant struggle in our country and incorporates in its project some urgent tasks to transform the social relations of production in the countryside, among which are:

- Socialize the large latifundia property (greater than 5,000 hectares) and give land to poor peasants.
- Organize agricultural cooperatives, assisted technically and economically by the new State, in order to raise labor productivity, increase production and raise the standard of living of the masses of poor and middle peasants.

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- Eliminate intermediaries and punish usury through the commercialization of agricultural products through the State.
- The Popular Democratic Government and of National Liberation will promote a policy of food sovereignty, that agriculture produces what the people consume and not for the large transnationals.
- Restore ownership of lands that were historically taken illegally from the peasant communities.
- The People's Democratic State recognizes nature as the primary source of wealth, the use of which must be planned at the national level in a rational way, guaranteeing its preservation for future generations.
- The Popular Democratic Government and of National Liberation upholds the principle of the Water War (Cochabamba, 2000): "The water is ours"; the management of this vital resource must be the product of the agreements between the State and the communities.
- Develop generation of clean energy, modern systems of irrigation, and policies to guarantee the sustainability of agricultural production.

The experiences of the construction of scientific socialism in the Soviet Union and Albania help us to understand in a concrete way the value of collective work, modernization and planning to transform agricultural production in our country. Only the Democratic, Popular and Socialist Revolution will socialize the property of the large landowners, advance towards the collectivization and modernization of rural work, guarantee the right to self-determination of the indigenous-native peoples and nationalities, and thus the peoples will have land, territory and dignity.

October 2021

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Black Slavery and the Capitalist Mode of Production

Describing the origin of the process of accumulation of capital, Karl Marx stated: “Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (*Capital*, Volume I, Chapter XXXI, p. 712, Progress Publishers, Moscow).

There is no doubt: capitalism was born and developed with cruel violence and the brutal exploitation of the peasants, the African peoples and the workers. In England, the cradle of capitalism, in the 16th century, a violent expropriation of the rural population usurped the hitherto communal lands, swept millions of peasants from their estates and forced an immense mass of disinherited proletarians to sell their labor power and that of their children to the new owners of the means of production.

The expulsion of the peasants was advantageous for the capitalists, who obtained grazing land and cheap labor. But for the peasants, who could not find work and wandered hungry through the English cities, it was hell. To prevent revolts, the lords adopted bloody legislation against those whom they called vagabonds and beggars. The multitude of families expropriated by the capitalists was of such magnitude that, in 1860, fearing a social explosion, England sent abroad thousands of former small proprietors with the promise of fertile land.

For those who worked in the factories, the wages paid were so low that, even with all the members of a family working, what they earned was not enough to eat. Therefore, there was no factory that did not employ and enslave children. In the reign of Edward VI, a statute of 1547 ordered that a worker who refused to work would be enslaved, and a slave who was absent for 14 days would be sentenced to slavery for life and had to be marked with the letter S (Slave in English). This does not surprise us, since in the 21st century large capitalist monopolies such as Nike and Apple continue to exploit child labor in several Asian countries.

In addition to the expropriation of the peasants in Europe, another infamous means of primitive accumulation of capital was the

enslavement of African peoples. Indeed, since the first ships were sent to Africa by European kings and parliaments and blessed by the Church, the blood of black people has not stopped spilling. When they were detained, Africans were bound by the neck, arms and legs, tied up two by two with a large chain and forced to march to a warehouse where they waited to be thrown into filthy cells. On the slave ship, the savagery continued with the torture of the rain of whips. The great revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh described the savagery carried out by slave traders in the service of the capitalist powers:

“The sick, considered as damaged and unsaleable goods, were thrown into the sea. As a rule, at the end of the journey, a quarter of the living cargo had succumbed to infectious diseases or asphyxiation. The surviving slaves were branded and numbered with white-hot irons like cattle and counted in tons and bales. Thus the Portuguese Company of Guinea signed a contract in 1700 by which it undertook to supply 11,000 ‘tons’ of Negroes” (Ho Chi Minh, *Civilization That Kills*, 1924, in *Selected Works*, Volume I, p. 116).

Mass murders, imprisonment of children, walking kilometer after kilometer in chains and then thrown into a fetid and lightless basement, marked with iron, burned alive, thrown overboard to lighten the load of the ships, unlimited exploitation of labor power, the list of crimes of the bourgeoisie against black people is endless, making it impossible to imagine how much blood Africans have shed since the invasion of their continent. The figures of this genocide have not yet been fully determined, but an estimate by the writer Richard Wright, quoted by Abdias Nascimento in his book *O Genocídio do Negro Brasileiro (The Genocide of the Brazilian Blacks)*, is that 100 million Africans were criminally murdered or enslaved by the self-styled European colonizers. Other studies guarantee that at least 15 million human beings were forcibly taken to the Americas and about three million died during the crossing or drowned at sea.

All this savagery was approved by the European parliaments and had the full support of the bourgeois state which, with its strength, imposed this repugnant crime on humanity. In fact, the violence of the bourgeois state, modern warships, new firearms, and the experience of various wars against the feudal lords were used to enslave black people, steal their wealth, and develop the accumulation of capital.

The bourgeoisie and slavery

Thus, for more than 400 years, the capitalist mode of production not only consented to but promoted the slave trade and slavery. In fact, all colonizing governments signed monopoly treaties and agreements for the exploitation of the African peoples.

Even when slave ships were banned, decades passed in which the navies of various countries, at the request of their governments or by bribery from African traffickers, ignored this trade. In 1824, a slave ship that needed to lighten its load, instead of throwing barrels of rum into the sea, preferred to throw blacks. An English navy ship picked up the barrels with Africans and took them to the slave ship. But when it got on the ship, it realized that the boat could not bear the weight and ordered to summarily shoot the blacks and throw them, already dead, into the sea.

The bourgeoisie and its mode of production, capitalism, not only developed the slave trade, but established slavery in dozens of countries, obtaining incalculable benefits with this infamous business. In reality, centuries of slavery and plundering of the African peoples were instrumental in a minority of people becoming business owners, big business owners and respectable bourgeois lords. It was, therefore, with the extermination, enslavement and transformation of Africa into an immense continent for the commercial hunting of human beings that capitalism was born and imposed on the peoples.

The slave trade specifically supplied the main colonies of the European powers outside Africa (Haiti, Guyana, United States, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Dominican Republic) with labor power of great physical capacity and intelligence, which allowed for the rapid growth of the economy. In analyzing the development of capitalism, Karl Marx noted: “But in proportion, as the export of cotton became of vital interest to these states, the over-working of the negro and sometimes the using up of his life in 7 years of labour became a factor in a calculated and calculating system. It was no longer a question of obtaining from him a certain quantity of useful products. It was now a question of production of surplus labour itself” (*Capital*, Volume I, Chapter X, p. 226-227).

England, the largest capitalist country of the time, was the one that took the most advantage of the slave trade for the accumulation of capital and had the slave trade as its central policy until 1783. At that time, all the English ruling classes defended slavery at all costs,

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as they considered this trade to be an enormous stimulus for the capitalist economy. Therefore, slavery was viewed favorably by the Church, the lords and the royal family. In addition, they reinforced the British navy to develop the production of new materials for the slave economy (shackles, chains, clothing, etc.) and to promote the production of various manufactures for trade with Africa and the West Indies.

In 1795, Liverpool was the largest slave port and accounted for 5/8 of the British slave trade and 3/7 of the entire European slave trade. To give an idea of how the volume of the slave trade grew over the years: between 1680 and 1686, the Royal African Company transported, on average, five thousand slaves a year. In the first nine years of free trade, Bristol alone sent 160,950 blacks to the sugar plantations.

Slaves were, therefore, a fundamental force to boost the agricultural production of the colonies that supplied products (sugar, cotton, coffee, gold, etc.) to a Europe in full economic expansion that had just carried out the so-called clearing of the land, destroying millions of small and medium rural properties and establishing wage slavery.

This is not an exaggeration, as women and children were enslaved in factories suffering grueling labor, in which many died, and wages were kept low by laws passed in parliament. Let us see how Friedrich Engels describes this reality in his 1844 book *The Situation of the Working Class in England*:

“From the beginning of manufacturing industry, children have been employed in mills, at first almost exclusively by reason of the smallness of the machines, which were later enlarged. Even children from the workhouses were employed in multitudes, being rented out for a number of years to the manufacturers as apprentices. They were lodged, fed, and clothed in common, and were, of course, completely the slaves of their masters, by whom they were treated with the utmost recklessness and barbarity.”

Thus, the same capitalist class that enslaved blacks expelled the peasants and exploited cheap labor in order to extract greater surplus value. It was a circle that initially reproduced itself through exploitation in order to produce ever cheaper commodities and to sell them at a higher price in the colonies, as Marx points out:

“Whilst the cotton industry introduced child-slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial

exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage-workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world” (*Capital*, Karl Marx, Volume I, Chapter XXXI, p. 711).

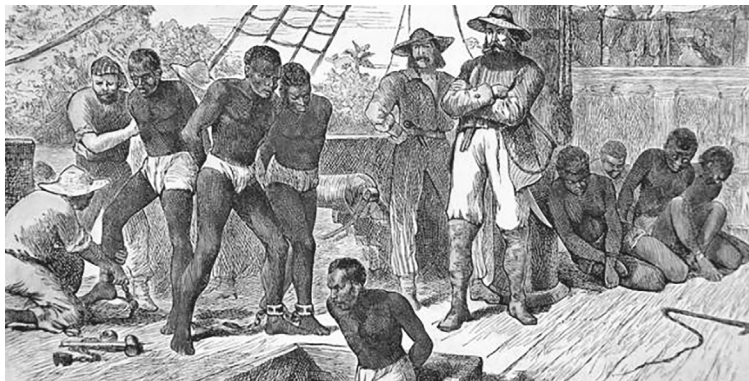
Indeed, England recognized and supported the Confederate States of the South and its goal of perpetuating slavery in the United States. The English government said that an end to slavery in that country would lead to the ruin of the textile industry of the United Kingdom. It was the great demonstrations of the English workers at the end of 1862 that prevented the English government from declaring war on the Northern states, which were fighting for an end to slavery in the United States.

To Civilize or enslave?

To minimize this infamous crime against humanity, the bourgeoisie and its historians say that slavery always existed, that it was not a creation of capitalism.

But in the slave society that preceded feudalism and the capitalist mode of production, slaves were people defeated in a war or those who could not pay a debt, regardless of the color of their skin. In addition, slaves were not commodities and could not be sold. In Egypt, for example, workers became slaves for the time needed to perform a certain job; once this was completed, they returned to their condition of free workers. It was, therefore, a different kind of slavery than that which occurred for centuries after the capitalist mode of production became dominant.

In the socialist mode of production there was no slave labor at all, let alone slavery. On the contrary, the socialist countries, in particular the Soviet Union, while it was a revolutionary country, fought alongside the peoples to free them from imperialist colonialism. In



addition, humanity has the right to have a mode of production that humanizes human beings and does not enslave them, that improves their lives and does not make them worse.

In short, unlike what many bourgeois historians propagate, the dawn of capitalist production was not a bed of roses, but of African blood, of the theft of peasant property and of the ruthless exploitation of workers and children. The defense of the negro as a human being was never among the principles of the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, this class always regarded the negro as an inferior race and established this conception throughout the world.

Capitalist imperialism spreads racism around the world

When the first European ships arrived on the African continent, in the middle of the 15th century, Africa was inhabited by peoples with a certain level of development and possessed enormous wealth, such as gold, diamonds and various spices. To deepen the plundering of this continent, between 1884 and 1885 the capitalist countries held the Berlin Conference, where, in one of the most arbitrary and authoritarian acts in the history of mankind, they decided to divide the nations and peoples with the interests of the world bourgeoisie as their sole criterion. This injustice was imposed on humanity by foreign troops who killed, tortured and annihilated those who dared to fight for freedom and independence.

Some of the consequences of this “civilization” of Africa by the capitalist countries were unimaginable tragedies, as Ho Chi Minh portrayed at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International in 1924 when he read the testimony of the black writer René Maran:

“‘Equatorial Africa was a densely populated area, rich in rubber. There were here all kinds of gardens and farms with plenty of poultry and goats. After only seven years everything was destroyed. Villages were in ruins, gardens and farms laid waste, poultry and goats killed. The inhabitants grew weak because they had to work beyond their strength and without any payment. They were not sufficiently strong and lacked the time to work their fields. Diseases broke out, famine appeared, the death rate increased. We should know that they are the descendants of strong and healthy tribes imbued with an enduring and tempered fighting spirit.’

“The same system of pillage, extermination and destruction prevails in African regions under Italian, Spanish, British or Portuguese rule.” (Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, Volume I, p. 154-155).

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The European nations proclaimed themselves superior, bearers of development, of modernity, who would bring civilization to the “barbaric and irrational peoples”. But, as we have seen, what happened was a massacre of the African peoples, with the death of thousands of human beings who resisted the seizure of their lands.

Convened by the Communist International and held in February 1927, the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism denounced this barbaric crime in its General Resolution on the Black Question, revealing the economic interests of the bourgeoisie with the slave trade and slavery:

“For 500 years, the black peoples of the world have been victims of the most terrible and ruthless oppression. The institution of buying and selling enslaved people, as a consequence of the commercial revolution and the expansion of Europe, was the beginning of one of the worst systems of terror and dispossession in the history of humanity. As a result of this trade, Africa lost 100 million of its inhabitants, of whom four out of five died in the bloody business of capture and transport. Those who survived were sent into the cruelest slavery in the New World.

“The immense wealth of this unworthy trade was the basis of the opulence and development of European states and their merchants. But the progress of the African peoples came to a screeching halt and their civilization, which in many places had reached a high level of advancement, was almost completely destroyed. These nations were declared pagan and savage, an inferior race, destined by the Christian god to be slaves of the superior Europeans, without any rights that the white man should respect. A bitter and hostile prejudice was raised against the black race, a prejudice that dominated the feelings of most Europeans, making them the object of degrading and pernicious proscriptions....

“In the United States, the 12 million Negroes, while having equal rights guaranteed by the Constitution, are denied participation in the political and economic life of the nation. This oppression is greatest in the Southern states, where the spirit of servitude still prevails. Segregation, deprivation of civil and electoral rights, legal injustice, forced indebtedness and imprisonment, violence, lynchings promoted by white mobs degrade and oppress these people. This perverse system of repression operates to reduce the race to a lower and servile caste, exploited and abused by all other classes of society.” (General resolution on the Black Question. First International

Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism. February 1927. Left Bank Magazine. 2016)

Capitalist apartheid

An example of black slavery and racism being an integral part of the system of capitalist domination is the case of South Africa. In 1910, the British founded the Union of South Africa as an integral part of the United Kingdom. Twenty years later, in 1931, South Africa formally gained independence from the United Kingdom, but with a British-imposed government. In 1961, the government declared itself a white republic and established the apartheid system. The population was divided by skin color, which guaranteed privileges to whites. There was no citizenship for blacks or access to health-care, education or any public service in the country. On June 16, 1976, to stop the revolt of the black population, the racist state of South Africa murdered 700 young people and injured more than 4000 people, in what has been called the “Soweto Massacre”.

But who benefited from apartheid in South Africa? Let’s look at what Kwame Nkrumah, a Ghanaian-born African revolutionary leader, wrote:

“The diamond industry of South Africa brought in a revenue of £93 million in 1962. Two-thirds of this was from gem diamonds, whose carat price was recently raised by the industry’s controllers. Of such importance is the diamond industry to South Africa that there is no duty on the export of rough diamonds.

“Diamonds are a major concern of Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, and it is through De Beers and the Diamond Corporation, with their associated companies and alliances that the operations of his Anglo-American Corporation stretch from South Africa into South-West Africa, Angola, Congo, East and West Africa, to control until recently the production and sale of pretty well 85% of the world’s diamonds.” (Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, International Publishers, 1966).

This racist system ended in 1994, that is, six years before the end of the 20th century. Hundreds of revolts, uprisings and the armed struggle developed by black South Africans and thousands of murders of children, youth, men and women were indispensable [in putting an end to this system]. Apartheid ended with the white bourgeoisie maintaining possession of the wealth it stole from the South African people and with 70% of the population living in extreme poverty.

The history of the partition of Africa and apartheid are faithful evidence that it is impossible to end racism by maintaining the capitalist system, and it shows that the bourgeoisie's goal of turning human beings into animals was the greatest "decivilization" in history.

Another great African revolutionary, Amilcar Cabral, in his book *The Weapon of Theory*, explained in depth the objectives of the different theories that, in different words, defend racism and apartheid:

"Imperialist colonial domination has tried to create theories which, in fact, are only crude formulations of racism, and which, in practice, are translated into a permanent state of siege for the aboriginal populations, on the basis of racist dictatorship (or democracy)....

"This is likewise the case with the supposed theory of apartheid, created, applied and developed on the basis of the economic and political domination of the people of southern Africa by a racist minority, with all the crimes against humanity that this entails. The practice of apartheid takes the form of unrestrained exploitation of the labour force of the African masses, incarcerated and cynically repressed in the largest concentration camp mankind has ever known" ("*The Weapon of Theory*," in Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, Monthly Review Press, 1979, pp. 140-141)

These cruel and anti-black acts have not ceased in the 21st century, as evidenced by the inhumane murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, which sparked the largest wave of demonstrations in the United States since the end of the Vietnam War.

As if that were not enough, 27 states in the United States (in total, there are 50) are debating bills in their parliaments that aim to prevent discussion of race in basic education. As of June 2021, eight states (Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Idaho, Iowa, Florida, Utah, and Montana) have passed laws limiting or preventing educators from talking about racism in the country with their students.

In the state of Iowa, for example, a law was passed that prohibits teachers from discussing in class the relationship of racism to the history of the country. The new law, signed by the state's governor in June of this year, states that educators cannot talk about racial inequality. In Arizona, the "Imperial Teaching Act", in addition to banning this discussion, fined teachers \$5,000 for dealing with the issue in class and only did not become law because the Senate vetoed the bill.

As we see, even with the end of slavery and the development of capitalism on all continents, racism remains an important instrument

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of capitalist domination over the workers. But black people never submitted to or accepted slavery and racism, and they fought and continue to fight, aware that every millimeter of freedom they have was the fruit of the blood and struggle of black workers around the world.

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The Struggles of the Poor Peasantry and the Agricultural Proletariat and the Path of Their True Emancipation

In recent years, as part of the revolutionary upsurge underway in Upper Volta known as Burkina Faso, new social strata have contributed to broadening and radicalizing the struggles of the democratic and revolutionary movement that are shaking the neocolonial system in crisis and bankruptcy. In the massive struggles that are taking place throughout the national territory, especially those organized by the Coalition Against the High Cost of Living, Fraud and Impunity and for freedoms, small merchants, the informal sector in the urban areas, the women, and the peasantry are increasingly joining the series of demonstrations on the basis of their specific demands. Thus in this general movement of struggles, the poor peasants, especially those who are in the areas of export crops such as cotton controlled by multinationals and the local bourgeoisie, are engaging in multifaceted movements to express their legitimate demands. The countryside in Burkina Faso is gradually becoming a hotbed of struggle.

What is the scale of the peasant movement in Burkina Faso? What is its place and role in the revolutionary process for national and social liberation? We outline some elements to answer these cardinal questions at a time when the dissemination of the agrarian program of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta (PCRV) is arousing enthusiasm among the revolutionaries and peasant masses of the country.

Let us first examine the characteristics of the peasantry in the neocolonial context.

Capitalism and neo-colonialism are the source of the evils suffered by the poor peasants and agricultural workers of Volta.

Upper Volta known as Burkina Faso is a backward agricultural neocolonial country with the persistence of remnants of feudal forces; it is dominated by imperialism, mainly French imperialism, that relies

on the reactionary social classes and strata, which are the political-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the comprador bourgeoisie and the remnants of the feudal forces. This fundamental characteristic of the country is reflected economically in the predominance of the agricultural sector. More than 85% of the population lives in rural areas. In this backward agricultural sector, the subsistence economy is predominant, but it depends on the neocolonial policy of French imperialism and its local allies. This is why agriculture is largely oriented towards cash crops (cotton, groundnuts, sugar cane, soybeans, etc.); it is not free from the shackles of pre-capitalist economic forms which are subordinated to the needs of finance capital. This leads to the subjugation of the peasant economy under the yoke of mercantile and usury capital. The logical consequence of this orientation of agriculture is that the exploitation and oppression of the peasants is increasing while for the most part their archaic production methods are not being modernized and improved. The road of development of capitalism followed by agriculture as well as the domination of finance capital over the countryside has led to a class differentiation at the level of the peasantry of Volta.

Thus there are a large number of poor peasants who, for lack of technical, material and financial means, work on small plots of land, barely surviving. Some can no longer even make a living from their crops and are forced to work for rich peasants and on large capitalist farms: they form the agricultural proletariat, ferociously exploited and with precarious living conditions.

Here are some illustrative figures on the characteristics of agriculture in Burkina Faso:

- 84.3% of the peasants are illiterate;
- 73% of households use rudimentary work tools such as the daba (a small hand hoe);
- 3 out of 1,000 peasants have a tractor or motorized plow;
- 84% of peasants have no means of transport; the portage is still done on the head;
- 1 out of 1,000 peasants has a motor pump for irrigation;
- 20,000 hectares out of the 3.5 million cultivated hectares are irrigated, that is, 0.6%;
- 3.5 million hectares are cultivated each year out of 9 million cultivable hectares.

In contrast to this situation of great poverty, there are a small number of rich peasants with large tracts of land, modern means of cultivation and livestock. They form the rural bourgeoisie whose interests are linked to those of the remnants of the feudal forces, foreign and capitalists of Volta and the neocolonial state. The agricultural policies put in place under the guidelines of the international financial agencies such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, mainly the application of structural adjustment programs in agriculture, have serious consequences which can be summed up in the following facts:

- liquidations, sell-offs and privatization of state-owned companies. These include the National Cereals Marketing Office (OFNACER), the National Rice Marketing Company (SANACOR), the Agricultural Products Price Stabilization Fund (CSPPA), the National Center for Agricultural Equipment (CNEA), etc. These various measures have led to staff cuts and massive layoffs of workers.
- the disengagement of the State from the supervision of the peasants and agricultural production characterized by blocking of the recruitment of engineers, technicians and agricultural agents since 1991 and the refusal to grant subsidies for the factors of production;
- the development of export crops to the detriment of food crops in order to mobilize the foreign exchange necessary to repay the debts contracted by the State with the IMF and the World Bank.

The ground is thus prepared for the emergence and development of agribusiness for the benefit of multinationals such as “AIGLON/SOPROFA”, AIGLON HOLDING and the new rural bourgeoisie.

Agribusiness: land grabbing and the expropriation of the poor peasantry for the benefit of the multinationals and the local bourgeoisie.

We are witnessing the development of capitalism in agriculture through the implementation of a series of administrative and economic measures that lead to the plundering of the country’s agricultural resources, the growing impoverishment of the small peasants for the benefit of agribusiness owners. The neo-colonial state has drafted a new law on agrarian and land reorganization (RAF) adopted in June 2009 that promotes this orientation. This law is part of the same logic as the old bourgeois and anti-popular slogan put forward by the

regime of the 2nd republic in the early 1970s: “Land to those who can work it”. Since the application of this law, the rich, the dignitaries of the authorities, the top hierarchy of the neocolonial army and the business community has rushed to the land in the countryside. They have taken over vast areas of tens or even hundreds of hectares in the fertile land regions of the country and the developed perimeters of the various hydro-agricultural dams. Agrarian relations in the countryside are thus being gradually shaken up. The once vital land, which was leased to anyone who applied for it, even a “foreigner”, has become a commodity. The landowners, willingly or by force, cede it to these new actors. This causes conflicts within the communities themselves, as ownership is still communal. Applicants to whom the plots have been leased are seeing themselves dispossessed overnight. They constitute the reserve of the future agricultural workers for the large plots and farms of the rural bourgeoisie. The fertile land of the East, West and South-Eastern regions of the country is the target of these predators to erect mini latifundias to the detriment of the local populations. In order to control the peasants, the government has set up peasant organizations which it manipulates. These are: the Peasant Confederation of Faso and the National Union of Cotton Producers, led by landowners.

However, the poor peasantry is not sitting idly by in the face of this exploitation and oppression; the source of the great misery it faces on a daily basis. The peasants and people in the rural areas are awakening to the struggles to express their demands to the cotton companies SOCOMA, SOFITEX and FASO COTON.

The struggles of the poor peasantry, the agricultural proletariat, and the alternative for their true emancipation.

In the face of great misery, exploitation and oppression, the peasant masses are developing multifaceted struggles that are bringing the countryside out of its lethargy. The great struggles of the Democratic and Revolutionary Movement against impunity for the economic and blood crimes of the mafia regime of the Fourth Republic, against the high cost of living and for democratic freedoms, are having a positive influence on the peasant masses. And this despite the divisive maneuvers of the authorities, who rely on the vestiges of the feudal forces to keep the population under the weight of backward customs. Class struggles are increasingly penetrating the rural areas, mainly those

dominated by cash crops such as cotton and sugar cane. The young agricultural workers showed combativeness in these struggles.

In 2011, a year of great popular struggles in all economic and social sectors of the country, the peasants in the cotton areas organized multifaceted struggles (street demonstrations, marches) including insurrectional movements for the boycott of cotton crops, the purchase at a fair price of their crops, etc. Indeed, the Interprofessional Cotton Association of Burkina Faso (AICB) sets cotton prices at a derisory amount, well below 1 euro per kilogram.

These struggles are violently repressed by the government, with the deployment of the forces of order in different locations to prevent the destruction of crops by angry peasants. Peasants are arbitrarily arrested and detained in detention centers in order to break the momentum of the social movements. But this wave of repression does not affect the determination of the producers, who are organizing themselves by the thousands to demand the release of their arrested comrades and the satisfaction of their demands.

Following the popular uprising of October 2014 and the victorious resistance against the fascist coup of September 2015, our people have accumulated a rich experience of struggles and now strongly aspire to revolutionary change. The fundamental masses are bursting onto the stage of popular struggles. The peasant movement is actively showing itself in various parts of the country, despite the context of the terrorist attacks and the unleashing of the counter-resolution. Peasants are incorporated into self-defense groups for the defense of



the security of the peasants in their localities and against the assassinations by death squads linked to the authorities.

The peasants as well as the various popular social strata are demonstrating more and more openly against the presence of the military interventions of the imperialist powers in our country and in the entire region of Sahelian West Africa under the guise of the fight against terrorism.

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta (PCR/V) firmly supports all these struggles and is carrying out work of agitation and propaganda in order to contribute to a better organization of the peasant movements. The party, on the basis of a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the characteristics of the economic and social realities of the country, drew up its agrarian program in order to guide its work of mobilization and organization of the poor peasantry and the agricultural proletariat. The PCR/V is the only political party in Volta that really takes into account, in its political program, the great popular aspirations whose realization is made impossible by the domination of our country by French imperialism and its local allies. In its struggle for the seizure of political freedom and for its total emancipation, the working class has as its main ally the poor peasantry, without which it cannot achieve its final goal. Similarly, without the working class and the leadership of its party, the poor peasantry, despite its numerical importance, cannot find a correct revolutionary solution to its problems. The revolutionary alliance of the working class and peasantry under the leadership of the PCR/V is therefore the key to the struggle for the winning of political freedom, for the realization of the National Democratic and Popular Revolution (RNDP).

In the process of this struggle, especially in the context of the revolutionary crisis that has been going on for more than a decade in our country, the party calls on the people to organize independently of the reactionary forces, to fight for bread and freedom; to fight for the realization of the pressing demands of all the popular social classes and strata synthesized in its program. The immediate struggle for these partial demands will contribute to improving the living and working conditions of the popular masses, especially the poor peasants.

In its agrarian program the PCR/V sums up the demands for the peasants.

“In order to eliminate the vestiges of the old feudal regime and in the interest of a free development of the class struggle in the

countryside, in order to mobilize, organize and resolutely lead the peasant masses in the struggle for the realization of the RNDP, the PCRV struggles and will fight for the satisfaction of the following demands:

1) Abolition of all corvees, institutions and all forms of feudal and semi-feudal oppression and exploitation, particularly in the East and North of the country (Mossi Plateau, Yatenga, Gourma, Djelgoudji, Liptako).

2) The right to organize in Peasant Unions.

3) The abolition of the mortgage on land and harvest for debts. Free disposal by the peasants of their land and harvest. Cancellation and prohibition of all usurious loans and contracts of an enslaving nature.

4) Abolition of unjust taxes and levies on the peasants. Prohibition of seizures-sales of the property of the peasants, imprisonment or corvees (cultivation of the fields of feudals and notables, prefects, cleaning of public places, etc.) for non-payment of taxes. Elimination of tax collectors and repressive methods of tax collection in the countryside.

5) Canals, dams, water reservoirs at the expense of the State in sufficient quantity and quality for the fields of the peasants and live-stock of breeders. Agricultural equipment, fertilizers, seeds and insecticides at affordable prices in relation to the purchasing power of the peasants.

6) The seizure and sharing among poor peasants of stocks of rice, millet, maize, etc. of the hoarders, usurers and speculators. Effective handing over to the peasants of all food and aid released or received in the fight against famine and natural disasters.

Moreover, the PCRV is struggling and will struggle resolutely to regroup the agricultural proletariat into an independent class organization, in order to enlighten it on the inexorable opposition between its interests and those of the rural bourgeoisie, the political-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the comprador bourgeoisie and foreign capitalists. It will thus be able to play its vanguard role in the countryside under the leadership of the party in the struggle for the realization of the RNDP, a transitional stage to the integral proletarian revolution, the only means to eliminate all exploitation and misery.

Ultimately, the revolutionary alliance of the working class and peasantry under the leadership of the PCRV is the only sure way to guarantee the improvement of the living conditions of poor peasants

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and agricultural workers; for the consistent revolutionary solution of their fundamental problems and those of the whole people.

Bread and Freedom for the People!

Long Live the Revolutionary Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry under the Leadership of the PCRV!

Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta

October 2021

Aspects of Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s Political and Economic Ideology

Various popular uprisings occurred during 2019 in Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile, which stood out for their massiveness and combativeness, as well as the participation of the youth. They left a great number of lessons from this experience, especially the need to strengthen and build Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties capable of leading future uprisings. They also took them to a higher level of confrontation with the bourgeoisie and imperialism, determining a collective strategy to face this task and to strengthen the ideological struggle in order to advance in a revolutionary process in Latin America.

Another consequence of the lack of leadership and the unorganized character of the struggle has led sectors of the youth who participated in the social outbreaks, in particular in Chile, to question the legitimacy of Marxism-Leninism as a fundamental tool for the liberation of the workers. They are looking for “new” ideologies that would be more in line with the experience of the street struggle, reviving anarchism and even Maoism Gonzalo thought, although the latter does not have major influence.

Undoubtedly the most widespread and accepted as the new guide for action is the thought of Ernesto Che Guevara, but without going beyond admiring the figure of the heroic guerrilla. There is no analysis or study of his economic political work behind this that would allow one to analyze his views in the current Latin American context and to propose a strategy for the liberation of the peoples. One should clarify the true character of his ideas and how they were put into practice during the first period of the Cuban revolution, to analyze the effects on economic development, as well as his revolutionary strategy.

The Cuban Revolution and the Guerrilla Foco

The Cuban Revolution was a clear confirmation of the Leninist theses on the revolution. Che Guevara’s theory of the “guerrilla foco” was not what took place in Cuba. The revolution did not have an agrarian character as Che implied, because the peasants had very little direct participation in the armed struggle. The struggle against the

Batista dictatorship was mainly urban and the insurrectionary uprising of the people is what provoked the flight of the dictator, but it was the general strike of the workers that swept away the dictatorship and the attempts of the reaction to remain in power. This left the army of Batista to fight, allowing Fidel’s guerrillas to enter Havana and take power.

In his writings, Che Guevara did not recognize the bourgeois democratic character of the Cuban Revolution, that it was essentially urban and the causes that allowed it to triumph. He concluded that the guerrillas were the main driving force of the revolution and promoted it from one form of struggle to a method to make revolution, “a means to an end... the conquest of political power” (*Guerrilla Warfare: A Method*).

Lenin says that one can never “regard guerrilla warfare as the only, or even as the chief, method of struggle; it means that this method must be subordinated to other methods, that it must be commensurate with the chief methods of warfare, and must be ennobled by the enlightening and organizing influence of socialism” (*Guerrilla Warfare*).

And with regard to the “guerrilla vanguard of the people,” Engels says, “The time is past for revolutions carried though by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses. When it gets to be a matter of the complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they are to act. That much the history of the last fifty years has taught us. But so that the masses may understand what is to be done, long and persistent work is required, and it is this work that we are now performing with results that drive our enemies to despair” (Introduction to Karl Marx’s work “*The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*”).

According to Che Guevara, “it is not always necessary to wait for all conditions favorable to revolution to be present; the insurrection itself can create them.” In Cuba there existed all the conditions to overthrow the dictatorship and these were: the domination of the country by the Yankee monopolies, which were the main latifundistas, who counted on the support of the dictatorship and the national capitalists; the 50% of the population in extreme poverty, in 1958 unemployment was 40%, 657,000 workers without work, 500,000 agricultural workers in the sugar industry who were unemployed for much of the year, 63% of the peasantry had no land; an organized

working class with a rich experience of struggle, an active resistance of the people with 19,000 dead in their struggle against the dictatorship, an organized democratic opposition. All this allowed the guerrillas to win over the masses in such a short time and gathered behind them all the opposition forces, including the non-monopoly sector of the bourgeoisie, with which they formed a revolutionary democratic government to later pass over to the Socialist Revolution.

“... in the underdeveloped parts of America, the battleground for armed struggle should in the main be the countryside” (Che Guevara “*Guerrilla War; A Method*”). Lenin said “it would be senseless to make the peasantry the *vehicle* of the revolutionary movement, that a party would be insane to *condition* the revolutionary character of its movement upon the revolutionary mood of the peasantry” (*A Draft Programme of Our Party*, 1899).

For Che Guevara, the peasantry was to be the main force of his popular army, relegating the working class to a secondary place, which must bend to the struggle when the guerrilla requires it. He denied the leading role of the working class and its party, demanding that the revolutionary process be led by the guerrilla General Staff. That the guerrilla must be continental, that the “the cordillera [mountain range] of the Andes will be the Sierra Maestra of Latin America” (*ibid.*), totally ignoring the unequal development of the countries of the Americas and therefore of their revolutionary struggles, which are developing according to their own political-economic and social conditions.

The failures of the guerrilla, carried out by Che in the Congo, from where he had to leave at the request of the Democratic Movement of the Congo to the Cuban government; in Bolivia where he was captured and assassinated, were the consequence of his petty-bourgeois individualist ideology. This led him to think that the individual was above the masses, to believe that they would follow him when they knew that it was Che Guevara who commanded the guerrilla, as he said in the introduction of his diary in the Congo. To the failure of Che Guevara were added the guerrilla outbreaks that emerged in the Americas after the Cuban Revolution, which Che fostered.

**Towards a new economy policy of socialism?
The criticisms of the Soviet Manual of Political Economy
of 1962**

In this Manual the Khrushchevite reforms were systematized; its center was to change two fundamental theses of Stalin that had to do with socialist construction and communism and which were developed in the “*Manual of Political Economy*” of 1954 and expounded by Stalin in 1952 in “*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*”.

a) The basic economic law of socialism is: “the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole society through the continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques.” The Khrushchevites replaced this law with one of a “consumerist” character, saying that “the basic economic law of socialism (according to them) is, above all, a law of socialist production... which expresses the cardinal material interest of the co-owners of the means of production” (*Manual of Political Economy* of 1962).

b) That “It is necessary, in the second place... to raise collective-farm property to the level of public property... to replace commodity circulation by a system of products-exchange, under which the central government, or some other social-economic center, might control the whole product of social production in the interests of society”. The Khrushchevites said that one can overcome the idea of removing the means of production from the sphere of action of the [law of] value, which are manufactured and sold within the state economy. This also held for the purchase and sale of products between industry and agriculture, that is, trade, since one can “develop and use the law of value and commodity-money relations during the period of construction of communist society” (*Manual of Political Economy* of 1962).

These were reforms that caused contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production, which developed over time and allowed the return to capitalism.

These were reforms that were broadened in 1965 with Brezhnev, freeing state enterprises from central planning. These enterprises only had to adhere to general objectives that they received, developing their own plans of production, ending the restrictions on the law of value and commodity relations that still existed. Thus the material

incentives for the workers would depend on the profits of the companies.

These reforms of the Khrushchevite revisionists were criticized by Che Guevara for the use of the law of value, of commodity-money relations and the material stimulus under communism. But he also criticized their use in the stage of transition from capitalism to socialism and under socialism. These were criticisms that he made from left-wing position of the period of “War Communism” of the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Brief Relation of War Communism and the New Economic Policy (NEP)

The period of War Communism was the result of a large part of the areas producing wheat and raw materials falling into the hands of foreign invading forces and almost no foreign trade, causing an alarming lack of industrial articles and food, which endangered the revolution. In order to overcome this crisis, the Soviet Power proceeded to nationalize all industries and internal trade, set mandatory grain quotas for the peasants and formed armed detachments of workers to enforce these quotas. Faced with the large issues of paper money printed with no backing, the ruble lost its purchasing power, trade ceased, money, prices and credit gave way to barter, using various products as money. The Soviet government distributed food and basic necessities with ration cards; between the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921, such distributions were made free of charge, as were public services, fuels, accommodation, medicines, etc. Moneyless transactions between state-owned enterprises reached large proportions; the supply of raw materials to factories were made free of charge and wages were paid in kind.

The replacement of the “market economy” by a “natural economy” led the left to believe that it was at the gates of communism, and it was they who opposed the New Economic Policy (NEP). The Bolshevik Party imposed this to solve the political-economic crisis, attending to the concerns of the peasants and allowing industrial development.

The NEP replaced the forced requisition of agricultural products with the tax in kind, commodity money circulation was allowed using the categories of the law of value (money, price, profit, purchase-sale, credits, taxes, etc.). It authorized the free sale of the surpluses after the payment of the tax, a freedom that was extended to all internal

trade in industrial products, “moving from State Capitalism to the state regulation of the operations of purchase and sale and the circulation of money” [translated from the Spanish] Lenin

Che Guevara’s Critique of the New Economic Policy (NEP)

According to Che Guevara, the problems of the Soviet Union and the rise of revisionism have their origin and foundation in the New Economic Policy.

“We consider the task important because Marxist research in the field of economics is heading in dangerous directions, the intransigent dogmatism of the Stalin era has been followed by an inconsistent pragmatism. And what is tragic, this does not refer only to a certain field of science; it happens in all aspects of the life of the socialist peoples, creating disturbances that are already enormously harmful, but whose final results are incalculable.

In the course of our practice and our theoretical research we came to discover a great culprit with the name and surname: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

”...our thesis is that the changes produced as a result of the New Economic Policy (NEP) have penetrated so deeply into the life of the USSR that they have their mark on an entire era. And their results are discouraging; the capitalist superstructure was increasingly influencing the most marked forms of the relations of production and the conflicts provoked by the hybridization, which means today the NEP is being resolved in favor of the superstructure: it is returning to capitalism.”



“...this constitutes one of the biggest steps backwards taken by the USSR. Lenin compared it to the Peace of Brest-Litovsk..., if he had lived longer he would have corrected its most backward aspects; his successors did not see the danger and thus the great Trojan horse of Socialism was formed” (Che Guevara “*Critical Notes on Political Economy*”).

The NEP was a step backwards only in its beginning, necessary to carry out the bourgeois democratic tasks that remained pending because of the civil war and foreign invasion. It made it possible to restore agricultural production and industry. Che Guevara’s criticisms were made from the positions of the Left Opposition in the Bolshevik Party led by Trotsky:

1. In his writings he opposed the “hybridization” of the NEP; he made Lenin responsible for the use of the law of value and of commodity-money relations under socialism. The proposals of the “New Economics” expressed the position of the Trotskyists to the NEP, who in 1923 proposed the accelerated industrialization. Its financing would be provided by an unequal exchange with agriculture, in which the law of value (the scissors crisis) would not govern. The Trotskyist Preobrazhenski called this the “original socialist accumulation”, which should be the fundamental law of socialism, proposing the theory of the two regulators. This “original socialist accumulation” was to regulate the state economy in which the law of value would not rule. There should only be a detail of accounts (arithmetic money) while the private sector of the land of the poor peasants and capitalism would be regulated by the spontaneous law of value. This would spark a struggle between both regulators, but this fundamental law would “modify and partially make disappear the law of value and all the laws of commodity capitalist economics to the extent that it manifests itself and can appear in our economic system” (*The New Economics*).

These were proposals that were rejected by the Bolshevik Party for endangering the worker-peasant alliance; instead they took the Leninist path of integrating the small and middle peasants into socialist construction, uniting them in agricultural cooperatives and passing to the collectivization of agriculture in 1929, which meant the disappearance of the rich peasants, the kulaks.

2. Che Guevara denied the international importance of the NEP. He said that “...this whole policy can be characterized as a tactic closely linked to the historical situation of the country and therefore

all its statements should not be given universal validity” (*Budgetary Financing System*). Thus the period between the seizure of power by the proletariat to the achievement of the total socialization of the country’s economy, in which the NEP was applied, was a tactic only appropriate for Soviet Russia and had no universal significance. Thus, Che Guevara denied the transitional stage between capitalism and socialism in countries with insufficient industrial development. According to him, “socialist ideas touch the consciousness of the people of the whole world; that is why it can advance the development to the particular state of the productive forces in a given country” (*Budgetary Financing System*). Thus, any country can carry out the socialist revolution, since according to him, Stalin came to “consider socialist revolutions possible in the colonies and dependent countries” (*Budgetary Financing System*). He did not understand what Stalin said, since he meant that the revolutions of national liberation in the colonies and the Revolutionary Democratic or Popular Revolutions of the dependent countries undermine the positions of capitalism and imperialism, and so they become reserves of the Socialist Revolution.

The new Cuban economy

In the early years of the Cuban Revolution, Economic accounting was applied with relative success. However, in 1962, before the economic reforms that the Soviet economist Evsei Lieberman promoted in the Soviet Union, in Cuba Che Guevara questioned the validity of the economic laws of socialism, mainly the law of value and the role of commodity money relations under socialism, the self-management of enterprises, to the economic accounting. He proposed that Cuba in the short term should totally abolish money and commodity relations and establish a type of “natural economy of a modern type.” He proposed the theory of the two regulators, to replace the economic (monetary) accounting by the Budgetary Finance System, which would replace economic control by means of money. He would replace accounting, the system of national accounts, establishing new forms of accounting that would ensure the rationality of economic plans, a new type of management for “consolidated” enterprises. a system of “receiving and delivery” of products, of raw materials exchanged between them that would allow to measure the work done without resorting to monetary accounting, which would only remain for international transactions. He would apply egalitarianism in the

remuneration of work, overcoming the individual stimulus, raising the degree of consciousness so that each worker would deploy the maximum individual effort in the collective interest.

As a result of wanting to move to a developed socialism in the shortest time, an accelerated industrialization was promoted and prices were set for the agricultural products of the poor and middle peasants. As to those who refused to sell them to the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), causing a food crisis, the government responded by confiscating the goods of the peasants, mainly the poor peasants. They responded by selling their products on the black market or by going on strike, causing food shortages, which led to a resort to rationing, which caused an inflationary spiral. This led to the absenteeism of workers due to the loss of their purchasing power, with productivity and the quality of work declining due to the lack of material incentives. For their part the agricultural workers on state farms abandoned them due to the low wages they were paid, leaving to work on private farms.

The crisis was overcome when Fidel Castro reversed the policy of the I.N.R.A. by removing Che Guevara from it, and revoked all the restrictions imposed on the peasantry, then organizing voluntary cooperatives, representing only 2% of the total peasant property. To date, Che's accelerated industrialization plan failed.

In 1964, with the visit of Khrushchev to Cuba, there was a total change in the economic policy of the Cuban government, tending to carry out a decentralization to give greater autonomy to the enterprises, which would come under the financial control of the banks. Material incentives increased; industrialization was relegated to second place, giving greater importance to agriculture. All these reforms constituted a defeat for Che Guevara's favorite ideas about "Cuban socialism".

In 1967 in Cuba an attempt was made to implement "The New Economics" by suppressing the economic accounting, causing serious dislocations to the conditions of reproduction.

Fundamentals of the use of the theory of value and commodity circulation under socialism

The only theoretical argument to which Che Guevara resorts in order to oppose the use of the law of value and, consequently, economic accounting, material stimuli and commodity circulation under socialism, is point 3 of the *Gotha Programme*, in which Karl Marx

refers to the remuneration for labor under socialism. According to Che, the use of money so that each worker could withdraw from national production (discounting his work for the common fund) the part that corresponds to him for the time worked would not be considered. Marx himself refuted this, because “what have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges” (Marx. – *Critique of the Gotha Programme* – FLP Peking).

In a society in transition from capitalism to socialism, in which the productive forces have not been fully developed especially in the countryside – the form of value exists, since the peasantry is not for socialism; it only accepts commodity circulation and therefore payment in money of its products.

Lenin, understanding that Soviet Russia needed to promote industrial and agricultural economic development, which needed investments, increased private activity through State Capitalism. He expanded this with the New Economic Policy (NEP), establishing for state enterprises a capitalist form of management, financial self-management, which through the banks are controlled in their income and expenses, which allowed a “general accounting, for the whole State, a record of the production and distribution of the products” [translated from the Spanish].

That “economic accounting is inevitably and inextricably linked to the New Economic Policy and that in the near future, it is certain that this type will be the predominant, if not the only one”... “Soviet Russia offered for the first time the possibility of beginning to build the economy in a planned way, to elaborate scientifically, to put into practice the state plan of the entire national economy.” “The productivity of labor is the most important factor, the decisive one for the triumph of the new social system.” On economic stimuli Lenin said: “Not to rely directly on enthusiasm, but on the help of the enthusiasm generated by the great revolution and on the basis of personal interest, personal stimulation raises production; we need first and foremost that it increases”, “we say that every important branch of the national economy must be built on the basis of personal interest” [translated from the Spanish].

These principles were applied by Stalin in socialist construction, who developed the system of economic accounting, establishing the principle of profitability in enterprise management based on the accounting of economic results. This tended to save production costs by allowing a greater accumulation of capital in the enterprise, demanding a greater share to its workers. They would be remunerated according to their work done since “under socialism ‘wage’ must be paid according to the work performed and not according to needs” (Stalin – *New Conditions – New Tasks in Economic Construction*).

The law of value continues to govern under socialism because there is still commodity production and the circulation of commodities:

First, the productive forces have not developed in all their fullness to fully satisfy the needs of the people, consumer products being distributed according to what each person contributes to society and through money.

Second, because there are still two forms of socialist property: the state ownership by the whole people and that of the collective-farm peasants over the production of the collective farms, whose exchange of products –through commodity circulation– makes it necessary to determine the value of agricultural products and, therefore, of industrial products and the workers’ wages.

The law of value cannot act as a regulator of production (supply and demand) because the economy is planned (law of the harmonious development of the economy). It only acts in the circulation of commodities, mainly in articles of personal consumption and in a restricted way. This is seen in the planning of prices, taking into account their value expressed in money, in the correction of supply and demand that plays a more important role in the movement of prices in the collective-farm market, which is controlled by the State, since the main volume of commodities are sold within state and cooperative trade at prices set by the plan.

Stalin said: “When instead of the two basic production sectors, the state sector and the collective-farm sector, there will be only one all-embracing production sector, with the right to dispose of all the consumer goods produced in the country, commodity circulation, with its ‘money economy,’ will disappear, as being an unnecessary element in the national economy.” (*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*)

“In order to pave the way for a real, and not declaratory transition to communism, at least three main preliminary conditions have to be satisfied:

“1. ...a continuous expansion of all social production, with a relatively higher rate of expansion of the production of means of production... reproduction on an expanded scale becomes altogether impossible without it.

“2. ...to raise collective-farm property to the level of public property... to replace commodity circulation by a system of products-exchange.

“3. ...it is necessary... to ensure such a cultural advancement of society as will secure for all members of society the all-round development of their physical and mental abilities” (Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*).

Stalin saw that there would still be unresolved contradictions between state and collective-farm property: “There certainly are, and will be, contradictions, seeing that the development of the relations of production lags, and will lag, behind the development of the productive forces. Given a correct policy on the part of the directing bodies these contradictions cannot grow into antagonisms, and there is no chance of matters coming to a conflict between the relations of production and the productive forces of society.... This, above all, concerns such economic factors as group, or collective-farm, property and commodity circulation.... these factors are already beginning to hamper the powerful development of our productive forces, since they create obstacles to the full extension of government planning to the whole of the national economy, especially agriculture. There is no doubt that these factors will hamper the continued growth of the productive forces of our country more and more as time goes on. The task, therefore, is to eliminate these contradictions by gradually converting collective-farm property into public property, and by introducing – also gradually – products-exchange in place of commodity circulation” (*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*)

Stalin referred to the deficiencies that persisted in agricultural production, one of them being the lack of interest of the peasant sector in the production of collective farms. They still maintained their plot within the collective farms which supplied 10% of their products to the population in their collective-farm markets. This had risen to 40% during the Second World War, with millionaire collective-farms, whose funds were confiscated through a tax reform.

In 1950 a merger of several collective farms into larger ones was carried out, thus seeking to put an end to the individualist tendencies that subsisted among the peasantry. It also sought to make a better use of machinery and achieve an increase in agricultural production. This was not achieved completely, as a right-wing tendency emerged within the Politburo of the Party that proposed to lower taxes, to pay better prices to the peasantry and provide cheap industrial goods. They fought to promote the strengthening of collective-farm property and individualism, as well as proposed to sell agricultural machinery, liquidating the Machine and Tractor Stations (MST), which were leased to the collective-farms. Khrushchev, for his part, proposed that peasant individualism should be combated and suppressed by transferring them to agro-industrial units that would form the center of each mega collective-farm, absorbing all these individual plots. This proposal was not accepted, because it could plunge the countryside into a bloody confrontation. The definitive answer to resolve the problem of agriculture was given by Stalin and was the one quoted above, which he expounded extensively in his theoretical work “*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*”.

On Stalin’s death on March 5, 1953, the new leadership of the CPSU made the decision to prioritize light industry to the detriment of heavy industry. In 1954, Khrushchev, Minister of Agriculture, launched his policy of opening up the virgin lands in Siberia, setting aside the Stalin-era projects of irrigation and forest areas aimed at lessening the effects of droughts. He diverted large financial resources and labor for agriculture in his colonization enterprise, for which new cities and new roads had to be built, etc. In the first harvest year a large production was obtained, but the following years production lowered, not justifying its large investments. The Sixth Five-Year Plan failed in the face of the backwardness of steel production, coal mines and timber. This was a result of the policy of favoring light industry. In 1957 centralism in the decisions of the national economy was reduced, industrial ministries were dissolved and new regional management bodies were established. In agriculture, since 1956, the prices of collection and sale were increased and in January of 1958 the regime of compulsory handing over of agricultural products was abolished. The Statutes of the Artel (individual plots) were reformed to favor the collective-farm peasants, the Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS) were liquidated and became the property of

the collective farms. These reforms led to an increase in commodity circulation, in opposition to everything said and done by Stalin.

The results were that industrial production stagnated and agriculture suffered a setback from 1959 to 1963, causing a great shortage of food; the standard of living of the population fell, the building of homes decreased, etc.

As one can conclude, there was a radical break between the period in which Stalin led socialist construction and the period after his death, in which revisionism took control of the party and the USSR. But Che Guevara did not see this deviation of the Khrushchevites from Marxism-Leninism; he saw it as “inconsistent pragmatic” actions that happened “due to the intransigent dogmatism of the Stalin era”, which insisted on using the law of value. This was because for Che Guevara it was not decisive that the productive forces were developed in order to dispense with commodity circulation and money, since it was consciousness that determines the productive forces and this was not the consciousness of the masses.

“The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is the social being that determines their consciousness” (Karl Marx – *Preface and Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* – FLP Peking).

“Hence, in order not to err in policy, in order not to find itself in the position of idle dreamers, the party of the proletariat must not base its activities on abstract ‘principles of human reason,’ but on the concrete conditions of the material life of society, as the determining force of social development; not on the good wishes of ‘great men,’ but on the real needs of development of the material life of society.

“The fall of the utopians, including the Narodniks, anarchists and Socialist-Revolutionaries, was due, among other things, to the fact that they did not recognize the primary role which the conditions of the material life of society play in the development of society, and, sinking to idealism, did not base their practical activities on the needs of the development of the material life of society, but, independently of and in spite of these needs, on ‘ideal plans’ and ‘all-embracing projects’ divorced from the real life of society” (Stalin – *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*).

The teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin show that the “theory of the guerrilla foco”, as well as the postulates of the

“Budgetary Finance System” are far from being the application of Marxism-Leninism to the Cuban reality. Rather they are an eclectic mixture influenced by anarchism, Trotskyism and Maoism; his writings and actions confirm this. The belief that the consciousness of human beings today has of the existence of socialism is higher than the real conditions of the life of the masses, made him conceive of a vision of the revolution and the socialist construction not only erred, but also ended in a resounding failure.

October 2021

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The Work of the Party in the Working Class, the Workplaces and Trade Unions

This political platform “*The work of the party within the working class, the workplaces and trade unions*”. was adopted at the 9th Congress of our Party, APK, in September 2021, after a process of discussions within and around the party in preparation for the Congress.

The Congress made it clear that we are living in a time of upheaval at a rapid pace; where crises, wars, pandemics, climate destruction replace each other; where the class struggle in the capitalist class societies is increasing in scope and strength; at a time of new opportunities to work and fight for a completely different future and development than the one the employers, warlords and exploiters have laid out for us. The Congress passed a series of resolutions to strengthen the party in its efforts for a revolutionary path in the working-class struggle for a socialist Denmark.

For several months, a large movement among public employees to ensure a public health and welfare sector, for equal pay and better working conditions in these sectors, has been growing. Public-employee nurses have been on strike and taken action for more than four months and health workers have been protesting. The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed how disastrously the public health and education sectors have in fact been eroded. In the face of this, the employers, the top leaders of the trade unions and the Social Democratic government are reinforcing their policy of austerity and attacks on the working class and its social rights and conditions.

To strengthen the party's roots and influence in the working class, the 9th Congress adopted this platform.

The work of the Party in the working class, the workplaces and trade unions

1) The class struggle will intensify throughout society in these years, not least in the workplaces, in the social areas and in the so-called welfare areas of the public sector. There are protests against the intervention of the government in the collective agreements and agreed scenario for sham negotiations, against the consequences of

the attacks by reforms and against the anti-worker policy of crisis and austerity. Workers and public servants must prepare and organise themselves for the struggles that are coming, as attacks on the workers and their living conditions increase.

2) The crises and pandemics are being used as an excuse for new attacks on the professional and social rights that have been won. The bosses, capital and its state are driving wages, working conditions, and living conditions into a downward spiral. While the employers and big business have received many billions of dollars in capital, their part in exploitation and stocks and shares have reached new highs.

They will not stop until they face resistance from the other side of the class struggle – from the working class and the people. They know only one way out of their constant crises and competitions for markets: to make the working class and broad sections of the population pay through increased exploitation and the exploitation of our labour, as cheaply and efficiently as possible, regardless of the consequences. Labour is used, thrown away, and new labour is brought in.

3) The demands for jobs, higher wages and equal pay, for education, social rights, and housing for all are central demands put forward together with the rejection of the bosses' policy of successive governments. If we accept the financial negotiating frameworks of what can be achieved and agree to share the deterioration among ourselves, this leads to defeat for the majority and bonuses for the few. The employers have long since blown away the framework for how far they want to go in the so-called "new normal" labour market. Already, large groups are grossly underpaid, working hours have been made flexible and work pressures increased. With a rapidly changing labour market, it is essential to blow away the economic framework and make the bosses pay.

4) As at the beginning of the labour movement, it has once again become necessary to raise a struggle for elementary rights such as the right to organize and to collective agreements in both private and public spheres, not the least among the growing large groups of "modern day-labourers" who work without rights without fixed pay, without fixed working hours, in so-called SMS (text messages) jobs. Among the migrant workers who live and work under slave-like conditions, the bourgeois class courts say that this is perfectly legal in the EU's "free" labour market.

5) The State does not play a neutral role, either as a public employer or as a so-called third party between the employers and the workers and employees. This has been evident not least in the negotiations of collective agreements in the public sector, where professional groups that have followed all the legal rules of state and the labour markets to put forward their demands, have been thrown a “no” by the chief trade union leaders and a “no” by the government and politicians as they went down that path. Subsequently, if they say no to a rotten offer and take action themselves, it is ruled illegal.

6) This development and the last several collective agreements and conflicts show that the class struggle cannot be waged under the conditions of the bourgeois state, the employers, or the power of capital. The “Danish model” is a model of class collaboration to the advantage of the employers and their state, and it has failed to achieve results. The same goes for “the triparty agreements” between the employers, state, and the heads of the trade union movement.

7) The Main Agreement in the labour market and the professional law system, the rules linking votes on collective agreements into a total pool (so no single union can vote it down and go on a legal strike) and muzzles on elected representatives, are tools for the protection of the employers. This is done to twist the arms of the workers and employees who want change and fight for their demands. It must be discussed in workplace clubs and trade unions how the work struggles can get passed these class rules. There is a growing political line developing based on class struggle, despite and through the political bankruptcy of class collaboration and the restricting legal and contract class system.

8) The capitalist state is a class state that is designed and acts as the prolonged arm of capital. This also applies to its violent part, where police are deployed against blockades and picket lines while protecting scabs. Numerous labour struggles have shown this.

9) Capitalism as a social system has shown time and time again that it is neither able to solve its recurring crises nor ensure a safe and stable everyday life and future for the working class.

The role of the working class and its party

10) The working class is the fundamental force of the revolution. It is the leading and fundamental force in the fight against capitalism and the dominance of capital. It is the unskilled, the low paid, the lower sections of the working class and the most pressured strata of

the workers and employees in the public sector, who are the most combative strata, as well as workers in sectors such as transport and construction.

The communist party's most important effort is its work within the working class: to strengthen the ideological, political, and organizational relations, and to develop the working class into the leading political force in society and into the political reference for the other classes and strata of working people and oppressed groups.

11) The strategic task of the communist party is to organize the revolution. This is crucial to build a socialist Denmark where it is the working class who has taken power. It is with this in mind that the Labour Party communists, APK, participate in the daily class struggle in workplaces, in trade unions and among the working-class groups who are excluded from the traditional labour market and organization.

The professional struggle and social struggle of the working class cannot be narrowed down to a battle for dollars and cents. We are seeing how quickly achievements can be rolled back if the day-to-day struggle is not associated with the fight for the long-term interests of the working class for a different future, with the strengthening of unity on the political line of class struggle and the development of the political revolutionary consciousness of the working class.

The trade union movement today and the labour aristocracy

12) For the working class, it is essential to fight for the right to organize and form trade unions. Today, this right is under severe pressure and liquidation from the anti-labour policies of the European Union and Danish politicians. The trade union movement has evolved far from its original roots as a safeguard against the capitalist employers and for the interests of the working class. This development has led to the service and insurance enterprise groups with large billion-dollar funds and financial groups that we see today.

13) The myth of the Danish one-stringed trade union movement (with no politically different trade unions, as in some countries) is only a shell to hold up the "Danish model" and triparty negotiations between the employers, state, and the chief trade unions leaders. Politically, there is a great distance from the members' demands and wishes for action to the actions of the top leadership of the trade unions. From the beginning there have existed two political lines in the

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labour and trade union movement: between class struggle and class collaboration, between a reformist and a revolutionary policy.

Organizationally, too, the myth does not hold water, with the declining degree of organization in trade unions (in Denmark it has declined from 80-90% in many sectors down to about 50% in the last decades and the emergence of “yellow” unions (with bosses and workers in the union) and Christian so-called trade unions. This is besides the fact that the traditional trade union movement has excluded large groups of the working class from the large growing unofficial labour market from being members.

At the same time, the heads of the trade union movement have closed their eyes to the social rights and conditions of the workers and the whole range of anti-worker and anti-social reforms, from unemployment benefits, sick benefits, social benefits to the rising retirement age. The governments of the employers are cutting social benefits ever further, so that the minimum wage can be squeezed and lowered.

14) It is not without reason that many workers and public servants find that national federal trade union, FH, sells out their demands, slows down protests and activity and ends up on the employers’ side. The trade union heads and their paid staff form a special layer –the labour aristocracy. They are able to live a very different life with lucrative salaries, pensions and jobs that are in sharp contrast to the conditions of the union members. Because of the special economic position of the labour aristocracy and their social position and influence, the class interests of this layer are linked to the interests of the employers and to the preservation of capitalist society.



15) This is why it is not possible to change the policies and actions of the labour aristocracy through dialogue. Illusions about this layer as an ally or actually as leaders in the class struggle are a recipe for defeat. Many combative workers have run head-on against this wall, in the struggles for central collective agreements, local conflicts and interdisciplinary battles such as equal pay for working-class women.

16) It is not possible to change the trade union system in its present form to organizations of class struggle. The systems of the trade union movement today are tied by a thousand threads to the bourgeois capitalist state. A fighting trade union movement on the grounds of class struggle can only be created when all these ties have been severed.

It is necessary for the fighting working class and public servants to come together, organize and build a strong unity and solidarity on this ground; to utilize the space for action that basic trade union organization across professions can provide, to develop class solidarity and combative will, and to challenge the many limitations that professional law and the agreement system place on the forms of struggle. An opposition within the trade unions must be built at the basic level on a line of class struggle.

17) Part of the reformist trade union movement's policy has always been that the professional struggle is apolitical and must be locked in that box, even though we live in a capitalist society that wages political, ideological, and economical class struggle every single day against the working class. Industrial action and professional struggles are also political struggles, but not on the line to divide the workers on a party level, or not to be abused or misled into thinking that a solution is to vote for "the right party" at the next election. When assessing the impact of the policies of successive governments, it is more than difficult to tell the difference between the colours of these government. The Social Democrats, when in power, have also been at the forefront of harsh anti-social reforms, austerity crisis policy, and government interventions in collective bargaining.

The unity of the working-class

18) The basis for the development of each struggle, for a situation in which a broad revolutionary movement rises, is the political and ideological unity of the working class. This unity must be forged in the concrete class struggle, in the discussion on current demands and

forms of action and on the strategic platform of the working class. It must be built from below in workplaces, in trade unions clubs, in local communities. It must involve the unity between private and public workers and employees, those who have jobs, the unemployed and those forced to work without social benefits, the migrant workers, across professional groups, ethnicities and genders. Problems such as work time, unequal pay, wage lowering, and social and professional rights must be solved jointly.

19) The solidarity of the working class must always be specifically involved, developed, and strengthened in order to use the common strength of the class. By extending the economic struggle to a political struggle with common demands placed on those responsible, unity and solidarity can be built and strengthened. Local and individual negotiations and “free-choice” arrangements are designed to make each person feel alone and isolated, while the collective strength of the working class and public servants is the way forward. In the event of conflicts and strikes, support committees must be set up locally and at workplaces to help spread solidarity and provide financial assistance if strike funds of the trade union are shut off and the professional court law imposes fines.

20) The labour movement must work for and organise the unity of all the social forces and sectors interested in fighting for their material and political demands and in combating bourgeois exploitation and the dominance of imperialism.

21) The international solidarity of the working class will always be at the heart of the work of the working class and its Communist Party, specifically, among the growing number of employees distributed in many countries working in the same multinational groups. There must be concrete and active solidarity with the many struggles that workers all over the world are facing against the consequences of neoliberal reforms, against capitalist and imperialist exploitation and oppression, against wars and destruction of resources and for opportunities for survival, and for a socialist future.

*Workers' Communist Party
9th Congress, September 2021*

Five Lines of Actions for the Communists in the Dominican Republic

Since the change of government in August of last year, a new political situation has taken place in the country, which opens possibilities for a deeper class confrontation than those of years ago. It is seen in the intentions formulated in projects of political reform, which have opened up the public debate, and could provoke struggles seeking to decide the way the society is organized and works. This goes beyond the economic struggles for immediate demands of the workers and other popular sectors that are also being seen.

At this time, the debate on political reforms and the revival of popular protests are converging, with prospects of developing systematic mass demonstrations. The PCT had foreseen these circumstances, and it was the fundamental reason for its participation in the last electoral contest.

Faced with this situation, the PCT has proceeded to characterize this new scenario and the social problems that it will cause, in the short and medium term, with the intention of developing a political agenda that makes the class struggle the center of its actions.

I. The analysis of the situation and what is to be done.

In the Dominican Republic, the reproduction of society has meant an unwritten pact among three social actors with certain structural levels: first, the oligarchy, which has taken over the leadership of society and dictates the norms and social regulations according to its perspective and its interests, through which capital's strategies of valuation and the enjoyment of whatever privilege they want take place with a minimum of obstacles. Second, the social agents that shape the underground economy, including those who are in charge of the illegal economy, who are assuming the control of the non-formal society without confronting the authorities and without creating conflict with the oligarchy. Finally, the political class that takes up the exercise of the state and government, which allows and supports the development of the actions of the oligarchy without competing

and, at the same time, disregards the population that is not important for the reproduction of society as far as social pressure and the election agenda allow. This lets them act on the basis of their own interests, both as groups and individuals, even when they clash according to the political trend to which they belong; at the end they manage to agree with their own corporate purposes.

For their own purposes, all these actors use the organizations of security, the police and military, in exchange for illegal enrichment.

Apparently, that pact has been violated. The reproduction of the dynamics which the oligarchy is interested in is at risk and it understands that the institutional measures that guarantee its supremacy must be reinforced and it will try to impose them. The reform will be neither a covenant among gentlemen nor a covenant among partners. The differences will come out. The contradictions with the working classes will too, and in a sharp way.

The task must be to develop a subjective condition for change before the social situation that causes the ways of life imposed by the processes of value creation and surplus value. This is where we must be present.

There will be no shortage of those who affirm that we must limit ourselves to continue and promote the spontaneity of the social movement. The struggle itself is enough to achieve that purpose. they tell us. But this, as simple as it may look, is not a free approach. “The theory of spontaneity is the theory of belittling the role of the conscious element in the movement, the ideology of “khvostism” [tailism], the logical basis of all opportunism. “ (Stalin, “The Foundations of Leninism, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 94, 1924).

Another possible response may be to lead the spontaneous movement and take it to where we want on the basis of conviction or leadership. The answer to this can be seen in the following quote: “Marxism-Leninism wages struggle, on one hand, against opportunism and revisionism, with their inherent bent for spontaneity and underestimation of the role of conscious, organizational activities by the party of the working class, and, on the other, against voluntarism and subjectivism, which ignore objective laws and the level of mass consciousness, and relying only on voluntarist decisions and actions” (Frolov, 1984, p. 400).

And, of course, the consciousness of the working classes must be worked on, but in more than one way. Both to turn the social situation into a social problem and to give direction to the spontaneity of the

social movements. Hence, the denunciation and challenge about the social situation are valid and, equally, the workers' movements must be supported decisively, but always accompanied by a constant activity in an attempt to create opportunities for the development of class consciousness.

II. The situations and social problems of interest.

1. About the national economic model.

This is an economy that produces little, that prefers to sell rather than to produce wealth, that is, it prefers to sell commodities rather than produce them, and whose tax model has been hijacked by business elites. The economic model reproduces itself at the speed of the oligarchy's needs, which does not have much interest in producing changes other than expanding its base of accumulation. The country is dedicated to providing services more than anything else, and besides, it buys abroad more than it sells.

The opportunity to propose a development plan for national production arises, taking care not to fall into the traps of the oligarchy. Neither should we limit the development of micro-enterprises and similar things. This is about promoting national industrialization on the basis of new areas of production, even on the basis of new modalities such as cooperative and associative enterprises.

The movement of the workers must press for more and better jobs, for decent working conditions and wages, for trade union freedom, for the development of new models of production such as cooperatives and associative enterprises. This can start among the



working classes. It is a social situation that must be worked on to turn it into a social problem. One must push for it, interacting with the working classes and formulating a different vision of the rights of the workers.

This would lead to reform of the tax system hijacked by the national oligarchy and the transnational companies. Making those who have more pay more taxes and adopt a progressive tax model (contrary to the regressive one). There are two aspects that we are clear about and that will be an important piece in the political confrontation. One must do as much as possible to include the issue of tax expense, that is to say, the resources left from taxes that the State stops collecting. Technical proposals, however correct, are of little use if they are not spread among the working classes, including the middle-income population.

2. The labor reform.

The traditional way of approaching this issue has been limited, at least until now, to the issue of wages, unemployment, benefits from social security and the right to organize unions. Aspects such as working conditions, job stability, risks at work, labor informality, job training and others, as important as the first, have been left out. It is time to agitate in order to complete the vision of work as a social problem.

In the hands of the business community, the issue of the cost of layoffs and, always, the salary issue is of interest. They appear to be administrative subjects and, consequently, economic. But they are more than that. One of the measures used to create surplus value is the fall in wages and another is job instability, which limits union activity to the extreme. Consequently, the struggle for wages and stability are subjects with political features, although they refer to the economic aspect.

The challenge is to make the other issues of the labor question a social problem, without neglecting the presence of the issues already addressed. Militancy and creativity must play a major role in this highly important issue, above all for what it represents in the development of relations with the working classes.

An issue not to be neglected is the growing presence of the so-called informal economy (64.81% of jobs). Informal work provides wages 19% less than its counterparts in the formal economy (Yu & Vorisek, 2021). It can be about one third of the GDP (Fortuño, 2019).

It is a social situation with serious consequences for the working classes: lower income and job instability, non-recognition of labor rights; they are left out of social security, have major difficulty to collectivize, etc. It is in the interest of the government for the issue of tax collection, but without bringing improvements in their working conditions.

Formalization of employment should be one of the tasks of the workers' movement on the basis of improving wages, for protection by legislation and with more opportunities to organize.

3. Limited access to consumption of goods and services.

The consumption of goods and services, in general, is low. The reasons for this are not fortuitous. First, it is determined by the policy of low wages and the extent of labor informality. Second, it must be taken into account that the international market is placed ahead of the national market. In addition, part of the policy of macroeconomic stability is based on reducing the money supply so that demand does not exceed supply and creates risks of inflation, which limits local consumption even more. Added to this is the social inequality that characterizes our economy.

For 2014, 20% of the poorest section of the Dominican population (Quintile 1) did not even achieve 5% of the country's wealth; while another 20% (Quintile 5) of the richest benefited from 50% of the national patrimony (Leclerc, 2014).

The increase in prices and the shortage of the so-called basic necessities, often, even temporarily, enters into the public agenda with great impetus. But just as it goes in, so it goes out. It is not possible to give continuity to this demand. It is very difficult to organize a movement around this social problem. Much work has been lacking to raise awareness through explanations of the rise in prices. That is the main challenge.

4. The case of social security.

Without room for doubt, social security is a social problem of great significance. The possibilities for even greater escalation are on the table. Even after making a decision, whatever it may be, the confrontation can continue and with greater intensity.

In the short term, the agitation about the social problem represented by the confrontation for social security is very probable to become huge. The mobilizations have started, but they still lack a push.

The oligarchy is at play and has a plan of fight to legitimize, perhaps, the decision that it has already reached. It is an opportunity to denounce the essence of this society. The integration of the workers and people in general is still to come. The proposals must show the benefits of a new society.

5. The deterioration of ecological relation.

About one out of every six square kilometers in the country is involved in mining activities. One must add to this the areas included in illegal extractivism practices and the issue of the appropriation and destruction of environmental parks and industrial pollution, and it is evident that the social situation is of great magnitude and significance.

The deterioration of ecological relations is a social problem that has not yet reached its full capacity of confrontation, but it is on the way to it. Care for the environment is not only ethical, but it is a confrontation even with transnational capital. Denunciation and militancy is the task.

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From “21st Century Socialism” to Progressivism

The struggle of the workers, peoples and youth in Latin America developed in opposition to the neoliberal policies imposed by imperialism in the last decades of the 20th century, strengthened the workers’ and popular movement, endowed it with the capacity to fight for their proposals in the electoral arena.

In several countries, as a result of these confrontations, alternative governments emerged, different from the traditional regimes, which raised anti-neoliberal positions and awakened expectations among workers.

They came with the support of the workers and peoples, of the middle sectors of the population, of the political organizations of the left, of the party of the proletariat. Several of these governments proclaimed themselves revolutionary, as expressions of the so-called “21st century socialism”¹.

They claimed to be the new path to social and national liberation, as a result of the revolution of the votes, as an alternative to the “failure” of 20th century socialism.

These regimes counted on important economic resources from the high prices of raw materials. They developed some reformist measures, some welfare policies aimed at the impoverished population of the countryside and the city, and a great number of public works. All the countries where these governments were in power multiplied their indebtedness, tied themselves to the high interest rates and short terms offered by China, which in a few years became their main creditor.

¹ Initially, the proponents of “21st century socialism” claimed that they were building the contents and program of their proposal on the fly. The most sophisticated said that this was a “new socialism, different from the Stalinist model.” In theory and in practice these were the old reformist proposals exhibited by social democracy to confront the socialism that the workers had built in the Soviet Union.

These governments kept the economic and social structures intact. The interests of the big capitalists and bankers were significantly favored; the dependence on the US imperialist monopolies was fundamentally respected and the doors were opened for the penetration of Chinese capital, which was directed mainly to the extraction of minerals and oil exploitation.

The offers to resolve the problems of the working masses, of employment, health care and education were only half attended to. Capitalist exploitation and oppression remained intact. The bosses imposed their conditions. The countries, while modernizing with infrastructure works, highways, ports and airports, continued to be tied to underdevelopment.

The supposed new way to confront and solve the problems of the workers turned out to be a failure; the new ways to revolution and socialism were a disappointment.

The various processes that claimed to be the “citizens’ revolution”, “Bolivarian”, “Andean” revolution were, in fact, a grotesque caricature of the revolution.

The electoral defeat of the alternative governments

The regimes of “21st century socialism” showed themselves to be repressive towards the trade union and popular movement, the organization and struggle of the indigenous peoples and nationalities, the political formations of the left and mainly the party of the proletariat and its forces.

They sought to corporatize the union organization of the workers, union leaders were co-opted, union federations were divided and others were built according to the designs of the government at the same time that several union organizations and political parties of the left were outlawed; social protest was criminalized. In Ecuador more than 600 social fighters were accused of being terrorists and saboteurs; they were persecuted and more than thirty of them were imprisoned, while two indigenous leaders were assassinated.

The alternative governments were unmasked before a good part of the workers, the peoples and the youth as expressions of the ruling classes, as more of the same, as corrupt governments, everywhere they led to the emergence of the new rich.

They were confronted by the masses fighting for their interests and rights, by the political formations and parties of the consistent left; they were denounced by reaction and the traditional political

parties of the bourgeoisie as “socialist”, as revolutionary. The inadequacies, errors, poverty, unemployment and corruption were shown as if they were socialism, the revolution; they tried to delegitimize the aspirations of revolutionary change.

The economic crisis of 2008 affected the management capacity of these regimes. Without the abundant financial resources of the first years they showed their class nature, they favored the interests of the big business owners and bankers, of the international monopolies and placed the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the workers.

Due to the struggle of the workers and peoples, to the denunciations of the bourgeois opposition, all these governments were politically exposed and were defeated in electoral processes by the neo-liberal right, by the bourgeois political parties that opposed the neo-liberal proposals while denouncing them as socialism.

In Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador and Bolivia the bourgeois parties returned to the exercise of political power. The working masses, the leftist formations that had fought for their rights and against the anti-popular policies did not have the capacity to build their own electoral alternatives that could influence the results. They were present in the electoral political struggle, they advanced, but they still do not have the capacity to make themselves visible as a sure alternative, present, for the majority of the workers.

Neoliberalism again

U.S. imperialism and its spokespersons, the traditional bourgeois parties denounced the failure of “socialism”; they sold the “generosity of neoliberalism” and restarted the neoliberal policies with the blessing and support of the International Monetary Fund.

In Brazil they seek to impose fascism, and the application of economic adjustment measures have led millions of workers to unemployment; some spheres of production have been privatized; some of the social gains in health care, education and social security have been dismantled. They are facing the determined struggle of the workers and peoples and are losing ground in their acceptance by the working masses and the youth.

In Argentina they came with force to impose the policies and proposals of the International Monetary Fund, deepening the crisis, increasing unemployment and the cost of living.

In Bolivia, in the few months that they were in government, they eliminated several of the rights of the workers and peoples.

In Ecuador, the government of Rafael Correa organized the 2017 electoral process and through electoral fraud imposed Lenin Moreno, his vice president, as his successor. Moreno’s administration caused the implosion of Correísmo, in the name of change; it promoted neo-liberal policies and led to the deepening of the crisis and the impoverishment of the workers. The president ended his term with less than 10% approval rating.

In Uruguay, the regime of the Frente Amplio (Broad Front), proclaimed as leftist and alternative, also suffered electoral defeat at the hands of the right-wing and neoliberal parties, and the measures against the workers returned with force.

The policies of the alternative governments, their failure to confront and resolve the problems of the working masses and the independent development of the countries, were denounced by reaction and the bourgeois political parties as expressions of statist policies, they were used to delegitimize the revolution, to “show” the masses the failure of socialism.

The imposition of the neoliberal policies that succeeded the alternative governments is also showing that it is not the true alternative for the peoples, for the progress of the countries.

Both the regimes of “21st century socialism” and the neoliberal administrations that have succeeded them are showing, in fact, that they are expressions of the interests of the ruling classes and the imperialist monopolies.

The alternative for the elimination of capitalist exploitation and oppression, for liberation from the chains of dependence on imperialism remains, as always, the social revolution of the proletariat, socialism.

The conquest of social emancipation and full independence cannot come from any sector of the exploiters, from any good imperialist country; they will be the work of the workers and the peoples.

A new cycle of alternative governments?

In Argentina, denouncing the crisis and the nature of the neoliberal government, the Peronists returned to power through elections. They promised welfare for the people, independence and development of the country. After a short time they were mired in corruption and led the country into a deep crisis and the working masses to hunger and unemployment.

The working class and the people of Argentina fought in the streets, in big mobilizations and strikes against the neoliberal regime and, in the elections, contributed to its defeat. Now, again they are on the barricades and in strikes, fighting for their interests, in opposition to the progressive government. The working masses and the youth are understanding that none of the options represent the legitimate interests of the people and the nation.

In Bolivia, as a response of the workers to corruption and neoliberal policies, to repressive policies, Evo Morales' party won the presidential elections and the crisis is deepening and striking the working masses and the youth. In the municipal elections, as a response to corruption and poverty, the masses voted against the government, for right-wing proposals. Once again it is seen that both alternatives represent the interests of the traditional big bosses.

In Brazil, the popular opposition to Bolsonaro's fascist government has been expressing itself massively in the streets, rejecting reactionary policies and fighting for workers' rights and against corruption. For the next presidential elections, the polls speak of Lula's advantage.

In Ecuador, in the last elections the neo-liberal proposals were imposed, the candidate of Correism was defeated. The workers, the indigenous peoples and the revolutionary left were able to build their own electoral alternative that achieved an important position, which was invalidated by electoral fraud forged by the collusion of the neoliberals and the reformists.

Analyzing these facts and the results of the elections in Mexico and Peru, reformist theoreticians and analysts speak of a new cycle of progressive governments, announcing new electoral victories. They pretend to put forward the idea that the political confrontation in Latin America is between progressivism and neo-liberalism; that, as a consequence, these two forms of the policies of the ruling classes and imperialism will take turns in government, for a more or less long term. They do not understand, or do not want to understand, that the historical process, in all parts of the world and at all times, develops in a spiral, that no political process repeats itself, that the working class and peoples, the proletarian revolutionaries pursue and will pursue, in the future, with greater determination, liberation from their chains.

The latest electoral events in Ecuador show that it is not inevitable that the political confrontation is always polarized between

different sectors of the bourgeoisie, that it is possible to build a consistent popular alternative, developed and led by the workers themselves.

The alternative and neo-liberal governments represent the capitalists and imperialists.

Historical experience shows that both the governments of the so-called “21st century socialism” and those that proclaim neoliberalism are more of the same, expressions of the class interests of the ruling class and the U.S. and Chinese imperialists. Neither of them represents the interests of those who produce the wealth; on the contrary, they are expressions of various sectors of the bourgeoisie, of the neoliberals and or reformists.

The neoliberals are making an effort to embellish their programs proposals with social and patriotic proposals. To deceive the masses, they speak of freedom and democracy, social welfare; they proclaim the benefits of free enterprise and free trade with the world. The representatives of the alternative governments dropped the leftist and revolutionary discourse; they speak of respect for free enterprise, for interdependence and fostered business ventures.

Some continue to call themselves liberals; they declare themselves supporters of social capitalism. The others have dropped the label of revolutionaries, of supporters of “21st century socialism”, so as not to alarm the big business owners and bankers; they proclaim themselves progressives, part of the actors of representative democracy.

Both positions are a response to the desire for change that are rooted in the subjectivity of the workers, the peoples and the youth.

From social struggle to political confrontation

In Latin America, as in all the countries of the world, the class struggle is confronting in an antagonistic and virulent way – sometimes it takes place in a hidden way – the interests of the workers with the privileges of the capitalist class, the aspirations for true independence. The former for their rights and desires, for the elimination of hunger and exploitation, and the latter for the perpetuation of their rule.

This confrontation is expressed in strikes and mobilizations that exist, at different levels, in all countries, in social outbursts such as those that occurred in Colombia and Chile in recent years and

months, in popular uprisings such as the one that developed in Ecuador.

In these forms of the class struggle, the youth strata, significant sectors of the working class and the peasant masses, as well as some sectors of the middle strata, are actively participating. The revolutionary left and the Marxist-Leninist party are consistent and timely in these struggles.

The bonds of unity in the streets and on the barricades are being strengthened, the ideas that the struggle is the road to the attainment of rights are being affirmed and developed. The opinions about projecting those actions, that strength and unity in action towards political unity for the struggle for the government, are developing. The workers themselves understand that they are responsible for heading and leading these struggles, that the leaders of the liberation struggle will not come from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, that they will be the men and women who stand out in the popular struggle.

It is of great importance for the party of the proletariat to work, in the very course of the social struggle, to spread the ideal of revolution and socialism, to win, every day, new steps in the organization and struggle of the working class, the peoples and youth.

In general, the rank and file of the trade union organizations and the associations responds actively and positively to the call of the proletarian revolutionaries to enlist and participate in the union struggle in the confrontation with neoliberal policies, for social and



material welfare. But at the same time, it is clear that, in the electoral political confrontation, the bulk of the workers continue to vote for the bosses, for one or another representative of the bourgeois political parties.

We Marxist-Leninists understand that the seizure of popular power, that the revolution and socialism will be the result of the overthrow of the ruling classes and of the dependence on imperialism, that this responsibility can only be fulfilled with the legitimate use of the revolutionary violence of the masses. However, in the same way, we understand that the process of accumulation of forces, of developing the workers and popular movement, of affirming and developing the revolutionary consciousness of the masses, inevitably passes through the participation, from the class positions, in the electoral processes organized by the bourgeoisie.

It is clear that there is a significant gap between the organization and the social struggle and the incidence of the ideas and proposals of the revolutionaries in the subjectivity of the working masses and the youth. A good part of them are involved in the street and strike struggle, but they do not know and even less make their own the ideas of the revolution and socialism.

To face these circumstances, in the PCMLE, we have outlined the policy of organizing a great ideological and political offensive among the working masses and the youth, a responsibility that we understand as a daily task to be developed in the course of the social struggle itself, as a work for the politicization of the masses.

We are clear that the working masses and the youth are immersed in the political struggle, in spite of the fact that many sectors of them express their repudiation of politics; they say that they are not involved in politics, define themselves as apolitical; they openly state that politics and politicians are corrupt. But we also understand that at the time of the elections they vote for one or another representative of the bosses, of the big business owners and bankers.

We take up the responsibility of working daily to bring socialism to the workers and popular movement.

We Marxist-Leninists of Ecuador have political and programmatic proposals for the current situation of the workers and peoples, to confront and give a patriotic and progressive solution to the development of the country. We are present in a timely manner in the events of the social and political life of the country; we draw up slogans and bring them, through various means and resources, to the

masses. At the same time we have drawn up programs for the government at the sectional and national level.

We are convinced that our proposals and slogans are timely, just and correct, revolutionary; however, we are clear that they are not known much less taken up by the majority of the working class and youth, that intense work is needed for their propagation.

The responsibility of taking these policies to the working masses, to the peoples and youth is the great challenge for the party and its forces.

The ideological offensive and the politicization of the masses must take into account all the workers of the city and the countryside, the broad masses of the youth, the indigenous peoples and nationalities. It must start from the systematic action of revolutionary propaganda, of the newspaper, leaflets, radio and television, the social networks; it must prioritize the direct action of the party militants among the masses, in the unions, in the communes and peasant cooperatives, in the associations of small merchants and neighborhood committees, among the teachers and the youth, in those environments in which the activity of the party has been developing, in our social base. From there we must strive to broaden the radius of action of the revolutionary policy of the party.

It is not enough to denounce the class character of the neoliberals and progressives; it is necessary, indispensable, to work for spreading the ideals of the revolution and socialism, what we communists propose for today and tomorrow.

October 2021

The Sale of Submarines to Australia

More Militarization and Nuclear Proliferation

The so-called “affair” of the submarines sold to Australia and the AUKUS alliance has several aspects. Here we address the stakes for French imperialism, which does not have the means to achieve its “international ambitions” in the Asia-Pacific region, but which participates in the militarization of this region and the rise of tensions between the Western powers, notably US imperialism, and China. And we trace the axes of mobilization that we are developing around these questions, in our work for the revolutionary break with the imperialist capitalist system.

“Stab in the back”, “unthinkable betrayal between allies”, etc. the best travelling salesperson of the French arms industry, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Le Drian, and the Minister of Defense, Florence Parly, have been spreading since September 15 on the media to say all the evil that they can think of about the decision of the Australian government to cancel the “contract of the century”, signed in 2016 with Naval Group. The Australian government has made public the signing of a contract with the US and its British ally for 8 nuclear-powered submarines, equipped with Tomahawk long-range cruise missiles. In the aftermath, Biden announced the strengthening of military cooperation within the framework of an alliance – AUKUS – acronym for “Australia, United Kingdom, USA.

This is a slap in the face for the French monopolies of naval military armaments around the Naval Group, involved in the contract signed in 2016 and constantly confirmed, for the manufacture of 12

submarines with diesel-electric propulsion for Australia. Naval Group expected to pocket some €8 billion.¹

Asia-Pacific Challenges for French Imperialism

It is also a failure of the international policy of French imperialism, which aspired, through this contract, to conclude a political-military alliance with Australia, a regional power in the Pacific, for the next 50 years.

As the admiral who commands the French military forces in the Asia-Pacific region said, French imperialism is the “only European nation bordering” the region through its colonial possessions. These are New Caledonia – which we call Kanaky, from the name given by the independence forces to their territory – Reunion, French Polynesia (Tahiti and many islands), which are all bases for the “pre-positioned permanent forces”² and those that regularly patrol these waters. Several naval maneuvers have been organized, with the US 7th Fleet, Canada, Japan, Australia, as well as with the fleets of each country, to improve the “interoperability” of naval forces (including submarines) and to promote French armaments.

Minister Parly explained, in typically neocolonial terms, the objectives of French imperialism in this region: “We have territories with more than 1.6 million inhabitants, several islands with different statuses, vast exclusive economic zones³ and the responsibility that goes with them”. But French imperialism obviously does not have the means to deploy the same forces as US imperialism, which deploys 60% of its military forces (350,000 troops and five naval groups).

¹ The figure of \$50 billion has often been mentioned: in fact, the bulk of this sum corresponded to the manufacture of submarines in Australia and the construction of a shipyard.

² This represents some 7,000 soldiers, fifteen warships and twenty aircraft, permanently stationed, to which must be added the bases in Djibouti and Abu Dhabi and the naval air groups that carry out missions of several months, including the nuclear aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, equipped with aircraft and nuclear attack submarines.

³ The Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) representing 9 million square kilometers, give exclusive access to the colonial power over their marine resources, oil, gas and minerals. This is an essential element for French imperialism.

It is therefore the ambition of French imperialism to develop an “independent” military policy in this region that has just been publicly and harshly questioned by the US leaders, who wanted to remind people that US imperialism was “at home” in this vast area and that it did not intend to share this hegemony with its main world rival, China.

US policy of containment of China

The Australian leaders are convinced of this; since 1945 they have put themselves under the “protection” of the United States, after that of the United Kingdom. Although in 2006, China became Australia’s largest trading partner, a free trade agreement was concluded between the two countries in 2015, tensions have continued to grow since 2018 and even more so in 2020, with the publication of the Australian “defense white paper” that increases its military capability and strengthens ties with the United States. At that time, the central government cancelled economic contracts made by Australian territorial authorities with China (as part of the “Silk Roads”). The government has increasingly denounced “Chinese interference”, getting closer and closer to Taiwan and in July, 2020, it launched the “demand for an independent international investigation” into the origin of the coronavirus, explicitly pointing at China.

The sale of attack submarines “made in France”, announced in 2016 and constantly confirmed until recent months, already aimed at the militarization of this vast region, and we have denounced it as such. But the new situation created by the establishment of a strong military alliance among Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, based in particular on nuclear-powered submarines, supplied and sold by the United States and the United Kingdom, poses an even greater threat to China and to all the countries and peoples of the region. This is a further step in the policy of US tension with China and of affirming the desire for hegemony of US imperialism, which puts its allies faced with a fait accompli, as Biden had already done by accelerating the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

“France remains in NATO”

Macron has let his ministers step up to the plate, to provide a way out of this diplomatic and political crisis between US imperialism and French imperialism. It has not escaped his notice that the

governments of the EU Member States and the leaders of its institutions have avoided engaging too openly with him⁴. Nor does he want to cut ties, either with the US or with NATO, whose logistical and intelligence support is essential for the French troops engaged in the Sahel. That is why Parly quickly swept aside the idea of “withdrawing from NATO.” As for Macron, he continues to highlight the need to develop a “European defense”, but he signed the communiqué of “reconciliation” with Biden, which says in particular: *“The United States recognizes the importance of a stronger and more capable European defense, that contributes positively to transatlantic and global security and is complementary to NATO.”*

Boris Johnson has launched the idea of associating France with AUKUS, given that it is militarily present in this vast Asia-Pacific region. Is this a trial balloon or a joke by Johnson who does not want to poison his country’s relations with France?

In any case, Macron did not fail to insist on the need for a front of states to contain China’s expansion. He agrees with Biden on the importance to be given to India, a major buyer of weapons (the amount of the contract for the sale of 36 Rafale fighter planes to India amounts to 7.9 billion €), even if, again, competition will be very strong between US and French monopolies.

Experience shows that between the announcement of fabulous contracts and their realization, it takes years and that nothing is “set in stone”. That said, there is an obvious continuity in the US strategy regarding the containment of China. Trump had pursued an aggressive economic policy, with bans on the export of strategic equipment, or the import of Chinese equipment, by a large number of allies of US imperialism (such as Huawei being banned from the 5G market). Biden is continuing this policy, expanding it by developing and strengthening military alliances with countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The nuclear submarine contract opens a new phase in the field of nuclear proliferation. It concerns a country which, for the moment, has no nuclear power plant, which does not control military nuclear power, which will depend entirely on the USA which enriches the

⁴ Almost all the leaders of the EU member states absolutely want the “US-European on Trade and Technology Council”, scheduled for the end of September, to be held. The initiative was launched by Biden during his European trip last June.

uranium extracted from the Australian subsoil (the third largest producer in the world), to obtain a highly enriched fuel.

**AUKUS and nuclear submarines are causing tensions
with several countries**

The majority of regimes in place in the Asia-Pacific region are far from democratic; they do not hide their hostility to China, but they do not appreciate being put in the “eye of the storm” of the economic and especially military rivalry between the US and China. Added to this are the rivalries among these countries, some of which are ancient.

The regional power that hopes to take advantage of this situation is India, led by a nationalist, repressive government, which must take into account a strong opposition of the workers, peasants and people to its ultraliberal policies. Modi is literally being courted by Biden, who wants to make him a counterweight to China. In the US strategy, India is one of the pivots of the Indo Pacific region, but it has very important economic ties with China, which it cannot break. This is the case for all states in this vast region, including Japan.

In short, if US imperialism remains the world’s leading power, especially on the military level, it is facing a complex situation and it no longer has the means to make everyone follow the US, brandishing the threat of its weapons of mass destruction, especially towards its main economic rival, China.

**Develop the mobilization against the policy of militarization of
inter-imperialist tensions, for international solidarity**



The reactions and denunciations of this acceleration of militarization and nuclear proliferation have multiplied, in France and around the world.

We emphasize four bases to explain, develop and translate them into mobilizations:

- The denunciation of the policy of militarization which, among other things, swallows up enormous wealth, to the detriment of social needs.
- The denunciation of the nuclear policy, especially military nuclear power, whether it is used as fuel for ships, vessels, etc. or for bombs.
- The denunciation of military alliances, starting with NATO: France must leave this military alliance dominated by US imperialism.
- The coordination of mobilizations at the international level. On this level, we emphasize the denunciation of French imperialism concerning its colonies, especially those in the Asia-Pacific region, which transforms its “possessions” into advanced military outposts in its inter-imperialist rivalries. We insist on the right of the peoples of those colonies to self-determination, which implies deciding in full sovereignty on the relations they intend to establish with the peoples and countries of their region.

October 2021

October 3, 1990: Day of the annexation of the GDR

Nothing Was Allowed To Be Left of the GDR, Otherwise the Existence of Capitalism Would Be at Stake

By Herbert Polifka, Arbeit/Zukunft [Labor/Future] Magdeburg¹

From Adenauer come the words: rather half of Germany whole, than the whole Germany half. “It is not only a question of the East Zone; it is a question of reorganizing all of Europe east of the Iron Curtain.” (Adenauer, CDU Party Congress in Heidelberg, March 1, 1952) “Our goal is the liberation of our 18 million brothers and sisters in the eastern territories. Until now, people have always spoken of reunification, but we should rather say liberation.” Helmut Kohl’s words on June 21, 1990, remain memorable: “Only the rapid realization of the currency, economic and social union offers the chance that Mecklenburg/Western Pomerania, Saxony/Anhalt, Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia will soon be flourishing landscapes again... To the Germans in the GDR I can say...: No one will be worse off than before – but many will be better off... For the Germans in the Federal Republic, the following applies: No one will have to do without anything because of unification.” (Texte zur Deutschlandpolitik, Reihe III/Bd. 8a, Bundes Verlag, (Text on Germany Politics, Series III, Volume 8a, Bundes Publishers), Bonn 1991)

The result of the property relations in East Germany established with privatization was:

¹ Editor’s note: Herbert Polifka was a member of the illegal section of the Communist Party of Germany (Marxist-Leninist). He fought against revisionism and opportunism in the GDR, for socialist revolution. Therefore he was sentenced by the revisionist state. His contribution was written after the reunification and republished on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of reunification.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ML PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- 85% of East German assets (factories, houses and land) now belong to West Germans.
- Only 5% of the businesses privatized by the Treuhandanstalt [Trust Agency – the agency established by the GDR government to privatize state enterprises prior to reunification – *translator's note*] went to East Germans, 10% went to foreigners (mainly U.S. and West European companies), and 85% to West Germans.

In a few years, a historically unprecedented redistribution of real estate and tangible assets transformed East Germany into a dependent country, where all major economic and political decisions were made by the FRG ruling class. But in order to break up the GDR economy, it was also necessary to create an atmosphere that at least tolerated this. The entire economy was, in short, described as “ailing”; everything was just “mismanagement.” The electronic media, newspapers, magazines, the entire opinion-making industry reported only actual grievances or invented new ones.

At the same time, the spirit of optimism of the GDR citizens was exploited. Illusions that many millions of people under SED rule already had about capitalism in the FRG were systematically stirred up further: “There is no alternative” and “we have to get through it; then it will be better.” Political demagogues told sweet lies: “But nobody will be worse off than before. On the contrary” (Kohl). And: “the German-Mark opens the door to paradise” (GDR press spokesman Gehler on currency union, July 1, 1990). Pjeroth (CDU): “Soon people will be talking about the golden East.” (1990). The lies that were deliberately spread about the “upswing in the East” were part of the instruments used to keep the citizens in the East quiet. Only through this preparatory work, only through these favorable conditions, did the Treuhand succeed in pushing through this greatest (peaceful) robbery in world history. The writer Rolf Hochhuth accused the Treuhandanstalt of being involved in “a robbery such as was never masterminded in any country invaded by Hitler” (*Neues Deutschland*, January 23-24, 1993).

The destruction of the economic, political and institutional structures of the GDR was the essential prerequisite for the West German elites to establish their own power apparatus, their own economic order. The central points of this empowerment were the question of ownership, the transfer of administration and the associated

GERMANY – NOTHING WAS ALLOWED TO BE LEFT OF THE GDR

occupation of all essential decision-making positions by West German officials and managers. In less than 4 years, a comprehensive roll-back of ownership in East Germany took place – over 90% of the state-owned enterprises were transferred to private owners or sent to liquidation. The decisive factor for this rapid privatization was the dismemberment of the combines. Only on this basis could modern and profitable sections of the plants be handed over to West German companies as prime pieces. Only in this way could a total liquidation be initiated for “uneconomical” areas. The consequence of the course of privatization was the permanent dismantling of the industrial backbone of the East German economy. The work of the Treuhand was deliberately aimed at destroying the industrial base in East Germany. Economic integration was motivated by politics, not economics; privatization was the execution by the electric chair of the East German economy, reflecting above all the West German elites’ interest in shaking out the market and shielding the FRG from unification-related impulses for change.

About the revisionism of the Honecker clique: It must be criticized in order to be able to judge it more profoundly. Erich Honecker is no exception, despite his party card and his lip service to socialism. What ultimately counts when evaluating a person are primarily his deeds, not his words. Probably, Erich Honecker was a revisionist careerist as early as the 1950s.

The adoption of Khrushchevite policies by the SED in the 1950s was the reason for the decline of the GDR. Another enemy seized the initiative: the one from within its own ranks, as Tucholsky would say. Bureaucracy, the smug arrogance of a ruling stratum, paternalism and the bullying of the working people, sycophancy and toadyism



became all-dominant in the life of the country. This atmosphere had a devastating effect. Enthusiasm slackened, self-activity was seen as a danger to the preservation of the state and was therefore increasingly restricted, causing interest in socialism to wane. Sections of the population moved to the West; for them, the GDR became increasingly unattractive. The construction of the Wall thus marked the final end of a socialist development in the GDR. Although the name was retained, the content was different. The gap between the party and broad sections of the masses had become wide, and within the party, the leadership was increasingly losing the trust of ordinary members. In particular, the media's increasingly restrictive policy on information was rightly met with rejection. The media's image was increasingly characterized by embellished actionism, constant reports of success, campaigning and embarrassing "court reporting" [reporting in the interest of the rulers]." Without a doubt, the collapse of the GDR without a fight set back the German and international labor movement. The loss of the prestige of socialism is tragic. F. Engels once said: once you have lost, you have to start all over again. In defeat lie the seeds of future victories. Above all, defeats are the best teachers and give a lesson in historical dialectics, above all defeated armies learn well. World history does not proceed smoothly and evenly "...without sometimes taking giant steps backward." Giant steps backwards – one must not think of dialectics as only a forward or higher development. Proletarian revolutions... constantly criticize themselves, continually interrupt themselves in their own course, come back to what has apparently been accomplished in order to start it all over again.

From a leaflet of Arbeit Zukunft (Labor Future), Organization for the Construction of a Communist Party of the Workers of Germany.

COVID-19 and the General Crisis of Capitalism

The pandemic generated by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 has unearthed the severe deficiencies that afflict capitalism worldwide in its full glory, or better said, its misery. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the unfairness engendered by growing inequality, on the one hand, and how fragile capitalist governments are in the face of the health care crisis, on the other. It has also exposed the gravity of the economic crisis that capitalism displays, while it has never ceased to generate income inequality and capital accumulation. Capitalism has used the COVID-19 pandemic to further suppress the position of the working class and the toiling masses in the economy and society. The COVID-19 pandemic will leave behind a world riddled with deeper contradictions that will become more unbearable for the oppressed than ever. The pandemic has accelerated imperialist tendencies towards confrontation, armed conflicts in the light of looming social upheavals. In conclusion, the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the general crisis of capitalism and deepened inter-imperialist contradictions.

COVID-19 and social inequality.

The far right and social-democracy, or whatever is left of it these days, have been debating over the need for a comprehensive policy to protect the population from the effects of the pandemic. The right-wing has been arguing in favor of ending the lockdown measures in order to let the virus run amok. Capitalism is in crisis and as such the pandemic is considered by some as a means to reduce what is viewed by some as population excess. Lobbyists from insurance companies and other sectors in the corporate space have been warning since the beginning of the pandemic about the cost of the pandemic and the economic impact of lockdowns compared to the economic impact of losing population. With this, some corporate lobbyists have been effectively arguing that the economic impact of lockdowns on their businesses is disproportionately large compared to the loss of GDP due to mortality. This is explained by the fact that those most vulnerable to the disease, the poor and the elderly either contribute little to the GDP or can be replaced by the unemployed.

The impact of the pandemic since its inception has been unequal in terms of how different sectors of the population have been affected by the virus. Social inequalities have fueled glaring imbalances in how the virus has affected various sectors of the population. It was evident to some since the very beginning that the poor, those employed in menial jobs, the under-insured or uninsured and the elderly would carry the bulk of the burden.

The impact of socio-economic inequalities on severe illness and mortality is and continues to be the subject of study. The reliability of these studies depends strongly on the availability of quality data, which many times is in the hands of corporations. As a result, this issue has been scrutinized the most in more industrialized countries compared to so called mid- and low-income countries. The issue of socio-economic inequality had been studied in the US. This is due to the availability of data of reasonable quality and activism from the side of some experts who have raised red flags in view of the glaring disparities in how the pandemic has affected various constituencies in the country. The disparities are so obvious that even US Government sources have provided a synthesis of the statistics. Three main groups have been affected disproportionately in the US: American Indian or Alaska native, African Americans and Hispanics. The number of COVID-19 positives is a factor of 1.8, 1.4 and 1.7 with respect to whites, respectively. The disparity becomes more acute when looking at the prevalence of severe disease. This is measured through the rate of hospitalisation and mortality. The rate of hospitalisation is a factor of 4, 3.7 and 4.1 times greater than for whites, respectively. In terms of mortality, the factors are 2.6, 2.8 and 2.8 respectively. No evidence has been put forward by the medical community that genetic factors may impact the probability of severe disease for an entire racial group. These strong biases speak to socio-economic factors, rather than genetic predispositions inherent to the various races as whole.

There are two important factors that determine the probability of severe outcomes: the probability of contracting the virus and the probability of developing severe disease when contracting the virus. The first factor depends strongly on the type of job the subject has. Workers that engage in more menial professions, where manual work and interaction with others are more probable, are in higher danger of contracting the virus compared to other professions. In addition, workers in low-income households are more likely to use public

transport, where infection is more likely compared to those that own a car. This issue is more acute in so called mid- and low- income countries. In addition, low-income households tend to live in smaller dwellings where a relatively large number of people live together and cannot socially distance compared to more affluent households. This issue is also particularly acute in mid- and low- income countries, where informal settlements are the norm for more vulnerable communities. Ethnic minorities in the US are known to engage in low-income labor, therefore making these groups more likely to get infected. In terms of the risk of developing severe disease, the prevalence of co-morbidities, such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity, play a strong role. It is also known that those with low income do not have the same access to fresh and whole foods compared to more affluent communities. The diet of low-income communities is sadly based on low quality processed foods, which are based on starch, contain corn syrup and other agents that have sparked a pandemic of diabetes, obesity and hypertension in the country. This, in addition to the fact that low-income households tend to be under-insured or not insured at all, and therefore treatment of chronic diseases becomes deficient, creating the conditions for ethnic minorities in the US to be more prone to severe disease. These factors are also prevalent in mid- and low- income countries.

Another sign that points to socio-economic vulnerabilities as a driving factor to severe disease and fatal outcome is the significant gap between officially recorded mortality and what is referred to as excess mortality. The latter is based on the counts of death certificates compared to previous years.¹ Where the computed excess mortality is significantly greater than the mortality officially recorded as being COVID-19 related, social vulnerabilities and healthcare under-coverage drive mortality. This has been observed in countries with relatively reliable reporting systems, such as Indonesia, South Africa and Turkey. In those countries it has been observed that most of the mortality is under-reported, especially in densely populated areas. This is related to the fact that many vulnerable communities do not have access to proper health care, or choose not to interact with inadequate or unreliable health care delivery.

¹ The methodology behind the computation of excess mortality varies from country to country. Typically, mortality is compared with the average mortality of the previous five years.

Capitalism views the poor and under-privileged as expendable in the big scheme of things. Far-right Governments, such as Bolsonaro's in Brazil, have made it very clear that his lack of strategy in regard to the pandemic is not necessarily an oversight, but rather a strategy intended to reduce population excess. The pandemic is far from over, in addition to the fact that the virus continuously mutates, thus creating new strains that behave differently compared to the original virus. While the virulence of the virus will likely wane, this pandemic will continue to kill the vulnerable in large numbers for years to come. That said, it may appear to some that the rate with which the virus is reducing the population is not comparable to what can be achieved by armed conflicts and major wars. In practice, the pandemic does not appear to be in a position to act as a replacement for armed conflicts. In this sense, the arguments put forward by the far-right are not necessarily reflective of depth of the crisis that capitalism irrevocably finds itself in.

By contrast, social-democracy wants to portray itself as the savior of the poor by arguing differently from the far-right, where more emphasis is done on controlling the pandemic and rolling out vaccination. While this may appear to be a sign that social-democracy cares more about the vulnerable than the far-right does, the reality on the ground points to a very different interpretation. The COVID-19 pandemic has been used by corporate capital to launch an attack on the economic position of the toiling masses, where income inequality, corporate profit and capital accumulation have seen new heights. It is this that social democracy has vowed to safeguard at all cost. The so-called defense of the vulnerable has in reality turned against the most vulnerable through the economic pressures that private monopoly capital is allowed to exert on the toiling masses. As will be seen below, monopoly capital has gained significant ground in terms of corporate profits and capital accumulation, while the toiling masses have suffered a serious setback in terms of labor rights, loss of income, rampant unemployment and underemployment. Tens of millions of jobs have been lost irrevocably, whereas corporate capital has increased profits and the rate exploitation continues to rise. Income inequality and Gini coefficients have gained momentum at rates that surpass those triggered by the 2008 crisis. Only governments now, even in the most affluent countries, are more powerless than ever to face the social pressures generated by the crisis.

Pharmaceuticals and the power of corporate capital.

One of the areas where the crisis of capitalism in its neo-liberal incarnation is showing its repulsive face is the problem of vaccination and how unequal its distribution has become. Bourgeois-liberals have been arguing about the so-called “vaccine nationalism”, where wealthier countries proactively purchased vast quantities of vaccine, leaving other countries behind. For instance, the Government of Canada has purchased 338 million doses, enough to vaccinate the population five times over. By contrast, India has ordered 116 million doses, or the equivalent of 4% of its population. While the facts that substantiate this criticism are there on the surface, what bourgeoisie liberals and the imperialist press do not particularly shed light on is the role of large pharmaceutical corporations in the current state of affairs and how a handful of them are in reality behind the scarcity. Indeed, many countries in the dependent world have been left behind, where governments of more developed countries have spent billions of dollars on private corporations for research, development and massive production of vaccines.

The bourgeoisie press have hailed some of the pharmaceuticals, such as AstraZeneca and even Pfizer, for not aiming at cranking up vaccine prices at this early stage. Other companies that command a smaller market share, such as Moderna, have given us a flavor of the large gap between corporate price and cost of production that the industry appears to be entitled to. The reality is that private monopolies in the vaccine space control the entire chain of research, development, prototyping and mass production of vaccines. Governments



and researchers funded by them, even in the wealthiest countries, have found themselves powerless to stand up to these pharmaceuticals. The well-being of billions of people is now in the hands of a handful of private corporations whose sole intention is to strive at the extraction of maximum profit.

By lowering prices for the first version of the vaccine, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and to a lesser extent Pfizer/BioNTech, are trying to secure future markets. They do so by creating dependence on their commodity, where scientists are used as accessories to trials and related R&D efforts required by them. Pharmaceutical corporations are cognizant that the pandemic will linger of years to come and that the current efforts are just the first pass in what is to become a profitable business model. The emergence of new strains, due to the natural process of mutation that the virus undergoes, invariably renders the virus more resistant to known vaccines. As a result, vaccines need to be tuned or even re-developed, where new products will emerge in the market. Something similar happens to the virus of the flu, where new vaccines appear seasonally. The difference here is that COVID-19 will remain significantly more virulent in the years to come. Tens of millions of people are expected to die from the virus if efficient vaccines are not rolled out in time to at least hundreds of millions of people around the world with relevant co-morbidities. Pharmaceutical corporations are essentially creating the conditions for a market that may generate hundreds of billions of US dollars in revenue over the next years.

Paradoxically, AstraZeneca, has provided the cheapest vaccine so far, while at the same time it has received the greatest investment. AstraZeneca has received over \$11 billion US in investments, overwhelmingly private, with some contribution from Government funding. Private funders surely do not bank on charity in the long term as a strategy for investment. AstraZeneca has been heavily criticized for its opacity and inability to deliver the vaccine in the quantities promised initially. The business model pursued by the corporation also remains a subject of debate and speculation, where it is suspected that the prices for their vaccine may increase in the future.

Instead of pursuing a strategy whereby vaccination is targeted to those most vulnerable to severe disease and death, Governments have fallen under the pressure of pharmaceutical corporations through their lobbyists and conduits, such as Dr. Fauci and the like. Dr. Fauci and other epidemiologists advise governments to plan for massive

vaccination campaigns, where most of the population is expected to be inoculated to achieve the so-called herd immunity. This is despite the fact that a significant fraction of the population has already developed some form of immunity to the disease. Naturally developed immunity is corroborated by the very small number of re-infections recorded around the world. In addition, a subject who gets vaccinated is not guaranteed not to be infected with new strains of the virus. Therefore, vaccination is no guarantee against re-infection. A strategy that would selectively target vulnerable members of the communities would not be as profitable to corporations compared to universal vaccination. In turn, vaccination hesitancy is typically linked with right-wing inspired conspiracy theories and the so-called “fake news”. While this connection is certainly substantiated, the narrative around the need for massive vaccination is tailored to fit the interests of large pharmaceutical corporations, rather than having the interest of the population in mind.

Pharmaceutical corporations in the West, through their lobbyists and the many scientists on their payroll or whose research funding is dependent upon them, have efficiently managed to sideline the Russian and Chinese vaccines. This is done on unscientific grounds under the disguise of scientific debate. The Russian and Chinese corporations that have developed these vaccines have become competitors to Western corporations and as such have become the target of unfair criticism or have been blatantly ignored by the relevant medical authorities that are in charge of approving the use of vaccines in their respective countries. This puts in question the objectivity and impartiality of the approval process that these agencies are bound to uphold and how this process has become subjugated to corporate interests. The World Health Organization is not alien to these biases either.

Capital accumulation and income inequality during the COVID-19 crisis.

Many bourgeois and petty-bourgeois economists have acknowledged that large corporate capital has profited from the pandemic at the expense of growing income inequality. It is well known that the brunt of the crisis is being born by the working class and the toiling masses. The economic status of the middle classes is being challenged as well. This happens through enhanced unemployment, wage cuts and other forms of economic pressures exerted on the toiling masses. Low-income workers have been particularly hardly hit by the

lockdowns and their aftermath. Under these conditions, the level of exploitation of the working class has been taken to a new level.

The Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report 2020 of the World Bank has shed light on quantitative analysis pertaining to the economic impact of the lockdowns on the most vulnerable. This report indicates that about 100 million people have been pushed the ranks of extreme poverty² in 2020, and about 150 million people by 2021. According to the World Bank almost 10% of the world population would be considered to be living under conditions of extreme poverty. The report also indicates that the so-called middle-income countries, which according to our definition are dependent countries many of which have de-industrialized as a result of neo-liberal policies, will carry the bulk of the pressure. According to the World Bank, about 40% of the world's population or 3.3 billion live under the \$5.50 US a day mark. This is in the light of growing dependence of dependent countries on imperialist countries and private monopoly capital, which speaks to the inability of capitalism to meet the needs of vast sectors of the world population.

The Gini coefficient, which is used to gauge income inequality, has increased sharply during the lockdowns and their aftermath. The Gini coefficient focuses on the relations of distribution and not directly on the relations of ownership in production, which in Marxism are the determining factor in the economic analysis. The Gini coefficient is used by bourgeois liberal economists as a means to articulate the petty bourgeois critique of monopoly capital, without having to deal with the core of the economic analysis and the private character of the appropriation of labor under capitalism. That being said, the increase of the Gini coefficient in the European Union as a whole has been estimated at around 3.5% during the hard lockdowns alone, where it has continued to increase during the months that followed. Similar tendencies have been observed in other regions of the world. Empirical analyses of the data are indicative of the presence of a correlation between the increase of the Gini coefficient and COVID-19 prevalence and outcomes. While such analyses are deemed superficial from the Marxist standpoint they do reveal the extent to which the pandemic has affected the toiling masses all over the world.

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² Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as living on less than \$1.9 US a day.

Mafia, Economy and Political Power in Italy

Origins and development of the mafia

The mafia was born in western Sicily towards the end of the feudal period, which remained predominant in the economic-social structure of the island until the 19th century.

Its initial function was to act in defense of agrarian feudalism.

Historically, the social base of the mafia was composed of the local power brokers who leased large estates from the absentee landlords (the so-called *gabelloti*) and of the private militias of the feudal masters (the *campieri*); both were the fundamental tools for controlling the territory and oppressing the peasants.

The conditions for the development of the mafia came to fruition in 1812, when the abolition of the feudal system was proclaimed by the Sicilian Parliament under the influence of the English occupation forces. This did not bring about the end of the latifundium, but the transfer of the lands from the declining feudal aristocracy to the *gabelloti* and *campieri*, the new parasitic middle class that performed the following functions: respect for the feudal order and social peace, surveillance of the peasants and application of punishment; the buying and selling of land; the imposition of harsh agrarian pacts with high rents and starvation wages for laborers; the collection of taxes; management of stolen livestock; the suppression of peasant protests; the division of irrigation water (especially for the production of citrus fruits in the fertile “gardens” of Palermo); the protection of affiliates and the corruption of public officials.

Using armed violence, intimidation and murder, the mafia managed to establish themselves as the necessary intermediaries to resolve all conflicts in their favor.

The emerging social strata formed by the mafia did justice for its own interests, continuing the old habits of the large landowners, as they concentrated a growing part of the land in their hands. The initial goal of these cynical and cruel parasites was to obtain the same power and privileges as their allied landowners. This explains the original

reactionary and conservative character of the mafia, its attitude to support capital and the existing social order.

The formation of the unitary State and the role of the mafia

In the second half of the 19th century, the Sicilian mafia had a regional organization to preserve the feudal structures in the countryside and to achieve economic advantages that allowed it to realize a primitive accumulation of capital in its hands.

In the period following the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy (1861), the mafia improved its process of organization and institutionalization.

The monarchic Italian state was born as a compromise between the industrialists of the North, in a hegemonic position, and the owner classes of the southern regions; it was a national unification from above, without the participation of the masses, who remained estranged from the process of royal conquest carried out by the bourgeoisie of the Piedmont, without an agrarian reform to distribute the land to the peasants.

The alliance between the industrial bourgeoisie of the north and the large landowners of the south, the separation between the new bourgeois state and the masses of peasants, opened a space for the development and consolidation of the mafia gangs that could impose their presence as intermediaries between the declining feudal aristocracy and a weak and distant bourgeois state, unable to exercise its power locally.

“*A state arises – wrote Lenin – a special power is created, special bodies of armed men*”, thus indicating, in a society divided into classes, the need for a power based on violence to oppress and exploit the toiling classes: working class in the north and poor peasants in the south of the country.

In the unstable conditions of the State after unification, the armed force of the Italian bourgeoisie revealed itself insufficient to fulfill this task. Thus, the mafia became an indispensable complement of the bourgeoisie for maintaining public order, with the use of rapid methods of intimidation and violence to protect class privileges.

The mafia, an expression of a part of the local ruling class, and at the same time a rival to and auxiliary of the official state power, since then it became a constant element of bourgeois society, finding complicity and representatives at every level of the institution (the “*friends of the friends*”).

Therefore, the continuity of the mafia phenomenon in Italy and its relations with the state authorities can be explained by the conditions in which, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the unitary bourgeois state was built.

The mafia organizations, which arose from the feudal past, survived and developed because the Italian Resurgence (1815-1871) was a failed bourgeoisie revolution that led to the maintenance of the underdevelopment, large unemployment and cultural backwardness of the southern regions, thereby generating a fertile ground for the consolidation of the mafia.

The mafia has been able to draw consensus and advantage from the distrust and discontent of the popular mass towards the prevaricating and corrupt State administration, whose lack of power or whose bad governance was “repaired” by the audacity of some “man of honor”. In this way there was created in the lower strata of the people a sort of recognition of the role played by the mafia in relation to a hostile State, which for the poor peasants of the south meant only taxes, military service and repression.

The function of the mafia was completed in the period following national unity, when it placed itself at the disposal of the conservative forces and became their electoral tool. To ensure economic and social immobility on the island, the ruling class adopted violence when necessary for the maintenance of its social and political dominance; to exercise this it used the mafia as the commissioner of this violence, even in the most brutal forms.

The mafia phenomenon was always tolerated by the central government, which used it to repress, together with the army, the Sicilian population (the Palermo insurrection of 1866; the workers movement of “Fasci Siciliani” in 1891-4, whose defeat was at the origin of the Sicilian emigration to the United States among whom the North American mafia found its breeding ground).

This favored the agreement between the mafia and politicians who, through the mafia, secured electoral consent and election to parliament, while the mafia obtained the management of tax collection and protection for the exercise of their criminal activity.

The mobsters, who were in a position to forcefully impose their will on the popular strata, soon became authoritarian procurers of votes. This allowed them to control the municipal administrations and to become the electors of the national deputies elected from the Sicilian districts.

In this way the mafia – which established ties of “political friendship” with important government politicians – had the power to influence the finances of the municipalities and the police forces, the laws and economic measures, increasing its power over every sector and every aspect of social life.

All these facts allowed the mafia to penetrate the institutions and further legitimized itself in the eyes of the population, while at the economic level it enriched and strengthened its position.

The transformations of the mafia in the 20th century

At the beginning of the 20th century, the mafia was prosperous and well organized in almost all the provinces of Sicily. It completely controlled some economic sectors (large landed estates, markets, mills, the port of Palermo, sulfur mines, etc.), while was carrying out thefts and kidnappings for extortion.

While remaining the organization of the emerging rural stratum, the mafia also became the organization of a part of the urban bourgeoisie, and began to have very important ties within the political system and with the bankers.

In this period, the mafia became a hierarchical and secret organization, structured on “families” and at the territorial level on “gangs”, systematically financing itself through “protection money”.

During the fascist period, Mussolini, after enjoying the support of the mafia and obtaining from it numerous local leaders useful for safeguarding order and maintaining the privileged positions shaken by the struggles of the peasants, fought the mafia by developing a repressive campaign against them. The disappearance of the mafia from the public scene was the result of the extension of the fascist system of organization of the masses, which was incompatible with the tradition of the system of interests of old Sicily. But the fascist campaign against the mafia was limited to countering the lowest levels of the phenomenon, without hitting the mafia leaders and the highest levels of connections between the mafia and the fascist institutions.

The mafia, at the service of US imperialism, became part of the anticommunist bloc

During the Second World War, on the occasion of the Anglo-American landing in Sicily, the mafia received strong support from the US secret services (Office of Strategic Services) and from the

U.S. gangsters of Sicilian origin who favored the reconstruction and re-organization of the *Cosa Nostra* (*Our Thing*, as the mafia was named by the Yankee gangsters).

Therefore, the mafia quickly regained control of the territory, with the support and legitimacy of the U.S. authorities, who were satisfied to find authoritative interlocutors capable of controlling the population.

U.S. imperialism, through its military and civilian structures, strategically directed and managed the mafia, using its strength in the “secret war” against the communists, the working class and the landless peasants, and to maintain power in Sicily, a strategic island for the control of the Mediterranean and North Africa.

Therefore, from the second post-war period the mafia was firmly integrated into the bloc of anti-communist forces which included the legal and illegal state apparatuses, the Christian Democrat party and other reactionary parties, the Freemasons, the fascists, industrialists and bankers, the leaders of the collaborationist unions, the Vatican and reactionary priests.

There has been a continuous interconnection between the mafia structure and the operational units created under U.S./NATO command. These links were strengthened by the U.S. gangsters who had returned to Italy (such as Lucky Luciano, who established the ruling mafia “Dome” and made the merger between the U.S. and Italian mafia possible).

The mafia in the U.S. had a strong sense of belonging (only people of Sicilian origin could be members) and was closely linked to the mafia bosses who remained in Sicily, which organized the expatriation of workers to the United States. In a few years, the U.S. bosses reorganized the mafia activities towards drug trafficking, which was much more profitable.

Thanks to the support, coverage and protection provided by US imperialism, which has always placed Sicily at the top level in its strategy, the mafia asserted its power even more in the island.

With the victorious anti-fascist Resistance and the end of the war, when movement of the peasants’ struggle advanced with the occupation of the land of the large landowners, under the leadership of the peasant trade unionists and the militants of the Communist Party, the mafia took terrorist action against the movement.

The mafia, with US help and the cover of the Italian state, organized the repression of this movement, with dozens of murders of trade unionists and political militants, armed attacks on trade unions and left-wing parties, widespread intimidation and violence.

The best-known episode was the massacre of Portella della Ginestra, which took place on May 1, 1947, when Salvatore Giuliano's mafia gang opened fire on peasants, causing eleven deaths and dozens of wounded. It was the "mother of all massacres" that bloodied the Italian Republic in the decades of the "strategy of tension". The involvement of the mafia in the 1974 fascist coup attempt is also well known.

At the political level, the mafia, after having supported the Sicilian separatist movement (which wanted to transform the island into a US state), from the 1948 elections on found its main political reference point in the Christian Democrat party.

This party, the linchpin of every government for about half a century, accepted mafia votes, useful in the fight against communism, and guaranteed to the mafia representatives direct access to local and central institutions, to the parliament and government, in order to obtain favorable policies for the mafia, promises and commitments, favors and protections, which the mafia families enforced with a long series of crimes.

The mafia soon understood that the agrarian bourgeoisie alone could not curb the advance of the workers' and peasants' movement, so it decided to enter the political sphere, strengthening its positions and its influence within the Christian Democrat party, as a force of political power, securing great advantages for itself and building a large network of relationships.

In this way, where it was dominant force, the mafia managed to create the electoral unity of the bourgeois factions, supporting candidates that it trusted and preventing the election of its opponents; meanwhile the Christian Democrat party became the "business committee" of the mafia. Through this dominant party, complicity reached the whole state apparatus and all the public resources.

Among the major representatives of this party in collusion with the mafia we remember: Vito Ciancimino, for years councilor for public works in the municipality of Palermo; Salvo Lima, mayor of Palermo, assassinated in 1992 because he failed to mitigate the sentences of the maxi-trial against the mafia; Giulio Andreotti, a leading figure in Italian politics, subjected to trial for mafia association.

From the rural to the urban mafia....

In the 1950s and '60s, there was an expansion of state intervention in the economy. This resulted in the creation of state-owned enterprises and the launching of public works programs, opening up new sectors of development and profit the mafia: construction, wholesale markets and public procurement, export of wine, control of water resources, transport and reclamation agencies, recruitment in local and regional authorities, private security, the credit sector, etc.

In particular, the construction companies controlled by the mafia made million dollars deals thanks to their relations with the political leaders of the Christian Democrat party, who guaranteed public procurement, construction licenses, exoneration for construction abuse, etc.

Even the chemical, naval and electronic companies did not hesitate to use mafia services, especially in the field of subcontracting.

In all these areas the mafia presented itself in the traditional guise of protector, imposing bribes on the entrepreneurs and then ending up managing the economic initiatives, relying on its own strength to discourage competition and grab public and private funding.

If before the core issue of mafia power was the possession of land, now the control of money became decisive and its activities developed especially in Palermo, capital of the Sicilian Region, plundered by the mafia.

With the beginning of the 1960s, especially in Palermo, a war began between the mafia gangs, with killings in broad daylight and in the center of the town, explosions of car bombs, massacres of police. The conflict led to the institution of the first “Commission of



inquiry into the phenomenon of the mafia in Sicily". Despite the intention of shedding light on the mafia and its relations with politics, it ended without providing any concrete indications on the basis of which it could be fought.

For its part, the Catholic Church claimed that the mafia was an "invention of the communists", thus perpetuating the alliance against the common enemy.

.... to the financial mafia

During the 1970s, the mafia further expanded its sectors of intervention: first cigarette smuggling and then international drug trafficking. The mafia thus made a qualitative leap: thanks to the huge capital earned in this trafficking the new generation of the mafia is now a business bourgeoisie, rooted in the real estate sector, construction, public works and finance.

At the same time, the mafia grew at the national level and opened up international trade (it established relations with other criminal organizations: the Russian, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese mafia, the South American narco-traffickers), taking a leading position in drug trafficking, ensuring an efficient network of drug connections and transport.

During the 1970s and '80s drug trafficking intensified, heroin refineries were established in Sicily in order to export drugs to the United States. Sicily became the greatest center of import-export of drugs on the global level, from the Middle East to Europe, from South America to the United States (to send drugs to the US the mafia utilized the NATO base at Sigonella).

The clandestine organization of the mafia, its practice of reactionary violence and intimidation, its links with mafia families in the United States, were important advantages in this trafficking, which rapidly increased its financial power and aggressiveness.

Organization, internal conflicts and conflicts with the State

While the accumulation of illegal capital growing exponentially, the mafia expanded its activities in all sectors of the economy, establishing links with Italian and Swiss banks, financial companies and "white collar" areas to manage the laundering of money derived from international drug trafficking. It began to use tax havens.

On the national level, the *'ndrangheta* in Calabria, the *Camorra* in Campania and the *Sacra Corona Unita* in Puglia developed as

separate criminal organizations, while the *Cosa Nostra* maintained the hegemony of the Italian mafia.

The huge influx of capital imposes the need for mafia families to create a more centralized and operational organization.

This was achieved through the grouping of “men of honor” (recruited with initiation rites in which sacred images were used) into “families” controlled by the “head of the family”. Three or four territorially close “families” constituted a “district” directed by a “district leader”. The “districts” respond to “provincial and regional commissions”. At the head of the mafia there was the so-called “Dome” or “Commission”, presided over by a boss recognized as the “first among equals”. The organizational structure of the *Cosa Nostra* is pyramidal, hierarchical, stratified at different levels and articulated at the base, with rules for recruitment, characterized by secrecy, silence and life-long loyalty, respect for the gang masters. The mafia, while operating in various Italian regions and in the world and able to establish extensive “network” relationships, remains firmly rooted in the territory of origin. It has at its disposal a vast military arsenal.

With the development of its economic activity, internal conflicts within the mafia also increased, between the new and old mafia, between families for the control of territory and criminal trafficking. In the early 1980s a bloodier mafia war than the previous ones broke out, in which the mafia from Corleone, in the province of Palermo, clashed with other families, exterminating their opponents (the defeated families took refuge in the US under protection of the Gambino family). Dozens of police, judges, journalists and politicians were killed or threatened in the years 1978-1993.

The bourgeois state, challenged, was then forced to react, so the governments put the struggle against the mafia back on their agenda, limiting its freedom of action or at least its excessive manifestations for some time.

In 1992 came the reaction of the mafia, with the massacres of Capaci and Palermo, in which two judges, Falcone and Borsellino, were killed who had inquiring about money laundering and the links between the mafia and the State and between the mafia and Gladio (a NATO “Stay Behind” paramilitary organization created to fight communism). In 1992-93 the mafia violence spread to the whole national territory, with the massacres of Florence and Milan and other terrorist actions.

Thus opened a secret negotiation between senior representatives of the institutions and the leaders of the mafia, which ended with a “pact”: the mafia stopped its bombings; in exchange, the State softened its struggle against the mafia and withdrew its harsh prison for the mobsters.

Meanwhile, the crisis of the Christian Democrat party in the early 1990s forced the mafia to look for new political reference points, such as Forza Italia (Berlusconi’s party, whose economic and political rise was favored by huge mafia funding, later largely returned), which was voted for massively in Sicily due to the mobilization of the *Cosa Nostra*.

In recent years, the attention of the mafia has shifted towards the populist and reactionary parties (Five Star Movement, Northern League, Fratelli d’Italia [Brothers of Italy]); different local exponents of these parties do not hesitate to turn to the mafia to acquire a large mass of votes, which later become bargaining chips and conditioning tools of the political choices.

The mafia has never shown a particular ideological interest in bourgeois politics and has no interest in taking political power. In the political sphere, its function is to guarantee electoral consent to the parties and associations that can favor and maintain its economic activities, guarantee favorable conditions for the mafia bosses in prison and fugitives, obtain special laws, public contracts, release from prison, removal of trouble some judges and police, etc.

The *Cosa Nostra* carries out politics and influences national policy with its violent means, especially for its own exclusive interests, which find an evident convergence with the interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole, which aim to block any development in a revolutionary and socialist sense.

From the middle of the 1990s to today, the mafia has adopted a low-profile strategy: it acts quietly and invisibly to avoid investigations and clashes, seeking complicity with the State and not openly challenging it, preferring corruption to massacres. During 2020, 271 mafia murders were recorded (for example, in 1991 there were 1916 victims). This change of strategy includes agreements with other mafias to develop some criminal activities (for example, with the Nigerian, Eastern or Mexican mafia) while the overall management of the “business” remains in the hands of the Italian mafia.

At the same time, it continues to increase its management capacity, to systematically expand its activities in the economic and

financial sectors favored by neoliberalism and globalization, which has exponentially expanded the possibility of combining legal and illegal activities all over the world.

It should be noted that in recent years the relationship between the Sicilian and the U.S. *Cosa Nostra* has been strengthened, encouraging the return of the new generations of families who fled to the US in the 1980s and 90s. The Calabrian *'ndrangheta* has instead assumed a leading role in drug trafficking, also settling in other countries (Germany, Belgium, Holland, Colombia, Uruguay, Canada, Australia), implementing a strategy of “delocalization”, while remaining highly centralized and anchored to its families of origin.

Mafia accumulation and management of capital

From the Marxist analysis of the mafia phenomenon, it is clear that the connection of the mafia criminal system and the bourgeois legal system, of its legal and illegal activities, is inseparable; both are subject to the same capitalist economic laws: that of accumulation and obtaining the maximum profit.

Marx, recalling that “*capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt,*” quotes the *Quarterly Reviewer*: “*Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent. will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent. Certain will produce eagerness; 50 percent., positive audacity; 100 per cent. will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent., and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged.*” (K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I.)

The mafia is an organization for the rapid accumulation of capital by any means. For their part, the “legal” capitalists accept the presence of the mafia, request it, use it for their activities, as well as for the recruitment and control of the labor-force.

The use of criminal methods, intimidation, murders, and all the possibilities that derive from an existence not conditioned by the laws and rules of “legal competition”, guaranteed by the tolerance and complicity of the state authorities, in the course of time have allowed the mafia to play a growing economic role.

Thus, starting from the traditional activities of controlling the trafficking of cigarettes and drugs (today especially cocaine), from the practice of usury (loan capital at high rates) to the public works

racket, the mafia has moved on to other sectors: direct control of companies; illegal waste dumping, seriously polluting the soil, water, etc.; intensive exploitation of immigrant workers employed in the countryside; the control of the food supply chain, investments in the real estate sector; creation of enterprises in the construction sector; securing markets through threats and racketeering.

Currently the annual revenue of the Italian mafias is estimated at about 200 billion euros, equal to about 10% of the Italian GDP. The profits are about 100 billion euros per year.

The revenue of the mafia economic activities indicates that there is a mafia capital, whose average rate of profit and rate of accumulation exceed those of other capitals.

Since only a part of this capital can be spent on luxury consumption, the problem of money laundering and the reinvestment of profits is a decisive problem for the mafia. Therefore, the mafia created its “finance department”, whose role is primarily to “launder” money in existing financial circuits, place and reinvest it in legal or non-legal activities.

Mafia economic activities

The dynamics of mafia capitalist accumulation can be described in four basic aspects:

1. formation of financial resources through multiple criminal activities;
2. use of these resources in the production of new illegal activities;
3. money “laundering” and cleaning up of capital (through financial intermediaries, cover companies, offshore countries, life insurance policies, credit and money transfers, bit-coins, rechargeable credit cards, use of casinos, real estate trade, etc.);
4. reinvestment of the cleaned-up mass of capital into the legal circuits of the economy and finance.

It is a process that, realizing its accumulation from traditionally illegal activities, inserts itself into the legal economic system to reinvest its profits, often influencing its internal dynamics.

The sectors in which the mafia operates are the following: usury; extortion racket; trafficking in hard and soft drugs; arms trafficking; counterfeiting; smuggling of cigarettes, tobacco and fuel; smuggling of migrants and refugees; gambling and betting; prostitution; kidnappings; organ trafficking; thefts and robberies; fishing; the

construction sector (construction sites, purchases of materials, public contracts, labor-force recruitment, protection services, etc.); fruit and vegetable markets; manufacture and export of clothing; wholesale and retail trade; hotels, pizzerias, bars and restaurants; rigged contracts and supplies; agricultural fraud to the detriment of the EU; illegal building; illegal disposal of millions of tons of industrial waste; health services (emergency funds, funeral services, face masks, disinfectants, etc.) and other services.

Let us go into the details of some sectors of activity.

Among the activities with the highest revenue for the mafia is usury: during the economic crisis of 2009, hundreds of thousands of commercial activities, hotels and public establishments were forced to close by the crisis in the sector: of these, about 40% were condemned by heavy debt and usury.

To better understand the nature of the phenomenon, it should be borne in mind that the interest requested by loan sharks is around 10% per month.

The phenomenon of *pizzo*, or the demand for a sum of money paid continuously by the merchants or entrepreneurs to the criminal associations in order to ensure their own safety or that of their businesses, it is extremely widespread in the areas where the mafia is present, as well as in the northern region of the country.

For some cities there is a price list for the *pizzo*: in Palermo for a shop from 200 to 500 euros per month is demanded, while in Naples 100 or 200 euros are enough; for a shop in the city center, the demand varies from 500 to 1,000 euros per month in Naples and from 750 to 1,000 euros in Palermo. For a supermarket, from 3,000 to 5,000 euros per month are demanded and for a construction site even 10,000 euros per month.

Combined with the phenomenon of *pizzo* there are the commercial enterprises owned directly by the mafia, in order to reinvest the profits deriving from illegal activities.

Agriculture, the fruit and vegetable markets, are an area of investment for the mafia organizations that control the entire food supply chain, from agricultural production to the arrival of products in the harbors, from wholesale markets to large distribution, from packaging to marketing of the goods.

In all stages of the food supply chain, the mafia acts influencing the setting of prices, the quality of the products, and the labor-force market. The entire food market is conditioned by organized crime;

this phenomenon is particularly relevant in Campania, where the *camorra* imposes its products: milk, coffee, mozzarella, bread, ice cream. In Naples, the daily production of bread is ensured by at least 2,500 illegal bakeries. Also fishing, especially fine fish and wholesale markets, is under mafia control.

Many tourist activities in the South are owned by the mafia, while many hoteliers and the owners of tourist villages are forced to pay the *pizzo*.

Counterfeiting and smuggling are other mafia activities whose distinctive feature is to support the informal and underground economies, on which the mafia does not pay taxes or contributions. They also manage the exploitation of many immigrant workers used for sales, who are hired and fired through an illegal work racket.

Cigarette smuggling, which seemed to have almost disappeared in the late 1990s, has regained vigor in the last five years. Criminal organizations existing in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Tunisia, in agreement with the mafia, bring tons of tobacco and cigarettes legally purchased on local markets to Italy; the difference with Italian prices is considerable and the profit is very high. Recently an illegal trade in counterfeit cigarettes imported from China was discovered; in this case the packets of cigarettes were complete with the stamp of the state monopoly. The clandestine production of cigarettes in Italy is largely carried out with illegally imported tobacco.

The mafia in the recent economic crises

The mafia, having large loan capital at its disposal, with high interest rates, took advantage of the economic crisis of 2009 as well as the current crisis related to the pandemic to expand its business in the circuits of the capitalist economy and in the apparatus of the public administration.

In this period some phenomena are emphasized.

The first is the increase in the so-called “participatory collusion”, which has involved the largest Italian companies, especially those engaged in public works. These monopolies, especially in the construction sector, make agreements with the mafia in the areas where they operate, granting contracts and paying a kind of “insurance” to act undisturbed.

The second is the attitude of the mafias towards small and medium-sized capitalist companies in difficulty: the mafia, having large

money-capital, proposes itself as a form of “social welfare” alternative to the institutions and banks that do not provide credit; once the owners accept the “help” the mafia adopts the traditional violent actions aimed at usury or engulf the same economic activities (sometimes leaving the former owners in their place, transformed into employees of the mafia, other times through figureheads).

The same “welfare” activity is carried out among unemployed workers, who are recruited by the mafia with daily “bonuses” of a few tens of euros.

The third is the increase of the ability of the mafia to infiltrate public administration, where corruption is rampant, especially in the awarding of contracts and in the mafia’s political electoral exchange, which has multiplied.

Currently, the attention of the mafia is shifting towards the funds of the Next Generation EU which represent a great opportunity of enrichment for organized crime; in the south of the country the possibility of mafia infiltration in large works is favored by the procedures of simplification and reduction of controls adopted by the Draghi government.

Conclusions

The mafia is not an “anachronistic” phenomenon, but a current phenomenon in continuous transformation, adapting to changes and internal selection, an integral part of the capitalist-imperialist economic-financial and political system.

The mafia system is functional to monopoly capitalism characterized by parasitism and decay; it is a moribund system in which immense wealth is concentrated at one pole of bourgeois society and increases the luxury, parasitism, waste and idleness of the exploiting classes, while at the other pole of society the yoke of exploitation, unemployment and misery are intensified.

The growing involvement of the mafia, its ability to penetrate the economy and increase its financial power are a manifestation of the strengthening of the parasitic character of capitalist property and the expansion of the incomes of the exploiting classes.

For more than thirty years, the globalization of financial exchanges, the creation of tax havens and the abolition of controls on the movement of capital have helped mafia capital to merge into the mass of money that circulates every day in the financial institutions

of the planet, without being possible to distinguish dirty from clean money.

In this context, the mafia has taken on the characteristics of a financial holding company that operates according to the criteria of “business diversification” and maximization of profits, constantly trying to expand its range of action, without giving up the criminal aspect while enjoying complicity at all levels of the political and economic system.

Today the mafia, in addition to the traditional control of territory, is moving toward “market management”. To carry out this activity it also uses the “clean face” of entrepreneurs and freelancers who, through their relationship with the mafia, see the possibility of overcoming their economic difficulties, or maximizing profits, offering in exchange services to recycle and re-use the mafia’s liquid capital.

Through these people, the mafia presents itself to the public administration in order to bribe its officials, adopting a strategy of camouflage in order not to raise social alarm.

There is a profound interpenetration of the mafia with the State and the capitalist economy at national and international level, of illegal and “legal” profits, which join and merge into the channels of the financial system.

Capitalism is the society of organized crime. In this society, where the law of profit acts viciously, crime is the most lucrative business. Large criminal associations have turned into powerful *holding* companies that act in rivalry and collaboration with the monopolies, which systematically trample on bourgeois legality to achieve their goals.

The mafia pursues the same basic purpose of the capitalist monopolies: obtaining maximum profit using every technique and every means, legal or not.

Crime and criminal methods are not only the product of the social relations based on exploitation, but are also fueled by them. The bourgeoisie keeps them alive as weapons to achieve its objectives against the working class and for the enrichment of the top levels of society.

The bourgeoisie does not want the defeat of the mafia, but lives in symbiosis and rivalry with it. It needs the mafia as a means of accumulating and injecting money-capital into the economic circuits, as an agency that provides services at extremely competitive costs, as an instrument at the service of the reactionary forces. At the same time, the bourgeoisie seeks to stem the activity of the mafia because

it alters the mechanism of competition and re-distribution of profits between capitalist companies and deepens the crisis of authority and the credibility of the ruling class.

Generations of communist militants, of revolutionaries, of all those who reject a society that offers them a future as unemployed or slavery in the service of the mafia, have fought the mafia, paying a very high price.

In honoring these brave militants and popular fighters, in supporting the workers, young people and women who reject the mafia brutality and its sub-culture, who denounce the ties between the State and the mafia, who demand truth and justice for the victims of the mafia, we affirm that to defeat the mafia there is only one means: the social revolution that abolishes the capitalist-imperialist system.

The ruling class spreads pessimism about the mafia; it wants us to believe that it has an eternal character, that organized crime is inevitable and cannot be eliminated from society. These ideas serve to hide the social causes of the mafia, to spread resignation, fatalism and fear, to deprive workers and peoples of any prospect of change.

The mafia is not invincible. The revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, leading its allies, can defeat and eliminate mafia crime together with the system that produces it as phenomenon necessary for its existence. Only a society capable of ensuring work, housing, social services, a dignified retirement, eliminating unemployment and poverty, implementing a profound and radical economic, social, political, cultural and moral transformation will be able to relegate the mafia to the museum of the horrors of a society based on the exploitation of one human being by another.

July 2021

Some Elements of the International Situation and the Economic Crisis

Not many years have passed since the outbreak of the last economic crisis (2019-2020) and signs of the outbreak of a new one (2021) are already present. We had barely emerged weakly from the one of 2007-2008, and, according to studies by official organizations of imperialism, in China what could be the beginning of a new economic crisis was recently detected in one of the largest monopolies in the world, dedicated mostly to the real estate sector.

There was an attempt to try to hide the crisis of 2019-2020 and to justify it by the pandemic; it represented a new spur to capitalist profits and a new and strong blow to the working masses. The financial oligarchy, very skillfully using the pandemic, made us pay more than the costs of this, focusing the problem as if the origin of the crisis were the SARS-Cov-2. It was preparing the ground for the prompt recovery of their profits by sacrificing the lives, labor, wages and gains of the proletarians of the world. They very quickly found themselves saving their capital by throwing the workers out and rushing to punctually apply the old and effective forms of the extraction of surplus value: the relative and absolute, as the only guarantee of preventing the fall of the rate of profit and restarting a new cycle of capital accumulation. That is why in 2021 the world economy had a slight recovery with a small growth during the three quarters of the year, but at the end it was “surprised” by what is happening in China with Evergrande.

According to OECD data, in 2020 the vast majority of economies had negative GDP, while China and Turkey barely grew 2.3% and 1.8% respectively, while others fell. Russia: -2.5%, USA: -3.4%, Germany: -4.9%, India: -7.3% and France: -8.0%, all had a negative balance. Worldwide GDP fell -3.4%, according to the same sources.

Already for 2021 the same OECD presents the following data for the same countries: Russia: 2.7%, USA: 6.0%, Germany: 2.9%, India: 9.7%, France: 6.3%. China: 8.5% and Turkey: 8.4%. and according to its projections for 2022, the growth range will be between 2.1% and 7.9%; of those indicated, only China will reach about 6%, the others will reach just over 4%.

In another economic area, according to the OECD's industrial production index, in 2019, the industry barely grew 0.9%, in 2020 reaching 4.2%. Although the growth was positive, the trend from 2019 to 2020 was one of declining industrial activity. This shows that although capitalism breathes it does so with difficulty, because in addition to its tricks such as speculation, now using cryptocurrencies, it still has subjected the working class to the wage exploitation, making it produce absolute and relative surplus value, the real basis of its profits and therefore of its economic growth.

The recent crises have shortened their period of appearance, and the proximity of the emergence of a new crisis may occur in the short term. This is first because the tendency of the rate of profit to decline is maintained and because of what happens it may end up as in China with the monopoly Evergrande; this is in technical bankruptcy due to insolvency and inability to pay its debt commitments. According to all official and independent versions, the monopoly borrowed exorbitantly to increase and obtain easy profits, and today this exceeds its ability to pay. However, the Chinese imperialist state is in a position to save it, placing the burden on the proletariat of its country and the world. This Chinese scenario, which is becoming global because of the interdependence of the world economy, is created by the set of contradictions of the capitalist-imperialist system due to its hegemonic disputes over the planet.

All the imperialist powers, faced with this scenario of increasingly recurrent crises, did not do anything to change the model of neoliberal accumulation, if anything they have called it a reset. Rather on this basis of state monopoly capitalism it is continuing with the pattern of accumulation and centralization of capital that has been devastating the planet for more than three decades, to which we must add when state capitalism appeared.

Faced with this scenario of a new economic crisis, the forces of capitalism are moving in alliances, global and regional. These are reinforced or broken for the investment of capital, credits or loans, according to the interests of the financial oligarchy.

Since Biden became president of the United States, the oligarchs of that country have been adjusting their economic policy without basically modifying it; for example: they invaded, devastated and left Afghanistan – leaving the Taliban in the administration of that country – to consolidate themselves throughout the region, where their imperialist rivals are advancing and gaining ground. They have

difficulties with Germany and France, because Germany signed gas agreements with Russia, and they displaced France from its business with arms sales with Australia.

Meanwhile, China's alliance with Russia continues to confront the U.S. and its allies. Chinese imperialism, in the celebration of the centenary of the "Communist" Party, reaffirmed its current militarist leadership with Xi Jinping, continuing its colonialist policy reinforced by its Silk Road, which continues its course of violating the zones of influence mainly of the United States. The Russian imperialists, with their recent electoral victory, are preparing to keep Putin in government until 2036, in order to deepen their annexationist and colonial policy towards large markets or zones of influence.

The disputes among the imperialist powers have created military tensions in several regions, where NATO is pushing to halt the Russian and Chinese advance or, where both together or each separately are mobilizing militarily to contain the U.S. offensive.

The ongoing imperialist struggles are taking place in every country of the world and are becoming more acute and complex, politically, economically and militarily; Libya, Syria, Iraq, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Crimea, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Peru, Haiti, Cuba, the Sahrawi Republic, Palestine, north Korea, etc., etc. In these countries they have managed to divide and hold back the revolutionary movement and destroy some nations now circumscribed by the occupation of the imperialist powers, such as Libya and Syria.



In addition to the above, sanctions, economic blockades, hard or soft coups, military interventions, imposition of authorities through controlled elections, strengthening of paramilitarism to attack the movement, etc. are continuing. Chaos, violence, migration or mass displacement of people, plunder, hunger and destruction of the national resources continue to be the hallmark of the system and continue to worsen.

In these countries, as in the rest of the world, the working masses continue to rebel and mobilize for our most elementary demands and our historical objectives; some popular movements have achieved important victories and experiences, but they do not have the continuity and breadth to advance to a break with the regime. Ecuador, Colombia and Chile are countries that show the potential and capacity of the masses to advance beyond the immediate and where Marxist-Leninists are present to develop the revolutionary, socialist and communist perspective, where the masses continue to assume our role as the makers of history.

The tendency towards fascism continues and seeks to advance among the very masses who have been struck a blow by capitalism; the parliamentary advances of fascist groups, the anti-communist campaigns, state terrorism and paramilitarism (organized crime) are developing where revolutionary and communist ideas and organization are weaker; holding back their advance is a responsibility of the Marxist-Leninists.

That is why our tasks in the next period must continue to be the building of new Marxist-Leninist parties and the strengthening of the existing ones, such as those of the ICMLPO; to fight revisionism and opportunism which continue to harm the process of emancipation of the masses; to take the initiative in action in the face of the offensive of the capitalists; to energize and deepen with our press, propaganda and agitation, influencing and rooting us in the working masses to raise their levels of struggle and organization, with the slogans:

Let the rich pay for the crisis!

For life, health, bread, peace and work!

Now is the time for the proletarian revolution!

Strengthen the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggle and build its worldwide front.

*Member of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist
Parties and Organizations
September 2021*

The Oppression of Women and Movements for the Emancipation of Women in South Asia

Women of South Asia, in countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives, still face immense discrimination, especially compared to the women of developed countries. At the same time, we should recognize that women have struggled to secure important rights and have entered all walks of life in South Asia. Some rights like the right to education may be now widely enforced, but many of these rights are still the privilege of the upper strata of society. In order to understand the dynamics of women's struggle for their rights and their continued subjection we need to study the history of women in the subcontinent. However, historians have been prejudiced and have seldom highlighted the role and plight of women in the history of South Asia. Few historians, like Dr. Mukarakh Ali and Dr. Uma Chakravarty among others, have focused on women and their work has shed immense light on the issue.

Generally, historians assume that the position of women has remained unchanged over time and that women were kept subordinate to men in much the same manner by religious and social sanctions and that any attempt to overcome these was seen as a disruption of social institutions and revolt. Also, most historians talk of India or South Asia as one homogenous region. It should be kept in mind that a very diverse range of societies exists in different parts of the subcontinent and it is futile to make generalized statements on 'women of Ancient or medieval India'. Also gender position vary between social classes and castes in the same region.

Some historians are also of the view that women had a high status and enjoyed equal status with men in the so-called Vedic period (1500 BCE to 500 BCE). However, historians studying the Vedic texts show that women had a marginal presence in public and religious life and the practice of enslaving women during wars greatly undermined the position of women. A large number of women faced a life of slavery without any formal rights and subjected to multiple exploitation. As urbanization and state formation emerged in the early historic period (500 BCE to 100CE), patriarchy took root in combination with the emerging caste system, which together

contributed to new forms of subjection of women enforcing caste endogamy and restrictions on the movement of women and their access to property rights or education. Divorce and remarriage were looked down upon and women were looked upon mainly as bearers of children for the men and their lineages. Women were not only oppressed within the family; especially the women of lower classes/castes were subject to material and sexual exploitation by the upper castes.

The Hindu lawbooks (dharmaśāstras) enjoined different forms of subjection of women including early marriage, denial of formal education, denial of agency in religious ceremonies and control over property of the family. A woman was expected to live under the supervision and guardianship of men all her life (father, husband, son, etc.). This did not prevent the prevalence of institutions like female slavery and prostitution. Ironically the prostitutes enjoyed the maximum freedom and access to formal education and even wealth. This was largely the characteristics of well-to-do social groups; we know little of the women of lower caste/classes including the slave women, except that they led a life of hardship and subordination to both men of the family and the upper castes.

Women enjoyed different kinds of rights in different religious traditions: if the Brahmanic tradition sought to keep them under tight patriarchal controls, alternative traditions like Buddhism and Jainism gave greater freedom to women and allowed them access to religious life even if subordinated to that of men. Women also appear to have held some property which they donated to Buddhist and Jaina religious institutions. These rights were not given to them but wrested by the women through hard struggles and negotiations.

Constant warfare in which women were specially targeted for rape and enslavement during the early medieval and medieval times (500CE to 1700 CE) created very insecure conditions for women. In a caste-based society where the 'purity' of birth was emphasized, such insecurity for women encouraged practices like *sati* (widow burning) and *jauhar* (collective burning of women prior to a king's defeat in battle) among elite classes. Correspondingly women of castes considered 'Untouchable' were subjected to much exploitation and sexual abuse by upper-caste men. In medieval times in which Persianate-Islamic cultural influences gained political dominance, we find the idea of purdah or seclusion and veiling of women becoming prominent cultural markers of elite ethos. While Islamic families insisted on education of girls also, this was held in carefully

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segregated schools or even within families and mostly confined to early literacy. Even amidst all these heaping of disabilities on women in general, many women rose to prominence in different fields, political, spiritual, intellectual and economic.

Colonialism 1750CE to 1947 CE was built upon these very casteist, patriarchal and religious institutions without undermining them significantly. However, it fostered an ideology which gave greater freedom to women and greater equality of rights and also sought to suppress blatantly anti women customs like sati, child marriage, rejection of widow remarriage and denial of education to girls. The colonial state introduced formal schools for girls and for the first time, women could access education even up to post graduate levels and could pursue professional careers. The colonial state sought to suppress institutions like sati and child marriage, but enforced them in a very half-hearted manner so that they continue to flourish well into our own times.

The limited freedom and education allowed by the British colonial state enabled a very large number of women not only to take part in the anti-colonial national movement, revolutionary movements and peasant and tribal struggles, but also assume leadership roles in them. Needless to say these radical women had to face immense social resistance and prejudice and despite this they fought for the rights of women (right to education, property, employment, freedom of movement and political participation) and against restrictive and discriminatory social practices like sati, child marriage, purdah, polygamy, and exclusion from religious rituals.

In reviewing the post-1947 position of women in South Asia we need to keep in mind this long history of caste-patriarchal subjection and denial of equality and rights and the simultaneous persistence of



a large number of women and even some men in pursuing progressive change.

Among the persisting problems is the demographic imbalance between males and females in the entire South Asia with the notable exception of Nepal and Sri Lanka. In the rest of South Asia, the number of males far outnumber the females. The following table will give us an indication of the problem:

Sex Ratio (Male : Female) in South Asia 2021	
Country	Percentage Male : Female
Afghanistan	105.3
Bangladesh	102.1
Bhutan	113.7
India	108.1
Nepal	85.4
Pakistan	106.0
Sri Lanka	91.9

The preference for male children, female feticide and infanticide, discrimination against girls in access to nutrition and health services explain such a stark gender imbalance in the population. If the sex ratio is a gross reminder of the discrimination faced by women in South Asia, other aspects of social life illustrate the problem too.

One such is child marriage. The practice of early marriage is rampant even though there are legal sanctions against it. According to a United Nations report, “one in five girls in South Asia is married off before the age of 15.” Early marriage not only indicates lack of freedom in choice of marriage partners, but in the case of girls, closure of educational and career opportunities and being forced into early child bearing. In India where the caste system prevails marriage is determined by the caste status; “love marriage” is looked down upon and inter-caste marriage especially involving dalits (castes considered untouchable) often end in the ‘honour killing’ of the bride and the groom.

Similar ‘honour’ killings happen in Pakistan under the name of Karokari. If a girl falls in love with or meets a boy without the consent of her parents, or if she gets married according to the law, then the boy and the boy’s family, their tribe and the influential landlords and elders of the area all call a “panchayat” and order the killing of both the girl and the boy and this is an act of murder. The girl’s family has to be beheaded. The girl’s brother, father or any other close relative declares the girl to be killed in public and the boy is treated in

the same way. If they run away, they are found and brought back to the area and killed. First of all, no report of such incidents is lodged with the police. No eyewitness to the events comes to light. Such cases are suppressed in the course of time. They are also called honour killings.

The rising religious fundamentalism in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan has targeted women in particular, forcing retrogressive social practices like child marriage, dowry (giving expensive 'gifts' by the bride's parents to the parents of the groom as part of the marriage), food, dress and personal demeanour, restrictions in moving about in public spaces, and discrimination in education, etc.

Religious fundamentalism and the growing intolerance of minorities has resulted in distinct pressure on women. Attempts to forcibly abduct girls of minority communities and marrying them off to majority community boys has become a form of conversion. Even though legal provisions exist to protect the rights of minorities and even if courts of law favour the minorities, these decisions do not get implemented on the ground. This is true of Hindu and Christian minorities in Pakistan and of Muslim and Christian minorities in India, especially when the minorities happen to be from poor social backgrounds.

If religious fundamentalism is pushing women to accept premodern social norms, the modern market driven economy is commodifying women and making the display of the female body an advertising marketing strategy. The combined effect of reinforcing patriarchy and the commodification of women in media has resulted in an unprecedented increase in violence against women, especially sexual violence like rape. This problem is fast emerging as a major social concern in countries like India.

The women of Pakistan, living in less developed regions dominated by tribal and feudal patriarchy, face severe problems. It has been estimated that they account for as much as 40% of Pakistan. For example, in many regions tribes and villages practice 'vani', a practice which allows communities or villages to hand over young girls as compensation for supposed damages caused by the men of one community or village. These girls are virtually like slaves and not even allowed to keep in touch with their natal families. Such practices continue despite them being banned by law.

Similarly, in the case of women's education in most South Asian countries including India and Pakistan, there are practical restrictions

on girls' education. These countries lack the number of schools for girls especially in backward and remote areas and the distance from their homes to schools is miles and miles where these girls have to walk in the cold, heat, sun and rain. They do not have any transport facility and the schools that are built for these girls are from only first class to fifth class with one teacher in these schools who teaches these girls. Whenever that teacher gets sick, if they go on leave for any other reason, the process of continuing the education of these girls is cut off. There is still a centuries-old notion that girls need not be educated. They just have to do housework, work in the fields, get married and have children. Instead of enjoying the beautiful days of their childhood, these girls are busy working with their poor parents from their childhood.

The working women of South Asia are doubly oppressed, slaving at home to keep the family fed and clothed and nursed, and working in the fields and shops and streets for little or no payment as they are mostly engaged as unpaid workers in informal 'family' enterprises and farms.

Despite all such odds, women of South Asia have struggled side by side with the men, from the trade union front to poetry and literature. With the slogan "Maliki or Death", the women of Okara, Punjab, sacrificed their lives to protect their agricultural land and successfully defended their land. Women also revolted against the feudal lords of Sindh many times. Women health workers from all over Pakistan fought incredibly for their rights. Women teachers of schools, domestic workers, home-based workers and working women have managed to organize themselves and wage historic struggles. Anjuman-e-Matf-e-Niswan, All-Pakistan Women's Association, Democratic Women Association, All India Democratic Women's Association, etc.

Women's movements have taken various forms: the movement of upper-class women for advancing their interests have usually ignored the rights and concerns of the labouring women from peasant, working-class and middle-class backgrounds. In countries like Pakistan and India, for example, March 8th which was celebrated militantly as Working Women's Day was converted to 'Women's Day', which became a middle class and government sponsored event.

In the last few decades several NGOs (non-government organisations) claiming to work for women have sprung up. These are run by middle-class and upper-class women intervening in the work of

‘self-employed’ women who engage in household-based productive work (like tailoring, embroidery, food processing, cigarette rolling etc.) and seek effectively to divert the struggles of working women. These NGOs offer women access to markets and fair prices for their products but keep them away from collective political action. In countries like Bangladesh and India the so called ‘Self Help Groups (SHGs) and micro finance institutions have entangled women in debt cycles in the name of giving them access to cheap credit for their ‘small enterprises’. Women end up paying prohibitive rates of interests to the banks and act as mutual guarantors. Middle-class or elite women’s movements end up making women tools of the bourgeois advertisement industry and media. On the other hand, the trade unions and other mass organisations have also ignored the interests of women workers and women peasants. It has thus become imperative for such laboring women to form their own organizations and fight for their rights and interests. This is often seen with suspicion by trade unionists and political activists.

It is important to recognize that women workers need to organize and pursue their own demands but at the same time they have to become part of the larger revolutionary political struggles for social change. Until the current system is completely abolished and a new revolutionary and collective society is established, neither the problems of men nor the conditions for women can be solved. It is imperative that men and women take part in the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of society on the basis of equality.

Let us all work out our own strategy to deal with this whole new situation so that we can successfully carry forward the efforts to carry out a democratic and socialist revolution in all countries. This is the voice of the hour and the need of the hour.

Workers of the World Unite!
Long live democratic and socialist revolutions
Long live the unity of all Marxist-Leninist parties.

Mrs. Shamim Chaudhry
Secretary of Information of the Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz
(Pakistan Labour Front)

October 2021

All Workers in Serbia Must Rebel!

The longest workers' strike in the history of Serbia



**Revolutionary Alliance of Labour, Serbia
on a strike of workers of Fiat Plastic, April 2021**

The difficult economic situation in Serbia, low salaries, bringing in foreign companies, which present themselves as some kind of “investors” (to which the state gives enormously high subsidies, exempts them from taxes, social security contributions, gives free land, infrastructure, etc.) have led up to strikes and riots.

Fiat is one of the first companies to invest in Serbia, in the city of Kragujevac. That Italian company was present as a licensor for the production of cars in the period from the 1960s until the 2000s. The propaganda of all regimes in Serbia was aimed at showing the public how good foreign investments are as if they are saving the Serbian economy from collapse. All authorities in Serbia, from Slobodan Milosevic to Boris Tadic (whose cadres are still present in the government of Aleksandar Vucic to a certain extent), systematically destroyed the former socially-owned companies, declaring that the assets of those companies do not belong to “anybody”.

After the changes in 2000, the new government introduced liberal capitalism at the big door, presenting it as the only solution for

the destroyed economy. In the first ten years, from 2000 to the middle of the second decade of the 2000s, almost the entire property of socially-owned companies, both unsuccessful and successful, was systematically looted and destroyed.

The new regime in Serbia, which came to power in 2012, has pursued a neoliberal policy in the field of economy even more fiercely. Aleksandar Vučić pursued Friedman's neoliberalism even more zealously than his predecessors. Since there was nothing left to plunder, the regime started begging around the world and offering Serbia as a kind of "Mecca" for foreign capital.

The ruling elite began to announce that the huge number of unemployed began to decrease, due to the arrival of foreign capital. However, the truth is different. The number of unemployed is decreasing (if that is true at all) due to the mass exodus of the working-age population to the West, as well as the change in the methodology for determining the number of unemployed. One of the most famous examples of the failure of such an economic policy is the above-mentioned Fiat factory in Kragujevac.

Years ago, workers protested and went on strike over poor working conditions. The Revolutionary Alliance of Labour of Serbia monitored the strike of workers in that factory from this year and that is why we are sending some of the events in that factory during the protest.

The dissatisfaction of the workers of the Fiat factory started at the beginning of this year. Employees began one-hour warning strikes on January 12, but no agreement was reached with the employer in the ongoing negotiations. "Workers' Dictates" were among the first to write about the problems of the new collective agreement in Fiat Chrysler and Fiat Plastic, to which the 11th and 12th issues of our central organ were dedicated.

The general strike in the factory began on February 18, because the employer reduced the salaries of the workers this year and the employees demand that the compensation for paid leave be 65 percent instead of the current 60 percent of their salary. Colleagues in the FCA. Fiat Plastic workers receive salaries reduced by about 15,000 dinars. Since the beginning of the strike, the Revolutionary Alliance of Labour of Serbia has been providing unreserved support to the Fiat Plastic Strike Committee. The protests continued, so that during August, the operative of the Security and Information Agency of Serbia would call the president of the Fiat Plastic union by phone.

SERBIA – ALL WORKERS IN SERBIA MUST REBEL!

The president of the Fiat Plastic Strike Committee told the media that the operative of the Security and Information Agency of Serbia would call the president of the Fiat Plastic union by phone and inform him about the “conversation” to which the union leader would be invited. All this was done as a kind of pressure from the bourgeois government in Serbia, which, as always, is against the workers and their demands.

On September 21, a meeting of the Fiat Plastic Strike Committee was held in Kragujevac with a conciliator from the State Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labor Disputes. According to the representatives of the workers, at negotiations with the conciliator, they mostly talked about the legal aspects related to their strike demands, as well as the views of the Fiat management. The conciliator from the agency wanted to know what our “strike red line” was, that is, demands that the strikers would not give up in order to “reconcile” with the company’s management. The strikers and Zoran Miljković, the president of the Strike Committee, repeated, as they have done countless times so far, that the “condition of all conditions” is the return of production machines to the halls, as well as the return of the workers to work.

The conversation between the conciliator from the State Agency and the managers of Fiat was postponed due to the absence of Marcel Batalja, the director of finance of “Fiat”. After that, a trilateral meeting will be organized with the participation of both parties, the strikers and the management of Fiat, with the mediation of the conciliator. Negotiations must be concluded within the legal deadline of one month from their beginning.

Since February, the workers of Fiat Plastic have been on a general strike, well organized, in a solidary and friendly atmosphere, not subject to pressure, not giving up and becoming a GUIDE to the struggle of the working people of the entire country. The workers of Kragujevac have shown that the battle is not over, that the working class has not found itself surprised by the new capitalist offensive and that it knows how to fight. The new Red Banner fluttered through proletarian Kragujevac. On Saturday, April 24, the workers of Fiat Plastic, who have been on a general strike since February 18 this year, expressed their protest in front of the Kragujevac City Assembly, demonstrated high class awareness and said that they would fight to the end.

On this occasion, the importance of proletarian internationalism should also be emphasized, which played a vital role in the strike of

Fiat Plastic workers. The solidarity of the Italian COBAS unions in Fiat with the workers of Kragujevac resonated with the actions of our Alliance as well as our sister Italian Marxist-Leninist organization (Communist Platform), which forced the Italian monopolists to react and expressly send the factory management to Kragujevac.

The Revolutionary Alliance of Labour enthusiastically welcomes this performance of the workers of Kragujevac, who have shown that the class struggle of the proletariat is indestructible, that the workers are aware of their strength and historical mission, that the might of the working class lies in unity and is stronger than all!

Solidarity with Fiat Plastic workers!
Long live the struggle of the working class!

Revolutionary Alliance of Labour of Serbia
savedra.org

November 2021

The Proletariat and Working Class in the Era of Global Imperialism

Imperialism, the hegemonic form of contemporary global capitalism, imposes its own original economic relations on all social classes and strata in general and on the proletariat in particular, forcing us to adapt our political tactics and positions to the new reality.

In 2011 the British professor Guy Standing (1948), member of the Academy of Social Sciences of the United Kingdom, published a book entitled “The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class” which meant the formal presentation of a socioeconomic concept well known today; the “precariat”. According to his definition, the precariat, or precarious proletariat, would be the successor of the old industrial proletariat, a paradigmatic social class of the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, from which it inherited its need to sell its labor power in order to survive because of its lack of the means of production. However, it differs from the industrial proletariat by no longer being linked to the large factories and industrial plants, but to a new working environment; isolated, of unforeseeable duration and intensity, with little or no possibility of being the worker’s sole source of income and, in general terms, dedicated to the service sector.

This attempt to define a “new” social class for the 21st century connects well with the more or less fortunate visions of the end of history (Fukuyama), post-materialism (Inglehart) or post-Communism (Laclau) that, perhaps inspired by a certain millenarianism, tries to explain the contemporary world by discarding the terms of the last century. However, under the new names the usual old social forces are manifested, and the class struggle continues to function as the motive force of history even if its clash is hidden by all kinds of disguises.

Genesis of the “new” working class

As early as 1848 Marx and Engels pointed out in the Communist Manifesto that “The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society.” In this seemingly simple sentence is condensed all the internal mechanics of the economic history of the last 500 years. Mechanics that Marx later analyzed thoroughly in his economic studies, coming to the conclusion that the material infrastructure (the organization that each mode of production adopts at a given time), shapes the social structure through the ideological superstructure (materialized in the political, juridical, legal, artistic and philosophical forms) of that historical moment. In other and more profound words: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness.” (A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. Marx, 1859)

Thus, from its very origins as an independent social class, the bourgeoisie has profoundly influenced the social organization in which it develops. From the end of the 15th century to the end of the 18th, it fostered a rapid political and economic concentration around the medieval cities, in contrast and competition with the purely feudal, decentralized and rural political and economic model. This economic system and its consequent political forms allowed the development of an initial capitalism based on the commercial exploitation of enormous mercantile empires in the Americas, Africa, Oceania and Asia, at the cost of provoking indiscriminate massacres among many native peoples of those continents. At this stage, the working class was still hardly distinguished from the medieval serfs and there was even a certain restoration of the most savage slavery.

The maturation of these material conditions allowed the bourgeoisie shortly afterwards (from the end of the 18th century) to launch its assault on political power, armed both with an immense economic force and with the whole theoretical and philosophical arsenal of the Enlightenment, until it formed the modern nation-state as the perfect machinery at the service of the economic interests of its class. The bourgeois revolutions in England, the United States of America and France, the Napoleonic wars and the brutal policies of the expropriation of the means of production that gave rise to the “primitive accumulation” and the appearance of the first “reserve

army of capital” in Europe were the bloody milestones of this stage, lasting until the middle of the 19th century. The working class at that time won certain rights and freedoms, recognized itself as an entity differentiated from the rest of the social strata, especially the nobility and the clergy, and developed a certain consciousness of itself, although still very weak.

From the second half of the 19th century, capitalism developed productive forces hitherto unimaginable; the extension of the European colonial empires and their degree of exploitation made it possible to achieve the advances of the Industrial Revolution, and to create the relations of production that gave birth to the typical image of the proletariat that we all recognize: a physical worker, masculine, western, crowded into immense factories, organized into mass parties and unions and with an already truly revolutionary consciousness, separate from the other social classes and strata.

But the same economic forces that had acted in previous stages also acted in the background on the infrastructure, following the law of the concentration of capital pointed out by Marx, creating a section of the bourgeoisie capable of exercising power over the State imposing itself, even on the whole of its class. This gave rise to the necessary conditions for a new revolution in the system of production and with it, of the whole society. But to achieve this, it was necessary to tear up the old social relations still in force.

In his work “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”, Lenin described how capitalism had entered a new stage, as early as 1916, distinct from the previous free-trade model. A stage characterized by the complete subjection of the national economy to the interest of the section of that bourgeois class that had developed a critical economic weight through its monopoly of the strategic sectors of the country. Consequently, under state monopoly capitalism, the national governments become an extension of the business of this bourgeois section and business competition took the form of international competition. Competition that, taken to the extreme, becomes open war.

The two savage world wars of 1914-1918 and, especially, 1939-1945 represent the birth pangs of the new imperialist world with its own social relations, fruit of the new productive model of global imperialism. Relations that, especially from the 1970s and for the first time in history, are the same for the entire planet and therefore constitute a single capitalist global market.

The world that emerged from the post Second World War II was very different economically from the one that existed in 1913. International relations had already been formally subjected to the authority of the respective national bourgeoisies (excluding the Soviet “anomaly” and the countries of Eastern Europe which, in any case, “corrected themselves” barely a decade later by adopting state capitalism under the guidelines of social-imperialist revisionism). All of them were under the tutelage of the U.S. bourgeoisie, established by the Bretton Woods agreements (1944) into an absolute capitalist power, definitively replacing the old European empires. This leadership was reinforced soon after with the U.S. investment plan for the reconstruction of Europe (the famous Marshall Plan of 1948-1951), which allowed it to favor the friendly countries (mainly the United Kingdom, West Germany and Italy), and to link the European economies to the destiny of the U.S. economy to this day.

Although European reconstruction tended at first to restore the pre-1914 industrial model, especially in the “friendly” countries of the Yankee empire, it soon became clear that this stage of capitalism had been overcome. Starting from the 1960s and, especially, the 1970s, the great Western industries began to move to the countries that had recently become independent of European colonialism (India, Bangladesh, Taiwan, the enclave of Hong Kong, etc.), attracted by their advantageous conditions of exploitation and the consequent rates of profit, incomparable with investment in Europe or North America. The Western world replaced these industries with the multiplication of small and medium-sized enterprises, mainly in the tertiary sector, and national economies dependent on financial operations, services and tourism appeared as the main economic source.

This was the culmination of the long process by which the industrial proletariat of the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th gave way to a working class unrecognizable to itself; composed of men and women of all ethnicities, with labor more intellectual than physical, isolated from each other and, unfortunately, deeply disorganized. But it is also the beginning of a working class that is more homogeneous and geographically widespread than ever before in history.

Ideological bases of modern imperialism

As we can see, under apparently new relations of production, the same logic imposed by the bourgeoisie at its rise to the status of the

ruling class have been maintained. And with them, the mechanisms of ideological domination that support and make normal the bourgeois dictatorship are maintained, also reinforced by the material conditions of the labor of the most developed proletariat.

But not only the proletariat feels these new conditions, but broad strata of the bourgeoisie itself are now subjected to the domination of its monopoly section, the absolute owner of the mechanisms of the political power of the state, provoking chain reactions that, ultimately, also have repercussions on the condition of the working class.

The middle and lower strata of the bourgeoisie, displaced from the economic mainstream, which has now moved into the international camp to which they have no access, are often dragged into inferior positions due to the unexpected turns and crises of the global economy. In this process, parts of this degraded bourgeoisie end up joining the ranks of the proletariat or approaching it, increasing the influence of the ruling class over the dominated class. As Marx and Engels put it:

“The lower strata of the middle class – the small trades people, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants – all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production.” (Communist Manifesto. 1848)

And later, Stalin said about the petty-bourgeois influence among the proletariat:

“The proletariat is not an isolated class. It is constantly replenished by the influx of peasant, petty bourgeois and intellectuals, proletarianized by the development of capitalism.... In one way or another, all these petty-bourgeois groups penetrate into the Party and introduce into it the spirit of hesitancy and opportunism, the spirit of demoralization and uncertainty” (Stalin, The Foundations of Leninism, 1924).

The bourgeois ideology that continually throws itself at the proletariat, overwhelmed, exploited and brutalized by its very condition has always tended to show it that the only way out of this situation of misery is to become part of the exploiting class, pushing it away from

the idea of ending its exploitation by violently overthrowing the capitalist mode of production itself. That is, it comes to reinforce the dominant ideology through the myth of “social climbing”.

This constant ideological contamination was reenforced by the adoption of imperialism by the great ideological models for the conscious proletariat, which saw how first the USSR and later revolutionary China, became imperialists with the characteristics of purely nominal socialism. Since the late 1950s and 1960s respectively, they became what that Lenin defined as: “*social-imperialists, that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds*” (Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, 1916).

All this combination of ideological and economic factors ended up bearing fruit with the appearance, in the mid-20th century, of philosophical theories that sought to explain the world from completely new positions, renouncing the traditional materialist vision of the left and replacing it with an explanation based on subjectively formed identities, in interclass and transversal social relations, in which issues such as ethnicity, gender or sexual identity replaced social class as determining elements. Authors such as the aforementioned Ernesto Laclau, and other constructivists such as Chantal Mouffe and Michel Foucault, proclaimed that what determines our social relations is not what we are objectively and materially (that is, our relations within the process of production), but what others perceive us to be subjectively and ideally.

The working class had lost its ideological models in the old “socialist homelands” that were now devoted to their own version of imperialism. It did not even recognize itself in the images and definitions of the revolutionary propaganda of the beginning of the century; nevertheless it identified itself ever more closely the postulates of the small and medium bourgeoisie. It willingly accepted the idea that the old dream of escaping from its proletarian condition no longer required accumulating large capital and setting out to produce surplus value (something that remained completely out of reach), or organizing massively to overthrow the bourgeois dictatorship and undermine class society (something which it directly assumed to be impossible). Rather, it was simply necessary to assume the external image of the ruling class in order to become a ruling class in the eyes of others.

Once the great working masses have been drawn into the bourgeois ideological trap, imperialism exercises its full domination over them by involving them in struggles and debates within the bourgeois

ideological camp, which are therefore sterile and harmful to the proletariat as a whole. The motive force of history muffles its noise, but it does not stop.

The influence of the degraded strata of the bourgeoisie on the proletariat also translates into its political alignment with ultra-nationalist positions, only explainable by the aspiration of the bourgeoisie to regain control of the national market, which are today subordinated to world economic currents. There are examples such as “Brexit”, the legislature of Donald Trump in the U.S., or the emergence of one or another political form of populism that aspires to rebuild an eminently local nation-state, in which the displaced middle and lower strata of the bourgeoisie recover their lost protagonism, while the revolutionary and class positions that maintain the materialist and structural analysis of society are at historic lows.

The necessary rearmament of the working class

There is no doubt that the new working conditions hinder the old tactics of revolutionary agitation. Mass workplaces in which a single action of propaganda reached tens or hundreds of workers at a time are things of the past in most of the world. The dispersion and isolation of production units (recently aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic) tighten the bourgeoisie’s vigilance over its proletarian prey while hindering any access to trade union or political information. The ideological domination by saturation that strikes us minute after minute, day after day, through the media, cinema, television series, books and even from academic training, isolates our class from any deep critical message. The lack of models and close examples to



utilize as a guide dampens any spontaneous revolutionary impulse. “Irregular” contracts and working hours no longer familiarize workers with collective organization, making revolutionary discipline something foreign and alien to their reality. But all these obstacles are incapable of preventing the working class from continuing to feel, as it did a century or two ago, the chains of exploitation and misery imposed on it by capitalism through the bourgeois dictatorship.

In fact, there is the apparent contradiction that to the degree that modern imperialism has been imposing its hegemony as a contemporary economic model, promoting the development and application of increasingly advanced technologies, the conditions of the proletariat have been degrading, renewing levels of human exploitation and misery that seemed to have been overcome since the 19th century.

The trade union isolation and disorganization of the workers allows the bourgeoisie to bring back forms abandoned during the stage of the “welfare state” typical of the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s. Proof of this are the millions of wage workers forced to legally register as self-employed. Another example of the evident regression of the material working conditions for the working class is the generalization of the business use of computer applications based on the “P2P” [peer-to-peer] dynamic, which reduce human labor to a simple extension of the computer program that manages the wishes of the consumer and the profits of the business owner.

There are many examples, but underneath them all lies the evidence that as long as capitalism exists, the proletariat will exist as the key to the entire system of production. Without a social class deprived of all means of production and in need of means of subsistence, the bourgeoisie is incapable of extracting surplus value from the labor of others, which would mean the death of capitalism.

The capitalist market began as a local one in the late Middle Ages, became national during the age of the bourgeois revolutions, and international since the Industrial Revolution. But for the first time in history, since 1945, the market and all its players are acting today on a global stage.

That is why, despite all the difficulties and all the ways of trying to hide the class struggle, it continues to show itself daily in the eyes of the proletariat throughout the world. The economic laws of capitalist exploitation have finally become universal laws, understandable to any worker in the whole world. The revolutionary power offered by this unique circumstance in history is unimaginable.

The ideological rearmament of our class is an urgent task despite the fact that the material conditions are not the most propitious for it. The creation and dissemination of counter-information in digital and analogue media, the practice of debate and reasoned criticism based on proven data, the study and analysis of the economic and social relations that surround us, the search for hidden causes for tangible consequences, etc., all this must be multiplied in our environments, where we have the capacity for influence, and then expand the circle, tirelessly pointing out the contradictions of its system of production, exposing the origin of the problems that affect us collectively, as a class, encouraging the organization of isolated individuals and sectors towards common goals.

Acting first in our spaces of proximity (workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, universities, etc.) and later, through stable organizations (parties and trade unions), grouping forces around radical and broader revolutionary objectives, ranging from the national to the international, we will create a proletarian contemporary internationalism that, through the Marxist-Leninist parties, constitutes, as in the times of Lenin and Stalin, the Headquarters of the Revolution throughout the world, collects all the data, brings together all the forces and directs all the blows of the proletariat against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in general and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, until the final assault.

Capitalism has been formed before our eyes as a unified system at the global level, which can only be fought through a global proletarian force, with a single strategic direction. The final cry that Marx and Engels included in their Communist Manifesto in 1848 resonates, almost 200 years later, as an indisputable order for all conscious workers in the world:

Proletarier aller Länder vereinigt Euch!
¡Proletarios de todos los países, uníos!
Proletarians of all countries, unite!
Prolétaires de tous les pays, unissez-vous!
Proletários de todos os países, uni-vos!

Madrid, October 2021

One Hundred Years Ago the First Communist Cell in Tunisia Was Born (Part 2)¹

1963: birth of the new left

The leadership of the revisionist party passively received the decision to ban its activities, which created a certain amount of turmoil within the party's base and especially among the youth. At that time, the Tunisian university was limited to a few institutes that prepared the new baccalaureate holders to continue their studies in France. It was among this population, nourished by ideals of freedom, equality and justice that the first centers of protest against the authoritarian turn of the new regime in power in the country were born. Thus, the year 1963 saw the birth of the first opposition organization to Bourguiba's regime among these young students: the "Group of Study and Socialist Action in Tunisia" (GEAST), which distanced itself from both the party in power and the Tunisian "Communist" Party, considered too passive, accommodating and non-combative.

However, this organization had neither a political line nor ideological unity, except for a rather vague reference to socialism. But with the launching of its theoretical review, "Tunisian Perspectives", a debate of ideas was set up and contributed to the elaboration of the ideological-political line of the organization. From 1966, it claimed to be a scientific socialist organization and took a position concerning modern revisionism, at a time when the communist movement was under the influence of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" initiated by Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese Communist Party. This was the Maoist stage of the organization, which lasted a good ten years.

Numerous studies were carried out to elaborate a class analysis of Tunisian society, which touched different aspects such as: the labor movement and the trade union movement, the agrarian question, the youth movement, the national question, the Palestinian question,

¹ This article is the continuation of the one published in the previous issue of Unity & Struggle (num. 42, May of 2021)

the nature of the next revolution in Tunisia, etc. All these themes and others were the subject of serious debates on the pages of the magazine and summaries were published in brochures and books that constituted the political and ideological line of the organization.

Gradually these debates, conducted mainly within the community of Tunisian students in France, took place among Tunisian students enrolled in the new Tunisian university that had just opened its doors. But things did not stop there, because these young people took actions. Strikes, street demonstrations and other forms of protest took place at every opportunity: demonstrations in support of the struggle of the Vietnamese people, the Palestinian people, the African people who were rising against the last colonial empires. Protests against the visit of US administration officials to the country. A movement in support of the first workers' strikes in the country after the jubilation of independence. All this movement culminated in the great demonstration of June 5, 1967, denouncing the Zionist aggression against the Arab countries of the Middle East, followed by a wave of large-scale repression and an attempt to dismantle the young leftist organization: GEAST.

Despite the repression and imprisonment of the organization's leaders, its ranks were strengthened by the arrival of a large number of young people, especially students, but also young workers from dynamic sectors such as transport and the phosphate mines. The launch in 1969 of an Arabic language newspaper called "Tunisian Worker", although clandestine, played an important role of propaganda and organization. GEAST thus became the main force of opposition to the autocratic single-party regime established by Bourguiba. The repression became more and more ferocious and hundreds of militants and sympathizers experienced all forms of it; tens of them would spend long years in prison after phony trials, especially in 1974 (202 militants) and 1975 (101 militants).

The decade from 1970 to 1980, which saw the official adoption of economic liberalism (after a decade of so-called Destourian socialism), promoted the role of the working class on the social scene. Strikes, which had been very rare during the previous decade, became more frequent. People demanded better living and working conditions, but also the independence of the trade union center from the government and its single party. This dynamic culminated in the general strike called by the UGTT (Tunisian General Labor Union) on January 26, 1978. The strike was bloodily repressed by the army,

which fired on the crowd of demonstrators. The result was dozens of deaths, hundreds of wounded, thousands of union leaders arrested and brought to trial. Thus, from that date onwards, social and political protest was no longer only the work of the youth, but counted on the presence of the working class.

But the resistance to this blow was great and the government had to give in and opt for a policy of openness: change of government (always chosen from the same party in power), release of the last political detainees and imprisoned trade union leaders, lifting of the ban on the activity of the Communist Party, legalization of the two social democratic parties, trade union reconciliation etc. But the celebration would not last long; this so-called open government was not able to respond to the demands of the working class and the popular masses for the improvement of their living and working conditions and the repression was still its only response. This culminated on January 3, 1984, with the “bread revolt”, when once again the forces of order shot at the crowd that had demonstrated against the doubling of the price of bread decided two days before.

For the left-wing activists recently released after more than six years of imprisonment, having found their comrades who had taken over, it was time to take stock. What did we have to do in the face of the emergence of the popular classes on the political scene? What was missing in these two truly popular revolts, the one of January 26, 1978 and the one of January 3, 1984, to achieve a victory and lead to a radical change in the situation? One did not have to be a genius to see that what characterized these movements was their spontaneity and what they lacked was ORGANIZATION. This question became the center of the debates and especially about what type of organization we needed. Many points of view were expressed, the two main ones were:

- The formation of a large left party that would gather all the small groups that multiplied in clandestinity and that acted mainly among the youth and in a very limited way in other sectors. A party that would uphold a rather vague socialism and that would adopt legal means of struggle. This path led to the foundation of the “Progressive Socialist Rally” in 1983.
- The constitution of a revolutionary party of the Leninist type, which would adopt Marxism-Leninism and would be oriented towards the working class to become its representative. This

option led to the foundation of the “Communist Party of the Workers of Tunisia” in 1986.

1986: the birth of the Communist Party of the Workers of Tunisia

The supporters of this second option formed a circle in 1983 to organize the debate around this historical task and published, in clandestinity, a theoretical organ named “The Communist”, of which 15 issues appeared until the end of 1985. This rich debate had as its objective the elaboration of the political and ideological line of the future party of the proletariat based on:

1. A class analysis of Tunisian society from the pre-colonial period until today, to define its internal contradictions:

- A main contradiction which opposes imperialism (especially French and U.S.) and its local henchmen to the Tunisian people as a whole and particularly to the working classes and popular strata.
- The contradiction that opposes the peasantry to the big landowners and to the pre-capitalist modes of exploitation that were widespread in the Tunisian countryside.
- The contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie.

2. Definition of the nature of the next revolution

On the basis of this analysis, the next revolution was identified as a revolution of national and democratic liberation led by the proletariat and its party.

3. Definition of the nature of the existing state, the state of the ruling classes, essentially the comprador bourgeoisie, guarantor of imperialist interests. This refuted the idea so much propagated by bourgeois propaganda of the neutrality of the state or the “state of all the people.”

4. The definition of the strategy and tactics to be adopted, which amounts to elaborating a program for the party in all its dimensions: strategic, the way in which the contradictions will be solved, the means and forces involved in this revolutionary process with a patriotic and democratic character with a perspective towards socialism; and tactical to define the urgent tasks that would allow it to confront the dictatorial regime in power and to create more favorable conditions of struggle for the oppressed classes.

5. The relation to the other existing political forces: a revolutionary process of this nature has to mobilize different social and political forces, the future party of the proletariat will have to define policies of common work, of overlapping of interests, even policies towards the existing political and social forces.

6. The definition of the organizational identity of the future party:

A recurrent question in the columns of the magazine “The Communist” was that of the identity of the future party. Although this objective was defined from the beginning, namely “for the formation of the independent party of the working class”, many aspects of the question had to be treated and deepened. It was necessary to draw demarcation lines with all the former and current organizations that claimed to be socialist and to defend the interests of the working class. It was necessary to show how these organizations (Tunisian Communist Party, several anarcho-syndicalist or Trotskyist groupings claiming to be Marxist, etc.) are far from representing the interests of the working class. It was also necessary to select the type of party, its mode of functioning etc.: a party of Leninist type, upholding Marxism-Leninism, proletarian internationalism and distancing itself from all bourgeois ideologies and from early and modern revisionism.

7. Assessment of the communist movement in Tunisia

This required the founders to take stock of the communist movement in Tunisia since the birth of the first communist cell in 1921 until the middle of the 1980s. All the organizational experiences were reviewed, particularly the most important ones, those of the PCT, the GEAST, the organization “Tunisian Worker”, the Maoist organization “Echoola” (the Flame). The purpose of this review was to



understand what prevented these organizations from transforming themselves into a party of the working class.

8. Its position within the international communist movement

The debates which took place for the formation of the party of the working class in Tunisia could not ignore the situation in the international communist movement, which had undergone acute divergences since the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. Some parties had indeed opposed the line defended by the new Soviet leadership. This had repercussions not only on the existing communist parties but also on the so-called new left organizations that have multiplied throughout the world since the 1960s. Some of them aligned themselves with the positions of the Chinese Communist Party and formed the so-called Maoist current. Others chose to defend Marxism-Leninism and formed themselves into Marxist-Leninist parties or organizations. This was the choice of the founders of the future Communist Party of the Workers of Tunisia, which was born on January 3, 1986. This allowed it to enter into relations with the fraternal parties and to be among them at the foundation of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO) in 1994.

9. The founding documents of the line of the party

These debates gave rise to the elaboration of a series of studies and documents which formed the basis of the political, ideological and organizational line of the new party. These included:

- Tunisian society: a socio-economic study
- History of the communist movement of Tunisia
- Maoism, which is anti-communism
- Trotskyism and Trotskyists in Tunisia
- A class analysis of the Tunisian trade union movement
- The Tunisian woman: realities and prospects
- Women and communism
- Against obscurantism: refutation of the theses of the Islamist movement
- About socialist realism in literature and art

Reference studies became the basis of the documents and resolutions that were adopted at the founding congress held in clandestinity on December 5 and 6, 1985.

10. Study, action and organization

This work of theoretical elaboration, which lasted some three years, did not prevent the core of the militants, founders of the party, from proceeding at the same time to the work of organization among the workers, young people, women, progressive intellectuals in various regions of the country. This allowed its militants, not only to take a stand on the daily problems of the popular strata, on current political events, but also to be among the masses in their daily fight for the improvement of their living conditions or for democratic freedoms. In spite of the clandestinity and the fierce repression that it had to endure, the Communist Party of the Workers of Tunisia knew how to maintain itself, to broaden its audience and to behave as the worthy representative of the working class.

The experience of the party, both during the 25 years of clandestine work and during the last decade when it has enjoyed legality, deserves to be considered in order to draw the necessary conclusions.

September 2021

Productive and Unproductive Labour: A Historical Summary

Introduction

The sources and increase of social wealth have been one of the most fundamental areas of interest since the birth of modern political economy. There had been debates on the source of value, surplus-value, profit or rent; on which type of work a new value can be created; issues such as which classes are economically productive, etc.

In economic literature, this discussion was continued on the basis of the distinction between *productive and unproductive labour*, at least after the mercantilists explained the surplus-value with a foreign trade surplus. The Physiocrats considered agricultural labour productive and defined the rest as unfruitful classes. Adam Smith, the founder of classical political economy, clearly separated productive and unproductive labour, expressed his sympathy for the manufacturing labour that produced profits for the capitalist, and his antipathy to the non-productive service labour employed in the mansions of the feudal aristocracy.

With the emergence of neo-classical economics in the second half of the 19th century, the debate on value and surplus value has been replaced by the productivity debate. Neo-classical economics have reduced value and surplus value to the utility created by various factors that participate in the production process, and considered all kinds of income-generating labour and activities in the market as productive.

Although it has been nearly a hundred and fifty years since its emergence and new elements have been added to it, the assumptions of the neo-classical approach form the basis of today's dominant "*mainstream*" orthodox economics. Not only the mainstream but also various schools of critical heterodox economics suggest that the distinction between productive and unproductive labour is dysfunctional. According to these approaches, some new phenomena emerging in modern capitalism, such as the relative expansion of the financial field and the proliferation of digital technologies, have made this distinction invalidated or lose importance.

Karl Marx's productive labour approach has arisen on the accumulated knowledge and legacy of classical political economy. Treating capitalist relations of production in its historicity, Marx benefited from the scientific heritage of classical political economists but at the same time dissociated himself from them. Marx's approach to the issue remains important and relevant in explaining the new facts of contemporary capitalism as well as what it inherits from the past.

For many years, however, there was confusion about which activity Marx described as productive and unproductive. After the Second World War, the rapid expansion of employment in the public and service sectors, the increasing proportion of office jobs in employment fuelled the debate whether the activities of such businesses and professions were productive.¹

All this confusion was caused by the economic, political and social conditions of the period as well as by the late arrival of the Russian and English translations of the manuscripts which Marx comprehensively addressed and designed as the fourth volume of *Capital*, which was later titled *Theories of Surplus-Value*. The entire Russian edition was completed only in 1964 and the English in 1971. However, various erroneous approaches are often expressed with reference to Marx's different passages in *Capital* and elsewhere.

In this article, the emergence, development, and key points of the distinction between productive and unproductive labour will be examined especially in the context of discussions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While noting the progress in the development of political economy, Marx's contribution, methodical diversion and relevance will be emphasized separately.

¹ In this period, the debate on productive labour was linked to class analysis of growing social "layers". "Neo-Marxist" defined the working class as the only productive category. The state's high-level bureaucracy and public workers were described as the new small bourgeoisie, indistinguishable and unproductive. When office workers and university graduate workers numbering in the millions were added to this, most of the employment in developed capitalist countries (70% to 80%) was characterized as the new and old little bourgeoisie. So the bourgeois "middle-class society" claim "ground" was accepted with a "leftist" caveat. From this approach, the Euro-communists extracted the task to ensure the alliance between the (shrinking) working class and the expanding middle classes.

Mercantilists and Foreign Trade

Mercantilism is a concept that covers the economic policies that allowed capitalism to spread throughout Western Europe during the second half of the 16th century, but were heavily implemented in the 17th century after finding its true content. For the first time, it has been the source of practices that clearly expressed the goal of wealth and profit and legitimized it with the power of the state. As an economic policy, mercantilism enabled the provision of the conditions necessary for the continuation of commercial profits and wealth that came with colonialism.²

The discovery and colonization of overseas territories led to a rapid expansion in trade volume from 16th century onwards. As a result of their commercial activity, traders gained control over agricultural production and primitive home industry and prospered rapidly. With the commodity production that developed in the same period, problems in the classical feudal structure increased, and the state finances were unable to meet the cost of aristocratic luxuries, wars and natural disasters. Therefore, monarchies, which were becoming increasingly centralized and approaching the form of a nation state, secured the profits and activities of traders in order to sustain the suppressed public finances.³ The defence of commercial interests played a central role in mercantilist thinking. Its key representatives, such as Thomas Mun, were also directors of colonial commercial companies such as the British East Indian Company.⁴

² Gencoglu, A. Y. (2013)) “Ticari Kapitalizmden Sanayi Kapitalizmine: Merkantilizm, Liberalizm ve Marksizm”, *Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* (“From Commercial Capitalism to Industrial Capitalism: Mercantilism, Liberalism and Marxism”, *Journal of Social Sciences*) 7(14): 79-94, p. 81

³ British feudal landowners and kings, who were put in difficulty as a result of the fall in land prices, war and economic crises, have had to borrow from merchants many times. For more information, see Dobb, M. (2007) *Reviews on the Development of Capitalism: Transitional Discussions*, transl. F. Akar, Document Publications, Istanbul, p. 168-179

⁴ Kazgan, G. (1993) *İktisadi Düşünce veya Politik İktisadın Evrimi (Economic Thought or The Evolution of Political Economics)*, Remzi Kitabevi, Istanbul, p. 29

The main problem that the economic policy focused on in the Mercantilist era was this: How to ensure the wealth of the state? Or “*What is the source of wealth, that is, value, and how can this be increased?*” The answer to this question was “*by increasing the stock of gold and silver*”. If the country does not have a gold mine, foreign trade is the best way to achieve it.⁵

In the mercantilist texts, it can be seen that the income from foreign trade is considered as the only form of surplus-value, so it is considered as the only source of both accumulation and state income. Davenant, for example, said that domestic trade did not enrich the nation, but only transferred wealth from one hand to another, whereas foreign trade made a clear contribution to the country’s wealth. When he said “*a clear addition to the country’s wealth*”, Davenant meant the growth of surplus-value; just as physiocrats did when confronting the productivity of agriculture with the “*infertility*” of manufacturing.⁶

In the mercantile system, the surplus-value is only relative; one loses what the other earns.⁷ The profits arising from the handover are actually the redistribution of wealth between different groups; there is no new value created. The fact that trade in its pure form would not create value, and that value cannot be a stock, has been confirmed by historical facts in the experiences of the Empires of Spain and Portugal, which implemented mercantilist policies and were left with a worthless pile in their hands. The question is what gives the precious metal its value.

Since the mercantile system relies on the form of absolute surplus-value, their critics, physiocrats, have sought to explain the absolute surplus-value, that is, the “net product”. Since the net product is still in their minds as a use-value, soil and agricultural labour is its sole creator.⁸

⁵ Karahanogulları, Y. (2009) *Marx’ın Değeri Ölçülebilir mi?: 1988-2006 Türkiye’si İçin Ampirik Bir İnceleme (Is Marx’s Value Measurable?: An Empirical Review for 1988-2006 Turkey)*, Yordam Kitap, Istanbul, p. 34

⁶ Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 189

⁷ Engels, F. (2003) *Anti-Duhring*, translated by K. Somer, Sol Publications, Ankara, p. 297

⁸ Marx, K. (1998) *Plus-Value Theories: Volume One*, translated by Y. Fincanci, Sol Publications, Ankara, p. 59

The Physiocrats and the Gift of Nature

Physiocratic theory is one of the theoretical expressions of capitalist society, which began to dominate within feudal society. But the feudal shell of the system was still strong. For this reason, the physiocratic system was not born in England, where industry, trade and seafaring prevailed, but in France, where agriculture was predominant.⁹

Just like the mercantilists, the physiocrats sought the source of wealth (surplus-value), but, unlike the mercantilists, they argued that it originated from production rather than exchange.¹⁰ They pointed at the right principle as they described productive labour as only the labour that produced the surplus-value. When the value of raw materials and other materials is given and the value of labour force is constant¹¹, the surplus value is made possible by producing more than what the worker consumes. They moved the pointer from the field of circulation to the field of production, thus laying the foundation for the analysis of capitalist production.¹²

Physiocrats criticized the illusion that the exchange of two commodities created the surplus value; however, they were limited by the level of capitalist development they were in. Ground rent was seen as the only natural surplus form in a society based on an industry with waged labour which was in its infancy, and small-scale production, where the privileges of the guild system continued despite being in a process of disintegration. Labour productivity was still very low, and the number of workers employed by a single capitalist was rarely

⁹ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 43

¹⁰ Kazgan, *İktisadi Düşünce veya Politik İktisadın Evrimi (Economic Thought or The Evolution of Political Economics)*, p. 56

¹¹ Physiocratic theory has determined the value of labour force as a fixed/given size in order to analyze capitalist production and analyze excess value. For this reason, the minimum wage has formed the main pillar of the physiocratic theory (Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 38)

¹² In Marx's words "*Within the confines of the bourgeois milieus, the honour of having analyzed capital belongs mainly to the physiocrats, which is what makes them the true father of modern political economy.*" (Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 39)

high. Accordingly, it was difficult to think of a large profit by investing in the industry.¹³

The difference between the value of labour power and the value it creates, i.e. surplus-value, is seen in agriculture in the clearest and most undeniable form among all sectors of production. The amount of use value¹⁴ created by the agricultural worker is greater than the use value it consumes. Thus, there is a surplus of use value left. If labour had produced as much use value as it needed, there would be nothing left.¹⁵ This is where physiocrats distinguish between other areas of production and agriculture: the productivity of the soil allows the labourer to produce more than they consume. In this context, the surplus-value is seen as “*a gift of nature*”. Agricultural labour serves as a tool that enables nature to realize its potential.¹⁶

On the other hand, physiocracy increasingly saw the feudal landowner and peasant as capitalist and labourer respectively, so it regarded the surplus product as something produced by labourers. The



¹³ Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 180

¹⁴ Unlike the exchange value, the usage value is the value that indicates the usefulness of the commodity in terms of usage and only occurs during the consumption process.

¹⁵ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 43-44

¹⁶ Howel, P. (1975) “Once Again on Productive and Unproductive Labour”, *Revolutionary Communist*, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/economy/authors/howell/produnprod.htm>, p. 47, downloaded: March 10, 2020

surplus-value of nature/soil and the view of it as a surplus produced by the labourer existed side-by-side in a contradictory manner. Turgot, one of the physiocratic thinkers, experienced this contradiction and tried to overcome it:

*“As soon as the farmer’s labour produces more than his needs, he can buy the labour of other members of society with the excess that nature gives him as a pure gift beyond his labour. Secondly, those who sell him his labour can only earn their living, but the farmer acquires an independent and usable wealth that he does not buy and sell beyond his livelihood. Therefore, those who sell their labour are the only source of wealth that stimulates all the labour of society with its cycle. That is because they are the only ones who produce labour above their wages.”*¹⁷

Turgot found that the agricultural worker produced a surplus “*beyond his wages*”. Since this excess is a tangible product, he considers it an additional value. Yet he understands the value of human labour not as a certain form of social existence, but as different types of material things (agricultural products). According to him, among all sectors of production, the surplus-value is undeniably produced only in agriculture. Agricultural labour is the only productive form of labour. The industrial worker cannot produce more than the value of his own livelihood objects; they cannot increase the material tally, they simply change its shape.¹⁸

Physiocrats equated value with a concrete product, not the labour time required for the production of the commodity. Accordingly, the transformation of seed into a product provides physical growth, while industrial production consists of changing the form of raw materials. Therefore, for physiocrats, the only productive class in society is the labourers who work in agriculture.¹⁹ Craftsmen, industrial workers, traders and capital are all defined as unfruitful classes.²⁰

¹⁷ Turgot, A. R. J. (1898) *Reflections on The Formation and the Distribution of Rich*, Macmillan, New York, p. 9

¹⁸ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 39

¹⁹ Turanlı, R. (2000) *İktisadi Düşünce Tarihi (History of Economic Thought)*, Bilim Teknik Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 59

²⁰ Kazgan, *İktisadi Düşünce veya Politik İktisadın Evrimi (Economic Thought or The Evolution of Political Economy)*, p. 57

Two points can be noted that distinguish the views of physiocrats about the source of value and productive labour from the mercantilists and that underline their originality:

The first is that they did not see the source of value in the field of exchange but in the field of production, but only in agricultural production and agricultural labour due to the influence of the era they lived in.

The second is that they assumed the value only as a concrete, tangible product or use value.

The classicists and labour

As a result of the impoverishment of agriculturalists and the rapid enrichment of manufacturers, and the spread of workshops and manufactures based on waged labour, it has become clearer that the source of capital accumulation and value is not in trade but in production (and increasingly in industrial production).

In his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* which was published in 1776 and was considered as the work that launched the period of classical political economy, Adam Smith described the surplus value as the value that the worker added to the commodity. He adhered to the principle that the value is determined by the labour time spent in the production of the commodity. He has made it clear that profit and rent, which are concrete forms of surplus-value, are the result of the labour of the worker.

Smith, who sees surplus-value as the product of labour materialization, has succeeded in making a critical distinction in political economy terms: productive and unproductive labour. However, despite his pioneering discovery, Smith did not fully dispose of the influence of physiocratic theory. He has two types of productive labour definitions. The first is as follows:

“There is a kind of labour that adds value to the value of the object on which it is spent. There’s another one that does not have that effect. The first can be called productive labour, since it creates value; the other can be called non-productive labour. As a matter of fact, in general, the labour of an industrial worker adds value to the value of the instrument he is working with, the value of his own livelihood and the profits of his master. Yet, the labour of an ordinary

maid adds value to nothing.... A man becomes rich by employing a lot of industrial workers; he becomes poor with a lot of servants."²¹

In his first description of productive labour, Smith emphasized a fundamental distinction: labour exchanged with capital (productive) and labour exchanged with income (unproductive). As a result of labour activity that produces commodities, by taking wages from a capitalist and in a way that increase their capital, the capital of the capitalist increases. However, the labour that receives wages from the same capitalist and does work in their household is not exchanged with capital. Again, it receives its wages from the capitalist, but this time not to produce commodities for him and to expand his capital, but to do their personal service it receives money from their income. Thus, the first type of labour develops the capital of the capitalist and creates a new value; the second type of labour receives a portion of the capital's income as a fee in exchange for personal service and does not create a new value. While the capitalist who grows his business and employs more workers expands his fortune, the person who grows his house and employs more services shrinks his wealth. The critical point in Smith's definition of productive labour is that productive labour enables direct capital accumulation.²²

That's Smith's first definition. The second definition is as follows:

*"Only the labour of the industrial worker, after that labour is spent, takes root and materializes as a certain object or a saleable commodity that at least lasts for a while. It's like it's such a labour that it's stored and put in a barn, which can be used at another time if necessary. That object, or the price of that object – all of which lead to a doo – can, if necessary, mobilize a labour as much as the labour that first produced it. On the contrary; the labour of the ordinary servant does not become materialized or rooted in any object or a commodity that is sold. Its services, in general, disappear as soon as it is done; they leave no trace or value that can be obtained in return for that amount of service."*²³

Smith thus described labour as *productive* in conditions where it is materialized in a concrete, tangible commodity, and when this does

²¹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p. 357-358

²² Hunt, E. K. (2005) *History of Economic Thought*, translated by M. Gunay, Dost Publications, Ankara, p. 94

²³ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p. 358

not happen, as *unproductive*. There is nothing wrong with Smith describing servants who exchange their labour with income in the category of unproductive labour. However, by reaching a false generalization from a correct example, it isolates all kinds of service labour from the capitalist relations it is in and describes it as unproductive labour on the grounds that it is not materialized in a concrete commodity. Smith criticized physiocrats, arguing that the physical surplus that physiocrats see as “*the gift of nature*” is not only in agriculture, but also in other sectors. However, its second definition suggests that Smith could not free himself of the approach of physiocratic theory, which equates the surplus-value with a concrete product (use value).²⁴ One of the reasons for this is that in Smith’s age there was almost no service market. What distinguishes violin and music is that there is a violin market, but there is no music market yet.²⁵ However, when they work to increase the capital of a boss, both a servant and a musician are productive labourers.

Described as the pinnacle of bourgeois political economy, David Ricardo, embraced Smith’s productive labour insight as it was, while breaking away from him at other points. Like Smith, he defined labour exchanged with capital as productive and income-exchanged labour as unproductive.²⁶

Thomas Robert Malthus steadfastly defended Smith’s distinction. It was necessary to understand the source of capital gains, thereby separating the labour that sustains and replaces the capital from the labour that does not have such quality.²⁷ Malthus, however, did not see fit for some professions that provided significant benefits

²⁴ Karahanogulları, Y. (2008) “Productive Labour”, Baskaya, F. and A. Duck (der.), *Dictionary of Economic Institutions and Concepts: A Critical Introduction, Yordam Kitap*, Istanbul, 1257-1270, p. 1263

²⁵ Karakoç, O. (1990) “On Productive Labor-Unproductive Labour Separation: A. Smith and K. Marx”, *Unpublished Seminar Study*, İstanbul, p. 7-8

²⁶ Altok, M. (2011) “An assessment of the distinction between productive and unproductive labor: Adam Smith’s ‘labour’ or Karl Marx’s ‘value?’”, *C.U. Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 12(1): 107-127, p. 117

²⁷ Karakoç, O. (1990) “On Productive Labor-Unproductive Labour Separation: A. Smith and K. Marx”, *Unpublished Seminar Study*, İstanbul, p. 7-8

to use the phrase “*unproductive labour*” of Smith’s definition, instead he used the phrase ‘*personal services*’.²⁸

John Stuart Mill divided consumption into productive and unproductive, just like labour. Like Smith, he defined labour that did not take root in any object as unproductive labour, and treated it outside of social wealth.²⁹

Thus, three key characteristics of the productive labour approach of classical political economy, which advocates Smith and Smith’s distinction in general, can be noted:

First, it saw the surplus-value as the result of activity in the field of production like physiocrats, not in the field of circulation. It included industrial labour as part of productive labour, exceeding the approach of physiocrats that limits it to agricultural labour. It rejected the contradictory definition of physiocratic theory seeing surplus-value as a gift from nature and saw it as a result of the labour spent in the production of the commodity.

Secondly, by defining productive labour as labour that is exchanged with capital and unproductive labour as labour that is exchanged with income, it has taken a very important step in the analysis of capitalist economy politics.

Thirdly, despite this success, it evaluated the surplus value within the scope of some concrete forms of labour (agricultural and industrial) and of consequences of labour. It defined service labour, which does not produce a concrete commodity, as unproductive labour without considering the relations it is involved in or whether it is exchanged with capital, hence, it has not fully exceeded the limits of the physiocratic framework.

Intervention by Marx

The accumulation of capital, that is, the conversion of appropriated surplus-value into capital (or investment), is an inevitable necessity for the capitalist mode of production and individual capitalists. Capital has to be exchanged continuously with a certain category of labour that can produce surplus value for capital. Therefore,

²⁸ Çaklı, S. (2006) “Productive Labour-Unproductive Labour Discrimination in Classical School”, *Abant İzzet Baysal University Journal of Social Sciences*, 12: 41-60, p. 55

²⁹ Mill, J. S. (1976) *Principles of Political Economy*, Augustus M. Kelley, Fairfield, p. 47

determining the category of labour is especially important to understand the accumulation process.³⁰

Marx defined productive labour in the most general sense as follows:

*“What capital wants to produce as capital (and capitalist) is neither a direct use value for individual consumption, nor a commodity to be converted into money first and then use value. The purpose of capital is wealth accumulation, increase in value; therefore, it is the preservation of the old value and the creation of a surplus value. And capital succeeds in this specific product of the capitalist production process only by being exchanged with labour; therefore, this labour is called productive labour.”*³¹

The surplus-value, which is the “*specific product of the capitalist production process*”, arises only by the “*exchange of capital with labour*”, in other words, by employing the labour power in the service of capital. So, this *original product* is also the result of a *unique* relationship, the relation of production between capital and labour power.

Although it is a typical form of economic relationship in production and other areas of social life today, the complete rise of relationship between capital and labour was only in the late 18th century, with the invention of machinery and the spread of the factory system.³² For Marx, capitalism, unlike bourgeois political economy, is not a natural order but a historical formation, and this formation is in a constant state of change/motion. “*Like all other concepts of Marxist economics, the concept of ‘productivity’ has a historical and social*

³⁰ Yilmaz, G. (2006) “Service Labour and Marxist Value Theory”. Yilmaz, D., F. Akyuz, F. Ercan, K. R. Yilmaz, T. Toren, U. Akçay (der.), *Understanding Capitalism: Makers Sing the Song-I* in Dipnot Kitap, Ankara, p. 292-3

³¹ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 374

³² Capitalist production depends on the masses of labourers who have their own production tools, such as peasants or artisans turning into proletarians by taking away the means of production from them; It is based on the fact that the worker who has freed himself from his feudal ties presenting his labour force as a “*free labourer*” to the service of the capital that controls the means of production. In the feudal society, where almost 90 per cent of the population relied on the soil and the feudal lord, the production relations between the workers and the capital were quite limited.

character".³³ Productive labour should also be understood as "*historically temporary, that is, relative, not absolute*".³⁴ Therefore, when the issue of productive labour with Marx's perspective is discussed, it should be taken into account that productivity is mentioned only in the context of capitalist relations of production not any other kind of production. This historical approach is one of Marx's starting points in separating productive labour in *general* with productive labour *for the capitalist*.

In general, productive labour has existed throughout history. For example, the person who produces jumpers in his home for his family is *generally productive*. The jumper he or she produces has a use value for family members. However, this jumper has no function in increasing the profits of the capitalist. In a textile workshop, if workers work longer and produce more jumpers, the capitalist appropriates more surplus-value, but if more jumpers are produced at home, children wear more jumpers, no surplus-value is produced. Therefore, although the labour of the person knitting jumpers at home is *generally* productive labour, it is not productive from a *capitalist point of view*. There are myriad of such activities in public life and they are with us at all moments. We can mention about labour activities that are beneficial and too many to count such as cooking at home, teaching a friend, shopping for groceries for your neighbour, cleaning your home, carrying furniture, but they are not productive for the *capitalist*. Since capital accumulation in capitalism in general depends not on *productive labour* but on *productive labour for the capitalist*, the bourgeois political economists and Marx dealt with this kind of productive labour, and sought the source and management of wealth in it.³⁵

Productive labour is *the labour that produces surplus value*. Marx expressed the issue of which labour produced surplus-value in different sections as well as certain sections in the three volumes of Capital, and in *The Theories of Surplus Value* (which Marx thought of as the fourth volume of Capital), especially in polemics with Adam Smith and the physiocrats. After highlighting his approach based on

³³ Karakoc Transfers from Rubin, *On Productive Labour-Unproductive Labour Separation*, p. 20

³⁴ Marx, K. (1999b) *The Misery of Philosophy*, Transl. A. Kardam, Sol Publications, Ankara, p. 104-105

³⁵ Marx, 1997, p. 484

the historicity of capitalism and therefore productive labour, we can proceed to the details of Marx's analysis of *productive labour*.

Commodity production

First of all, as seen in the case of the jumper knitted at home, the labour activity, which does not result in a commodity for the capital is not a productive activity, and the labour force working in this field is not productive in the *capitalist sense*.³⁶

We can mention the two most common forms. Women traditionally defined as "*housewife*" due to the different forms of patriarchal capitalist domination over them do a lot of housework throughout the day, but do not produce any commodities. Therefore, they are not productive labour for capital. However, thanks to their role in the *reproduction* of labour force with the domestic chores they do, they enable the capital to reduce labour costs and thus they exist as a *free* resource that capitalists benefit from.³⁷

Again, education, health and other public services that have not yet fully acquired a commodity form and that are (much as it remains) provided as public services are non-productive areas of public service. Unless they are sold, there can be no mention of commodity production in "*public services*", and workers working there are also in the category of *unproductive* labour. As public services become more marketed, surplus-value is increasingly produced in these areas.

For example, health professionals working in a public hospital (nurses, doctors, caregivers, cleaners, cooks, etc.) are unproductive in the capitalist sense.³⁸ However, if the same medics resign and

³⁶ The tendency of capital and powers to commoditize all areas of social life is, in a way, related to this.

³⁷ It is a phenomenon that capital benefits from free domestic women's labour, reduces labour costs and thus increases its profits. But the capital aims for women to enter the market as cheap labour force, to participate directly in the capitalist exploitation network with flexible working methods by deeming this critical and in a way indirect contribution insufficient. Important steps such as a lot of legal arrangements have been taken in this direction.

³⁸ Today, with contribution fee, revolving capital, public-private partnership, city hospitals in the field of health sustained results in "*public*" hospitals increasingly being opened to the market. As we

perform the same work in a private hospital, they become productive *workers*. It is worth remembering again that the *productivity* mentioned here is not about a social benefit or the nature of what is produced. Health service produced both in public hospital and private hospital is the same. In the private hospital, this service takes the form of a commodity and workers work for the capitalist in the health sector. As a result of this work, the capitalist appropriates the surplus value produced by the workers and therefore these workers are *productive*.

Marx gives the same example for teachers:

*“A teacher who teaches others is not a productive worker. If he works for a wage alongside the entrepreneur who owns the educational institution, if he uses his labour to increase this entrepreneur’s money with other teachers, he is a productive worker.”*³⁹

*“Capitalist production is not merely the production of commodities, it is essentially the production of surplus-value... . If we may take an example from outside the sphere of production of material objects, a schoolmaster is a productive labourer when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of in a sausage factory, does not alter the relation.”*⁴⁰

Production based on wage labour

Secondly, workers who produce a commodity but do not produce commodities directly for capital are not productive in the capitalist sense. The peasant who owns small land can produce agricultural products without employing any labourers. The worker provides his/her own livelihood with this production and therefore does not make a direct contribution to the accumulation of capital since it does not produce a surplus-value for the capitalist. Therefore, he/she is not a productive worker.⁴¹

approach this transformational scale and capital model, the workers become productive workers.

³⁹ Marx, *Results of direct production process*, p. 112

⁴⁰ Marx, *Capital: Volume One*, p. 484

⁴¹ To bind small peasants to capitalist agricultural monopolies for a long time “*contract manufacturing*” and various forms of relationships are developing. This can be interpreted as the proletarianisation of

There are a large number of groups of professionals that produce commodity in their own workplace or helps the distribution of commodity and are defined as “*self-employed*”. Dentists, physicians, psychologists, doctors, engineers, architects, software developers, tailors, cobblers, plumbers, painters, tile layers or car mechanics are unproductive workers who are not productive when they work in their own workplaces “*for themselves*” rather than for a capitalist. They generate income for themselves.⁴² However, when these labourers who are essentially petty bourgeois go bankrupt and work under a capitalist, they produce surplus value and become productive workers. Marx gives the following example:

*“A writer is productive labourer not to the extent that he produces ideas, but to the extent that he enriches the publisher who publishes his work, or if he is a waged-worker for a capitalist. (...) The singer who sings like a bird is an unproductive worker. But he becomes a waged labourer or merchant at a rate at which he sells his song for money. But if the same singer works alongside an entrepreneur who makes him sing to make money, then he becomes a productive worker; because he generates capital directly.”*⁴³

Wage labour employed by capital

Thirdly, productive labour is defined by the activity of the labour force employed for *capital*. Unlike the *labour exchanged with income*, it is the *labour exchanged with capital*.

What does that mean?

While some of the labour force works for capital, others work for a fee in exchange for “*personal services*”. The worker employed as a maid in a house is an unproductive worker if she receives a wage from the landlord in exchange for her personal services. Here the purpose of the landlord is not to make a profit, but to buy the service/commodity “*housework*”. The employee’s wages are covered not from any capital but from the income of the landlord. As a result,

peasants and as a process of turning them into productive labour in the capitalist sense.

⁴² If they accumulate this income and turn it into new investments and employ other workers, they become capitalists. However, unless they employ other workers, the money they have does not turn into capital, it remains in the form of income.

⁴³ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 148

the landlord does not get richer, his house is cleaned, his clothes are ironed, etc. His wealth does not increase as the number of servants he keeps increases, but rather he has a cleaner house but a less disposable income.

If the same maid cleans the same landlord's house employed by a cleaning company, this time she gets paid not directly from the landlord and his income, but from the (changing) capital of the cleaning company. The company makes more profit by employing more service workers. Different from the first situation, the maid enters into an employment relationship with the capitalist, i.e. the capital. During the working period, she first produces a value equal to her own wages, then a surplus-value for the capitalist, and therefore she is a productive worker.

Labour employed in production and transportation

Fourthly, not all labour exchanged with capital (i.e. paid for by the capitalist investor) is productive either. Social reproduction has four stages: production, exchange, social maintenance and individual consumption. Surplus-value is produced only in the production process among these stages. Workers and other labourers employed in the areas of exchange and especially *social maintenance* undertaken by the state do not produce a new value, but play a role in the redivision and redistribution of the produced value. They earn their wages through the surplus value that has already been produced.

Marx formulates the general movement of capital as follows:

$M \rightarrow C \rightarrow \text{Production process} \rightarrow C' \rightarrow M'$

(Money \rightarrow Commodity \rightarrow Production process \rightarrow Commodity' \rightarrow Money')

Capitalist buys the means of production and raw materials necessary for production with his or her money capital and buys the labour force for a certain period of time. Thus, the money capital (M) becomes a commodity capital (C). This is, in essence, buying something with money, i.e. simple commodity-exchange. No surplus value is produced by exchanging money and commodity between the seller and the capitalist. A new commodity (C') is produced using means of production and raw materials with the labour force that serves the capitalist. The commodity that is manufactured is a different product from the raw material in the production process. In this process, the labour force enables the transfer of value of the machinery and raw materials into the product through the labour activity, produces a

surplus-value (surplus-labour process) that the capitalist will appropriate, as well as the value to be paid to the worker as a wage (the necessary labour process). The produced commodity (C') contains the surplus-value. The surplus-value is generated in the production process in which the commodities in the hands of the capitalist (means of production, raw material and labour force) turn into a commodity in the form of a product (C->C'). As a result, the capitalist has a batch of commodities (C') containing a surplus-value as well as the value to cover the cost of production. By selling the commodities (C'->M'), the capitalist acquires the value that includes the surplus-value and can start the new cycle of capital. However, the fact that the capitalist has appropriated the surplus value in the form of money (M') by selling the commodities leads to a misconception that the surplus value is the result of this sale. In fact, just like the capitalist buying raw materials and means of production (M-C), selling the commodities is a simple process of commercial exchange (C'-M'), which creates no surplus-value. However, it has a critical function: the generated surplus value is realized, that is, it falls into the hands of the capitalist in the form of money (in M).⁴⁴

As Marx noted, "*Its two processes of circulation consist in its transformation from the commodity-form into that of money and from the money-form into that of commodities... During its time of circulation capital does not perform the functions of productive capital and therefore produces neither commodities nor surplus-value.*"⁴⁵

What Marx means by *circulation* is the process of converting commodity to money, and he distinguishes this from other activities

⁴⁴ For example, when a block of flats is built, there are both production costs and surplus-value within the value of the building. When a flat in this block is sold, the construction company realizes this surplus-value and puts it in its cash box. The owners of the same flat can change ten times in a year. Thus, the trade volume increases by 10 times. However, these changes of the owners do not create any additional value in the country's economy, this is a change of owners of the existing manufactured value and there is no increase in value in total.

⁴⁵ Marx, K. (2004) *Capital: Volume Two*, trans. by A. Bilgi, Eris Publications, Ankara, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/m-e/kapital/kapital2.pdf>, p. 113

that are deemed as circulation but are an extension of the production process:

*“Commercial capital, therefore – stripped of all heterogeneous functions, such as storing, expressing, transporting, distributing, retailing, which may be connected with it, and confined to its true function of buying in order to sell – creates neither value nor surplus-value, but acts as middleman in their realisation and thereby simultaneously in the actual exchange of commodities, i.e., in their transfer from hand to hand, in the social metabolism.”*⁴⁶

Since the surplus value is not produced in the field of circulation and a share of the surplus-value obtained in the production process is received, the same applies to the workers working in the service of the commercial capitalist:

*“We must make the same distinction between him and the wage-workers directly employed by industrial capital which exists between industrial capital and merchant’s capital, and thus between the industrial capitalist and the merchant. Since the merchant... produces neither value nor surplus-value... it follows that the mercantile workers employed by him in these same functions cannot directly create surplus-value for him.”*⁴⁷

In this context, those working in the sale (exchange area) of commodities in the form of goods or services, in other words, employees working in stores are not productive. The same applies to the employees in the financial field, too.

So, according to Marx, productive labour encompasses *the labour* activity of workers employed by the capitalist in the industry, distribution-transportation⁴⁸, storage and service production. Technical variables such as the profession of these workers, the product they produce, the conditions of their work are insignificant in terms of the productivity of the labour, the decisive thing is that the production relationship between labour force and capital –which internally hosts exploitation– has been established. Therefore, as Marx gives as examples in different occasions, the factory worker, cleaner, waitress, singer, teacher, engineer, doctor, miner, academic, author, etc.

⁴⁶ Marx, *Capital: Volume Three*, p. 249

⁴⁷ Marx, *Capital: Volume Three*, p. 258

⁴⁸ “Production” of spatial displacement as part of the production of commodity.

produce a surplus value when they enter into relations of production with capital. In Marx's words:

“The material characteristics of labour and therefore its product, in itself, make no sense in terms of this distinction between productive labour and unproductive labour. For example, to the extent that the labour of a cook and a waiter is converted into capital for the hotel owner, they are productive labour. But the same people are unproductive workers as servants, to the extent that I did not create capital from their service, but spent my income on them.”⁴⁹

As can be understood from all these statements, the idea that Marx limited the production of value or productive labour only to industrial labour—which is a fairly common opinion—is an instance of misinformation about Marx. This argument is one of the admissions of bourgeois political economy and was the subject of extensive criticism by Marx. Surplus-value production and productivity in this sense are not related to a physical commodity but to the relationship of exploitation in the production process that forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production, and in this respect it is a product of social relations that bear class contradiction.

As a result, in terms of the history of economic thought, three main characteristics of Marx's prolific conception of labour can be noted:

Firstly, Marx continued the tradition of physiocratic theory and bourgeois political economy, and saw surplus value as a result of labour activity in the field of production, not circulation, social reproduction or consumption.

Secondly, he accepted and maintained the distinction made by Adam Smith and bourgeois political economy, which defined productive labour as labour that is *exchanged with capital*.

Thirdly, he distanced himself from the approach that reduces the surplus value to a concrete commodity, object, and thus the use value, which existed in different forms in the physiocratic theory and bourgeois political economy. Thus, the surplus-value produced was explained consistently in the context of labour value theory, it ceased to be the physical commodity produced in this or that sector, and it was discussed in relationality and historicity as an exploitation relationship between labour force and capital.

⁴⁹ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume One*, p. 148

Conclusion

The question of in which field the surplus value is produced has been one of the most important problems of political economy starting from its founders and before. Because the basis of the economic system and the guarantee for the welfare of the ruling classes depend on the production and appropriation of surplus value in class societies.

Physiocratic theory and classical economics have taken a critical step for the analysis of capitalism by moving the analysis of surplus-value from circulation to the production process. However, physiocrats restricted the surplus value, which they saw as a gift of nature, to agricultural labour and to a concrete product. On the other hand, the classical political economy, especially Smith, defined the production of surplus-value as labour that is exchanged with capital that goes beyond the concrete form of labour (agricultural labour), and took another important step in the analysis of capitalism with this definition of productive labour. However, Smith did not fully overcome the influence of the physiocratic approach, introducing a second definition to productive labour, limiting it to industrial labour, which produced only material/tangible commodities. He failed to develop an approach that would envisage and include the capitalization of rapidly developing service production in the later stages of capitalism.

Marx's approach was shaped by the historical accumulation of knowledge of classical political economy. However, Marx's analysis of capitalism and his approach to productive labour cannot be seen only as the purification of classical political economy from the contradictions of labour value theory. Freeing it from its inconsistencies, Marx developed the theory of surplus-value on this basis, finding its logical conclusion. However, this is not a simple completion or conclusion. This is a methodical rupture that puts historicity and integrity/relationality at the centre of its analysis with its contradictions and conflicts.

In this context, Marx treated capitalism and productive labour for the capitalist not as elements of a natural order, but as a historicity that it was shaped in and open to change and transformation. He has transcended the monolithic analysis by physiocratic theory and classical economics, which defined productive labour with agricultural labour or industrial labour that produced a concrete commodity. He

discovered the quality of labour that goes beyond concrete forms in capitalist production relations and defined the surplus-value on the basis of production relations, which are the result of the exchange between capital and labour force.

Marx's dialectic method and especially his productive labour approach provide a great opportunity to understand the economic and political developments in today's world and the general trends and orientations of current capitalism.

With its inevitable need to accumulate and its expansionist nature, the capital entering areas that have managed to stay out of the market for hundreds of years and transforming them on a capitalist basis, causes the working class to expand with participation from different professional layers and social classes. Thus, the category of productive labour is expanding with the opening of new industrial, service and information production areas (linked to industry or service production), but the unproductive labour population is also increasing with the expansion of marketing, sales, finance, real estate, etc. Marx's category of productive labour remains important in understanding the ongoing productivity crisis, falling profit rates, the increase in financial activities, the intense pressure to commoditize and privatize non-market areas, and other current economic developments despite the huge technological developments of the last 20 years.

October 2021

Afghanistan and the Task of Working-Class Activists in the United States

**“Communist” forces take sides against the working class
while imperialists continue their work**

The radical liberalism of the Western “Left” which has dominated the organizational drive of radical politics over the past 60 years continues to show it’s disgusting, selfish, and utterly liberal persona in the face of the tragedy of the return of theological rule in Afghanistan. The radical liberals see the simple removal of U.S. *combat* troops from Afghanistan as a victory against U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan and that the Taliban, who have resumed power in the country, are heroic anti-imperialist fighters and should be upheld. Some have even gone so far as to insult the Vietcong by comparing the theological brutes of the Taliban to the national liberators of Vietnam. The logic behind this position is liberal, relativist, and thoroughly rooted in detachment from the suffering of the people the Western “Left” claim to have bleeding hearts for. These so-called leftists are now celebrating that people of Afghanistan have come out of U.S. military oppressions only to be back in the hands of brutal theological rule.

First, let us understand that U.S. imperialism has not left Afghanistan. Radical liberals often like to call themselves anti-imperialists, and more often than not, claim to uphold the Leninist theory of imperialism. The problem, as plainly seen by the statements of revisionist “Marxists” in support of China’s growing social imperialism, is to see imperialism as military action and only military action. The use of economic, social, diplomatic, etc., means of aggression and control are often ignored completely as having anything to do with imperialism. Dependency of food and infrastructure is now often referred to as aid, assistance, and solidarity so long as it comes from anywhere but U.S. Imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, etc., are matters of cultural relativism and do not have a material basis outside of cultural consideration.

“Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral. Any fragment, segment, section of this curve can be transformed (transformed one-sidedly) into an independent, complete, straight line, which then (if one does not see the wood for the trees) leads into the quagmire, into clerical obscurantism (where it is anchored by the class interests of the ruling classes). Rectilinearity and one-sidedness, woodenness and petrification, subjectivism and subjective blindness—voilà the epistemological roots of idealism. And clerical obscurantism (= philosophical idealism), of course, has epistemological roots, it is not groundless; it is a sterile flower undoubtedly, but a sterile flower that grows on the living tree of living, fertile, genuine, powerful, omnipotent, objective, absolute human knowledge.” V.I. Lenin; On The Question of Dialectics(1915)

A Deal Long in the Making

The removal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan, is of course, a positive development. The U.S. military must be removed from all occupied lands, including its own. But to consider the removal of combat forces a removal of U.S. imperialism is to ignore imperialism itself. The decision to leave Afghanistan was not some spur of the moment decision made by a peace loving, anti-war Joe Biden. This pull out has been put into plan for at least a decade already. In 2011 the Obama administration began a \$6 billion dollar plan to build an Afghan army and police force capable of holding its own so that the U.S. could pull out in 2014. While the administration fell years short of its goal, the Biden administration has finished the job by pulling out U.S. combat troops and blaming the incompetence of the U.S. puppet government and military of Afghanistan for the emergence of the Taliban rule.

During the U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan, the U.S. and the Taliban, whom the Western “Left” are calling anti-imperialists and cheering for, have made a great many agreements with the U.S. over the past decade. This should come as no surprise as the Taliban were originally formed and allied with the U.S. in the 80’s against the then social-imperialist Soviet Union who thought it would bring socialism to Afghanistan through invasion. During these years, the U.S. and Taliban worked together towards the death of thousands of innocent people.

Since the 2011 push under Obama, U.S. and Afghan puppet officials have met and made a number of deals with the Taliban over the past decade. Most notably was the “U.S.-Taliban Peace Deal” that former President Donald Trump signed with the Taliban. The U.S. and Taliban have been working together for quite some time, and the removal of U.S. combat forces was a joint agreement between the U.S., Taliban, and provisional Afghanistan government.

Resources continued to flow into Afghanistan until the very last day. The IMF released a \$6 billion dollar loan to the country in June of this year knowing the military pull out was going to happen, and the State department has been arming the country non-stop since the 2011 push knowing the pull out was going to happen.

There was no victory of anyone over U.S. military forces, there was an agreement between the imperialists, their puppets, and the Taliban. In spite of increasing violence and other infractions of the deal on the part of the Taliban, the U.S. has pulled out. In spite of the number of deals, killings, and bribes that have taken place between the Taliban and Afghan officials, the U.S. has pulled out. Clearly, this pull out was premeditated, planned, and done with reason to benefit the imperialists.

One may ask how this may benefit the imperialists, and while time will only tell there are early signs already—the main being regional security. A decrease of military in Afghanistan specifically may very well mean an increase of military in the region generally to “protect allies and assets” of the U.S., Pakistan has already been commented on significantly as a place of particular interest. China has also expressed interest in backing and investing into Afghanistan under Taliban rule as the Taliban have gained control of a number of Afghanistan’s natural mining resources. And while the Taliban have said they “have no interest in foreign investment”, this seems dubious in an economy that is 80% foreign aid. The likelihood of Afghanistan falling once again under the hegemony of competing imperialist powers is high—challenging the claims that the Taliban is a force for “national liberation.”

The imperialists have not lost any money in Afghanistan. One must always remember that wars are paid with tax money, most of which is collected from working and oppressed people. The imperialists sit back and profit from war production and conquest. The private contractors once had a force of over 8,000 people on the ground. While the state military has left there are still over 1,300 private

security contractors operating in Afghanistan with over 400 fully armed with military equipment. These private companies have even less oversight and transparency than the U.S. military has operated with and have been known to be involved in everything from opium trafficking, human trafficking, and the use of practical slave labor in construction projects.

Radical liberalism and bastardized anti-imperialism

The imperialists long term plans may be obscured at the moment, but one thing is not: the Western “Lefts” radical liberal fetishization of the now in power Taliban.

Which brings us to a very important question: How could anyone who claims to be even the smallest amount in line with lineage of Marx, Lenin, Socialism, Communism, dare to support a theological regime of any kind. The point of Marxism, of revolution, of building of socialism and communism is to improve the material and spiritual life of human kind, not to excuse oppression which uses culturally acceptable symbols. How can theological rule of any kind not be oppressive? How can theological rule create anything but a reactionary regime?

The Taliban in particular have a long history of violent, dogmatic, and brutal rule. It is not the western imperialists who suffer from this, who continue to sip their scotch in country clubs without worry, it is the people of Afghanistan who will suffer. This cultural relativism that glorifies anti-American brutality simply because it is



anti-American is firmly liberal and used by a plethora of “leftists”. These so-called leftists use the same cultural relativism, the same logic as the liberals they purport to oppose.

While many radical liberals often denounce liberalism and consider themselves anarchists, communists, and all kinds of ideological categories, the liberal logic remains firm. Positions do not exist on their own, standing against the U.S. only to support brutality by another is not socialist, is not Marxist, is not Leninist, nor anti-imperialist. Liberalism is a subjective logic. In a technical sense, one may refer to it as *subjective idealism* in the era of bourgeois society. Due to the subjective nature of the logic, a plurality of positions may be formed from it. In fact, liberalism outwardly celebrates its pluralism of positions. Liberalism is not a synonym for the “United States and Europe”, it is a logic, an ideology, a framework of perceiving the world through subjectivity and relativism. There is no contradiction in using liberal logic to condemn the United States or any country, person, etc., or uphold for that matter.

Yet, it is these radical liberals who continually claim to cry the loudest, hardest, most sincerely, for the people of the third world, for oppressed people at home and around the globe. But it is a twisted support. These radical liberals uphold the suffering of third world peoples as their symbol of righteousness. Out of this righteousness comes the condemnation of populations of peoples all over the globe to oppressive, imperialist regimes because they don’t play nice with the United States. The radical liberals uncritically support and cheer, as if watching the World Cup, any personality or government which is not inside the U.S.’s direct sphere of influence.

This support is often done with ignorance to the plight of the people. During the course of the Syrian Civil War, these forces who pose as leftist uncritically supported Bashir-Al Assad to the point of ignoring the people. Looking back, the people of Syria are rarely mentioned outside of their support of Assad. The radical liberals play the same game of personality and semantics that the mundane liberal does. Anti-imperialism, world politics as a whole, is treated like a football game and now the radical liberals who parade as leftists are cheering for the team of theologically brutality over the team of U.S. imperialism. With such friends, who needs enemies? The old opportunist line of supporting the “benevolent capitalist”, the “responsible government”, or “lesser of two evils” reappears in new form.

Building an Authentic, Internationalist Working Class Movement in the US

But why is this important? After all, the U.S. State is not currently changing its policies due to its left, radical liberal or otherwise. The Taliban certainly don't care what the U.S. left thinks about them.

It is important because it is our duty to challenge U.S. imperialism here at home, and in doing so, build a socialist state. Our positions on the events of the world impact the nature of this potential state and the movement that will build it. The reasoning used for these positions is the same reasoning being applied to practical work and the movement built from it. It is for this reason the western has been stuck in spite of its continuous populist work. When looked at through the lens of radical liberalism, these actions do not lead to a movement, but fill in the cracks for the imperialist system and prolong the poverty and oppression they seek to oppose.

And yet, these same people think they are going to build an anti-imperialist movement by siding with brutal theological regimes while decrying the role Christian fundamentalism plays in the U.S., defend the use of child labor in sweat shops, defend the use of child labor in Africa, and then claim to stand up for workers in the U.S.. But all of these crimes are justifiable by the radical liberals out of no other consideration than cultural relativism. To stand against theological rule, to stand against millions of people working 12-hour days from the time they're nine years old to the time they die is to be labeled a chauvinist. Any notion of scientific understanding, let alone scientific socialism is thrown out the window.

Is nothing more western chauvinistic than saying such reactionary regimes and disgusting crimes are the results of such great and historic cultures? Is nothing more western chauvinist than saying child labor, African slave labor, submission to national majorities, and to uncritically support any current reactionary regimes are necessary for growth and defense? These positions only increase the fallout from these actions around the globe and feed into social chauvinisms like Sinophobia and anti-Islam xenophobia.

No, it is not out of cultural sensitivity, acceptance, or understanding that the radical liberals uphold such crimes and brutality against people of the world, but out of their own egoist detachment. It is why their populist actions, their "praxis", leads to little. The picture can be taken. One can say, "hey I did a thing!", a short-term goal can be

met quickly. The same goes into uncritically “supporting” X or Y government or personality outside the U.S. sphere, immediate satisfaction through empty lip service.

Turning these actions into a movement, and all of the other types of practical action that is needed, is a long term goal, there is not always, and rarely, immediate satisfaction and victory.

Until this radical liberalism can be shrugged off the U.S. working class movement will be left in the world of symbol and dichotomy. Acts of service and charity will never evolve into dual power. Internationalism cannot be built by upholding social imperialism and theological oppression. To do so is to act in the name of those in power, not into those who are powerless.

October 2021

The National Question in the Light of the Debates of the Communist Movement of the First Half of the 20th Century

The national question in Latin America

The countries of Latin America and fundamentally of Spanish-speaking America have had particular historical processes, different from the rest of oppressed nations and countries. The independence struggles against the crown of Spain in the early 19th century concluded in the formation of several independent states in the colonial regions of the Americas, which were led by a local elite.

Spain's interest was to exploit the colonies it had in the Americas for its benefit; this on several occasions affected the interests of these elites. Interested in defending their economic privileges and seeking for these to be expressed politically. They took advantage of a particular international circumstance, also driven by powers that competed with Spain and were influenced by liberal ideas, by the French revolution and much more by the independence of the United States of America, they embarked on several wars of independence within the Spanish colonial structures.

The independence of Spanish-speaking America did not lead to a single State, but to several, since the aims of the different elites could not be realized in such a wide geographical scenario. We have to add some characteristics of the wars of independence in our region: the fact that the elites who carried out these wars in many cases did not represent either the interests of the peoples who inhabited this region nor did they identify with them. In others, when they managed to express some popular demands, the processes took an opposite course immediately after the triumph, to which we must also add the high percentage of immigrants and Creoles [people born in the Americas of Spanish parents – *translator's note*] with little or no territorial roots who had been arriving in the region before and especially after independence. For this reason, for a long time the new states remained peculiar to most peoples, the elaboration of the idea of a nation was a later fact, thus following a reverse path to the "usual" one.

The social economic structures that these countries inherited from the conquest conditioned their subsequent development. The Spanish conquest, driven by a feudal and declining European power, did not develop a process of colonization that created the bases of a modern society; they were dedicated only to destroying the pre-existing social structures where they existed (such as the Inca empire), to import the natural resources that interested them, mainly precious metals, and to establish a military presence to maintain control of the region. When the new states were born, they found a world where a number of industrial powers were in the process of expansion, where the first ties were established between their ruling classes and the imperialist powers that dominated the world market. The imperialist powers come to look for certain resources in the region, so that the countries end up specializing in certain of these resources, creating what is known as a monoculture economy. The relations that took place were between two different economic formations; on the one hand the countries of Latin America (we are including Brazil from here on) where the existing relations were semi-feudal and semi-slave-owning and on the other hand the capitalist industrial powers. England in the lead was ordering the region according to its needs. But in addition to trade relations, there was another particular phenomenon of the mature stage of capitalism: the export of capital. All this exchange that arose from independence and its “sudden” entry into the world market, modified the societies of the new States. As we wanted to show, at the beginning of the 20th century Latin America appeared in the world as part of that majority of subordinated, exploited countries, along with Asia and Africa.

The Russian Revolution and Latin America

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Leninism was consolidated as a world tendency, representing the revolutionary wing of socialism, which took shape in the Comintern (Third International). In this way, the struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America would become an integral part of the debates of the world revolution:

“Formerly, the national question was usually confined to a narrow circle of questions, concerning, primarily, “civilized” nationalities. The Irish, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, and several other European nationalities -- that was the circle of unequal peoples in whose destinies the leaders of the

Second International were interested.... Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between Europeans and Asians, between the “civilized” and “uncivilized” slaves of imperialism, and thus linked the national question with the question of the colonies. The national question was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of the liberation of the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.”¹

The Comintern was created in 1919 to extend the revolution to Europe, and when we say Europe we mean Germany in particular. Bolshevism existed until that moment in Russia; therefore, it needed a world organization to consolidate itself in other countries. However, in particular in the revolutionary situation of that time, the Comintern was an organism that promoted the revolution on a world scale. All over the world, within the parties of the Second International, in the workers’ and trade union organizations, within the revolutionary groups supporters of the Russian Revolution were formed that formed parties. In Europe this phenomenon was based on the dispute with the large parties of the Second International, from which large numbers of militants emerged, which were consolidated as parties and joined the Comintern. But this large number of parties that were formed started from nuclei of leaders who in many cases were unaware of Bolshevism. Others had even fought against it and generally brought with them an important baggage of the opportunist policy of the Second International. For this reason the necessary conditions for the formation of the International Communist Movement demanded an important vertical organization of the Comintern, which through its Secretariat and Executive Committee elected in the congresses, guided the work of the communist parties, seeking to take advantage of the revolutionary crisis.

The Russian Revolution had an important influence in Latin America, where many parties were founded before important sections of the Comintern in Europe, including in El Salvador. Farabundo Martí founded the Communist Party in 1930 that sparked a popular insurrection in which the first Soviet in Latin America was formed;

¹ Stalin. “The National Question”, in *The Foundations of Leninism*, 1924.

the Soviets would learn of this some time after the fact. In general the workers' movement and the revolutionary movement looked to the Russian Revolution. In our country this shook up the Socialist Party, which under the inspiration of the internationalist current led by Eugenio Gómez would be renamed the Communist Party and then join the Comintern. The work of the communist parties and groups with the Comintern was fundamental, so that parties and groups that were often marginal and at their beginning had a distinctly petty-bourgeois composition in most cases, were structured into important workers' parties, formed trade unions and promoted struggles and revolutions throughout the continent. But the work of the Comintern in Latin America also had limitations, which were expressed in a series of characterizations of the countries and tasks of the proletarian vanguard, which would lead to future erroneous developments and would mean setbacks.

At the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920 the issue of the national question and the colonies was touched upon, opening the discussion to places outside Europe. The theses presented by the Indian using the pseudonym Roy – who was actually a delegate of the Communist Party of Mexico – were approved, which stated that the victory of socialism would come from the proletarian revolution in the [big] powers *together with* the revolutions for independence of the colonies. But the national question would be discussed in relation to the revolution in the East, which at the Fifth Congress would focus on China.

AMÉRICA LATINA



It was not until the Sixth Congress of 1928 that Latin America would enter the debates of the Comintern, where some controversies would arise. As an important antecedent, in 1925 the South American Secretariat (SSA) was created that worked with representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile. This provided the framework for the presentation at the Sixth Congress of a co-report on Latin America by Jules Humbert-Droz, a Swiss, prominent leader of the Comintern from the 1920s who in the 1930s would defect to become a right-wing social democrat. In the report, the countries of Latin America were characterized as colonial and semi-colonial countries² (although it was never said which were colonial and which were semicolonial). Reality seems to indicate that it was a very rigid conception that the Soviets and the Comintern had about countries outside Europe and the United States; in general terms there was a vision that all these countries fell into this category, although at times it was admitted that they could not be seen as a homogeneous whole. This certainly did not please the Latin American delegation much; it was strange to put the countries of Latin America on the same plane as the colonies and semi-colonies of Africa and Asia. The strongest polemic against this characterization was by the Ecuadorian Ricardo Paredes, who proposed that:

“It is clear that one cannot establish a strict classification between so-called semi-colonial countries because there is a considerable number of intermediate forms. Therefore a new category must be accepted. This new group would consist of the “dependencies” which have been penetrated economically by imperialism but which retain a certain political independence either because the economic penetration is not very strong or because they are strong politically.

“...hitherto the general conception of our countries has been that they are the ‘rural district of the world’, which alters the problems of the struggle in these countries by under*estimating the proletariat and over-estimating the peasant question.”³

Another important theme in Jules Humbert-Droz’s co-report is the character of the revolution in Latin America as a revolution of the “bourgeois-democratic” type, in which the struggle of the peasants

² Manuel Caballero. Latin American and the Comintern 1919-1943, 1987.

³ Idem.

against the landlords is the “fundamental character of the revolutionary movement in Latin America.”⁴ This would also encounter some resistance from the Latin American delegations. The character of the countries of Latin America and the character of their revolution are perhaps the most important points to determine the tasks of the parties, and would be the center of subsequent debates, although a priori we can say that this attempt by the Soviets to give a single definition for these two issues, in a region where there existed great dissimilarities between countries, seems to be, as we said above, a rigid response.

The characterization of the revolution in Latin America in the period of the Comintern

All these debates would have a much broader development in the most important event that the Comintern had in Latin America, the Latin American Communist Conference. The organizers clarified that it was not a conference of communist parties, since they could only count as such the parties of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. In addition to these parties (except that of Chile, which due to the situation of the moment it could not participate), it was attended by the parties and groups of Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Panama, among others. The Communist Party of the United States also attended, which the Comintern had particularly entrusted to coordinate with the parties of Latin America, since it was the party of the imperialist power that had the main impact on the region. In a certain way it also had a role of orientation; this was not a minor detail. In the 1940s, because of this relationship, some orientations that we will call Browderism after Earl Browder, General Secretary of the US CP, would be spread. The debates at this Conference were an important source for understanding how the communist parties and groups thought and characterized the countries and the revolution in them, and how they viewed the national tasks of the revolution.

In particular we will focus on drawing some conclusions from some parts of the conference proceedings that interest us most for the purposes of the article, but the theme present in this activity was much broader.

In the first place, there was a statement of the communist parties of Latin America that we understood erroneously and that was central

⁴ Idem.

in all the orientations they developed: the proposal that imperialism was maintaining the semi-feudal and semi-slave remnants in Latin America:

“In Latin America, imperialist penetration, both English and Yankee, has not played a progressive role, but has served to distort the economic life of these countries; it has not developed capitalist relations, but was maintaining the semi-feudal and semi-slave exploitation of the working masses.”⁵

But here there was in principle a confusion between capitalist relations and industry:

“When the imperialisms penetrate the colonial and semi-colonial countries, they do not play a progressive role. For example, in Latin America, although English imperialism penetrated deeply more than a century ago, it did not develop the industries of the Continent. Latin America still lacks a real heavy industry. Where are the blast furnaces, locomotive and machine factories in general in our countries? They do not exist. And it is that imperialism, instead of stimulating the industrial development of the countries subjected to it, tries to block it.”⁶

This statement contradicted some substantial proposals of Marxism, and the protagonists themselves were forced to qualify it:

“...despite the imperialist obstacles, a certain industrialization has been carried out in the Latin American countries – secondary industries, it is understood – and that “industrialization” has been carried out precisely under the influence of Yankee imperialism, especially in the most economically evolved countries.”⁷

In the debates the specifics of the Latin American economies that imperialism ended up imposing on them were defined as “deformations” (a term that we will find in many Marxist works in our country). However, in general the non-development of the economy in the capitalist sense of the developed countries was confused, that is, on the basis of heavy industry, with the development of capitalist relations in general. What was stated was basically that the economy did not follow the classical path towards the development of all potentialities, but was deformed from it by the presence of imperialism.

⁵ Codovilla. Report to the 1929 Conference.

⁶ Sala. Speech at the 1929 Conference.

⁷ Codovilla. Report to the 1929 Conference.

This is a fact that determines the strategy or stage of the revolution, because the “deformed” economies were not ripe, as were the economies of the [big] powers, to move on to socialism. In other words, the material bases for socialism had not been developed; so *which social class or subject is able to create these bases*, was the topic of polemics within the communist movement as well as with the socialist parties that followed the line of the Second International.

Needless to say, the argument that imperialism does not develop the key industries in the countries it dominates is at least naïve; we cannot pretend that the imperialist powers create their own competitors. But what is of interest is the problem of whether or not imperialism in its penetration into the dependent countries maintains semi-feudal and semi-slave relations. It is true that this penetration and the forms of organization of the world division of labor have been different when the hegemony was held by English imperialism, or when it was held by US imperialism. Without a doubt they are also different if we compare the world economy of the last century with the current one. But beyond this, the laws that govern the capitalist economy are present in substance at all times and are what determine the main aspects of our epoch.

One of the most important points of the imperialist phase of capitalism is the relevance of the export of capital, and when we say the relevance it takes on it is because these smaller-scale exports developed throughout the 19th century in Latin America. Added to this, imperialism seeks to supply itself from the dependent countries and sells its commodities to them. There is a vision of this process –the [big] powers export capital and the dominated countries receive it. This is presented as a process external to the countries that receive this capital, a tendency of a certain nationalist sign (“they opened the doors to English capitalism”), so to speak in some way a “perversion” of the nation. However, this is a vision that ignores the fact that this process is a result of the functioning of capitalism, and in particular in our countries, it is a process that has shaped the economies and the ruling classes. Latin America was born and developed by the formation of the world capitalist market, its existence is a product of it.

When first British imperialism and then US imperialism arrived in what we know today as Latin America, they found themselves with diverse economies. In many places there were remnants of pre-Hispanic economic formations, latifundia of the feudal type, semi-slave and slave relations; these were subordinated to imperialism, which

ordered what was produced in each place according to their needs. A relationship of dependence was created; this region, after all, was subordinated to the world capitalist market as an agrarian appendage and supplier of raw materials. The economic formations of the region to which we are referring became sellers of products for imperialism, which on the world market became commodities. Although at first the objective of these economic formations was consolidated in the sale of products without working them up, this would not take long to change; the same demands of the expanded reproduction of capital demanded an increase in supplies since the different pre-capitalist formations, which with their weak development of productive forces, were not in a position to supply them. Thus, in the relationship of subordination they would be transformed until they disappeared as such:

“...with the increasing, multiplied and accelerated growth of the cycle of expanded reproduction of industrial capital, *there is the multiplication, growth and demand for expanded reproduction*, whether [of] the elements that as raw material made up constant capital, or [of] the elements that as subsistence would be for wages integrated into variable capital.

“The old modes of production, which for now coexisted with the capitalist mode, based on a very low level of productive forces, were incapable of providing this growing mass of raw materials and means of subsistence at the geometric pace demanded by the expanded reproduction of industrial capital. Then begins the truly devastating work of capitalist production, whose driving force was this expanded reproduction of industrial capital. Thus began the second form of the connection with the pre-capitalist economic formations: that of their destruction, of their progressive (also cruel, also more firmly dominant) substitution by the very mode of producing capitalistically, whether [of] raw materials, or [of] the means of subsistence.⁸

This is why the idea that was widespread among the parties linked to the Comintern that imperialism maintained the semi-feudal and semi-slave remnants in the countries of the region has no real basis, and today it is undoubtedly false. The other idea that comes from this is that in the imperialist stage of capitalism, in the countries

⁸ The quote from Julio Rodríguez is taken from the book *Economic Power and Foreign Companies in Uruguay Today* by Luis Stolovich.

of the region capitalism does not develop; this also is not supported by reality, capitalist relations develop in an extended way and destroy the relations of pre-capitalist formations, but economies are molded according to the impositions of the international division of labor. If in any case there are signs of industrialization, they are always subordinated to what is allowed by imperialism, since the capitalist class in these countries is a class associated with and subordinate to the imperialist monopolies. These points would be the centers of the polemics in the communist movement in Latin America, and the responses of the Comintern to them would suffer to some extent from the schematism of which we have been talking.

In this sense, according to the categorization of the countries of Latin America, the character of the future revolution as bourgeois-democratic was raised. The concept of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, however it was used, was the one that Lenin developed in the period of the Russian revolution of 1905. At that time, for the Bolsheviks the socialist revolution was not on the agenda; rather the economic and social conditions in Russia made the immediate task the struggle for a new bourgeois-democratic system and the struggle against tsarism, which the Bolsheviks summarized in the slogan Democratic Republic. This is how Lenin posed the two phases of the revolution in Russia:

“...the resolution eliminated the absurd, semi-anarchist ideas about putting the maximum program into effect immediately, about the conquest of power for a socialist revolution. The degree of economic development of Russia (an objective condition) and the degree of class consciousness and organization of the broad masses of the proletariat (a subjective condition inseparably connected with the objective condition) make the immediate complete emancipation of the working class impossible. Only the most ignorant people can ignore the bourgeois nature of the democratic revolution which is now taking place.... In answer to the anarchist objections that we are putting off the socialist revolution, we say: we are not putting it off, but we are taking the first step towards it in the only possible way, along the only correct road, namely, the road of a democratic republic.... If any workers ask us at the given moment why we should not go ahead and carry out our maximum program, we shall answer by pointing out how far the masses of the democratically-minded people still

are from Socialism, how undeveloped class antagonisms still are, how unorganized the proletarians still are.⁹

The development along the capitalist path is inevitable for any nation founded on commodity production which has an exchange with other capitalist nations; in Russia this development inevitably clashed with the tsarist regime, which was rooted in feudalism. This opened the doors for— Russia in 1905 in this case — to necessarily enter a new phase. The need arose for the superstructure to reflect the changes taking place in the material base of the country, that is, in which the incipient bourgeoisie had a greater political weight. As we know, the bourgeoisie and the landlord classes with feudal characteristics that survived in Russia were not antagonistic classes, although they did fight over power. Thus for Lenin the revolutionary stage of a bourgeois character that was in contention could have two outcomes: either a peaceful compromise between the ruling classes or a decisive victory of the revolution against tsarism. In all this the question was how the proletariat and its vanguard stood toward this revolution. For Lenin although this revolution “...does not go beyond the limits of the bourgeois, i.e. capitalist, social and economic system,”¹⁰ the proletariat had to intervene, because this revolution, despite its character, was beneficial to it:

“All these principles of Marxism have been proved and explained over and over again in minute detail in general and with regard to Russia in particular. And from these principles it follows that the idea of seeking salvation for the working class in anything save the further development of capitalism is reactionary. In countries like Russia, the working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism. The working class is therefore decidedly interested in the broadest, freest and most rapid development of capitalism. The removal of all the remnants of the old order which are hampering the broad, free and rapid development of capitalism is of decided advantage to the working class. The bourgeois revolution is precisely a revolution that most resolutely sweeps away the survivals of the past, the remnants of serfdom (which include not only autocracy but monarchy as well) and most fully

⁹ Lenin Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, 1905.

¹⁰ Ibid.

guarantees the broadest, freest and most rapid development of capitalism.”¹¹

But:

“...it is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie to rely on some remnants of the past as against the proletariat, for instance, on the monarchy, the standing army, etc. It is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie if the bourgeois revolution does not resolutely sweep away all the remnants of the past, but leaves some of them, i.e., if this revolution is not fully consistent, if it is not complete and if it is not determined and relentless.”

The problem for Lenin then was to establish on a material basis which were the social forces that would lead the revolution in a “determined and relentless” way against the old regime. These were not the manufacturers, the big bourgeoisie or the landlords since they needed tsarism against the working classes. The only force capable of relentlessly carrying the revolution forward “is the *people*, i.e., the proletariat and the peasantry, if we take the main, big forces and distribute the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie (also part of ‘the people’) between the two.”¹² In this revolutionary phase that was beginning, the decisive victory over tsarism would only be through the “*revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*.”¹³ But this government would not be socialist, since it would not propose to touch the bases of capitalism; it would propose a radical redistribution of the land, change the factory system, etc., without initially leaving the framework of capitalism. The Bolshevik line proposed an active participation of the proletariat, moving on to preparations for the insurrection, in order to be able to bring along the peasantry and conquering power. Regardless of the class character of the revolution, it was the task of the proletariat to carry it forward decisively, relying on the peasants.

In essence the main theses that Lenin developed in 1905 on the bourgeois-democratic revolution were: that the proletariat could be the leader of the revolution despite its bourgeois character; that the main ally for this would be large sectors of the petty-bourgeois masses in the process of proletarianization (in Russia at that time this large sector was fundamentally made up of what is known as the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

peasants); that the task of the moment was to move from slogans to action and to organize armed insurrection to win the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasants; that as soon as possible, after the overthrow of tsarism, the proletariat had to undertake the struggle to turn the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one. Lenin summed up these ideas in two slogans: “At the head of the whole people, and particularly of the peasantry – for complete freedom, for a consistent democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and exploited – for Socialism!” And these were in general the ideas that the Comintern transferred to Latin America, and that Humbert-Droz developed in his report to the Conference of Parties.

When Humbert-Droz gave his report, opening the point of *anti-imperialist struggle and the problems of tactics of the communist parties of Latin America* he stated that already – at that time – there was no doubt of characterizing “the revolutionary movement of Latin America, as being of an *anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic* type.” As can be seen this was an adaptation to Lenin’s proposals, but in essence they were almost the same. He then said that “the bourgeois-democratic revolution has an economic mission: to break the domination of feudalism, imperialism, the church and the big landlords”; “it is not, then, a liberal state that will be born of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, but a democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants”, the latter depending on the degree of leadership that the proletariat could have, which would also try to pass over to the proletarian revolution as quickly as possible. In the context of this discussion, a number of revolutionary movements took place in Latin America, most led by military cliques but supported by the popular movements; others were deeper but the governments that arose from them ended up agreeing with imperialism and the ruling classes and handing over the gains of the revolution (as in Mexico). For this reason, the characterization of these revolutions and the role of the communist parties and groups was important so that they would not end up – as they ended up on more than one occasion – subordinating their activity and work among the masses to the needs of the military cliques and revolutionary governments, which was why there was a particular indication of these dangers in the conference.

In short, the conclusions reached by the communist parties and groups linked to the Comintern was to characterize the countries of Latin America as semi-colonial, where there were semi-slave and

semi-feudal remnants and where the revolution at the time was of a bourgeois-democratic character. This was the orientation that the Comintern took up for Latin America and the one that the different parties would take up for their countries. This serious attempt to study the reality of these countries and delineate the tactics and strategy of the communist parties meant an important effort and was a significant contribution to the formation of the communist movement in this region. However, it erred, perhaps due to the low level of theoretical training of the parties, of a certain schematism that would be the basis for some errors that were expressed in delays and failures. It is necessary to complete the picture with the vision that the Comintern had of the role of the bourgeoisie:

...the national bourgeoisie was linked with imperialism from its birth, becoming an agent of it, helping it in the exploitation of the local working masses, in order to participate in the profits that imperialism obtained in these countries.

Today, such is the state of deformation of the national economy and its dependence on the foreign market, that any tendency to create an independent national economy within the framework of bourgeois legality is doomed to failure. Only a bourgeois-democratic revolution directed against imperialism and the big landlords can create the conditions for such independent development.

Thus, all the demagogic manifestations of the petty bourgeoisie and the nascent industrial bourgeoisie, with respect to the independent economic development of the Latin American countries, do not go beyond lyrical manifestations, when it does not have behind them the hand of an imperialism – particularly US imperialism – which has an interest in investing capital for “industrialization”.¹⁴

The existence of a “national” bourgeoisie was thus denied, that is, one that seeks independence and condemned any attempt to seek independence within the framework of bourgeois legality. But the theoretical deficiencies that we mentioned and other influences, mainly from the US CP, would create the conditions in the mid-1940s for proposals to be raised that would largely go against these positions, putting forward unity with the local bourgeoisies. But beyond this, the effort of the 1930s and part of the ‘40s, made by the Comintern in Latin America, was the most important effort to develop Marxism-Leninism in this region.

¹⁴ Codovilla, Report to the 1929 Conference.

Conclusions

Taking as a starting point the debates that have taken place from Marxism on the national question, studying the most important experiences developed from Marxism-Leninism that sought to give an answer to the problem of the revolution in our countries and critically taking up these efforts, we are in a position to approach some answers about the character of the revolution in our country, and the national question there.

Our country is a part of a large group of dependent countries; as such, its economy, as a dependent one, is subordinate. This is expressed in its specific development according to the needs of the world social division of labor that is controlled by a small nucleus of great powers and monopolies. The basis of this subordination is the association of the local capitalists with the imperialist monopolies, and it is natural that this should happen, because in itself capitalism in our country (as in the rest of Latin America) was born at the stimulus of foreign investment, mainly English. Therefore, this association was marked from the very beginning of capitalism in our country and from the beginning of our country as such. It is therefore not surprising that the reforms in the legal and political superstructure in recent years that accompany the changes in the global system of production, driven by the big monopolies, are developing almost without resistance, with an almost general political consensus among all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties.

Added to this is the fact that in our country there is already an independent national state; this brings us closer to the idea of determining what are the pending national tasks, which therefore necessarily integrate into the program of the revolution, that is, the strategy for the victory of communism. On the one hand, it is evident that in Uruguay there are national tasks, only a handful of countries – the great central powers – do not have these. Their main point is breaking with the subordination of our economy, that is, breaking with the imposition – although it is accepted happily by the local bourgeoisie – of the monopolies over the economy of our country, what to produce and how. On the other hand, because of the specific characteristics of our economic formation, the material basis of socialism does not exist today nor will it exist within the framework of capitalism; this can happen only in the small number of powers that dominate the world economy. Finally, in the absence of a bourgeoisie interested in

breaking with dependence, that is, a national bourgeoisie, only on the basis of People's Power, of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with the rest of the working classes – or in the process of proletarianization – will it be possible to break with the dependence – that is, subordination – as a necessary condition to build the material basis for socialism.

Thus, we need to develop more extensively what we said in summary in the last two paragraphs. Leninism necessarily understands – as was widely seen in Lenin's treatment of the problem of revolution in Russia – the stages in social development, which are realized through ruptures and revolutions. The first problem for the proletarian revolutionaries who are carrying out their activity within the framework of a territory and state is – on the concrete analysis of the given society – to define the stages that its development has ahead of it, and thus, to also define its driving forces. This development takes place within the framework of the contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production, between the potential of the former and the containment of these by the latter, between the real possibilities of the systematic increase in production and the system of property that makes it impossible.

It is in this context that we must analyze the national question; that is, the national question is one that includes a number of aspects of the relations of production that contradict the productive forces. In other words, the national question includes the problem of the socialist revolution. The material basis of socialism cannot be developed without breaking the obstacles that subordination to the international division of labor imposes on our economy.

For this reason, in our country – and to a large extent in the region – the main task of this stage is the building of the material basis of socialism, which by the way it is incorporated into the world economy, can only be carried out by breaking with it; this implies overthrowing the power of the local bourgeoisie associated with imperialism. The building of the material basis of socialism, even though in historical terms it is a purely bourgeois task (it is capitalism that ripens the premises for its overcoming) corresponds to the proletariat, which, on the basis of its power, has to fulfill this task.

In practical terms, in our country, the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat is a government that will break the power of the bourgeoisie, the political power, it will destroy its state, and the economic one, it will expropriate it. This line is different from all the parties of

the field of revisionism, from the classical one, the modern one, Maoism and others. All these sectors raise in different ways the defense of the bourgeoisie and that it can play a progressive role. This is an idea that is expressed in various programmatic proposals such as subsidies to companies, installations, defense of the national industry, etc. This implies, therefore, breaking with the idea that in Uruguay there is a national liberation struggle like that of the colonies and semi-colonies, also discarding a national front, a type national liberation front in which the bourgeoisie would be included, whose objective would be the formation of an independent national state, which, as we know, is a task that has already been accomplished. But as we say, this in no case means that in our country there are no national tasks.

These conclusions that our Party has arrived at are a watershed from those of the rest of the traditional left in our country and are synthesized in a more developed way in the Political Line. The task of the working class in our country at the present stage is the formation of a front that integrates all the working classes and sectors of the petty bourgeoisie that aim to overthrow the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie and that will form a workers' government, whose task is to develop the economic basis of socialism.

October 2021

The Class Struggle Is Advancing

As Marxist political economy has foreseen, the capitalist economic cycle takes place in a chain of events going from boom to depression, passing through crisis and recovery.

After the economic prosperity the debacle occurs, and to the degree that the capitalist economy expands it transforms the whole earth into a large interconnected market, so that the crises do not affect a single country, region, bloc or an isolated industrial branch, but extend to the entire world, although not simultaneously or with the same intensity.

During the boom there is a rapid increase in the productive forces, which leads to disturbances due to the anarchy of capitalist production: the lack of planning and the momentary oversupply result in the production of commodities that exceeds the possibilities of consumption by the popular majorities, creating a relative overproduction that opens the doors to the crisis. At other times the increase in demand leads to uncontrolled price rises by the capitalists, creating the so “poorly understood” inflation.

It is proven every day that capitalism is a mode of production with dire consequences for the exploited majority, which we pay for with our lives in such a contradictory system. Abandoned to their fate, social strata are impoverished, they are despised, they become migrants without rights, while others of us barely survive while a very small part of the population gets richer. The result is the elimination of those who work creating luxury and wealth that go into the pockets of those who live off the labor of others.

At a certain time, society experiences an “excess” of products while contradictorily millions of people do not have even the minimum to eat; this is something common that we can see every day. The consequence of this is the stagnation of the market, unemployment, an increase in supply and even lower prices of some commodities, including labor power, capital flight to the most productive branches and regions. This produces a total imbalance that begins to show symptoms of recession and then sinks into economic depression and the destruction of the productive forces. If there is no revolution

there is a revival, boom, a new crisis and depression in a vicious cycle that will exist as long as capital rules.

Our ICMLPO, after having evaluated the economic, social and political indicators of the world economy, at the end of 2019 had already foreseen the imminent arrival of a new crisis.

This forecast was totally correct. What no one could foresee was that along with this new cyclical crisis of capitalism there would be a pandemic that would take it to unsuspected levels, deepening the long general crisis of capitalism and sharpening in an accelerated way the fundamental contradictions of the epoch.

The new cyclical crisis has developed intertwined with the Covid 19 pandemic, impacting the world economy more deeply, but as always, the most affected have been the proletarians, especially in the dependent countries. This is not to deny that this crisis has affected the working class in the imperialist countries, but in the dependent ones the effects have been greater given the relations and processes of transfer of capital from these to the parent companies. The imperialist monopolies transfer large quantities of resources that serve to cushion the impact of the crisis in their own territories, placing a new burden on the workers. This undoubtedly foresees responses of struggle on the part of the working class and the peoples subjected to an ever-increasing exploitation, pushing them to abandon their families to sell their labor power in the most active markets. Meanwhile others of us propose resisting and fighting to build a new reality in our countries together with the masses, responses that we must organize, promote and push forward on a national and international scale.

The capitalists know that in the face of the worsening of the already difficult living conditions of the popular majority, they will not have to wait for mobilizations and protests, which will lead to actions of discontent, further sharpening the fundamental contradictions due to the chain of phenomena. On the one hand the contradiction between capital and labor will lead the big monopolies to exploit the workers more intensely, and they we will respond with struggle. At the same time, the capitalists will look for more resources and raw materials, as cheap as possible, in the dependent countries in order to maintain or increase their profits in the midst of a decrease in economic activity. Thus, they need to deepen the robbery of surplus value by decreasing the real wages through their direct reduction, by lengthening the working day, intensifying exploitation, or taking away labor benefits. In the same way they will enter into conflict with

VENEZUELA – THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS ADVANCING

other imperialist powers and monopolies in the struggle to appropriate markets, increasing the struggle between them.

The repression will not wait and, as we have seen in Chile and Colombia, countries with governments of the extreme right, the most brazen violence and the justification of repression gives way to the fascistization of society, before which the peoples are demonstrating their combative ability at a high cost while advancing their consciousness of struggle.

Faced with the violent response of the reactionary governments and the application of methods designed by the so-called “war on terror” promoted by the US State Department and applied as a military doctrine, it is up to the Marxist-Leninists to deepen the coordinated actions of a theoretical and practical response to confront the offensive that seeks to eliminate rights and further subject the working class and peoples.

Our parties and the ICMLPO have an important role to play in objectively evaluating the reality and our possibilities to respond to the immense challenges posed by this period of struggles.

As we have stated in the editorial of our newspaper “Acero Revolucionario” (“Revolutionary Steel”) of September 2021 we consider that “The US State Department is changing its ways of acting at the international level and we must study them. They reflect, on the one hand, the end of a stage of direct political pressures, and on the other hand, their interest in achieving the objectives set with the least effort.



In this perhaps the “over the Horizon” policy of President Biden is summed up, which is closely related to the continuation of the supposed “fight against terrorism”, which is nothing more than direct intervention in other countries. This applies the theses of constructive chaos, the inescapable changes towards green energy, the Internet of things and the attempt to build a new hegemony with closer alliances with the United Kingdom and Australia to confront every day more openly the China-Russia bloc. This is carried out on all flanks and with allied troops, expanding their capacity by having a greater operational reserve (kicked out of Afghanistan and ready to go to any front), leaving their Taliban allies in their place. We do not believe that this would mean a fundamental change, but it does imply a deepening of war preparations and the onslaught against political and social rights. These, as a result of the crisis, and with the excuse of the pandemic, will be increasingly restricted with the application of more radical methods linked to the brazen application of the terrorist dictatorship of finance capital against the working class at the international level. This clearly means the fascistization of society, capital’s method of subduing the working class at times when it decides to reveal itself.

The migrant caravans, the problems at the borders, the threats of coups d’état by the extreme right, the violent repression of demonstrations, the elimination of rights, the preparations for war are clear signs of an advance towards fascism on the part of the imperialist powers that need to act in the face of the increase in consciousness and organization of the working class and the oppressed peoples, who are already capable of mobilizing by the thousands overcoming the limitations of the pandemic.

Due to the changes in reality, it is necessary to adjust our tactics to respond to these phenomena, since undoubtedly the conditions are changing and our ways of acting must evaluate this reality, preserving its principles and revolutionary class character; undoubtedly confronting the common enemy: imperialism, the main danger in every situation and denouncing revisionism as well as opportunism.

The way of carrying out such a complex task is by applying the appropriate tactics: That, as the classics teach us, is done by giving concrete answers to concrete situations. Stalin defined it very clearly: “Tactics are the determination of the line of conduct of the proletariat in the comparatively short period of the flow or ebb of the movement, of the rise or decline of the revolution, the fight to carry out this line by means of replacing old forms of struggle and organization by new

ones, old slogans by new ones, by combining these forms, etc.” [The Foundations of Leninism, Chapter VII.]

There is a very explicit orientation to follow: Determine the line of conduct during the period and replace the old forms of struggle and organization, the old slogans with new ones, obviously, adapted to the current period, which must be evaluated and studied thoroughly. We believe that we are entering a period of increased agitation and mobilization at the international level, together with an increase in repression, preparation for wars and the replacement of technological patterns, with the respective fascist response. This promotes the illusion that social democracy will be able to solve such a situation and return to the so-called “welfare state”, which will be impossible and will lead the masses to disappointment. Meanwhile the bourgeoisie is advancing in its terrorist methods, for which we Marxist-Leninists must prepare to make a leap towards greater levels of confrontation using all forms of struggle and organization until we reach the popular insurrection.

In relation to Venezuela, a recomposition is taking place, about which the representatives of the traditional and emerging bourgeoisie, as well as the petty bourgeoisie, agree in their objective of reviving the economy and reducing the struggles in order to take advantage of the natural resources.

One of the reasons why both imperialist blocs support Mexico’s process of negotiation is that it is a way to reorganize their forces.

The US-EU imperialist bloc seeks to introduce its political actors to the country, by creating a “parallel government” led by Guaidó. They were defeated after abandoning the political spheres; now they are trying to recover them by starting a new offensive merging internal and external actions.

The China-Russia bloc seeks to gain international legitimacy, which they have largely achieved.

“... Mexico’s dialogues are just an expression of the struggle between the two imperialist blocs in confrontation, so those participating will not be able to reach real agreements if they are not endorsed by the US and Russia.

“For the US-EU bloc, the idea is to try to clean up its political actors who are outside the country and are totally disconnected from the masses and the national reality. Therefore, they are entering the political arena again and thus preparing the conditions for their next offensive since the debacle of Guaidó and his sell-out policy is

irreversible, that is why they need energy to launch their next attack, possibly in 2022.”

The tactics of the Marxist-Leninists in Venezuela are focused on placing us in the front line of the fight against imperialism, especially against the US-EU imperialist bloc as the main danger. We denounce the greed of the China-Russia imperialist bloc on our national territory, we prioritize the work in the working class, peasants and revolutionary comuneros (communards), we are developing a broad policy of unity, alliances and agreements with revolutionary sectors, working for the Anti-imperialist and Anti-Fascist Popular Front, we denounce those who torpedo the policy of the Popular Front by applying a sectarian Trotskyist policy that divides the popular movement. We criticize the weaknesses and concessions of social democracy, its petty-bourgeois and negotiating essence, we demand that the government improve the living conditions of the popular majority and respect the gains with street mobilization, we take advantage of all spaces for the promotion of our program, carry out Marxist-Leninist political training and proletarian organization, promote internationalism and solidarity with all peoples fighting the common enemy.

This policy allows us to resist and fight in the complex conditions of the moment, combining an internationalist approach and class principles while remaining on the broad spectrum of the struggle for national liberation and the fight against imperialism. We put forward our Marxist-Leninist positions that differ from the others, while educating the masses with the tools of our party that is playing a role within the political debates of the Venezuelan revolutionary left. With our Marxist-Leninist line we are confronting in the first place the pro-Yankee right, the US-EU imperialist bloc, the imperialist greed of the China-Russia bloc, the local bourgeoisie, both traditional and emerging. We are denouncing the vacillations of the reformist petty bourgeoisie, the opportunist, negotiating and corrupt tendencies that infiltrate the organizations of the popular movement in order to break it down; we are denouncing the sectarian and divisive politics of the Trotskyists and of the revisionist communist party with its history of inconsistencies and betrayals, while we are consolidating the work in the working class, among the poor and middle peasants, the revolutionary comunards, the advanced intelligentsia, the progressive troops and the anti-imperialist elements of the people while preparing the theoretical and practical conditions to confront the class

enemies together with the people, where the conscious youth, the revolutionary women and the advanced intelligentsia are found.

We are doing what we have done throughout the history of our party and in the organizations that preceded it, always with an eye on the confrontation with imperialism, the bourgeoisie and its lackeys, with a willingness to advance in the process of national liberation that will open the doors to popular democracy leading towards socialism.

In the midst of all these complex situations we are continuing to work on the process of education of the popular masses according to the premises of our classics Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, the orientations of the Communist International, the experiences of the international communist movement as well as the analyses of the ICMLPO in order to advance in the revolutionary struggle.

Socialism is only built with the worker peasant alliance in power and the people in arms.

*Political Bureau of the Marxist-Leninist
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