

No.1

COMMUNIST

PROMETHEUS

JUNE



«Workers of the world, unite!»

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The development of the modern productive forces provides new technical instruments for the Marxist press. The illustrative material in this issue was created using artificial intelligence technologies (the generative neural networks Gemini 3 Flash Image and DALL-E 3). Here, AI functioned solely as a means of production, while the ideological conception, the formulation of tasks, and the final processing of the images are the result of the living human labour of our editorial collective.

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email: komunistprometey@ik.me
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FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

A NEW STAGE

The publication of the first issue of “Communist Prometheus” is a natural result of nearly thirty years of work done by our group. In conditions of extreme weakness on the part of the contemporary workers’ movement and fragmentation of Marxist forces, we are not trying to start all over. On the contrary, we draw upon accumulated political and theoretical experience. Our praxis has passed through several stages, each one required a refinement of strategy and the consistent application of the Marxist method to changing historical conditions.

1998: THE FORMATION OF A FOUNDATION IN CONDITIONS OF CRISIS

The first step was the publication of the newspaper “Komsa”, launched in June 1998 against the backdrop of a profound economic crisis in Russia. Unlike many “leftist” groups, we did not regard 1991 as a “bourgeois counter-revolution”; for us, it had already taken place in 1925, when Stalinism, having triumphed in the USSR, abandoned the course towards world revolution.

Our emergence was an objective response to the social collapse of the 1990s. The initial impulse was largely rooted in a spontaneous rejection of the “new” bourgeoisie – drawn from the Party and Komso-mol nomenklatura. However, this rejection quickly developed into the formulation of a clear political foundation: the necessity of the complete abolition of private property and commodity-money relations, as well as the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat as an inevitable transitional stage towards communism.

2014: THE TEST OF INTERNATIONALISM

The principles of proletarian internationalism were inherent to our organisation from the very beginning. Therefore, when the inter-imperialist conflict intensified in 2014 and Ukraine became one of its military fronts, we had no need to revise our positions.

This period compelled us to deepen our analysis of the uneven development of capitalism and the shifting balance of powers on the world stage. At a time when a significant part of the so-called “left” descended into social chauvinism, we consistently defended the classical Marxist thesis: the proletariat has no fatherland, and every modern nation is merely a political and economic shell of capital. The task of the working class in any imperialist conflict is reduced to a single principle: the main enemy is at home.

2026: “COMMUNIST PROMETHEUS” AND THE TASKS OF PARTY-BUILDING

Today, the situation demands that we advance to the next stage. As stated in the published “Manifesto”, the era of bourgeois-democratic revolutions and national liberation movements has definitively come to an end. Capitalism has finally bound the planet in the chains of the world market, while leaving the class of wage labourers divided.

The publication of “Communist Prometheus” is dictated by the necessity of moving towards practical work on the formation of a world communist party. We assess our forces soberly, do not regard ourselves as a fully formed party, and recognise ourselves only as one part of the practical movement towards it. Along this path, we remain open to collaboration with all left-communist organisations that consistently uphold the positions of Marxism and proletarian internationalism.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME AND OUR TASKS

The image of Prometheus reflects our central task – overcoming the bourgeois monopoly on knowledge and bringing Marxist consciousness into the proletariat’s class struggle. Without the assimilation of theory, spontaneous protest remains confined within the limits of economic demands and is incapable of threatening the foundations of the system of wage slavery.

The path from the newspaper “Komsa” in 1998 to the journal “Communist Prometheus” in 2026 represents a process of political and organisational maturation. We critically reassess our past experience and take the next logical step.

We present this journal not just for reading, but as a working instrument for theoretical discussion and organisational co-ordination. We call upon those who share our positions to join the work on the publication and to participate in the process of forming the communist party.

April 2026



MANIFESTO OF THE GROUP



COMMUNIST PROMETHEUS



This text constitutes our programme document. We hope it will contribute to laying the theoretical foundations for the unification of Marxist forces on the path towards the creation of a new world communist party. The document has emerged under conditions of extreme weakness and fragmentation within the contemporary workers' movement, at a moment when global capitalism has entered its highest, imperialist stage of decay, threatening humanity with barbarism and new destructive wars. The central idea of the manifesto is that the historical epoch of bourgeois revolutions has come to an end; consequently, the only path forward for the proletariat lies in preparing a world revolution aimed at the complete abolition of private property, commodity production, and the state.

PREFACE

The "Manifesto of the Communist Party" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels was the first historical programmatic document of the revolutionary party of the world proletariat. Precisely because of its *programmatic* character, the theses that constituted its *core*, its essence, did not pertain directly to the historical moment of its publication, but instead, they described the conditions and set the objectives for a long-term historical horizon within which the communist movement was supposed to unfold. The Communist Prometheus did not emerge in a vacuum: our activity is grounded in the *continuity* and further *development* of the programmatic core of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party".

Marx and Engels declared: «*the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property*». The development of capitalism created the necessary objective conditions for the realisation of this theses: «*modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few*».

In "The German Ideology", the founders of scientific communism pointed out that «*to this modern private property corresponds the modern State*». From this it follows that the abolition of private property requires the abolition of the state. Who, then, must undertake this task? In the preface to the 1888 English edition of the Manifesto, Engels – emphasising that this had always been his and Marx's shared view – gives an unequivocal answer: «*the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself*».

And while Marx and Engels themselves lived in a period when the fundamental social facts and tasks of the labour movement identified in the Manifesto were, at best, still in their infancy, we are living in an era in which, for the first time, all these propositions can be regarded without reservation as the programme of a world communist party.

THE NATURE OF OUR ERA

Completing the formation of the world market, capitalism has fulfilled its historical function. The era of bourgeois revolutions and the formation of national markets, national bourgeoisie, and nation states has come to an end. Contemporary bourgeois society has entered its highest, imperialist phase, characterised by reactionary politics on *all* fronts. Having passed beyond the ascendant and progressive stage

of its development, capitalism has turned towards an inevitable and terrifying decline – a trajectory *already* clearly recognised by revolutionary Marxists of the times of Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. In our modern era, capitalism has created not only gigantic productive forces, which constitute the objective precondition for its supersession, but also colossal destructive forces capable of annihilating humanity itself. The task of the working class, led by its vanguard – the world communist party – today consists in abolishing capitalism, preventing it from dragging the whole of humanity into the abyss. Communism or barbarism – that is the alternative.

Despite the fact that all the forces of the old world fail to recognise this reality, *the spectre of communism is stirring* within the depths of capitalist society. Regardless of the weakness of modern communists – *conscious exponents of an unconscious process* – a communist revolution is maturing, one that must abolish the division of society into classes and the private property that underlies it.

This task cannot be accomplished without the *broad masses* of the working class acquiring communist consciousness, and this «*can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew*» ("The German Ideology").

THE PARTY

The dominant ideas of any class society are the ideas of the ruling class. In modern society, the bourgeoisie is the ruling class, and therefore bourgeois ideologies prevail even among wage workers *everywhere*. «*In order to supersede the idea of private property, the idea of communism is enough. In order to supersede private property as it actually exists, real communist activity is necessary*», as Marx asserted in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Thus, a *genuine critique* of bourgeois ideas is possible only within the framework of a *real practical movement*, in the process of a communist revolution. This practical movement must be led by a world communist party. Such a party does not exist today. We do not regard ourselves as this party, nor even as its sole nucleus. We view our activity as *part* of the practical movement towards communism, as a struggle for the creation of this party, and our manifesto as only one of the necessary steps along this path. In 1999, in our newspaper *Komsa*, we

declared: *«We are ready to cooperate with all those who, not in words but in deeds, are fighting for the liberation of the proletariat from the power of the bourgeoisie; with all those who stand on the positions of classical revolutionary Marxism, regardless of the organisation to which they belong. Our position remains unchanged: today the proletariat does not have its own party, and we are confronted with the urgent necessity of creating one. This is the immediate practical task of our organisation».* This task remains relevant today.

The above does not contradict the fact that there have been and continue to be groups of revolutionaries – often small in number, sometimes literally reduced to a handful of people – who preserve their commitment to uncompromising revolutionary Marxism, ensuring its scientific integrity and continuity over time. In this sense, we trace our lineage back to Marx and Engels, to the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, to the first two congresses of the Communist International, to the Italian Communist Left, and to the Russian ‘post-Soviet’ communist groups that opposed their ideas to pseudo-Marxism – the ideology of the USSR’s false socialism, which collapsed and sank into oblivion.

The absence of a world communist party can be explained only by the absence of the necessary conditions. *«These conditions of life, which different generations find in existence, decide also whether or not the periodically recurring revolutionary convulsion will be strong enough to overthrow the basis of the entire existing system. And if these material elements of a complete revolution are not present (namely, on the one hand the existing productive forces, on the other the formation of a revolutionary mass, which revolts not only against separate conditions of society up till then, but against the very “production of life” till then, the “total activity” on which it was based), then, as far as practical development is concerned, it is absolutely immaterial whether the idea of this revolution has been expressed a hundred times already, as the history of communism proves»* (“The German Ideology”).

In the same work, the founders of scientific communism write: *«The various shaping of material life is, of course, in every case dependent on the needs which are already developed, and the production, as well as the satisfaction, of these needs is an historical process».* Within the class of wage labourers, *the need to carry out a communist revolution* must mature and develop and our task is to assist this process. The environment in which communist consciousness matures is not confined to economic relations between the capitalist and the proletarian – that is, to relations within

the process of production and appropriation of surplus value. This process encompasses the totality of relations within the capitalist social economic formation.

The development of communist consciousness occurs *«not so much because of the “economic origins”»* of wage workers, *«but rather in the course of class struggle»*, which is always a political struggle. With this thesis, in 1999, we drew a clear line between ourselves and the proponents of workerist and economistic tendencies.

Thus, there exists a class *«which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages»*, and this inevitably places it in the sharpest contradiction with the ruling bourgeois class; today, this class *«forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness».* Yet all this represents only a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for a communist revolution.

The development of wage labourers from *contingent individuals* into conscious exponents of an unconscious process *«takes place naturally»*, *«it is not subordinated to the general plan of freely combined individuals»*, this development occurs *«very slowly»*, and *«the various stages and interests are never completely overcome».* Communists can only impart to this process a more organised and planned character.

METHOD

The theoretical basis of a world communist party is Marxism.

David Ryazanov, in his history of the Communist League, wrote: *«Marx and Engels finally discovered a synthesis between ‘politics’ and socialism and, at the same time, an answer to the question of how to unite the labour movement and socialism, which until then had followed different paths. It became clear that socialism, or communism, is the highest form of the labour movement, [...], that communism can be realised only by the labour movement; and that the only class which can and must, by virtue of its position, undertake the realisation of communism is the proletariat. From this there naturally followed a task: to bring into the class struggle of the proletariat an awareness of its aims, and to organise the proletariat into a distinct political party. Not withdrawal from the tasks of the present, not a retreat into sectarian cloister, but intervention in all manifestations of social life, attentive study of reality, and active participation in all spheres of social life!»*

This was written in a time when the bourgeoisie had not yet resolved all the historical tasks confront-

ing it – the era of bourgeois revolutions, the highest point of which was the October Revolution in Russia.

THE HISTORICAL FATE OF CAPITALISM

The entire written history of human society that has come down to us is the history of class struggle.

More than five hundred years elapsed between the first major slave revolts and the fall of the slave-owning mode of production. The historical period that began with the first large-scale anti-feudal peasant uprisings and ended with the worldwide establishment of capitalism likewise spanned more than five centuries.

The first major uprisings of the proto-proletariat (guild apprentices, urban plebeians, manufacture workers) occurred during the transition from the Middle Ages to early modernity. In 1378, an uprising of the *ciompi* – untrained day labourers in the cloth factories – took place in Florence. The English bourgeois revolution gave rise to movements that were proletarian in character, such as the Levellers and the Diggers. The Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was accompanied by movements that can already be described as workers' uprisings against capitalist conditions of labour: the Luddite movement (England, early 19th century) and the Lyon weavers' uprising (France, 1831 and 1834).

Thus, the practical movement towards communism unfolds across time and space, passing through various stages, solving various accompanying tasks, overcoming various obstacles. We do not know how much time will pass before the *abolition of private property*, but we know for sure that theories predicting an "automatic" collapse of capitalism or positing fixed "objective" limits to its existence are unscientific. Such are the theories of the collapse of capitalism by a critical fall in the rate of profit or by the exhaustion of a non-capitalist environment.

At the same time, the further development of capitalism not only increasingly hinders the development of the productive forces, but ever more frequently destroys them in catastrophic crises of overproduction, intensifying the struggle for markets and the redivision of the world among imperialist states. In the crucible of these crises and wars, capitalism renews itself, like the mythical phoenix, opening new cycles of capital accumulation. The proletariat has no path to liberation other than through the destruction of the capitalist mode of production.

THE SPREAD OF MARXISM

The development and dissemination of Marxism likewise unfolded across *space* and *time*. Originat-

ing in continental Europe, it spread to Great Britain; through European migration it reached North America; through students educated at European universities and members of aristocratic families who travelled abroad, the most advanced intellectuals in Russia became acquainted with the works of Karl Marx. Later, the ideas of scientific communism would also find their way into Asia.

Lenin linked the spread of Marxism to three major periods in world history: «(1) *from the revolution of 1848 to the Paris Commune (1871)*; (2) *from the Paris Commune to the Russian revolution (1905)*; (3) *since the Russian revolution [...]*.»

The first period lasted twenty-three years, the second thirty-four years, while the third – beginning with the First Russian Revolution – had not yet been completed at the time Lenin wrote his article.

THE FIRST PERIOD

The first period was a time when socialism was making its transition *from utopia to science*. Beginning as one of the «*very numerous groups or trends of socialism*», Marxism advanced by overcoming the «*incomprehension of the materialist basis of historical movement, inability to single out the role and significance of each class in capitalist society, concealment of the bourgeois nature of democratic reforms under diverse, quasi-socialist phrases about the "people", "justice", "right", and so on*». This period encompassed the European bourgeois revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871. By its end, «*independent proletarian parties came into being: the First International (1864–72) and the German Social-Democratic Party*».

The Paris Commune and the First Russian Revolution (1905–1907) became the pinnacles of the era of bourgeois revolutions and, at the same time, the prologue to the proletarian revolutions. In the Paris Commune, the proletariat, as Marx wrote, discovered the long-sought historical political form through which the class of wage labourers could achieve its economic emancipation. The Paris Commune became the prototype of the *dictatorship of the proletariat – a semi-state form* whose task was not merely to seize power, but to destroy the old bourgeois state machine. In the First Russian Revolution, the proletariat was led by the Marxist party, while the Soviets, created by the wage-earning class *itself*, represented a further development and continuation of the same historical political form embodied by the Paris Commune. This form would later be realised in the Russian

Revolution of 1917 and in the revolutions of 1918–1919 in Germany and Hungary.

THE SECOND PERIOD

The second period differs from the first «*by its "peaceful" character, by the absence of revolutions. The West had finished with bourgeois revolutions. The East had not yet risen to them.*

«*Socialist parties, basically proletarian*» emerging in Western Europe «*learned to use bourgeois parliamentarism and to found their own daily press, their educational institutions, their trade unions and their co-operative societies. Marx's doctrine [...] began to spread.*

It was precisely at this stage of prolonged "peaceful" capitalist development that «*liberalism, rotten within, tried to revive itself in the form of socialist opportunism*». Revisionists such as Eduard Bernstein «*cravenly preached "social peace" [...], renunciation of the class struggle, etc. They had very many adherents among socialist members of parliament, various officials of the working-class movement, and the "sympathising" intelligentsia*».

Yet these same years, which in Western Europe were a time of 'peaceful' and gradual development of capitalism, were in the East a period of rapid capitalist growth. This contradictory and *uneven development* of capitalism was preparing «*a new source of great world storms opened up in Asia*». «*It is in this era*», wrote Lenin, «*of storms and their "repercussions" in Europe that we are now living*». Thus, Marx's scientific foresight was confirmed. On 27 September 1877, he wrote that «*this time the revolution will begin in the East, hitherto the unbroken bulwark and reserve army of counter-revolution*». It goes without saying that he was referring to the *bourgeois-democratic* revolution.

«*After Asia*», Lenin wrote, «*Europe has also begun to stir, although not in the Asiatic way. [...] The frenzied arming and the policy of imperialism are turning modern Europe into a "social peace" which is more like a gunpowder barrel*».

Capitalism entered its highest stage – the stage of imperialism.

THE THIRD PERIOD

The world-historical significance of the third period in the spread of Marxism lies *primarily* in the fact that it made the proletariat the leading force in bourgeois revolutions – and, *most importantly*, it marked the beginning of proletarian communist revolutions themselves.

The central event of world-historical significance in this period was the October Revolution in Russia.

The combination of two crises – the internal crisis of the bourgeois Provisional Government and the external crisis represented by the protracted first imperialist war – meant that the proletarian revolution had to solve two tasks simultaneously: to complete the bourgeois revolution within the country and to open the road to world revolution. The highest point in the realisation of the second task was the creation of the Communist International, the headquarters of the world revolution.

The October Revolution thus had a *dual* character: by destroying the remnants of feudalism, it resolved tasks that the bourgeoisie was no longer able – and no longer willing – to carry out, and at the same time it sought to open the path towards a world communist revolution.

October's "*storming of the heavens*" in Russia was followed by revolutions in Germany, Hungary and Finland, and by the beginning of the formation of communist parties in many countries of the world. This *unprecedented revolutionary wave* was subsequently swept away by a counter-revolution of colossal force. During the 1920s and 1930s, Stalinism in Russia, social democracy, and then Nazism in Germany and fascism in various European countries drowned the *first world communist revolution* in blood.

The failure to grasp this *dual* character of October was a component of the erroneous view held by the Mensheviks who, based on a one-sided view according to which Russia's economy at the time suffered not from the dominant influence of imperialist capitalist relations, but from the insufficient development of the productive forces, held that the Russian working class – although destined to play an unprecedented role in organising economic and political life, especially in the "defence," and even further development, of capitalism – should not take full state power or attempt to build socialism, since such an attempt would be premature. To the proletariat they assigned the role of pushing the Russian bourgeoisie, which they regarded as the only class capable of *leading* the solution to the country's immediate economic and political issues. As Yuliy Martov wrote in 1917, after the Bolsheviks had already seized power: «[To attempt] *to implant socialism in an economically and culturally backwards country is a senseless utopia*».

This vision lacks two essential components of a truly scientific revolutionary strategy. First, it fails to take into account the *empirical* fact that by the time the revolutionary epoch began in Russia, the bourgeoisie of the leading capitalist countries had

become an entirely counter-revolutionary force – incapable of playing a leading role in the bourgeois revolution and ready to betray the interests of its best ally in the struggle against feudalism, the peasantry. From this fact, the only correct conclusion for the tactics of the proletariat was to be drawn: it was necessary to win the peasantry – subject to a double oppression of feudalism and capitalism – as an ally, to appeal to the rational side of its *duality*, rather than its prejudice, its future – not its past (it was precisely this idea that Engels expressed in “The Peasant Question in France and Germany”). Marx and Engels, unlike the Mensheviks, were able to incorporate this crucial point into the strategy of the proletariat. In “Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany”, Engels – drawing on extensive empirical material – analysed the German Revolution of 1848–1849 and developed theses that he and Marx had already advanced during the revolution itself: the leitmotif of the analysis is the inability of the German liberal bourgeoisie to play a leading role in the bourgeois revolution. A hypothetically favourable alignment of forces for the proletariat was repeatedly expressed by Marx and Engels in compact formulas: «[only with the support of the peasantry] *the proletarian revolution will obtain that chorus without which its solo song becomes the swan song in all peasant countries,*’ or: *‘The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant War. Then the affair will be splendid*».

However, in the mid-19th century, conditions combined in a manner unfavourable to the proletariat, and, according to the classics, it was precisely the fact that the peasant masses were drawn behind the *counter-revolutionary* bourgeoisie rather than the revolutionary proletariat that constituted the principal reason why the revolutions of the *Spring of Nations* in 1848–1849 were neither radical nor carried through to completion even in a bourgeois sense – let alone capable of opening a perspective for the realisation of an internationalist communist strategy. But such conditions arose half a century later in Russia, and not to take advantage of them would have amounted to nothing less than a betrayal of the proletariat by a party claiming to represent its historical interests.

Secondly, the Mensheviks lacked an understanding of the necessity of viewing the struggle of any national section of the proletariat as subordinate to the interests of the world class as a whole. The Bolsheviks bequeathed to subsequent generations of revolutionary fighters an *invaluable* historical experience: *for the first*

time, the proletariat created a functioning organisational centre of the world revolution; for the first time, it united – in practice, rather than in declarations or moral exhortations – different contingents of the class across the globe and for the first time, it constituted the working class as an active *subject* of international relations. But all this might not have happened if the Russian workers had followed the Mensheviks and voluntarily renounced the seizure of power.

However, the defeat of the *first* world communist revolution cannot refute the correctness of Marxism, just as it cannot refute the logic of historical social development.

The end of the third period can be *tentatively* considered to be 1925, when, following the results of the 14th Conference of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), the transition from the course of world communist revolution to the course of building socialism in a single country was confirmed. The last flashes of this period were the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939. The Second Imperialist World War that followed was accompanied only by isolated, independent actions of the proletariat, limited in strength and significance, in which those who had taken part in the revolutionary wave of 1917–1923 and in the subsequent struggle against the bourgeois counter-revolution played a central role.

The counter-revolutionary wave and the subsequent decades of bourgeois rule gave rise not only to the monsters of capitalist reaction, but also to many more or less influential ideologies of *false* socialism – Stalinism, Maoism, Castroism and Guevarism, Juche, Chavism, etc. All of them were born in their time as *bourgeois* ideologies of ‘catch-up development,’ designed to accompany the centralisation and acceleration of capitalist development in the respective backward countries, and have now taken their rightful place on the edge of the graveyard of bourgeois ideologies, from which the most diverse factions of the bourgeoisie draw their ‘ideas.’ Another component of these ideologies, bringing them closer, for example, to Russian populism, were elements of *utopian* socialism, designed to involve the broad masses in the construction of *capitalism*, which was actually taking place, and to hide it behind phrases about the mythical ‘building of socialism.’

At the same time, fragments of the revolutionary “storming of the heavens» in the second half of the 1910s and early 1920s remained – *proletarian* movements that attempted to defend Marxism in conditions of widespread repression. But they failed to retreat

in an organised manner, preserve rare cadres, provide a scientific analysis of the social battles taking place and those to come, and create a core that could become the successor to the world party of the proletariat. Ultimately, they reached an impasse. The most famous of these movements is Trotskyism, which currently does not even have a unified theory and has degenerated to the level of petty-bourgeois ideologies that do not go beyond certain national demands or interclass alliances. Although we do not question Lev Trotsky's subjective revolutionary spirit and his contributions to the proletariat, scientific honesty requires us to acknowledge that the seeds of modern Trotskyism were sown by Trotsky's own theoretical and political errors.

However, there were also *proletarian* currents, mainly in Italy, which managed at least to preserve the thread of Marxism and prepare the ground for future generations of revolutionaries. Their most important achievement was a largely accurate analysis of the socio-economic nature of states such as Stalin's USSR – *bourgeois* states growing out of a *capitalist* economic base.

THE FOURTH (CURRENT) PERIOD

Contemporary conditions differ substantially from those observed by the classics of Marxism, who traced the following *logic of social development*: rapid capitalist expansion was accompanied by a sharp intensification of class antagonisms, the situation of the proletarian masses became increasingly unbearable, and this generated the growth of spontaneous class struggle. Marxists then had only to *merge the labour movement and socialism*.

Today, rapid capitalist development – accompanied by the expansion of industrial production, the disintegration of the peasantry, and large-scale migration to the cities – can be observed primarily in Southeast Asia and Africa – but even there, this process has either already ended or is slowing down. There is certainly no reason to expect a spontaneous class struggle among wage workers in the developed imperialist metropolises *in the foreseeable future*.

The present conditions in all developed imperialist states closely resemble those that had already taken shape in the most advanced capitalist countries – England and the United States – in the second half of the nineteenth century. As early as 1907, Lenin provided an incisive characterisation of these conditions. The proletariat shows *«almost no political independence. In these countries – where bourgeois-democratic historical tasks were almost entirely non-existent – the political arena was com-*

pletely held by a triumphant and self-satisfied bourgeoisie, unequalled anywhere in the world in the art of deceiving, corrupting and bribing the workers».

Compared with the capitalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the contemporary working class exhibits a far more complex internal stratification; in advanced capitalist countries, it is accompanied by the growth of parasitism and the labour aristocracy, the spread of a property-owning strata of wage workers and families with multiple sources of income; relatively high labour productivity means that far fewer workers are concentrated within individual industrial enterprises than in earlier periods; there is a convergence of incomes between wage workers and the intermediate strata, and a more developed transport system and housing stock have blurred – though not abolished – the spatial separation between “working-class” and bourgeois residential areas; the production, dissemination and consumption of the dominant ideology (social networks, streaming platforms, the Internet in general) have taken on more developed forms; imperialism has given rise to an extensive ‘social’ state.

This is precisely why there is no mass labour movement and why the revolutionary minority is extremely weak in the centres of imperialist development (centres whose working class bears the historical task of playing a decisive role in the communist revolution), making the prospect of a victorious communist revolution impossible *in the short and medium term*.

At the same time, **primitive accumulation of capital** (i.e., the separation of the direct producer from the means of production) **has largely been completed** worldwide in the *last* sphere where it could still take place: agriculture. In the second half of the twentieth century, the decomposition of the peasantry was largely completed. It no longer exists as a pre-capitalist class on a scale of any global significance. The agrarian revolution was complete. Agricultural production has become one of the sectors of the capitalist economy.

The era of bourgeois revolutions has ended, and with it, national liberation wars and anti-colonial movements have receded into the past. All this has deprived the communists of the opportunity to supplement the proletarian uprising with another edition of the peasant war or a national liberation movement. The modern class of wage workers will have to carry out the world communist revolution under new and unprecedented historical conditions. At the same time, for the first time in history, it will be compelled to realise an unmediated and uncom-

promised communist programme – a programme centred on the abolition of private property. The implementation of this programme will open the way from the highest and final form of *commodity* production – capitalism – to communistically organised, i.e. directly social labour, which excludes the possibility of transforming the product of social labour into a *commodity*. The abolition of private property implies the *destruction* of commodity production as such. Here it is worth noting two important conclusions that follow from the scientific analysis of capitalism developed by Marxism: 1) measures aimed at mitigating *individual negative manifestations* – through nationalisation, state regulation and the elimination of market “failures”, the expansion of the “welfare state”, etc. – do not lead to this goal; 2) no “intermediate” economic system, no “third way,” can exist between commodity (i.e. capitalist) production and planned (i.e. communist) production. Because modern society is characterised by a permanent – not accidental – social interconnection resting on an anarchic basis of production, a connection that appears on the surface as the universal circulation of money, any mode of production that preserves this commodity-based, *anarchic* foundation – and therefore money – falls within the scope of Marx’s theory and is, *by definition*, capitalist, regardless of the labels assigned to it by old or new ideological mantras: “real socialism,” “monocapitalism,” “totalitarianism,” “state capitalism,” “bureaucratic collectivism,” “neo-Asian mode of production,” “new feudalism,” etc. As Lenin showed in his polemic with Kautsky and Bukharin, a hypothetical capitalism in which only a single collective capitalist remains – embodied in a state or a private corporation that has completely suppressed competition among different fractions – is impossible.

At present, none of the bourgeois factions can, even *in principle*, offer solutions to the fundamental problems facing humanity. Thus, the only truly universal interest of the modern bourgeoisie is the preservation of the existing mode of production. Undoubtedly, the division within the bourgeoisie – the ruling class of capitalist society – is an objective phenomenon. It is fragmented by competition in the struggle for the appropriation of surplus value and therefore cannot be united in any lasting sense. Yet it is united by a common class interest: to preserve the social order within which it can continue to appropriate surplus value.

All modern political shells are fully developed and fully adequate to the established mode of production. The differences between “right-wing” and “left-wing”

parties, as well as between “democratic” and “dictatorial” regimes, are of a *private*, cosmetic nature. Parliament (like all other representative institutions) has become a dysfunctional relic even for the bourgeoisie itself, since the struggle between its factions and the adoption of major decisions take place within the executive and monetary apparatuses of the state. For the proletariat, parliament is even less relevant, as it can no longer serve even as a tribune for its class interests.

This was not the case in the era of bourgeois revolutions, which fought against the *remnants of the medieval order*. At that time, communists supported the struggle for bourgeois democracy, since it created conditions for accelerated capitalist development; consequently, it was a *necessary* and *unavoidable* stage for the full unfolding of the proletarian struggle on a modern, i.e., capitalist, foundation. The participation of the proletariat in this struggle was the only thing that could give it the most consistent and complete character, as well as significantly hasten its outcome.

Our era for the first time sets the proletariat and its world communist party the task of carrying out exclusively its own, specifically communist, objectives. Therefore, the communist party cannot enter into any interclass blocs, electoral coalitions, interparty alliances, coordination committees, etc. But we have always welcomed – will continue to welcome – defectors from the bourgeois class who place themselves on the path of the world communist revolution. They are following the only correct path – the path of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

CAPITALISM BREEDS WARS

Commodities are the economic *cell-form* of capitalist society. From this cell, all its inherent characteristics *inevitably* grow: competition by all possible means, poverty, and the highest manifestation of the contradictions of capitalism – world imperialist wars. Thus, the very development of the capitalist mode of production constantly creates the conditions for war. Consequently, the only way to end war is to abolish private property.

Back in “The German Ideology”, Marx and Engels wrote: «*Big industry universalised competition [...], established means of communication and the modern world market [...]. [...] Generally speaking, big industry created everywhere the same relations between the classes of society, and thus destroyed the peculiar individuality of the various nationalities. And finally, while the bourgeoisie of each nation still retained separate national interests, big industry created a class, which in all nations*

has the same interest and with which nationality is already dead; a class which is really rid of all the old world and at the same time stands pitted against it».

At present, the capitalist mode of production has indeed spread across the globe, so if Marx and Engels created the Communist League as an international organisation, then in the current conditions of *universal competition*, Marxists must see themselves as the world proletarian vanguard, otherwise they are doomed to parochialism and narrow-mindedness or, worse still, to becoming an instrument of one of the factions of the bourgeoisie, which *always* pursues certain *nationally limited* interests that are inadequate for the modern era.

THE NATURE OF WARS IN THE CURRENT ERA

Marxism has always viewed the emergence of nations as a consequence of the establishment of capitalism and the elimination of feudalism, i.e. before the beginning of the capitalist era, nations did not exist in the scientific sense of the word. In the Middle Ages, states were composed of numerous semi-autonomous localities and regions, often separated by their own customs barriers and frequently speaking different languages. These units were economically self-contained, and their connection to central state power was relatively weak. Capitalism, which destroyed the medieval communal, guild, and artisanal ties, replaced them with another type of social connection: one established by the market within the framework of a commodity economy. It was this connection that became the social bond constituting the nation.

In one of his most important works, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (1914), Lenin wrote: *«Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. [...] Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The most profound economic factors drive towards this goal, and, therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the national state is typical and normal for the capitalist period. Consequently, if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determi-*

nation of nations, not by juggling with legal definitions, or "inventing" abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state».

Due to the uneven development of capitalism, a specific variant of the national question emerged: the colonial question. Its essence lay in the fact that countries whose bourgeoisie had largely completed the elimination of pre-capitalist remnants at home became *metropolises* and employed their power to preserve these very remnants in dependent territories – the *colonies*. The communists were then faced with the task of supporting certain bourgeois-democratic movements in *backward* countries, insofar as their victory accelerated capitalist development and thereby brought closer the next stage of proletarian revolutions on a world scale.

However, this applied not to all bourgeois-democratic movements, but only to those of a genuinely national-revolutionary character. Already at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, Lenin emphasised: *«There can be no doubt of the fact that any nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, because the great mass of the population of the backward countries consists of the peasantry, which is the representative of bourgeois capitalist relations. [...] if we say 'bourgeois-democratic', we lose the distinction between the reformist and revolutionary movement [...], simply because the imperialist bourgeoisie has done everything in its power to create a reformist movement among the oppressed peoples too. A certain understanding has emerged between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often, even perhaps in most cases, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, although they also support national movements, nevertheless fight against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes with a certain degree of agreement with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is to say together with it. [...] The point about this is that as communists we will only support the bourgeois freedom movements in the colonial countries if these movements are really revolutionary and if their representatives are not opposed to us training and organising the peasantry in a revolutionary way. If that is no good, then the communists there also have a duty to fight against the reformist bourgeoisie...»*

Here, it is important to emphasise one point: by the term 'backward', the Communist International

meant countries with a predominantly feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant economy, and not countries with a fully developed capitalist economy that lagged behind the leading countries only in quantitative terms. Today, there are no such backward countries on any significant scale.

Thus, from the standpoint of Marxism, the national question is considered "solved" once feudalism has been completely overcome within a country's economy and production has become entirely commodity-based. From this moment on, a new historical stage begins: the struggle of the proletariat for the abolition of all nations and state borders, for the unification of people throughout the world within the framework of a new, communist economy. Naturally, this scientific understanding differs from the widespread *philistine* opinion that the national question is not resolved as long as conflicts between states representing different nations and ethnic groups within a single state persist, but the reality is that, *in this sense*, the national question cannot, *in principle*, be resolved *within the framework* of the global capitalist economy.

Such a common-sense approach is not only theoretically sterile, but also practically harmful, as it makes the proletarian who accepts it a blind and passive instrument that will inevitably be exploited by one faction of the bourgeoisie or another.

The only protection against this is a clear understanding that nations today are fully formed, and that the wars waged by particular detachments of the world bourgeoisie (whether in small countries in terms of economic size, large countries, or within countries), under the banner of 'national liberation war', are either directly and openly imperialist or imperialist in a 'proxy' form, when the bourgeoisie of a smaller nation, or of a part of it, acts merely as an intermediary for advancing the objectives of particular imperialist powers or blocs.

In "The Communist Manifesto", Marx and Engels proclaimed that the proletariat had no country. This implied the need for the proletariat to fight first and foremost for its own class interests on a global scale, since national interests had become synonymous with the interests of the ruling classes. With the advent of the imperialist era, nationalism completely lost any progressive content. As Lenin wrote: «*If national wars in the 18th and 19th centuries marked the beginning of capitalism, imperialist wars point to its end*».

It is completely irrelevant which detachment of the bourgeoisie struck first: this *particular* circumstance does not change the main point: the *reactionary* nature of such

wars. In these conditions, as Lenin wrote, the division into defensive and offensive wars becomes obsolete.

Neither side in such a conflict is fighting to break down the *archaic* and barbaric capitalist system and move on to the next stage of humanity's social evolution – which means that wars will happen again and again. Humanity can break out of this vicious circle only when the proletariat launches a *world revolution*: the complete end of this world civil war will put an end to all wars by abolishing their root cause: commodity production.

Thus, *imperialist* war is not an exception but a *typical* phenomenon of our imperialist *era*, but typical does not mean the only one, and in the imperialist era there *can be* "justified", "defensive" revolutionary wars: *class* civil wars, wars against *all* imperialist powers waged by the proletariat to establish its own dictatorship, as well as wars aimed at spreading the revolution to other countries. Therefore, the position of communists has nothing in common with bourgeois pacifism, and the general slogan of communists, applicable to *any* war in the current imperialist *era*, is the classic slogan of the German Spartacists: **"The main enemy is at home."**

However, this slogan – and the only correct tactic that follows from it, namely *revolutionary defeatism*, i.e. the *mass* revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of all countries against their 'own' governments in all imperialist wars – can only be realised if there is a *mass* movement of the working class.

Until such a movement exists, every worker can lay his brick in the foundation of the future edifice, that is, understand – and spread this understanding around him – that even in a purely *everyday* sense, it is irrational for the proletariat to support 'its own' bourgeoisie in war, since the ruling class inevitably uses it to increase oppression of the exploited class (restrictions on political freedoms, freedom of speech, assembly, organisations, everyday controls, the shifting of increased costs onto the population, the intensification of labour regimes, and forced mobilisation), and will benefit itself (redistribution of assets, increased corruption and privileges, including under the pretext of classifying previously publicly available information, enrichment from military contracts and foreign aid, further deepening of already extreme social inequality).

THE TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST STRUGGLE

The appropriation of Marxist theory and of the experience of previous class struggles of the proletariat

is a necessary but insufficient condition for the struggle to create a world communist party.

We live in an era in which the conditions for a communist revolution are maturing. The key question is not how rapidly capitalism will be overcome, but how. The necessity of the revolutionary path is not in question. The problem lies in *how exactly* this process will unfold. The driving force of the communist revolution is the class of wage workers – the only revolutionary class of our era. The task of communists is to generalise and develop the forms assumed by its struggle, directing it towards the abolition of private property. To this end, communists must participate in all manifestations of the contemporary struggle of the proletariat, however partial and limited they may be.

The world communist party exists in constant connection with the class of wage workers. Objective conditions determine the depth and breadth of the political vanguard's activities.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten that class struggle develops simultaneously – but unevenly – on several fronts: economic, political and theoretical. The main task of the struggle on the theoretical front consists in linking and generalising the experience of the wage-working class across *global time and space*. It is necessary to *grow together with the working class*, not in isolation from it, and certainly not by substituting ourselves for it.

The programme of the Internationalist Communist Party, presented in September 1944, sets out theses that remain relevant today:

«Our political line will not be influenced by idealistic temptations or theories of spontaneity. This will allow the party's will to fight to coincide with the will of the masses when they express, in a concentrated form, the urgency of a practical necessity in the sense of a revolutionary assault for the conquest of power.

But there will be no serious conquest of power unless the party first gains influence over the masses of the proletariat. To this end, the party defines its tasks as follows:

a) the masses cannot be won over when and how one wishes, if objective conditions do not stir them; the tactical acrobatics of parties that would like to influence them and make them spring into action at the touch of a magic wand are useless;

b) the fighting spirit of the masses, when ignited in struggle, indicates – as if in a diagram – the process of instability and crisis that pervades the productive apparatus of capitalism, its markets and the whole of its po-

litical organisation. At this moment, the party can insert itself into the struggle and be one of its determining elements, drawing the masses into its orbit to unite their energies and direct them towards the achievement of specific objectives;

c) the success of such an intervention is possible to the extent that the party has been able to create permanent organisations for propaganda, recruitment and agitation within the masses; to the extent that it has been able to win trust, through constant adherence to the life and struggles of the proletariat and its class demands; finally, to the extent that it has demonstrated that it has not deluded the masses with untimely and insincere agitation, with empty gestures such as strikes for the sake of strikes, or strikes for purposes that are contrary to the spirit and interests of the class».

If all representatives of the exploited classes preceding the proletariat had the *opportunity* to free themselves from their dependent position individually, by entering the ranks of the ruling class, then from the moment when modern history fully became world history the liberation of the exploited class – the class of wage workers – has become possible only *«under conditions of real collectivity», «in its association and through it»*. In other words, the exit from capitalism can only be the result of exclusively collective action by the world proletariat.

After capitalism, there will be neither exploited nor exploiters. In his "Theses on Feuerbach", Marx sets out the fundamental tenets of dialectical materialism and, among other things, draws attention to the fundamental flaw of previous materialism. *«The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society»*.

This is followed by a crucial conclusion: *«The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice»*.

Only practice united with revolutionary theory can be revolutionary practice. Only such a unity of theory and practice constitutes the communist movement, able to surpass a social condition in which one part of society rises above another.

«Workers of the world, unite! »

January 2026.

SEARCHING FOR A WAY

This historical-political essay traces the group's long trajectory of formation and ideological evolution – from its emergence in the late 1990s to its transition to new forms of activity in the present day. It describes the organisation's first steps on the “scorched earth” of post-Soviet Russia, the spontaneous maximalism of the early years of the newspaper *Komsa*, and attempts to reconstruct communist principles of party work from the ground up. Under present conditions of extreme passivity on the part of the working class, the pursuit of quantitative indicators is ruinous: the foremost task of communists today is not the mechanical compilation of the bourgeois press or pretending to be a mass movement, but the uncompromising selection and rigorous theoretical training of a narrow stratum of revolutionary cadres, along with the development of Marxist theory in its application to contemporary conditions.

Russia in the late 90s: the decade of active, though spontaneous and fragmented, economic struggle of the proletariat was drawing to a close, its apogee being the “rail war” of 1998. In these conditions, in the summer of 1997, a small Marxist group emerged in Kirov, which, first of all, drastically distanced itself from “official” and “semi-official” “communism” – the various pseudo-communist successors of the Stalinist counter-revolution that, in the first half of the twentieth century, destroyed the Marxist school in Russia and had already thoroughly discredited themselves by that time, although some of them, like some kind of zombie companies, persist to this day.

“SCORCHED EARTH” AND DEFENSIVE MAXIMALISM

The Kirov Marxist Group (KMG), which stood at the origins of our organisation, was effectively forced to begin from scratch: the “scorched earth” tactics employed by Stalinism led to a rupture in the continuity of the revolutionary party – there was no one to transmit the practical, theoretical, and organisational experience of the Bolsheviks to our generation. On the other hand, it was necessary to confront a rising nationalism (present even on the electoral level)², which found fertile ground in depressed working-class neighbourhoods, and to pull young people who cared about what was happening away from its influence. More broadly, the official political environment in Russia at that time was far more fragmented than the current “one-and-a-half-party” system³, while ideological front lines were far more sharply drawn. This acute ideological confrontation was often accompanied by physical clashes in the city’s streets.

All these factors meant that, from the outset, our group’s orientation bore a pronounced imprint of maximalism. It was decided to launch our own press or-

gan, which was named *Komsa*. The reasons for this choice were set out in the editorial of the first issue, published in June 1998: *«In the late Soviet period, komsa was the name given to the unruly, uncontrollable section of the mass organisation of the Komsomol – those who found it intolerable to sit through tediously uniform meetings,»* and who *«had no interest in the prospect»* of making a career, something the *«Komsomol bosses»* were actively pursuing. In contrast to them, young maximalists *«preferred to live and to perceive everything that was taking place in all its diversity. They were reprimanded and expelled from the organisation. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, it was precisely they who, having entered new left-radical organisations, were the first to come out against the power of capital.*

We have nothing in common with the Komsomol elite of the late 1980s. They were handed fashionable bars and restaurants, banks and the beaches of the Canary Islands; we, by contrast, were left with a devastated, impoverished society in which we must struggle, strive, and simply live. [...]

Like the “Elusive Avengers”⁴, we too hate the bourgeoisie and all forms of counter-revolution. We have united to struggle for a new, classless society in which there will be no place for the exploitation of man by man or for violence; a society in which the principal evil – private property, concentrated in the hands of a handful of wealthy parasites who regard themselves as masters of life – will be abolished. With the abolition of private property, commodity-money relations will also be abolished. The name of this new society is communism.

But before this society can be realised, the proletariat – that is, the class of wage labourers – must take power and overthrow the old capitalist world. Yet the advance towards communism does not end there: the proletariat must establish its own apparatus for the suppression of bourgeois resistance. This society will no longer be a state, since power within it will be in the hands of the majority – such majority rule is

1 - On the Workers’ Movement and the Workers’ Newspaper [in Rus.] // *Delo rabochikh*. 2002. November. No. 1. P. 1.

2 - Melnikova N. Kirov Region: in July 1998 [in Rus.] // *International Institute for Humanitarian and Political Studies. Political Monitoring*. URL: <http://www.igpi.ru/monitoring/1047645476/1998/0798/43.html>

3 - We have devoted a number of our publications to this feature of the Russian political system. *“Let us clarify what is meant: with the emergence of United Russia, despite the formal existence of a multi-party system, the effective synthesis of interests, as well as the renewal of the political line and personnel of the Russian ruling class, takes place within this party; all the others, at best, express the minority interests of particular groups of the bourgeoisie and therefore, on the parliamentary stage, play a secondary role as a garnish to the main course. Their function is limited to capturing the votes of the discontented and creating the illusion of choice. It is precisely this party-political system, which has confirmed its viability in the most recent parliamentary elections, that we describe as a ‘one-and-a-half-party system’”* (*The Emptiness of Parliamentarism // Proletarian Internationalism*. 2016. October. No. 26).

Furthermore, a description of this phenomenon can be found in the articles “Social Reality and a Storm in a Teacup of Electoral Politics” (*Proletarian Internationalism*, No. 62, October 2019), “Illusions of the Ruling Class and the Realities of Russian Imperialism (I)” (*Proletarian Internationalism*, No. 82, June 2021), “Colour Revolutions and Sovereign Democracy” (*Proletarian Internationalism*, No. 104, May 2023), and “The Historical Delay of Restructuring” (*Proletarian Internationalism*, No. 122, November 2024).

4 - A 1967 Soviet adventure film about young people during the Civil War. [translator’s note]

termed in Marxism the dictatorship of the proletariat. This constitutes a transitional period in which the old society is abolished and the new one brought into being.

*The creation of a new society is possible only with the emergence of a new human being – free, dignified, striving for knowledge and all-round development, and free from bourgeois prejudices and obscurantism. Such a person can be formed only within a communist organisation».*⁵

This mood and the character of that period in Russia in the 1990s were well reflected in *Komsa* headlines such as “Barkashov – the Russian brother of Hitler”, “Is Zyuganov very distant from fascism?”⁶, and so on.

It soon became clear that it was necessary to establish contacts with various radical left groups in other regions as well.

In August 2000, the KMG took part in the Second Conference of the Movement for a Workers’ Party (DzRP) – a formation that amounted to an “organisational fog” of heterogeneous currents, including not only a Leninist tendency but also legalist and spontaneist ones⁷, united solely by the aspiration to create a workers’ party, but not by any common strategy. At this conference, a split occurred: delegates of the Marxist Workers’ Party and the Workers’ Faction of the DzRP left the movement; shortly thereafter, the KMG also withdrew from the organisation. Earlier still, we had established co-operation with the Union of Marxists, jointly publishing in 1998 the first issue of the newspaper *Perspektiva* – a more “intellectual” publication compared to the KMG’s own paper (the aforementioned *Komsa*), which also continued to publish

The following data we collected on the distribution of our newspapers at the gates of Kirov’s plants and factories speaks to the level of workers’ activity in the 1990s and their interest in Marxist publications: at the Avitek plant, 7 copies of *Komsa* and 23 copies of various issues of *Perspektiva* were sold in July 1999; at the Non-Ferrous Metals Processing Plant (OCM), 2 copies of *Komsa* and 2 copies of *Perspektiva*; at the Kirov Meat Combine, 6 copies of *Komsa* and 11 copies of *Perspektiva*; at the Kirov Tyre Plant, 3 copies of *Komsa* and 24 copies of *Perspektiva*; at the Leps

Electromechanical Plant, 18 copies of *Komsa* and 38 copies of *Perspektiva*; at the Artificial Leather Combine, 4 copies of *Komsa* and 4 copies of *Perspektiva*.⁸

It was a state of “grumbling silence”. Among the industrial workers – towards whom we primarily directed our agitation and propaganda at the time – the majority were dissatisfied, “but to do anything – God forbid!”. At the same time, more than 45 per cent of wage labourers were owed wages. Processes of degradation and lumpenisation within the working class were intensifying. Near the factory gates one could often hear irritated whispers: “Give us guns! To hell with your newspapers!”. Were these wage labourers proletarians in the classical sense of the term? Did they live solely by the sale of their labour-power? They went to work, yet returned with empty pockets: companies in the region owed them what ranged from several months to several years of wages. How did they survive all this time? Through vegetables grown on their own garden plots, mushrooms and berries gathered in the forest, and fish caught in the rivers. Some income was obtained through casual jobs on the side, some through taking equipment and materials from their “main place of work”. Petty theft and absenteeism had been commonplace in Russia since “Soviet” times. The attitude towards work at “one’s own” factory was passed down from generation to generation. “Everything around belongs to the collective, everything around belongs to no one” – this classic piece of Soviet folk wisdom aptly reflects the prevailing attitude towards “common” property. The privatisation of this property in the 1990s was aptly dubbed *prikhvatitsiya*⁹ by proletarian circles. This redistribution of property from above corresponded to a process of petty theft from below. It was a spontaneous, individualistic manifestation of the class struggle. Only a few rose above this level of class consciousness. Nor could it have been otherwise: *«the worker, on the one hand, effectively became a petty proprietor, while on the other was compelled to sacrifice his health, education, and culture, subjecting himself to intense self-exploitation. In such conditions, there can be no question of any serious political activity».*¹⁰

5 - *Komsa*. 1998. June. No. 1. P. 1. [in Rus.]

6 - Ibid.

7 - Three Paths for the “Movement”. [in Rus.] URL: <https://www.oocities.org/marxparty/lpp/lp6/tusovka.htm>.

8 - Salnikov S. Going to the Factories. [in Rus.] // *Agency for Social and Political Information*. Bulletin No. 1(49). 2000. February. URL: <http://libelli.ru/works/aspi-49.htm>

9 - from Russian *prikhvatit'*, meaning “to grab”, “to snatch”. [translator’s note]

10 - Salnikov S. The Working Class of Kirov: Recent Tendencies and Prospects of Struggle. [in Rus.] // *Agency for Social and Political Information*. Bulletin No. 1(49). 2000. February. URL: <http://libelli.ru/works/aspi-49.htm>.

Distribution of Komsa

CITY	NO. 4	NO. 5
KIROV*	332	323
KAZAN	50	
KRASNODAR	30	20
MOSCOW	128	297
LENINGRAD		50
PERM*	50	
CHELYABINSK	30	35
MURMANSK	10	
UFA	60	50
ODESSA		10
SEVASTOPOL	5	
BARNAUL	30	
NIZHNY NOVGOROD	30	50
BIRSK	5	5
ASTRAKHAN	10	
YASNOGORSK		10
VYBORG		10
ROSTOV-ON-DON	30	20
VORONEZH		3
KAZAKHSTAN		20
KYIV		20
SAMARA		25
KALUGA	30	
KALININGRAD	30	
NEVINNOMYSSK	30	
ARZAMAS-16	10	
GUS-KHRUSTALNY	10	
INDIVIDUAL SENDING	100	42
TOTAL	1010	940

* IN THESE CITIES, KOMSA HAD SUBSCRIBERS.

Information on the geographical distribution of *Komsa* can be found in the table published in No. 1(6) for the year 2000; we reproduce it here, adding a "Total" row.

The groups that had withdrawn from the DzRP formed the "Marxist Bloc", which in November 2000

published the first issue of the newspaper *Delo rabochikh*, focused primarily on covering and analysing the economic struggle of the proletariat. For all the shortcomings of such an approach – now evident – it was conditioned by an attempt to pull the most class-conscious workers from the influence of bourgeois factions which, reviving the traditions of "Zubatovism" under new historical conditions, sought to harness the then highly active workers' movement to their own ends, going so far as to draw certain of its detachments into manoeuvres over the redistribution of property and to create "socially oriented" movements that acquired considerable electoral weight.¹¹

Even at that time, we placed our emphasis on work in the proletarian and student milieu and on the distribution of newspapers at factory gates, in the streets, and through door-to-door canvassing in working-class districts. At the same time, in an effort to restore the broken thread of Marxist theory, we undertook its systematic and organised study, gathering for this purpose in comrades' flats, since we lacked the means to rent even the cheapest office.

Thus, passing through various stages of development and acquiring the necessary experience in practical struggle, comrades were formed who, a few years later¹², would establish *Noviy Prometey* in St Petersburg.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LENINISM

In the period of "pre-history", when the organisation is in the process of formation, both theoretical and practical instruments inevitably arise which, in the period of "maturity", are subsequently discarded from its arsenal as having failed to justify themselves. At that time, these included a disproportionate emphasis on "workers' democracy" and on the coverage of the economic struggle of wage labourers, a concentration on local politics to the detriment of international relations¹³, attempts to utilise the mandate of a deputy of the regional Duma for revolutionary propaganda¹⁴ – made possible by the protests of workers and intermediate strata – and so forth.

At the same time, even then one could observe the formation of those instruments which would

11 - Minin S. "Zubatovism" in the May Day Style [in Rus.] // Left.ru. 2000. 25 September. No. 3 (3).URL: <https://left.ru/2000/3/mai.html>.

12 - At the end of 2005.

13 - See issues of the newspaper *Delo rabochikh*: No. 1 (November 2000), No. 1(2) (January 2001), No. 3(4) (April 2001), No. 4(5) (April 2001).

14 - At one of the sessions of the Kirov Regional Duma, the chair of the Duma addressed Deputy S. Salnikov so: "Cease political agitation within the walls of the Regional Duma; this is not the place for it!" (see: *The Ghost of World Revolution Visits the Kirov Authorities* [in Rus.] // published as a leaflet, September 2000).

later become constants of the organisation's work. In essence, what was at stake was the reconstruction of Leninist principles:

- the struggle in the interests of the proletariat as a life choice of every activist (*«Personal ambitions must be cast aside; the interests of the cause come first»*¹⁵);

- the defence of the understanding of the state as an apparatus of class violence of the ruling class (in an article with the telling title "To hell with the army", we wrote: *«On the 21st of February 1999, the united ranks of the Kirov opposition (Trudovoy Kirov, the RCRP, CPRF, VK-P(b), and other kindred organisations) held their traditional rally marking the anniversary of the founding of the Red Army. Nostalgia for days gone by alternated with indignation at the accursed Yeltsinists who had destroyed the USSR, and with it our valiant Soviet Army. The speech by the secretary of the Kirov Marxist Group, however, hung in the air, provoking bewilderment and outrage among the patriotic veterans. Small wonder: he dared to say, "The army is collapsing – well, to hell with it; this only makes it easier for the proletariat to take power into its own hands. For the army is not tanks or guns, nor even soldiers from working-class families, but an apparatus of class violence of the ruling class." This elementary truth of Marxism proved unknown to many who, apparently by some misunderstanding, bear the name of communists»*¹⁶);

- an awareness of the fact that, in a non-revolutionary period, politics is the preserve of narrow, organised minorities – the vanguards of the classes – and, consequently, of the necessity of forming a cadre party capable of defending the strategic and organisational autonomy of the proletarian vanguard: *«Unity is impossible with opportunists, those who place the tasks of political self-preservation above the interests of the common struggle. Unity is impossible with those who advocate an alliance (in practice) with the "national" bourgeoisie against the "comprador" bourgeoisie [...]. Unity is undesirable with those who glorify "humanism" and "democracy" in abstraction from their class content [...]. Unity is necessary with those who see the sole problem in the absence of a proletarian vanguard, for such people lack only one step – to look in the mirror! If we have recognised the necessity of the socialist revolution, if we see that the only force capable of accomplishing it is an organised and active working class, if we are already engaged in the work*

*of enlightening and organising the masses – then we are precisely that vanguard of the proletariat. Only we act in a fragmented, amateurish manner, whereas we must act on a broad scale, professionally and in a centralised manner. [...] Class consciousness arises not so much by virtue of "economic origin" as in the course of class struggle [...]. The working class can give rise to labourists, nationalists, and "couldn't-care-less" types – there is nothing surprising in this. It is naïve to regard every workers' protest as the beginning of a revolution. On the contrary, matters must not be left to spontaneity; it is necessary to intensify propaganda and our own organisational presence within the collectives...»*¹⁷;

- the recognition of the necessity of a press organ of our own, acting not only as a collective propagandist but also as an organiser (*«It is necessary to provide workers with information on the state of the workers' movement across all regions. It is necessary to enable workers to see and understand the community of interests of all workers – that in every corner of Russia workers are struggling for the same thing. This can be achieved only through the exchange of experience of struggle. This task can be fulfilled only by a newspaper. At the same time, the newspaper must also act as an organiser. The newspaper must become a tribune for advanced workers and workers' leaders [...]. The joint activity of these advanced workers and leaders will lead to a situation in which workers' groups will no longer struggle in a spontaneous and scattered manner, but in an organised and collective way. In short, a newspaper is needed. Today, this newspaper must reflect the qualitative changes taking place in the workers' movement and become an instrument aiding workers in their unification»*¹⁸);

- the positioning of oneself as an organisation of the world working class (*«The OKPR¹⁹ considers itself one of the organisations of the international workers' movement in the struggle against international capital»*²⁰) and the consistent implementation of the line of proletarian internationalism under all conditions (*«However much some communists may wish to struggle ONLY against Zionism, it INEVITABLY turns into a struggle against Jews in general. However much one may wish to support the "brotherly Serbs", it turns into support for the Serbian bourgeoisie. However much one may wish to oppose world imperialism in the person of Bill Clinton, it results in assistance to Arab imperial-*

15 - Class Analysis of Society and the Prospects for Overcoming Communist Multipartism in Russia [in Rus.] // *Komsa*. 1998. August. No. 3 (3). P. 6.

16 - To Hell with the Army... [in Rus.] // *Komsa*. 1999. March. No. 1 (4). P. 3.

17 - A Mirror for the Hero [in Rus.] // *Komsa*. 1999. March. No. 1 (4). P. 3.

18 - On the Workers' Movement and the Workers' Newspaper [in Rus.] // *Delo rabochikh*. 2002. November. No. 1. P. 1.

19 - "United Communist Party of Russia". The party name is provisional.

20 - Class Analysis of Society and the Prospects for Overcoming Communist Multipartism in Russia [in Rus.] // *Komsa*. 1998. August. No. 3 (3). P. 6.

ism in the person of Saddam Hussein. The recognition of national interests as superior to class interests is ruinous for the communist movement»²¹);

– a strategy formed on the basis of a Marxist analysis of significant *global* phenomena (the system of states, international relations, their medium- and long-term tendencies, etc.), as well as an analysis of the dynamics of the *principal* enemy – “one’s own” imperialism – and the formulation of a corresponding political position on each particular question precisely on the basis of these facts (thus, in one article from October 2000, the following analysis was presented in this vein: «*The economically depressed region*²² *was*²³ *in a state of deep social depression*²⁴; *crime, alcoholism, and illness were on the rise in the city [...]. This situation persisted until the Putin turning point in Russian history. With the demand for patriotism and a national idea, and with the wars in the Balkans and Chechnya, orders began to pour into the Kirov defence industry, and not just from Russia. A mass recruitment of workers and specialists began, including those previously made redundant [...]. Deputy Prime Minister A. Klebanov reported unprecedented, “fantastic” economic growth in the Kirov defence industry (over 1,000 % (!)), while the “popularly elected” Kirov governor V. N. Sergeenkov did not miss the opportunity to bask in self-congratulation, unreveredly attributing the “economic miracle” to his own genius. Any sober-minded observer will understand that for industry to make such a leap in such a short period of time, it must previously have been virtually non-functioning. Consequently, there is no economic miracle here, but merely a state order. For Marxists who know and understand the inevitability of these processes, life itself poses the tasks of the immediate period: 1. To conduct agitation and propaganda among the proletariat, explaining the essence of what is taking place, the possible paths of development, and the only revolutionary means of resolving the problem. 2. To create and develop our own organisation. 3. To promote the development of the workers’ movement and to win authority within it. [...] To go out and call on workers to strike today is profoundly senseless. To wait until they themselves begin to strike or struggle for their rights by other means is to trail in their wake. We have no other path than that of revolutionary Marxist propaganda and class struggle,*

*and this path cannot be realised without the creation of a revolutionary Marxist party»*²⁵);

We intend to reprint some of the articles from that period, including those cited above, in full, accompanied by brief commentary, in our journal and on our website: original copies of *Komsa* are now virtually impossible to obtain (outside of archives).

It was a romantic period of our revolutionary formation. We were gaining experience, striving to grow alongside our class, and experiencing firsthand everything that was happening to it. We made mistakes and took blows – and not only in the figurative sense of the word. We lost those whom we had considered our comrades, but who, for one reason or another, chose a different path. We also lost genuine comrades, whose young lives were cut short under mysterious circumstances. We moved forward – at times without a compass, at times feeling out our way forward.

A STEP FORWARD OR TWO STEPS BACK?

In the winter of 2000, the Italian organisation *Lotta Comunista* established contact with us. We had long wanted to break out of our isolation and establish links with internationalists from other countries. But we were not specifically seeking contact with *Lotta Comunista*; indeed, before our first meeting, we knew nothing about the organisation. It was *Lotta Comunista* who found us. This chance connection developed into almost a quarter of a century of relations, activity, discussions, and struggle.

This choice enabled us to:

- broaden our Marxist horizons and deepen our experience;
- gain access to the extensive long-term strategic analysis of international relations carried out by *Lotta Comunista* over decades, as well as to more specific, but equally valuable, scholarly materials on a wide range of questions;
- adopt a model of serious, responsible, disciplined, and systematic organisational work based on long-term planning.

However, after almost a quarter of a century, we were compelled to break relations with this organisation, since throughout all this time it failed to pose

21 - Ibid.

22 - Kirov Region, 60 per cent of whose industry at that time consisted of defence enterprises.

23 - In the 1990s.

24 - Following the conversion campaigns of the second half of the 1980s.

25 - Salnikov S. Why There Are No Strikes in Kirov: Thoughts Aloud [in Rus.] // *Left.ru*. 2000. 2 October. No. 4 (4). URL: <https://left.ru/2000/4/PochemuKirov.htm>.

a number of interconnected *key* questions: about the causes of the present passivity of our class; about the conditions under which it will overcome this passivity; and about what the model of the party itself, its methods of work, and the very type of proletarian revolutionary should be under precisely such conditions of the class.

In conditions of the complete absence of any proletarian class movement, *Lotta Comunista*, seeking at all costs to preserve the *quantitative* results it had achieved – which do indeed appear impressive against the background of other internationalist groups – inevitably arrived at purely *mechanistic* methods of work, enabling it to recruit new supporters and retain old ones without regard for their level of preparation or understanding even of the increasingly unambitious material published in the newspaper, let alone of the fundamental questions of Marxism. And this root problem has naturally given rise to a multitude of more particular shortcomings in the organisation's current work, which it would be inappropriate to address here.

More serious disagreements – for example, the attitude towards the so-called “Resistance Movement” during the Second World War, and many others – will find their expression in the pages of our journal. Open polemic has always been a weapon of Marxism, and we shall continue to use it in our struggle.

Ultimately, the most fundamental issue remains under serious doubt – namely, the ability of *Lotta Comunista* to carry out a positive *qualitative* leap the moment history and the class demand it.

We have learnt a great deal over this quarter of a century, and have gained and taught new comrades. Through practical experience, we came to understand that a newspaper is not only an organ of propaganda and agitation, but also a collective organiser. Our newspaper was published regularly, every month, and each issue contained our own articles. We took part in the publication of Marxist books, from their preparation through to typesetting and distribution. We ourselves prepared and conducted party schools with intensive study of the Marxist classics, engaged in the study of the history of the workers' movement, and carried out research into capitalism. This quarter of a century was not lost time.

We have unquestionably become stronger than we were at the moment of our acquaintance with *Lotta Comunista*. Precisely for this reason, it cannot be said that we have taken two steps back. We continue to move forward. Having understood that staying

any further within *Lotta Comunista* is incompatible with the conclusions we have reached (set out in our “Manifesto”), we took the only possible decision – to break relations with this organisation.

Since August 2025, our articles have no longer been published in the newspaper *Proletarian Internationalism*, whose pages are now filled solely with translations of *Lotta Comunista*. An insignificant part of our former comrades remained within *Lotta Comunista*. Everyone makes their choice. We made ours: leaving to those who preferred to preserve their connection with *Lotta Comunista* the name of the organisation, the newspaper, and much else besides.

We continue the struggle.

TIME TO WORK IN A NEW WAY

Every consistent Marxist inevitably arrives at the conclusion we set out in our “Manifesto”: for the first time, our epoch confronts the proletariat and its vanguard in the form of the communists with the task of carrying out only their own, *purely communist* tasks; and now more than ever «*the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property*», to use the words of the “Manifesto of the Communist Party”.

On the other hand, as we have already said above, the present stage of this epoch is characterised by the absence of a mass workers' movement and of a proletarian party as a significant political factor, by the extremely low level of consciousness among the workers, and by the complete and undivided domination of bourgeois ideologies throughout society, including within our own class.

Thus, any genuinely communist group, proceeding from these two premises – the character of our goal and the objective impossibility of acquiring a mass base for its achievement – must arrive at the conclusion that its activity at the present time should consist in carrying out the following tasks: 1) the selection and *Marxist* training of a small number of devoted fighters for the cause of the proletariat; 2) the development of Marxist theory in relation to contemporary conditions; 3) the restoration of the broken thread of the Marxist school – this applies above all to the Russian-speaking part of our class, where in practice it is necessary to begin from zero, from the “scorched earth” left behind by Stalinism.

And it is precisely from the standpoint of the effectiveness of carrying out these tasks that any instrument used by a communist group, including its press organ, must be evaluated.

We do not yet possess a *precise* understanding of what exactly such an organ should be, but we do know which negative features should be avoided. Unfortunately for us, these features are displayed by the newspaper *Lotta Comunista*, which in its present form hardly makes it possible to advance in carrying out the tasks outlined above.

The established working method of its editorial board and authors consists in filling almost every issue of the newspaper almost entirely – with the exception of one or two articles – with materials from the bourgeois press. The collection of such materials in itself, especially on so prolonged and systematic a basis, is undoubtedly necessary, but the problem is that they are published in an unprocessed and unanalysed form; and we are not speaking even of a simple formal – in other words, technical – analysis, let alone a Marxist one. Moreover, in many cases even simple commentary on the cited materials is absent.

These articles might have been suitable as *preparatory* material for actual articles, were it not for one “but”: they do not rise even to that level, since the best examples of such materials – for example, Lenin’s “*Notebooks on Imperialism*” – contain profound commentary and an initial systematisation of the materials.

It is hardly surprising that in its present form the newspaper leaves many communists perplexed – communists who, let us recall, see the abolition of private property as their goal. They simply do not understand why they should read a *communist* newspaper in order to learn about European and American drone models. One can read about such matters in specialised publications, where these issues are covered far more deeply and in far greater detail. And now imagine that articles of this kind constitute the overwhelming majority of the newspaper’s contents. In that case, the newspaper contains almost nothing *specifically* communist – that is, nothing which could not be found in more or less serious bourgeois publications. The only indication of the political orientation to which the publication believes itself to adhere is the newspaper’s title.

In other words, we are confronted with precisely the situation aptly described by the young Marx: «*The form is of no value if it is not the form of the content*».²⁶

Writing such articles is a relatively *simple* matter, and lately it seems that AI can do this no worse. It does not require serious cadre training, deep

knowledge of Marxism (in many cases, it requires no knowledge of Marxism whatsoever), careful selection, systematisation, and analysis of facts, or large amounts of time; and it can easily become a mechanical conveyor-belt form of work carried out by inertia, allowing one to remain within a comfort zone formed over many years.

However, from the standpoint of the tasks outlined above, this method is self-destructive for several reasons:

- it does not permit the specifically *Marxist* training of fighters for the cause of the proletariat, since neither writing nor reading such a newspaper requires one to be a communist at all. The authors of such articles learn neither independent analysis nor work on literary style; this leads to a situation in which they are unable either to attract even a sympathetic audience or to genuinely engage it. This will turn into a real catastrophe at the moment of an acceleration of the class struggle: how will the authors of the present articles, with their dry bureaucratic style, be able to kindle revolutionary passion in workers prepared for the decisive battle? Will they suddenly acquire a powerful style without ever having practised it? The question is rhetorical;

- a more or less politically educated communist, devoted to his ideas and always striving to develop himself, time and time again finds nothing there capable of genuinely engaging him, which in the end leads to apathy and estrangement from the organisation. This applies to an even greater extent to comrades possessing the highest level of class consciousness. As for the “rank-and-file” comrades, the result is that they cease reading the newspaper altogether: it attracts neither by its content nor by its form. As a consequence, a situation emerges in which they do not integrate into the organisation precisely as *communists*, but merely carry out the *mechanical* work of distributing the newspaper and organising flows of people;

- it *wastes* the time even of those communists whom it has managed to recruit, consolidate, and involve in the work; under present conditions of a catastrophic shortage of politically educated communists, forcing them to engage in the mere compilation of the bourgeois press represents the height of wastefulness;

- it does not permit the development of Marxist theory in relation to contemporary conditions, since the newspaper does not even contain sec-

26 - K. Marx. Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood (Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly. Third Article) // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1842/10/25.htm>

tions in which the results of independent research, or at least of a meta-analysis of already existing legal-Marxist and bourgeois studies, might be presented. And in general, this work is scarcely carried out at all, since the lion's share of the cadres' time is occupied by purely *mechanical* operations (collecting excerpts, distributing the newspaper, and so forth). Moreover, such an approach does not imply discussions or exchanges of experience with other internationalist currents, which ultimately leads to the theoretical *degradation* of the activists;

– it permits the task of restoring the broken thread of the Marxist school to be resolved only to a small and frankly insufficient extent: only an insignificant proportion of publications is devoted to this theme, despite the fact that the work to be done is a vast untrodden field; meanwhile, the editorial board prefers to occupy its authors with the compilation of conjunctural *journalistic* notes from the bourgeois media on profits, financial bubbles, and debts, which at best will cease to be relevant within a few months – or even weeks or days. In other words, we are not speaking of more or less profound research that would retain its usefulness for at least several years.

Form and content are inseparable; they are dialectically interconnected. A non-revolutionary form cannot be filled with revolutionary content.

In order to understand all this, time was necessary. Was too much of it spent? Perhaps this was facilitated in part by the fact that our activity in Russia was, in essence, autonomous. The greater integration into the work of *Lotta Comunista* that took place with the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war accelerated our understanding of the differences in our approaches and methods.

The break with the mechanistic methods of the past marks the beginning of a new stage for our organisation. Leaving behind a quarter of a century of illusions and organisational formalism, we continue our struggle on a qualitatively different level. From now on, all our forces and resources will be subordinated to the fulfilment of our genuine tasks: the uncompromising selection and Marxist training of revolutionary cadres, and the development of communist theory in relation to contemporary conditions. Henceforth, our form will be inseparably linked with our revolutionary content.

March 2026



APPEAL TO THE WORKERS OF RUSSIA

Our group's history did not start yesterday. Most of our past publications and declarations are not widely known today. That is why we decided to start publishing in our magazine some materials from our archives. One of them is this call to action, published in 1999 in our paper "Komsa".

The enemy that the Russian bourgeoisie secretly dreamed of has been found. The Russian capitalists have received the one and only “national idea” around which they’re going to rally the entire “Russian people”. Having the interests of the Russian state trampled in the international arena is the best reason to fan chauvinistic hysteria in order to reconcile slaves with their masters.

Today it is no longer possible to blame all sins on the “heavy legacy of the Soviet past”. Its most ardent figures, represented by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), took seats in the executive authorities and became an organic part of the current system. Liberals and patriots continue their internecine squabbles, but their interests converge on the main thing: their main opponent inside the country is the proletariat, and their main external competitor is international financial capital, personified in the guise of the United States. To fight it, the Russian bourgeoisie needs the support of the majority of society, especially the workers - as they are its most organised component. It is no coincidence that they’re trying to present the showdown between two bloody imperialist predators (the United States and Iraq) as a blow to the prestige of the Russian Federation.

Recent events in Yugoslavia have further united the Russian bourgeoisie, or rather those who represent its interests in the political arena.

All this hysteria is very similar to the events of the summer of 1914, the beginning of the first world war. All that remains is to rename St. Petersburg to Petrograd, defeat the German embassy and plunge into another imperialist war.

Comrade workers, don’t surrender to the false hysteria of the Russian bourgeoisie, this whole charade was staged in order to raise its shaken prestige and distract us from socio-economic problems and the struggle for our interests. From this war, as from any other, you and I will get nothing: funerals, coffins, blood, sweat and tears - that’s all we will get.

The bourgeoisie will hit the jackpot and prolong its life. Worker, don’t let yourself be fooled and thrown into the meatgrinder of another imperialist massacre!

Only by throwing off the bloodsuckers represented by your government and the entire bourgeoisie from your back will you help yourself and set an example to the workers of Serbia and Croatia, who should have stopped killing each other long ago and turned their weapons against their bourgeois governments.

Let’s transform the imperialist war into a civil war!

Long live the worldwide communist revolution!

Workers of the world, unite!



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW APRIL 2026

Whilst the news speaks of imminent stabilisation, the system is undergoing a profound structural crisis: the markets are saturated with unbacked debt, new technologies are stripping some traditional industries of their former profits while generating new super-profits for others, and states are, as expected, being drawn into wars over resources. It is not enough to diagnose contemporary capitalism; we must understand why the labour movement is currently so weak and fragmented and, above all, where communists must begin their practical work today in order to organise people for the coming social upheavals, rather than confining themselves to passively awaiting spontaneous revolts.

The ruling bourgeoisie and its official economic ideologues are once again indulging in illusions. Having weathered the inflationary shocks of the early part of the decade and adapted to the reconfiguration of global logistical arteries, the world of capital hastens to proclaim the advent of a new era of stabilisation. Yet behind the glittering façade of record-breaking stock market indices there lies a profound intensification of all the internal contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. The present world situation is determined neither by diplomatic manoeuvres in Geneva nor by the supposed struggle of “democracies against autocracies”, as the “philistines” of the liberal press would have us believe. The world is inexorably driven by the uneven material development of the productive forces, which have outgrown the narrow bounds of private property relations.

The astronomical global debt, which in 2024 surpassed the \$315 trillion mark (more than 330% of global GDP)¹, can no longer be serviced without a continuous depreciation of currencies.² Enormous debt bubbles are bursting one after another, laying bare the true nature of fictitious capital. If yesterday we witnessed the collapse of the Chinese giant Evergrande, today the epicentre of the debt earthquake has shifted to the very heart of Western capitalism. The crisis in US commercial real estate (CRE), where trillions of dollars are locked up in vacant office towers, has already triggered a wave of regional bank failures (from Silicon Valley Bank to the troubles at New York Community Bancorp). This is not merely a “market correction” – it is a classic moment when fictitious capital (credit extended on the expectation of future, but never realised, surplus value) collides with the harsh reality of material production.

Stagflation³ is rampant in the old centres of capital accumulation, such as Germany. In a country that for decades served as Europe’s “industrial locomotive”, GDP contracted by 0.3% in 2023; in 2024, the decline ranged from 0.2% to 0.5% according to various estimates, while last year recorded a negligible growth rate of 0.2%.

Germany’s economic model has for decades rested on a combination of cheap energy (primarily from Russia) and high-tech exports. The loss of access to cheap energy sources has undermined the profitability of entire branches of heavy industry. The chemical giant BASF, a pillar of German industry, is shutting down energy-intensive facilities in Ludwigshafen and redirecting billions in investment to China and the US, where energy is cheaper. In 2023–2024, BASF halted the production of ammonia, caprolactam, and several fertiliser products. However, the dismantling of equipment, site restructuring, and the phased redundancy of thousands of workers are stretched out over time and remain ongoing. This constitutes a “bleeding wound” in the German economy that has yet to heal.

At the same time, in Zhanjiang, BASF is constructing a vast integrated chemical complex (Verbund) worth €10 billion – its largest investment to date. Full completion of the megaproject is scheduled for 2030. Simultaneously, investments are being made to expand US facilities (in Geismar and other locations), a process further stimulated by subsidies from the US government under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Production of steel, glass, paper, and fertilisers in Germany has fallen by 15–20 % compared with 2021 – the last year before the invasion of Ukraine by Russian imperialism. The emblem of German cap-

1 - Debt structure for the first quarter of 2024 (according to the *Global Debt Monitor*, a regular report by the Institute of International Finance): **“Developed” markets** (including the US, Japan, and the countries of Europe): ~\$209.7 trillion (around two-thirds of total debt). Here, debt growth is driven primarily by government borrowing.

“Emerging” markets (with China, India, and Mexico as the main drivers of growth): ~\$105.4 trillion. Over the past decade, debt has more than doubled (increasing by \$55 trillion).

By sector:

Non-financial corporations (the real economy): ~\$94.1 trillion. The most heavily indebted segment, particularly in “emerging” economies.

Governments (public debt): ~\$91.4 trillion. This is the sector that has grown most rapidly in recent years, owing to the financing of support programmes during the pandemic and increased military expenditure.

The financial sector (banks, funds): ~\$70.4 trillion.

Households (mortgages, credit cards, student loans): ~\$59.1 trillion.

The global economy has indeed found itself in a narrow corridor. Tight monetary policy and elevated interest rates (an attempt to curb inflation) render the servicing of this \$315 trillion mathematically impossible in the long term. For this reason, there is broad agreement among economists that the inflationary depreciation of fiat money will remain a concealed instrument for managing this bubble.

2 - See Appendix 1.

3 - Stagflation (from “stagnation” + “inflation”) is a condition of the economy in which three destructive processes occur simultaneously: a decline in production or zero economic growth (stagnation), a continuous rise in prices (inflation), rising unemployment, and a fall in real incomes.

For bourgeois economic science (in particular Keynesian economics), stagflation was long regarded as a paradox. Classical theory assumed that prices rise only when the economy is “overheating” (when people have ample money and are actively purchasing), whereas during a crisis and a contraction of production prices should fall (deflation). Stagflation disrupts this mechanism and drives state regulation into a blind alley: attempts by central banks to suppress inflation through high interest rates ultimately cripple industry, while attempts to sustain production through cheap credit lead to hyperinflation.

italism – the automotive industry – is undergoing a historic crisis of overproduction and a falling rate of profit amid a technological shift. In autumn 2024, the Volkswagen Group announced its intention, for the first time in its 87-year history, to close plants within Germany itself and lay off tens of thousands of workers. German capital is losing the competitive struggle to Chinese electric vehicle producers (such as BYD), which operate with lower costs, and is attempting to counteract the falling rate of profit through the direct destruction of jobs and the dismantling of collective agreements with trade unions, as well as by redirecting part of its productive capacity towards military production.

The German bourgeoisie is refusing to invest domestically. Under conditions of high costs within Germany and aggressive American protectionism, German capital is “voting with its feet”. There is a massive outflow of direct investment abroad, while domestic production stagnates.

Although the peaks of energy inflation in 2022 have passed⁴, price increases have become entrenched and have assumed a “core” form. Prices for food, services, and, most acutely, housing rents continue to rise. Inflation acts as a hidden tax on the working class. Over the past few years, the real (inflation-adjusted) wages of German workers have declined markedly. Capital is shifting the costs of the structural crisis onto the shoulders of the proletariat. Stagflation in Germany represents a structural crisis of overaccumulation of capital. German capital can no longer extract sufficient surplus value under these conditions.

The colossal expansion of credit in global capitalism no longer stimulates real growth; it is a classic, textbook symptom of the overproduction of capital. The most striking manifestation of this gangrene today is the astronomical scale of share buybacks. Capital is no longer invested in the expansion of real production on its previous scale, since this no longer promises a sufficient rate of profit. Instead, it circulates within a speculative casino, artificially inflating stock market capitalisation and enriching the financial oligarchy.

By the end of 2024, companies in the S&P 500 alone had spent a record \$942.5 billion on share buybacks. By 2025, this speculative frenzy had shattered all previous records: over a 12-month period (up to and including September 2025), the volume of buybacks in the US exceeded \$1.02 trillion. This disease

is devouring not only American imperialism, but also other old centres of capital accumulation:

– the European bourgeoisie, which historically preferred dividend payments, has entered the same race. By the end of 2024, the volume of share buybacks by European corporations had reached a record €182 billion, while the proportion of companies dissipating capital in this way reached an all-time high of 43%.

– Japanese capital, which for decades had been sitting on vast hoards of idle cash owing to the stagnation of the domestic market, spent approximately ¥18.7 trillion on share buybacks in the 2024 financial year; in 2025, this figure surged to an extraordinary ¥24.9 trillion (around \$200 billion).

To grasp the scale of this acceleration, it suffices to consider the historical dynamics. In the 1990s, buyback volumes in the US amounted to only tens of billions of dollars per year. In the early 2000s, they barely reached \$200–300 billion. Today, however, the US technology sector (Information Technology) alone has expended more than \$2.1 trillion on buybacks over the course of a single decade. This exponential acceleration is not a sign of economic health, but a mathematical demonstration of decay. Enormous masses of surplus value are being withdrawn from the real sector.

Karl Marx brilliantly anticipated this stage in the development of capitalism, in which surplus capital is channelled into financial speculation:

«Over-production of capital is never anything more than over-production of means of production – of means of labour and necessities of life – which may serve as capital, i.e., may serve to exploit labour at a given degree of exploitation; a fall in the intensity of exploitation below a certain point, however, calls forth disturbances, and stoppages in the capitalist production process, crises, and destruction of capital. It is no contradiction that this over-production of capital is accompanied by more or less considerable relative over-population. The circumstances which increased the productiveness of labour, augmented the mass of produced commodities, expanded markets, accelerated accumulation of capital both in terms of its mass and its value, and lowered the rate of profit – these same circumstances have also created, and continuously create, a relative overpopulation, an over-population of labourers not employed by the surplus-capital owing to the low degree of exploitation at which alone they could be employed, or at least owing to the low rate of profit which they would yield at the given degree of exploitation.»

4 - A war involving the US and Israel against Iran, and the associated situation around the Strait of Hormuz, could alter the situation.

If capital is sent abroad, this is not done because it absolutely could not be applied at home, but because it can be employed at a higher rate of profit in a foreign country» (Capital, Vol. III, Ch. 15).⁵

Furthermore, in his analysis of fictitious capital and the credit system, Karl Marx emphasises the inevitability of this process developing into pure speculation against the backdrop of a falling rate of profit:

«The credit system appears as the main lever of over-production and over-speculation in commerce solely because the reproduction process, which is elastic by nature, is here forced to its extreme limits, and is so forced because a large part of the social capital is employed by people who do not own it and who consequently tackle things quite differently than the owner, who anxiously weighs the limitations of his private capital in so far as he handles it himself. This simply demonstrates the fact that the self-expansion of capital based on the contradictory nature of capitalist production permits an actual free development only up to a certain point, so that in fact it constitutes an immanent fetter and barrier to production, which are continually broken through by the credit system. Hence, the credit system accelerates the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world-market. It is the historical mission of the capitalist system of production to raise these material foundations of the new mode of production to a certain degree of perfection. At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of this contradiction – crises – and thereby the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production.

The two characteristics immanent in the credit system are, on the one hand, to develop the incentive of capitalist production, enrichment through exploitation of the labour of others, to the purest and most colossal form of gambling and swindling, and to reduce more and more the number of the few who exploit the social wealth; on the other hand, to constitute the form of transition to a new mode of production» (Capital, Vol. III, Ch. 27)⁶.

It is precisely this necessity to “destroy”, or devalue, a portion of accumulated capital in order to preserve the remainder that constitutes the economic basis of wars. The historical parallels are unmistakable. Just as on the eve of the world wars of 1914 and 1939, the foundation of the present crisis lies in the exhaustion of markets and the objective necessity of their forcible redivision. Once again, monopolies are baring their teeth

in the struggle for raw materials, while the bourgeoisie fans the flames of chauvinism and sets the machinery of militarisation in motion. The unprecedented level of globalisation renders the localisation of conflicts impossible, while the fear of nuclear annihilation compels the imperialists to wage war through protracted proxy conflicts, economic coercion, and cyberattacks.

Apologists of “political realism” indulge in the illusion that the doctrine of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD) will indefinitely restrain imperialist predators from direct confrontation. However, Marxist analysis demonstrates that the existence of nuclear weapons alters only the form of imperialist slaughter, without abolishing its underlying economic causes. The fear of nuclear catastrophe is utilised by capital to legitimise hybrid conflicts, yet the deepening crisis inexorably erodes these “red lines”. No weapon in itself can abolish the laws of motion of capital.

At the core of this spiral of contradictions lies a colossal technological shift: the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and “green” energy. Here, the fundamental law of capitalism identified by Karl Marx – the tendency of the rate of profit to fall – asserts itself in full. Its essence is that, in the pursuit of competitive advantage, the capitalist is compelled to increase the proportion of machinery, equipment, and servers (constant capital) relative to the living labour of workers (variable capital). Yet since new value is created only by living labour, as production becomes increasingly mechanised, automated, and robotised, the rate of profit on the total capital advanced declines inexorably.

Today, we observe this process in its most grotesque form in the technology sector. The “AI bubble” demands colossal capital expenditure from monopolies: hundreds of billions of dollars are being poured into the construction of data centres. At the same time, in an attempt to arrest the fall in the rate of profit, corporations are carrying out sweeping mass redundancies.⁷ By replacing living labour with algorithms, capital undermines the very basis of its own exploitation. The production of electric vehicles (EVs) reveals the same tendency: vast investments in robotics are giving rise to price wars and negative profitability. The bourgeoisie of any given state is not a unified whole. The struggle over new technologies is also an intense internal conflict – for example, between

5 - K. Marx. Capital, Vol. III Part III // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch15.htm>

6 - K. Marx. Capital, Vol. III Part III // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch27.htm>

7 - see Appendix 2.

established industrial capital and new digital monopolies over the distribution of state subsidies.

This constitutes the highest and most destructive contradiction of capital, anticipated by Karl Marx in the *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1859*:

«Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition – question of life or death – for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value. Forces of production and social relations – two different sides of the development of the social individual – appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation. In fact, however, they are the material conditions to blow this foundation sky-high.

“Truly wealthy a nation, when the working day is 6 rather than 12 hours. Wealth is not command over surplus labour time” (*real wealth*), “but rather, disposable time outside that needed in direct production, for every individual and the whole society.” (The Source and Remedy etc. 1821, p. 6.)» (*Grundrisse*, Notebook VII: “Chapter on Capital”)⁸.

Artificial intelligence objectively creates the material basis for a society of absolute abundance. Yet in order to survive, capitalism artificially manufactures scarcity: it monopolises algorithms through patents and unleashes trade wars. Moreover, the transition to a “green” economy in no way diminishes the role of traditional energy. Established oil and gas monopolies exploit global instability to extract new subsidies from states under the pretext of “energy security”. At the same time, “green” capital lobbies for environmental quotas that drive competitors into ruin. This internecine struggle between factions of the bourgeoisie is ultimately paid for by the proletariat through rising tariffs.

This technological revolution intensifies imperialist rivalry to the utmost. American imperialism has turned to crude protectionism. Yet here too the profound split

within the national bourgeoisie is clearly evident. To reduce the current division within American capital solely to the crude dichotomy of “globalist financiers” versus “patriotic industrialists” is to view reality through the prism of the late twentieth century. Today, the fault line runs not so much between sectors as within global value chains themselves, and is determined by the position a given corporation occupies within those chains. American capitalism is confronted with a fundamental contradiction: the logic of profit maximisation (requiring cheap labour and open markets, above all in Asia) has come into direct conflict with the logic of maintaining international and military hegemony (requiring control over technology and “reindustrialisation”).⁹ The “Trump Doctrine” functions as an instrument of the latter fraction for the extraction of surplus value. The rupture of trade chains with Asia is turning Latin America into a vast maquiladora. This is clearly expressed in the unprecedented political pressure exerted by Washington on Peru to limit Chinese control over the new deep-water megaport of Chancay, as well as in the diplomatic coercion applied to Brazil and Argentina aimed at forcing Huawei out of the sector of 5G network. Within the United States itself, the notorious anti-immigrant hysteria serves to create a rightless reserve army of labour.

The centre of gravity of the world economy has shifted to Asia. China, choking on a colossal surplus of accumulated capital, has entered the classical stage of imperialism – the aggressive export of capital. The Chinese bourgeoisie (torn apart by the struggle between the export-oriented capital of the coastal regions and the domestic party-state sector) is compelled to expand outward aggressively. The construction of alternative financial systems makes the confrontation between American and Chinese capital the principal axis of contemporary conflicts.

An analysis of the present conjuncture is inconceivable without taking into account new imperialist predators such as India, Turkey, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia. It would be a mistake to regard them as passive objects. Taking advantage of the crisis of the old hegemony, they have entered into active bargaining. Turkish capital is penetrating Africa, while Indian and Saudi capital are carving out their own spheres of influence. The growth of their ambitions renders the system of contradictions even more explosive.

Europe, cut off from cheap raw materials, is attempting to preserve the remnants of its industry

8 - K. Marx. Grundrisse: Chapter 14. // Marx Engels Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch14.htm>

9 - see Appendix 3.

through the expansion of the military-industrial complex. For Europe, the United States is not a guarantor of security but a competitor. These contradictions give rise to a paradox: transnational European capital and the Euro-bureaucracy call for a unified military-industrial complex, while the national bourgeoisie resists. German industrial capital is resisting a rupture with China, while European agrarian capital, driven to ruin by Brussels' environmental quotas, finances right-wing populism.

Russian imperialism is attempting to forge ties with the Global South. In order to avoid falling into China's suffocating embrace, the Kremlin is actively exploiting divisions within global capital by cultivating relations with India, the Arab monarchies, and African states. Within the country, the raw-materials oligarchs privately yearn for a return to Western markets, while the military-industrial complex and the security apparatus divide the super-profits derived from the war economy.

Nowhere does this bloody knot reveal itself more starkly than in the Greater Middle East. Claims of combating "terrorism" serve merely as an ideological fig leaf. In reality, this is an attempt by US-Israeli capital to reconfigure transport corridors (the IMEC project) and secure control over energy resources. For US-Israeli capital, a strike against Iran would resolve a central task – the physical destruction of an independent centre of power capable of blocking the Strait of Hormuz, and the disruption of Sino-Russian logistical networks. India seeks to safeguard its investments in the Iranian port of Port of Chabahar, while Turkey aims to weaken Tehran as its principal rival.

Moreover, external aggression is always an attempt to resolve internal class antagonisms. On the eve of the war, Israeli society was shaken by profound crises. Under the pretext of an "existential" threat, a regime of "class peace" was swiftly imposed, and the anger of the proletariat was channelled into chauvinism. Israeli capital, under the cover of war, is physically clearing the Palestinian territories, freeing land for real estate speculation and gas extraction. In Iran, the war has become a lifeline for the military-clerical bourgeoisie (the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), which had been on the verge of collapse under the pressure of strikes by oil workers and teachers. The regime has imposed martial law and is exploiting the external threat to brand any striking worker a "foreign agent" and send them to the gallows.

New frontiers of capital accumulation extend even into the Arctic. Beneath the ice of Greenland lie colossal

reserves of rare earth metals. However, for technology monopolies, Greenland also represents an ideal geographical "radiator", with access to cheap geothermal energy – a critically important material basis for the deployment of vast data centres cooled by Arctic air.

Everywhere, the bourgeoisie is waging a general offensive against the proletariat. We are witnessing increases in the retirement age across the countries of advanced capitalism, the dismantling of traditional labour protections through the imposition of the "gig economy", and the effective curtailment of the right to strike. Capital skilfully sets workers against one another, instilling in them the belief that the enemy lies abroad. Yet objective material conditions – inflation, wage stagnation, and the burden of debt – are inexorably tearing away this veil. Outbreaks of strikes in the warehouses of logistics monopolies and among "digital" workers have already begun.

But to see in this the outline of imminent victorious class battles of the proletariat is to indulge in illusions. The Marxist approach demands a ruthlessly sober assessment of the present condition of the working class itself. We are confronted with a stark historical paradox: the objective material conditions for the collapse of capitalism have over-ripened, yet the subjective factor – class consciousness, the organisation of the masses, and the existence of a revolutionary party – is at its lowest level in the past century.

Strike struggle on a global scale remains fragmented and is predominantly defensive in character. The working class is permeated by social passivity and nationalism. A world communist party of the proletariat does not exist, while genuine communist organisations consist of tiny, scattered groups, isolated from the broad masses.

There are clear political-economic and historical explanations for this grim picture. The present weakness of the labour movement is neither accidental nor the result of the "stupidity" of the proletarian masses, but a necessary outcome of the development of capitalism in recent decades.

For decades, the bourgeoisie of the imperialist centres (the United States, Europe, and to some extent Japan) has utilised super-profits to create a substantial "labour aristocracy" and a system of social provision (the welfare state). This material bribery fostered the illusion that capitalism could be "improved" by peaceful means and transformed the trade unions into a bureaucratic appendage of the bourgeois state, whose principal function is to dampen, rather than intensify, the class struggle.

The transition to a platform-based “gig economy” has transformed a section of wage workers into isolated “self-employed” couriers, freelancers, or call centre operators, for whom it is objectively more difficult to develop an awareness of their common interests.

Moreover, the working class has yet to recover from the catastrophes of the twentieth century. The defeat of the revolutionary wave of 1917–1921 and the transformation of the parties of the Communist International into social-democratic mechanisms of systemic opposition – all this has discredited the very idea of the struggle for communism in the eyes of the masses. Bourgeois ideology has successfully imposed the notion that any attempt to overthrow capital inevitably leads to the Gulag.

Does this assessment of the facts provide grounds for historical pessimism and capitulation? By no means. Marxism teaches dialectics: the conditions that gave rise to the passivity of the proletariat are today being destroyed by capital itself.

Firstly, the structural crisis and the fall in the rate of profit no longer allow the bourgeoisie to sustain “class peace”. Capital is compelled to ruthlessly cut social expenditure, raise the retirement age, and reduce real wages through inflation. The economic basis of reformism and the trade union bureaucracy is being consumed in the furnace of militarisation.

Secondly, the introduction of artificial intelligence and automation is leading to the rapid proletarianisation of those strata that until recently considered themselves part of the “middle class” (engineers, programmers, office employees). They are being stripped of their privileges and cast onto the labour market on the same terms as the rest, swelling the ranks of the objective gravediggers of capital.

As the lives of millions become increasingly unbearable, spontaneous class struggle will intensify. However, spontaneous uprisings in themselves do not lead to victory. For the economic struggle to develop into a revolutionary struggle against private property and the state, it is necessary to introduce into it scientific communist consciousness.

It is precisely here that the most urgent practical tasks for the contemporary Marxist vanguard are posed. Under the present unfavourable conditions, the vanguard must resolutely demarcate itself from all forms of reformism. A relentless theoretical struggle must be waged against modern social chauvinism (those “left” forces that support “their own” imperialism and “their own” industry), against the illusions of a “multipolar world” (the support of some

predators against others), and against opportunist parliamentarism.

A period of retreat in the labour movement is a time for forging a theoretical and organisational core. Marxists must study contemporary capitalism and train cadres disciplined in class struggle.

The vanguard has no right to confine itself to academic circles. Its task is to bring communist consciousness into every manifestation of the class struggle, even at its most elementary level, patiently explaining to workers the limitations of purely economic demands and directing their anger towards the capitalist system as a whole.

Since capital is more globalised than ever, an anti-capitalist revolution can only be a world revolution. Marxists in different countries must begin already now to establish links, exchange experience, and elaborate a unified tactic, thereby preparing the foundations for the creation of a new, genuinely revolutionary Communist International.

The era of illusory “peace” and stability is over. Capitalism is entering a period of immense upheavals, wars, and crises. Although the proletariat may appear fragmented and weak today, it is precisely these monstrous crises that may become the forge in which the Marxist vanguard will temper the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that a revolutionary Marxist party is not a fire brigade waiting in the depot for a “spontaneous uprising” to break out. The vanguard has no right merely to “be ready for the moment”. It must itself organise this class movement on a daily basis: through the publication and distribution of its press organ, participation in all manifestations of class struggle, and political condemnation. Between spontaneity and organisation there lie many intermediate stages; each step towards a higher level of organisation is a step towards the communist revolution.

At the same time, Marxists must be prepared, both theoretically and organisationally, for the moment when conditions arise in which millions of workers may be set in motion. Only a party armed with advanced theory and fused with the vanguard of the working class will be capable of directing a spontaneous uprising into the course of the communist revolution, whose aim is to smash the bourgeois state apparatus and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat – a necessary condition for the expropriation of private property and the subsequent withering away of the state.

April 2026

FINANCIAL REPRESSION

APPENDIX 1

If a country (such as Turkey or Argentina) has external debt denominated in US dollars, the depreciation (devaluation) of its national currency against the dollar does not alleviate the problem, but instead makes servicing that debt much more difficult. To meet the same dollar-denominated obligations, the state and businesses must raise far greater sums in depreciated local currency. Therefore, when economists state that global debt cannot be serviced without the “*permanent depreciation of currencies*”, they are not referring to the decline of “developing” countries’ currencies against the dollar. Rather, they are referring to the depreciation of the reserve currencies themselves (above all the dollar) relative to real assets through inflation. This process is known in economics as ‘financial repression’. It operates differently for two types of debtors:

1. Countries that borrow in their own currency (the US, Japan, EU countries).

For these countries (which account for two-thirds of global debt), devaluation is a lifeline.

The process: the state (via central banks) prints money or keeps interest rates below the actual rate of inflation.

Result: the purchasing power of the dollar (or euro) falls. Although nominally the US still owes the creditor a nominal \$100, the real value of this money decreases. At the same time, the state’s tax revenues

rise in line with inflation (goods cost more – sales and income taxes are higher).

The outcome: the state repays its old, fixed debts with “cheaper” money. The debt is devalued at the expense of a hidden tax on those who hold savings and bonds in that currency.

2. “Developing” countries that borrow in dollars.

For countries that borrow in foreign currency, a depreciation of their local currency is a path to bankruptcy. Yet paradoxically, global dollar inflation (that very “depreciation” of the dollar) may actually alleviate their position:

Many “developing” countries are exporters of raw materials. Prices for oil, metals, and food on world markets are denominated in dollars.

When the dollar depreciates as a result of inflation, the prices of real commodities rise.

The exporting country receives a greater quantity of “cheaper” dollars for the same volume of exports. With these dollars, it becomes easier to service its existing dollar-denominated debt.

The aim of the system is not to trigger a collapse of local currency exchange rates, but to sustain global inflation, which gradually erodes the real value of accumulated debt. Without this, states would be forced either to raise taxes to economically destructive levels or to declare widespread defaults.

The Dialectical Contradiction of the Capitalist System

APPENDIX 2

From the standpoint of Marxist theory, living labour alone is the sole source of surplus value. Consequently, by expelling workers from production and replacing them with machines or algorithms, capital undermines the basis of its own profitability in the long run.

The ongoing reduction of the workforce in the global economy is not a logical flaw in the theory, but a real, objective dialectical contradiction inherent in the system itself. To understand why corporations persist in carrying out mass redundancies with relentless determination, thereby exacerbating the long-term problem, it is necessary to distinguish between the logic of the individual capital (the micro-level) and that of the system as a whole (the macro-level), while also taking into account so-called “counter-tendencies”.

Here is a concrete explanation of how this contradiction is resolved in practice:

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall is a macroeconomic, systemic law. However, the individual capitalist (or a corporation’s board of directors) does not think in terms of the macroeconomy as a whole. They think in terms of quarterly results and competitive pressures.

When a corporation lays off 10,000 workers and introduces, for example, artificial intelligence or a new production line, it sharply reduces its individual costs of production. Over a short period, market prices for its commodities are still determined by the industry’s previous, higher average costs. As a result, this particular corporation appropriates

surplus profit (extra profit). For it, the rate of profit rises, at least temporarily.

The contradiction asserts itself later: when competitors do the same (laying off workers and installing machinery), commodity prices fall, the surplus profit disappears, and the average rate of profit in the industry declines to a new, lower level. In other words, mass redundancies represent an attempt by an individual capital to preserve itself at the expense of others – an attempt that ultimately drags all down.

Mass redundancies almost never entail a proportional reduction in output. When a corporation fires 20 % of its workforce, the remaining 80 % are typically told: *«You will now perform the work of your fired colleagues, or you will find yourselves on the street alongside them.»*

In terms of Marxist theory, this signifies a sharp increase in the rate of surplus value. Although the total mass of variable capital (v , i.e., the wage fund) has declined, the remaining workers produce more surplus value (m) per unit of time as a result of intensified labour, overtime, and the fear of losing their jobs. This sharp rise in the rate of exploitation temporarily offsets the effect of the rising organic composition of capital (c/v , where c denotes constant capital) and slows the fall in the rate of profit.

Mass redundancies create a surplus of labour supply on the market – the so-called reserve army of labour (the unemployed). The existence of a vast pool

of workers “waiting at the gates” enables corporations not only to refrain from raising wages, but in practice to reduce them for those still employed (or to hire new workers on worse conditions). This cheapens variable capital (v) and allows the corporation to appropriate an even greater share of the total social product.

Ultimately, shareholders do not live off interest; they live off the mass of profit.

Even if the rate of profit (the return on invested capital) inevitably falls, say, from 15 to 5 %, a corporation that captures new markets and expands its scale may still increase the total mass of profit. Five per cent of a \$1 trillion capitalisation exceeds 15 % of \$10 billion. In order to preserve this absolute mass of profit under conditions of contracting markets, corporations are prepared to carry out any cuts necessary.

Actions that are entirely rational and even necessary for an individual capital in the here and now (laying off workers → reducing costs → delivering profits to shareholders) are profoundly irrational from the standpoint of the global economy in the long term (reduction of the workforce → contraction of aggregate demand → decline in the mass of surplus value → crisis of overproduction and a fall in the rate of profit).

This is precisely why corporations cannot stop: competition compels them to saw off the branch on which they are sitting, for whoever ceases to saw will be the first to fall.

APPENDIX 3

The Economic Content of the Struggle Between Factions of the US Bourgeoisie

To better understand the situation, it is necessary to examine five key fractions of US capital, their interests, and concrete examples.

1. The transnational technology sector (Big Tech)

This is the most internally contradictory fraction. On the one hand, it produces high-technology commodities; on the other, it is entirely dependent on the global division of labour. It has a vested interest in unrestricted access to markets (including China) and global production capacities (Taiwan, assembly in the PRC).

However, the sector itself is deeply divided. Companies such as Apple (*fables* – without their own fabrication facilities) are strongly opposed to trade wars. The imposition of tariffs on Chinese imports directly undermines their profit margins, since relocating vast assembly clusters from China (e.g., Fox-

conn) to the United States or even to India cannot be accomplished rapidly or cheaply. Companies such as Nvidia (chip design) are actively lobbying for the relaxation of export controls. Restrictions on the sale of advanced chips to China deprive them of a substantial share of the market, and they openly warn the government that this undermines US dominance in the field of artificial intelligence. Companies such as Intel (which possess fabrication facilities), by contrast, benefit from protectionism. They actively supported the CHIPS Act, receiving tens of billions of dollars in state subsidies to build domestic fabrication plants in order to compete with TSMC.

2. Import-dependent retail and the service sector

This is the sector (Walmart, Amazon, Target, Nike) that has for decades benefited from the relocation of American manufacturing to the countries of new

capitalism. It has a vested interest in maintaining zero tariffs on mass consumer goods, electronics, and clothing. For this fraction of the bourgeoisie, “tariffs on Chinese goods” are not a means of protecting domestic producers (who in many cases simply no longer exist), but a direct tax on the American consumer, leading to a fall in the rate of profit and a contraction of consumer demand. This fraction stands in sharp opposition to isolationism.

3. The export-oriented agro-industrial complex

A historically conservative sector which, paradoxically, has found itself held hostage by protectionist policy. It has a vested interest in unrestricted access to Asian markets (above all China). When the heavy industrial fraction pushes through tariffs on Chinese steel, China responds symmetrically – striking at American farmers by curtailing imports of soybeans. This sector is deeply hostile to protectionism, as it undermines markets painstakingly built up over decades (indeed, Donald Trump’s administration was compelled to allocate approximately \$28 billion in emergency subsidies to farmers in order to prevent their bankruptcy as a direct consequence of its own trade war).

4. Domestic heavy industry and energy

This is the so-called “old” capital – steel producers (U.S. Steel), aluminium manufacturers, and the traditional automotive industry (Ford, General Motors) – which is pushing the state towards stringent protectionism and tariff wars. It is interested in shielding the domestic market from cheaper imports (subsidised Chinese or European goods), as well as in securing state infrastructure contracts. Companies in this sector are unable to compete with Chinese electric vehicles (EVs) or steel, either in terms of price or, in many cases, in battery technology. It was this fraction that lobbied for the retention of “Trump-era” tariffs under the Biden administration and pushed through prohibitive 100 % tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in 2024. Without state protectionism, these corporations face extinction.

5. Financial capital (Wall Street and investment funds)

This sector advocates globalisation, yet here too there is a fundamental contradiction. It is interested in the free movement of capital to wherever the rate of profit is highest. For a long time, it acted as the principal lobbyist for the integration of China into the world economy. However, today it finds itself caught between contradictory imperatives. On the one hand, financiers seek to invest

in rapidly growing Chinese technology companies. On the other, the US federal state (through bodies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Treasury) is compelling them to pursue “de-risking”, that is, to withdraw capital from Chinese assets under the threat of sanctions or the loss of access to US state contracts.

The fact that the US federal state has begun to act with relative autonomy from the interests of individual fractions of capital is conditioned by transformations taking place in the world economy. It is precisely this that is intensifying the struggle between these fractions.

The US political leadership (both Republicans and Democrats) has recognised that if everything is left up to the free market (in which the transnational sector that benefits from globalisation prevails), the United States will definitively lose its industrial base, along with its capacity to produce weapons, advanced semiconductors, and strategically essential materials. Without this, there is no material foundation for sustaining its status as a global hegemon or the strength of the dollar itself. For this reason, American imperialism has turned to protectionism not out of choice, but as an emergency measure to preserve its economic base. The state is now effectively compelling transnational corporations to subsidise national security (by abandoning profitable markets, rupturing cheap logistical chains, and relocating production facilities back “home”, where labour power is more expensive). Naturally, those fractions of capital that incur losses as a result of this restructuring resist fiercely, which finds expression in the political chaos and polarisation in Washington.



IRAN

AS THE NEXUS

OF THE IMPERIALIST CRISIS

This text presents a Marxist analysis of Iran's role in the contemporary imperialist crisis and the country's internal class dynamics. Whilst liberal ideologues speak of a struggle between "reformists" and "conservatives", we argue that all factions of the Iranian bourgeoisie are united in suppressing the workers' movement, using it merely as a mass base in their internecine struggles over assets. Against the backdrop of the unfolding US-Israeli intervention, we categorically reject both support for foreign invasion and calls for "national unity" around the Islamic regime. The proletariat's only possible response would be the tactic of revolutionary defeatism: the Iranian proletariat must break free from bourgeois influence, create its own vanguard party, and use the war to smash the bourgeois state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat through revived workers' councils.

It is not the first time that the Middle East, and Iran in particular, has found itself at the center of clashes between imperialist powers in their struggle to redraw spheres of influence and markets. This was the case on the eve of World War I, when Iran was partitioned between British and Russian imperialism. It happened again during the carnage of World War II, when the Shah's regime sought ties with Hitler's Germany, only to end up once more under joint Anglo-Soviet occupation. The 1943 Tehran Conference became one of the symbols of a new imperialist redivision, foreshadowing the end of that slaughter. Since then, a long cycle of capitalist development has significantly altered the international lineup of these predators, shifting their relative weight and balance of power. Alongside global powers capable of projecting their policies worldwide, there now exists a complex web of agreements and conflicts among regional actors. Yet the essence of this struggle, brilliantly exposed by Lenin over a century ago, remains unchanged: it is a division of markets and spheres of influence among imperialists-bandits fighting each other over the redistribution of their captives. It makes no difference who drew the knife first, escalating the conflict into open violence.

WAVES OF IRANIAN PROTESTS

Today, this struggle between the organized apparatuses of violence serving capital is intertwined with class struggle – a struggle that differs significantly from the era of Lenin in terms of class factionalization and intensity. The proletariat no longer acts as an organized leading force directing the peasantry's demand for peace and land against a united front of the big bourgeoisie and landowners. One of the key objectives of Marxist analysis, therefore, is to critique ideologies that often portray this confrontation between classes and their factions as an abstract surge of the masses or the “middle class” toward abstract freedom and democracy. This critique is particularly necessary in the case of Iran, where the latest wave of protests preceded the threat of US-Israeli intervention. It is described as “another” wave because social tension in the country erupts regularly, independently of the varying triggers for each outbreak. For instance, one may recall the 2009 protests – the so-called “Green Movement” – which demanded a recount of votes after the election victory of the ultra-conservative Ahmadinejad, or the 2019 protests sparked by a sharp hike in gasoline prices. While there are many other immediate causes, Marxism must go further: moving beyond the external, superficial manifestations of this struggle evident in the slogans and demands, to uncover the socio-economic substance of the political conflict. This is precisely what we will undertake in this article, critically engaging

with the book “Iran for Everyone” by Russian expert Nikita Smagin.

THE GENESIS OF IRAN'S POLITICAL FORM

Smagin is a liberal, formerly an adherent of the national-liberal Alexei Navalny. This background inevitably colors his ostensibly impartial analysis. Yet his research has certain merits, one of which is evident from the following passage in his book: *«Whenever I tried to share insights about Iran, I would often hear in response: “But you're contradicting yourself!” Life contradicts itself – that's universal. And in Iran's case, the frequency of these contradictions multiplies many times over. Iranians themselves, I'll tell you, often contradict their own positions! Iran has a paradoxical political*

system, a paradoxical attitude toward Islam, paradoxical laws and worldview. Paradoxes in Iran are not merely encountered at every turn – they are a systemic phenomenon, foundational to the state and society, enabling their survival and development». Of course, a mere claim to employ dialectical method is insufficient in itself, but the author does make a genuine, albeit limited, attempt to apply it – and that is precisely what drew our attention to his work.

Thus, the modern form of the Iranian state emerged from the protests and the overthrow of the Shah's regime in 1979. Contemporary liberal ideologies seek to portray it as an authoritarian, personalist regime that, by its very nature, gravitates toward the so-called new “Axis of Evil” – comprising China and Russia – and allegedly challenges the supposedly progressive West. Yet even a superficial engagement with Iran's political realities immediately debunks this caricature. Let Smagin speak: *«The first association that comes to an outsider's mind when thinking of Iran is almost invariably: “It's an Islamist dictatorship.” In reality, the picture is far more complex. Once we set aside emotional judgments, we immediately enter a realm of nuances and caveats: yes, but... In the 1990s, Iran developed a unique political system in which theocracy coexisted with democracy, and unelected institutions functioned alongside elected ones. Elections were held regularly; while it would be difficult to call them truly free, they were almost always competitive and unpredictable».* Unwittingly, this bourgeois expert articulates a class truth that the proletariat would do well to take to heart: it is not only in Iran, but wherever the bourgeois

sie has firmly consolidated its hold on power, that it creates a hybrid of elected and unelected governing bodies. And when it comes to the vital interests of big capital – to its long-term strategy – it concentrates decision-making authority in institutions insulated from the zigzags of fickle electoral pressures. What concrete research must uncover, then, are the specific forms through which the political dominance of the big bourgeoisie manifests itself under the particular conditions of each state.

The pivotal moment in the genesis of Iran's contemporary political form was not the year 1979 itself, but 1989. Here is how Smagin describes the birth of this construct: «Such a complex, compound model emerged as the product of the “Khamenei–Rafsanjani reforms” of 1989 [...].

[...] in 1989, the legendary Ayatollah passed away. By that time, internal opponents had already been defeated and repressed, and the war with Iraq had just ended in a military stalemate: at least 500,000 lives lost, up to a million affected [...].

The behind-the-scenes power struggle – the “fight of bulldogs under the carpet” – revealed that the two most influential figures at the time of Khomeini's death were Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Speaker of the Majlis, and President Ali Khamenei. Ultimately, they divided power between them: Rafsanjani became the next president, while Khamenei assumed the role of Supreme Leader (rahbar). Equally significant was the fact that these two men also initiated the first – and so far only – constitutional reform in Iran's history. Among other changes, this reform abolished the office of prime minister, with its powers effectively transferred to the president.

[...] President Rafsanjani emerged as the leader of the reformist movement, which advocated for economic liberalization and the normalization of relations with the world, including the West. [...] In opposition, a conservative bloc began to coalesce at the other end of the political spectrum, appealing to the “hardcore” values of the Islamic Revolution—including anti-Western rhetoric and strict adherence to religious norms. This segment of Iran's political landscape consolidated around Khamenei, although formally he endeavored to appear neutral, refusing to endorse any particular faction. To this day, the Supreme Leader prefers not to publicly voice support for any specific candidate in presidential elections. At the same time, the subtle cues in his speeches, coupled with reporting in Iranian media, leave little doubt as to which side Khamenei favors in the domestic political arena.

In the political struggle, both movements had their respective weaknesses and strengths. The reformists enjoyed broader popular support. Their ideas of system liberalization and openness to the world clearly resonated with voters: both the Majlis and the presidency more often remained in their hands. Over the 35 years from 1989 to 2024, reformist politicians held the presidency for 24 of them. Yet the con-

servatives have always commanded a decisive advantage within the theocratic institutions of power: the Supreme Leader (rahbar) can be removed only on grounds of ill health – in effect, he is chosen once and for life. Moreover, his constitutional powers make the rahbar the most influential figure in Iran. He directly appoints half the members of the Guardian Council, which can reject any legislation passed by the Majlis and also determines who may run in parliamentary and presidential elections – and who may not. In addition, the candidates for three key ministerial posts – Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Intelligence (which oversees the security services) – must be approved by the Supreme Leader. Finally, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a military formation numbering 300,000 to 400,000 personnel that forms part of the country's armed forces and serves simultaneously as army and intelligence apparatus, reports directly to him.

[...] As a result, real authority and influence are determined less by what is written on paper than by which politicians and officials currently command greater prestige and leverage».

Let us note in passing that this organization of power by the Iranian bourgeoisie – which dons a variety of guises, including religious ones – partly explains why the US-Israeli bet on eliminating the leaders of this political regime has failed to pay off. More broadly, the relative flexibility of this type of democracy – as a form of capitalist dictatorship – has served several objectives typical of how the bourgeoisie organizes its rule:

Forging, through struggle and bargaining, a general line for the ruling class regarding both domestic and foreign fronts.

Mobilizing mass support for this political regime – including, though certainly not exclusively, by creating the illusion of choice between different factions, different campaign promises, and different electoral brands.

Finally, as noted above, establishing a maximally resilient structure for contending with other factions of predators, both regional and global.

THE IRANIAN VARIANT OF THE “WELFARE STATE”

It is evident that any political form is infused with a contradictory and constantly evolving social and economic content that it is called upon to express. It is not difficult to observe that Iran, too, has large bourgeois families and resort enclaves where this elite squanders wealth accumulated through “arduous labour”; there exists the so-called IRGC economy, which accounts for somewhere between 20 and 40 percent of the national economy, and in which retired military officers occupy positions on corporate

boards; and there is also the economy of the Middle Eastern bazaar – that of the Iranian petty bourgeoisie.

Here, however, we would like to dwell on another element in the functioning of this socio-economic model, well described in Smagin's book and characteristic of the post-war socio-economic order of the old powers, which is likewise in crisis today. We are referring to what in the West has come to be known as the welfare state. In Europe, this system consolidated during the "economic miracles" of the 1950s and 1960s, a period marked by the rapid dissolution of the peasantry, the migration of the population into cities, and proletarianization. The crumbs from the masters' table that were channelled into systems of social provision were intended to soften the frictions that inevitably arose in the course of these processes and, in part, to sustain demand for goods in a rapidly expanding economy. In specific forms, this phenomenon was also characteristic of Iran.

From 1950 to 2015, the level of urbanization in Iran rose from 28 to 73 percent: in essence, this indicates an extremely rapid process of the dissolution of the peasantry and the formation of the classes of modern bourgeois society, which could not but generate social tensions, sharpen political struggle, and compel an adaptation of political forms.

Let us trace how Smagin describes these processes: *«The first systemic manifestations of social policy in Iran date back to the years of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988). The exhausting conflict required the restructuring of the economy along wartime lines, and the previous market mechanisms of distribution ceased to function. In order to avert famine, the authorities resorted for the first time to mass subsidies for food products: prices were placed under state control, and goods were distributed to the population according to strict norms. Effectively, this amounted to a system of ration cards, under which each person was entitled to only a fixed quantity of goods. The war then came to an end, the need for rationing disappeared, but the subsidies remained. Now Iranians could consume unlimited quantities of gasoline or electricity at low prices.*

Another feature of the new authorities also manifested itself in those years. The Islamic Republic sought not to abolish the institutions that had existed under the Shah, but rather to modify their functioning and supplement them with new ones. [...] The pre-existing organizations and institutions of social assistance that had operated under the Shah were not dismantled; instead, new bodies emerged, oriented toward those strata of the population that the previous regime had neglected. Notably, the Pahlavi Foundation, which controlled significant assets of the Shah and his family, was renamed the Foundation of the Oppressed ("Bonyad-e Mostazafan"). It became a preserve of the IRGC, evolving into the largest and most influential of Iran's foundations.

In economic terms, the achievements of the Islamic Republic in its first decades were more than modest. Sanctions and international isolation disrupted established routes for hydrocarbon exports, while the protracted war with Iraq devastated the economy. [...] The country only returned to its pre-revolutionary economic levels in the early 2000s [...].

In contrast, social policy produced quite substantial results. The Islamists opened access to education and healthcare for the broad masses. Infant mortality declined rapidly. By the early 1990s, Iran had reached the level of developed countries on this indicator, significantly surpassing the Middle Eastern average – and this against the backdrop of war and economic crisis. Iranians also live longer than their neighbours in the region: by the early 2010s, Iran, whilst remaining a developing country, had caught up with European states in terms of life expectancy. State policy played a role in this: in 1995, a law on universal healthcare was adopted, extending health insurance coverage to the entire population. For the first time, even residents of remote villages gained access to basic medical services.

Progress compared to the Shah's era was also evident in education. Whereas around 5 million pupils were enrolled in Iranian schools in the 1970s, by the early 2000s their number had reached nearly 20 million. Admission to higher education became significantly easier. The Islamic Republic also did a great deal to advance the emancipation of women. Prior to 1979, the literacy rate among girls aged 15–24 stood at 42 percent and was significantly lower than in Turkey (68 percent). However, by the mid-2000s this figure in Iran had already risen to nearly 97 percent – 3 percent higher than in neighbouring Turkey. Women also entered universities en masse, their share of the student body exceeding 50 percent.

For the first time in Iran's history, unemployment benefits began to be paid on a regular basis. The self-employed were incorporated into the system of social provision. Finally, the system of subsidies and assistance to vulnerable strata, combined with the economic stabilization of the 1990s and 2000s, succeeded in reversing the poverty trend. This indicator deteriorated sharply during the war years and remained at around 30 percent until 1995–1996. Thereafter, however, the number of people living in poverty began to decline, falling to just 5 percent in 2011–2013».

This long cycle of development led to the formation of a modern capitalist society, including what bourgeois sociology terms the "middle class." In reality, what is at issue is a social amalgam of different classes and their strata – exploiters and the exploited – arbitrarily lumped together on the basis of income levels and the predominance of bourgeois habits. Be that as it may, this heterogeneous mass began to place ever greater demands on the state. The latter, in turn, is incapable of meeting

them under conditions of sanctions and economic degradation resulting from a lack of investment. This constitutes the real basis of the protests in Iran.

THE ILLUSION OF WORKERS' REPRESENTATION AND FACTIONAL STRUGGLE WITHIN THE BOURGEOISIE

In the analyses of Smagin and other bourgeois scholars, what is often overlooked is not only the Iranian proletariat itself, but also the manner in which the ruling class actively constructs mechanisms to subordinate the labour movement to its own factional interests. The Iranian bourgeoisie, despite its internal fragmentation (which political scientists tend to reduce, in an overly simplistic manner, to a struggle between “reformists” and “conservatives” or “principlists”), possesses a considerable arsenal of means for co-opting workers' protests and deploying them as a battering ram in internecine struggles over assets and political influence.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1979 Revolution, when independent workers' councils (*shoras*) were suppressed, the state established their surrogates – the Islamic Labour Councils – as well as the umbrella organisation “Workers' House” (*Khaneh-ye Kargar*). These structures defend workers' rights only nominally. In practice, their function is the pre-emptive control of the working environment and the incorporation of the working class into a state corporatist system.

It is important to note that the leadership of the “Workers' House” has historically been closely linked to the faction of so-called “pragmatists” and “reformists” (associated with Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami). During periods when this faction found itself in opposition to hardline conservatives, the leaders of the “Workers' House” frequently mobilised the workers under their control to exert pressure on political rivals, organising sanctioned rallies under the banner of social justice which, in reality, served merely as instruments of bargaining over ministerial portfolios and economic concessions.

On the other hand, the conservative wing of the bourgeoisie, relying on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and major religious foundations (*bonyads*), regularly plays the card of the “defence of the oppressed” (*mostazafin*). From the era of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad through to the presidency of Ebrahim Raisi, conservatives have actively exploited workers' strikes at privatised enterprises as a means of striking at their rivals.

A particularly vivid example is provided by the struggles at the Haft Tappeh sugar complex and the HEPCO heavy machinery plant. When enterprises transferred

into private hands (often linked to the reformist camp) were driven into bankruptcy, and workers went unpaid for months, conservative media and politicians would suddenly present themselves as the “voice of the proletariat”. They publicised these strikes and endorsed demands for the reversal of privatisation, but solely with the aim of transferring these assets from private competitors back into the hands of the state or para-state foundations associated with the IRGC. Once the change in ownership had been effected, this conservative “solidarity” rapidly dissipated, and any attempts by workers to continue their struggle for their substantive rights were met with harsh repression.

The reformist faction, for its part, has for decades exploited the democratic illusions of the intelligentsia and sections of the working class. In the run-up to elections, it promises the liberalisation of labour legislation, the legalisation of independent trade unions, and the expansion of civil liberties. However, it is precisely reformist administrations (particularly under Hassan Rouhani) that bear responsibility for the most far-reaching campaigns of neoliberal labour market deregulation, including the proliferation of so-called “white contracts” (agreements signed by workers with no terms or wages specified, which employers may complete at their discretion) and the exclusion of millions of workers in small enterprises from the protections of the Labour Code.

However acute the contradictions between the various factions of the Iranian bourgeoisie may be (whether oriented towards the domestic market or seeking accommodation with Western imperialism, whether rooted in private capital or in the military-state apparatus), they display complete class unity on one question: the prevention of proletarian self-organisation.

As soon as a strike exceeds the limits permitted by one faction or another, and workers begin to advance political demands or attempt to establish genuinely independent organisations (as demonstrated by the Tehran bus drivers' union, the teachers' Coordinating Council, and the independent union of workers at Haft Tappeh), the state apparatus casts aside its internal divisions. Leaders of workers' struggles are subjected to arrest, torture, and prolonged imprisonment under every administration – whether conservative, “pragmatist”, or reformist.

Thus, the Iranian bourgeoisie continually seeks to reduce the labour movement to a mere auxiliary in its intra-class conflicts. The recognition that no faction of the ruling class, nor any of its political formations, can serve as a tactical ally of the proletariat is the first and indispensable step towards the political

independence of the Iranian working class amid the gathering storms of imperialist redivision.

THE BLOODY REPARTITION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

At present, American imperialism, in alliance with its Israeli partner, has launched a military operation against Iran, making no secret of the fact that it is explicitly counting on the protest potential of the Iranian population in the course of its intervention. At the same time, Donald Trump did not trouble himself with elaborate justifications about the need to defend “democratic values” and other ideological banalities, leaving the task of legitimising the war – under the pretext of putting an end to a reactionary, anti-human regime – to a chorus of liberal commentators in the media.

To simplify the overall picture, one might say that the American predator, now in a condition of relative decline, is attempting to leverage its still considerable military superiority in order to bring key economic resources and transit routes under its control, thereby securing a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis with its rivals – above all, the rising imperialist power of China. Yesterday, this repartition of the region proceeded through investments, trade agreements, and diplomatic initiatives (the Abraham Accords; the 2021 strategic agreement between China and Iran, envisaging \$400 billion in investment over 25 years, etc.); today, it continues through military intervention, setting in motion an unpredictable chain of consequences.

Investment, diplomacy, and war are not opposing or mutually exclusive means of this repartition; imperialist wars are the continuation of imperialist policy, expressing the economic interests of the largest monopolistic groups. The same logic is pursued by lesser regional predators – from Israel to the Gulf monarchies and Turkey. Nor do European and Russian imperialisms stand aside, each seeking to avoid losses in the latest round of global repartition.

There is another important lesson to be drawn from this situation. Left-wing imitators of Marxism may have indulged the illusion that an American invasion, carried on the bayonets of imperialism, would bring the Iranian proletariat a supposedly progressive democracy, thereby creating more favourable conditions for workers’ struggle in the future. This is either foolish naivety or outright betrayal, amounting to siding with the class enemy.

On the other hand, the Iranian bourgeoisie has quite predictably acquired a powerful trump card in the form of “national unity”, seeking to rally the proletariat around the state flag and the defence of the Islamic regime – one

which only yesterday was detested by the masses themselves. Under these conditions, the only correct Marxist position for the Iranian working class is the tactic of revolutionary defeatism. The proletariat has no fatherland in this inter-imperialist slaughter.

The task of the workers is neither to defend the “national sovereignty” of the bourgeois Islamic Republic against American missiles, nor to lend support to Washington’s intervention, but to utilise the military crisis – which weakens the state apparatus – to intensify the class struggle in the rear. The slogan of the moment is the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war: the turning of arms against one’s “own” national bourgeoisie.

The emancipation of the working class can only be the act of the working class itself. However, the experience of strikes in Iran – repeatedly driven into a blind alley by reformists or suppressed by the bayonets of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – demonstrates that spontaneous economic struggle and the formation of “independent” trade unions alone are insufficient. Trade union struggle leaves the proletariat confined within the framework of the system of wage slavery. In order to break out of the trap of bourgeois factional struggles, it is imperative for the advanced workers of Iran to forge their own political weapon – a revolutionary vanguard party. Only an organisation of professional revolutionaries, armed with advanced Marxist theory, is capable of introducing a genuinely class-conscious, internationalist perspective into the spontaneous workers’ movement and uniting disparate strikes into a single political front.

This political struggle must possess a clear revolutionary perspective. The goal of the proletariat cannot be the “democratisation” of the regime, the replacement of the *Rahbar* with a liberal president, or the construction of a “genuine” “welfare state”. The historical task consists in the complete destruction – the forced dismantling – of the bourgeois state apparatus, with all its elected *Majles* and unelected councils, religious foundations, and the Revolutionary Guards. Upon the ruins of the dictatorship of capital, the Iranian working class, relying on revived workers’ councils (*shoras*) and in alliance with other parts of the world proletariat, must establish its own rule – the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Today, we stand only at the beginning of this arduous path. Yet it is precisely the restoration of this clear revolutionary programme, cast aside by opportunism, that constitutes the principal condition for the future battles of class struggle, whose highest expression will be the creation of a new Communist International.

March 2026

FROM ENGEL'S MANCHESTER TO GLOBAL MANCHESTER

For decades, bourgeois ideologues have sought to convince us that Marxism is hopelessly outdated, that the traditional working class has disappeared, and that the brutal exploitation of the past has given way to a humane “post-industrial society” of equal opportunity. We dismantle this myth through rigorous political-economic analysis. We show that capital has not changed its predatory nature in the slightest – it has merely expanded the hellish conditions of nineteenth-century Manchester, described by the young Friedrich Engels, to a planetary scale. Confronted with the inexorable fall in the rate of profit in the 1970s, capitalism unleashed the mechanisms of a global counter-offensive: it shifted material production to the countries of “new” capitalism, condemning billions to hyper-exploitation, while fragmenting and subordinating the working class of the imperialist metropolises through the gig economy, digital Taylorism, debt bondage, and the illusions of fictitious capital. In this article, we dissect the anatomy of the modern fragmented proletariat and demonstrate that, despite spatial and occupational fragmentation, a miner from the Congo, a courier tracked by GPS, and a burnt-out IT specialist remain links in the same chain of surplus-value extraction. To break this global machine for the production of poverty and alienation, the fragmented class of wage labourers must overcome the imposed atomisation and recognise its common class interests. Only a world Marxist party can direct the spontaneous protest of the proletariat into the channel of communist revolution.

In 1845, 24-year-old Friedrich Engels published the book “The Condition of the Working Class in England” which Lenin called «*a terrible indictment of capitalism and the bourgeoisie*», counting it among the finest works of world socialist literature. The choice of subject for analysis was no accident: the Manchester of the XIX century was the first “laboratory” of industrial capitalism. Engels documented with meticulous precision how a system possessing an unprecedented capacity for technological innovation generated, simultaneously, absolute poverty, epidemics, and the degradation of human life. It was the reality of Charles Dickens’ suffocating, smoke-filled Coketown in “Hard Times” and the hellish depths of Émile Zola’s “Germinal”.

In the first volume of “Capital”, Karl Marx formulated the law «[...] *all methods for the production of surplus-value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and every extension of accumulation becomes again a means for the development of those methods. It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse. The law, finally, that always equilibrates the relative surplus population, or industrial reserve army, to the extent and energy of accumulation, this law rivets the labourer to capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan did Prometheus to the rock. It establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.*»²

A century and a half later, the apologists for capitalism claim that this law has become obsolete. We are told about the advent of “post-industrial society” and the triumph of the middle class and the knowledge economy. However, if we set aside the ideological trappings and apply a rigorous marxist political-economic analysis of contemporary reality, we find that capitalism has not changed its nature: it simply scaled up 1845 Manchester to the size of the entire planet. Modern economy is one global factory, where digital algorithms act as soulless overseers and financial bubbles work as an iron lung for a system afflicted by a chronic overproduction crisis.

mental elements of marxist theory of crisis: the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

THE MATHEMATICS OF INEVITABILITY

Capitalism is guided by only one objective: the self-appreciation of value (accumulation of capital). Profit derives exclusively from unpaid labour done by the workers (surplus value). In the Marxist paradigm, the rate of profit is expressed by the formula:

$$p' = \frac{m}{c+v},$$

where m is surplus value, c is the constant capital (machines, raw material, servers, algorithms) and v is the variable capital (workers’ wages).

In the pursuit of a competitive advantage, a capitalist is forced to constantly introduce new technologies, substituting human labour with machine labour. This leads to the unstoppable growth of *the organic composition of capital* (the ratio c/v). But since the source of new value is solely living labour (v), the relative decline in the share of this labour in production inevitably leads to a systematic fall in the rate of profit (p').

1973: THE POINT OF NO RETURN

In the late 1960s, the winners of the Nobel Prize in Economics Robert Solow and Paul Samuelson made a series of triumphant statements. «*The obsolete notion of [...] “economic cycle” is no longer of great interest*», said Solow.

Samuelson joked that, after fifty years of operation the National Bureau of Economic Research had «*deprived itself of one of its objectives – the study of the business cycle*». Arthur Okun, economic advisor under presidents Kennedy and Johnson, claimed

THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW AND THE GREAT DIVERGENCE: THE MECHANICS OF THE “LONG DECLINE”

To understand why the modern programmer, the courier, and the smartphone assembler are all on the same class boat, we need to turn to the funda-

1 - V. Lenin. Frederick Engels // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1895/misc/engels-bio.htm>

2 - K. Marx. Capital, Vol. I: Chapter 25 // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch25.htm>

that recessions were «now [...] preventable like plane crashes» and that the notion that economic fluctuations could pose a threat to the smooth functioning of the economy was «outdated». In his book “*The Political Economy of Prosperity*” (Washington, 1970), finished in November 1969, he wrote that in that moment «the nation had been living the one hundred fifth month of an unheard of economic growth, unprecedented and uninterrupted» declaring without hesitation the «obsolescence of the scheme of economic cycles».

The apologists for capitalism perceived the period of post-war growth in the reconstruction as the new norm of capitalism.

Robert Brenner, director of the Center for Social Theory and Comparative History at UCLA and editorial committee member of *New Left Review*, shows in his book “*The economics of global turbulence: the advanced capitalist economies from long boom to long downturn, 1945-2005*” that this was merely a temporary anomaly, caused by the destruction of vast amounts of capital during the Second World War.

By the late ‘60s, the economies of the US, Germany and Japan were suffering from an oversupply of production capacity. The law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall had taken its toll. The crisis of 1973 (often mistakenly attributed solely to the oil embargo) marked the point at which capital could no longer guarantee profit growth whilst maintaining the post-war ‘class compromise’ (high wages).

This marks the beginning of what economists refer to as “The Great Decoupling”. In his book “*Capitalism Unleashed*” (Oxford University Press, 2006), Andrew Glyn³, an English economist, lecturer at the University of Oxford and scholar of capitalism, examines the mechanisms behind capitalist resurgence. His findings are backed up by research from the Eco-

nomics Policy Institute (EPI): since 1973, labour productivity in the US and Europe has risen by almost 110 %, whilst the real wages of the median worker have stagnated (see table and graph). All added value over the last half-century has been appropriated by capital to compensate for the falling rate of profit. The system survives solely by intensifying the degree of exploitation.

CAPITAL, IN ITS PURSUIT OF PROFIT, DRIVES DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Faced with falling profits and the interests of the working aristocracy in the metropolises during the 1970s, capital resorted to a strategy which the Anglo-American geographer David Harvey, one of the founders of so-called “radical geography”, described in his book “*The Limits to Capital*” (1982) as “*spatial fix*”: if in Detroit the work force costs 20 dollars an hour and the working day is limited to 8 hours, then the factory must be moved where the demands of the proletariat are much lower.

According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) regarding the last decade, the global army of wage labour counts the unprecedented number of 3.3 - 3.5 billion people.

There has been a colossal geographic shift: the absolute majority of the world proletariat (about 1.9 billion workers) is now concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region, which has been transformed into the world’s main industrial workshop. In Africa, the salaried workforce totals about 500 million people (of whom more than 85 % in the informal sector, with no social security whatsoever) while in South America it amounts to about 300 million people. The working conditions in the Global South often literally repeat the reality of XIX century England: systematic lack of workplace safety, 10-14

YEAR	LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY (OUTPUT PER HOUR)	MEDIAN REAL WAGE	GAP (CAPITAL APPROPRIATION)
1973	100	100	0
1990	132	103	+29
2010	185	108	+77
2022 (EST.)	210	110	+100

DATA BASED ON THE EPI (ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE) MODEL.

3 - In the 1970s and 1980s, Glyn was an activist with the Trotskyist Committee for a Workers’ International, as well as an adviser to the National Union of Mineworkers (UK) and the International Labour Organisation.

hour shifts and incomes that barely cover the basic necessities of life.

On this note, it mustn't be forgotten that marxism distinguishes between *absolute impoverishment* and *relative impoverishment*. Today, a smartphone assembler in Shenzhen not only has a bowl of rice, but also an iPhone. However, at the same time, the extent to which this worker is exploited (the relative impoverishment, i.e. the gap between what he produces and what he receives) significantly exceeds the exploitation level of a rice harvester.

As Marx wrote in "Wage Labour and Capital": «A house may be large or small; as long as the neighboring houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirements for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut. The little house now makes it clear that its inmate has no social position at all to maintain, or but a very insignificant one; and however high it may shoot up in the course of civilization, if the neighboring palace rises in equal or even in greater measure, the occupant of the relatively little house will always find himself more uncomfortable, more dissatisfied, more cramped within his four walls.

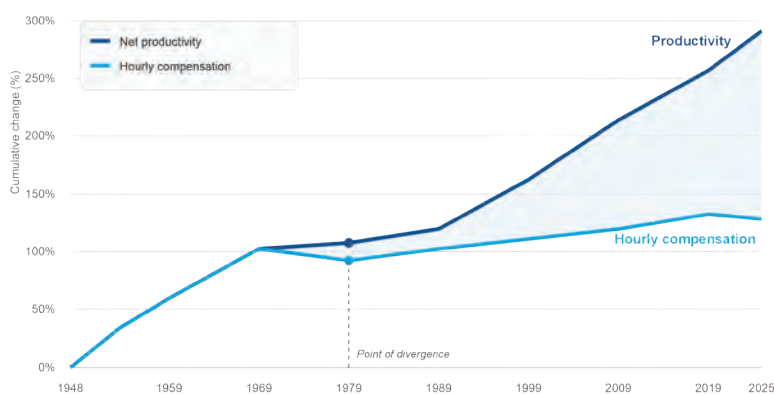
An appreciable rise in wages presupposes a rapid growth of productive capital. Rapid growth of productive capital calls forth just as rapid a growth of wealth, of luxury, of social needs and social pleasures. Therefore, although the pleasures of the labourer have increased, the social gratification which they afford has fallen in comparison with the increased pleasures of the capitalist, which are inaccessible to the worker, in comparison with the stage of development of society in general. Our wants and pleasures have their origin in society; we therefore measure them in relation to society; we do not measure them in relation to the objects which serve for their gratification. Since they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature.»⁴

“GLOBAL LABOUR ARBITRATION” AND IMPERIALIST RENT

Researcher John Smith, in his book *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century* (2016) demonstrates clearly this process through the example of the production of clothing and gadgets. The eco-

The Productivity-Pay Gap

Growth of net productivity and hourly compensation, 1948–2025



Source: Economic Policy Institute (EPI), graphic adapted by us

nomic “miracle” of multinationals is based upon their monopoly on patents, branding and finance (which remain in the North), whilst outsourcing the physical process of producing value to the Global South.

Of a smartphone's retail price, less than 2 % goes to the workers assembling it in Foxconn factories.⁵ All the enormous surplus value squeezed out of the 12-hour shifts of Chinese, Vietnamese, or Indian workers flows, in the form of imperialist super-profits, into the accounts of corporations in California and Ireland. This allows Western economists to produce charts showing GDP growth in the imperialist metropolises, while concealing the fact that this GDP is paid for literally with the sweat and blood of workers in the countries of developing capitalism.

The bleakest aspect of this global system of exploitation is the mass use of child labour, driven by the poverty of the proletariat of the Global South. According to the latest joint estimates by the ILO and UNICEF, 160 million children worldwide are currently forced to work – nearly one in every ten children on the planet – of whom 79 million are engaged in work hazardous to their life and health. The absolute epicentre is Sub-Saharan Africa, where 23.9 % of all children in the region (86.6 million) are exploited. In the Asia-Pacific region, the share of working children stands at 5.6 % (49 million), while in Latin America and the Caribbean it is 5.3 % (8.3 million). It is precisely these children – mining cobalt for the batteries of premium electric vehicles in the Congo or sorting toxic electronic waste in Ghana – who provide

4 - K. Marx. Wage Labour and Capital // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/wage-labour/ch06.htm>

5 - Dedrick J., Kraemer K. L., Linden G. The distribution of value in the mobile phone supply chain // Telecommunications Policy, 2011. Vol. 35. Issue 6, pp. 505–521.

the foundation for the profitability of high-tech transnational corporations.

THE LAW OF RESISTANCE

However, this process contains a dialectical contradiction. Beverly Silver, Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University, analyses the movement of capital over the past 150 years in her study *“Forces of Labour: Workers’ Movements and Globalization since 1870”*. The textile and automobile industries fled from the strikes in England to the United States, from there to Japan, then to South Korea, China, and finally to Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Reading Silver’s book, we see the iron law already described by Marx and Engels in “The Communist Manifesto”: wherever capital goes in search of compliant labour power, it inevitably produces its own gravedigger – the proletariat. This working class is not yet fully schooled by capitalism, remains weakly organised, and does not yet sufficiently recognise its own interests. Yet the explosive growth of strikes across Asia in the 2010s and 2020s already serves as direct proof that **the proletariat has not disappeared – it has merely changed its geography.**

THE ANATOMY OF A FRACTURED CLASS: THE PRECARIAT, MIGRATION, AND THE LABOUR ARISTOCRACY

Capitalism’s development by the twenty-first century has produced an unprecedentedly complex system of internal stratification within the proletariat, fragmenting it into strata whose interests at times come into conflict with one another. This multi-layered system of oppression constructed by capitalism is reflected in the film *“Parasite”* (2019) by the South Korean director Bong Joon-ho, where the bourgeoisie hover above all in an abstract glass house, while those at the bottom of society, blinded by false consciousness, viciously tear each other apart in flooded basements for the right to serve their masters.

“THE INTERNAL SOUTH” AND THE USE OF MIGRATION

If capital cannot relocate a farm or construction site to Africa, it imports Africa itself. According to ILO data for 2024, 68.4 % of the world’s 167.7 million international migrant workers are concentrated in the countries of the imperialist core of capitalism. Migrants constitute an artificially rightless reserve army of labour. Their deprivation of political rights and the constant threat of deportation allow capi-

tal to circumvent labour legislation, depress wages, and – most importantly – channel the class anger of local workers into the reactionary politics of right-wing populist xenophobia.

RENTIER CAPITALISM AND THE ILLUSION OF OWNERSHIP

The French economist Thomas Piketty argues that inequality is increasing because the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of economic growth. The economic geographer Brett Christophers, Professor at the Institute for Housing and Urban Research at Uppsala University in Sweden, introduces the concept of rentier capitalism. He argues that capital has succeeded in partially integrating the upper strata of the wage-earning class – the labour aristocracy – into the system of exploitation.

Through the mechanisms of pension funds (dependent on stock-market valuations), mortgage lending, and micro-investment, wage labourers in the imperialist metropolises have become owners of fictitious capital. This gives rise to false consciousness: owners of fictitious capital begin to identify with the fortunes of Wall Street, since a market crash means a reduction in their own pensions.

The modern labour aristocracy has a clear geographical and economic concentration. In the countries of the imperialist centre (the United States and Western Europe), this layer comprises roughly 20–30 % of all wage labourers, including top management and highly paid specialists in the IT and financial sectors. By contrast, in the countries of the Global South, the share of the labour aristocracy is negligible and rarely exceeds 2–5 %, serving primarily the logistics and infrastructure of transnational corporations.

According to the World Inequality Database (WID), the character of this stratum in the West has changed radically: it has been bourgeoisified through mechanisms of ownership. Among the “asset-burdened” strata of wage labourers, the share of income derived from various forms of property – imputed rent from mortgaged home ownership, share dividends, interest income, and the capitalisation of private pension accounts – can now amount to between 15 and 25 % of total disposable income. By contrast, among the bottom 50 % of wage labourers, the share of property income is statistically zero: this is precisely the classic proletariat with nothing to lose but its chains.

It is precisely this material umbilical cord linking the incomes of the upper strata of workers in the imperialist metropolises to their “own” imperialist bour-

geoisie that constitutes the economic basis of their political opportunism.

Yet we should not forget that under the conditions of the 2020s – inflation, rising central-bank interest rates, and rising living costs – the fictitious capital of the labour aristocracy is steadily evaporating. It is losing both savings and assets. The social base of capitalism is narrowing even within the metropolises themselves.

INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPTATION: THE COLLAPSE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE YELLOW TRADE UNIONS

On the political level, the most important factor in the demoralisation of the proletariat was the betrayal by its historic organisations – trade unions and left-wing parties. This process, which began with the revisionism of the Second International, reached its logical conclusion in the era of advanced imperialism: social democracy became fully integrated into the structures of global capitalism.

Contemporary systemic left-wing parties – whether Labour in Britain or the Social Democrats in Germany – have long ceased to function as the political vanguard of the working class. Beginning in the 1990s, during the era of Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder's "Third Way", they abandoned even the rhetoric of overcoming capitalism, transforming themselves into efficient managers of capitalist reform. It was precisely these pseudo-workers' parties that carried out privatisations, dismantled social protections, and advanced policies of austerity, thereby destroying the last remnants of the post-war class compromise.

A clear example of this was the so-called "Agenda 2010" and the Hartz reforms carried out in the early 2000s by Schröder's Social Democratic government in Germany. It was precisely these reforms that created Europe's largest sector of low-paid precarious labour ("mini-jobs") and brutally slashed unemployment benefits.

At the same time, the trade-union movement underwent profound bureaucratisation and degeneration. Having become an integrated component of corporate governance – the phenomenon known as trade-unionism – the upper layers of the official trade unions became catastrophically detached from the rank and file members. Trade-union leaders, sitting on the boards of directors and receiving executive-level salaries, are far more interested in preserving "social partnership" and corporate profitability than in uncompromising class struggle. The trade

union was transformed from a school of communism and a militant organ of solidarity into a service bureaucracy providing legal assistance in exchange for monthly membership dues.

This opportunism had devastating consequences for class consciousness. The working class of imperialist metropolises, betrayed by its own political and trade-union "elites", found itself in a state of profound political disorientation and cynicism. Having lost faith in the possibility of a genuinely left-wing alternative, the atomised proletariat became easy prey for right-wing populism, which today skilfully channels the anger of a significant section of workers against the establishment into the dead end of xenophobia and chauvinism.

THE ABSENCE OF INFLUENTIAL MARXIST ORGANISATIONS AS AN OBJECTIVE MIRROR OF THE CLASS

The inevitable outcome of all the processes described above has been the profound political disorganisation of the proletariat. One often hears the question: why is there still no mass, influential Marxist International or powerful communist parties in the world today?

The Marxist answer is that the political superstructure – the party – always reflects the economic base and the material condition of the class. The absence of influential Marxist organisations today is not merely the result of "leadership mistakes", a lack of charismatic leaders, or theoretical weakness. It is a direct, objective reflection of the actual condition of the global working class itself. As Marx wrote, the proletariat must transform itself from a fragmented "class in itself" – objectively existing but lacking consciousness – into a politically conscious "class for itself".

Today's global working class remains paralysed precisely as a "class in itself". Its most exploited layers have been physically displaced to the Global South, where any form of workers' self-organisation is ruthlessly suppressed by the armed apparatus of local bourgeois dictatorships and transnational capital. At the same time, in the countries of the imperialist core, the proletariat is trapped in debt, fragmented by the gig economy, isolated in suburbia, and blinded by digital illusions.

The creation of a genuinely revolutionary mass Marxist party cannot be artificially decreed from above or assembled on the internet. Such a party can emerge only organically, as the political and intellec-

tual expression of real, cohesive resistance by the proletarian masses from below. In the absence of this foundational cohesion and experience of collective struggle, the left-wing political field inevitably disintegrates into marginal academic circles, activist sects detached from production, or reformist NGOs that pose not the slightest threat to the hegemony of capital. The weakness of Marxist organisations is an exact mirror of the structural weakness and fragmentation of the modern proletariat.

THE DIGITAL CONVEYOR BELT AND PRECARISATION

Those who have not entered the ranks of the labour aristocracy are condemned to precarisation. British economist Guy Standing describes the precariat as a layer of the working class deprived of even the slightest certainty about the future. The gig economy – Uber, platform-based delivery services, and similar forms of labour – has shifted the risks and costs of the reproduction of labour power entirely onto the worker.

In her book *“The Making of a Cybertariat”* (2003), the British researcher Ursula Huws, who specialises in the sociology of labour, the digital economy, and gender issues, demolishes the myth of the IT sector’s “exceptional” status. The labour of programmers, copywriters, and designers is subjected to digital Taylorism: it is fragmented into primitive tasks, standardised, and algorithmically managed.

For decades, Silicon Valley’s apologists have sold us the idea of the “sharing economy” and the gig economy as an era of independent creators and free entrepreneurs. However, if we arm ourselves with the analytical lens of Marx’s *“Capital”*, we can see that platform capitalism does not overcome capitalist contradictions – it pushes them to their absolute, chemically pure limit.

Marx could not have foreseen the emergence of the smartphone, but he described with remarkable precision the very mechanics of what Uber, Yandex, Amazon, and Glovo are doing today. Modern digital platforms can be understood through the basic concepts of Marxist political economy in the following way: whereas under classical capitalism the bourgeoisie were the owners of factories, newspapers, and steamships, in the gig economy platform owners claim that they are merely “information intermediaries” connecting the client and the worker. Yet

from the standpoint of Marxism, the platform itself – the algorithm, servers, and databases – constitutes the modern means of production.

By monopolising digital infrastructure, capital places itself in the position of an absolute controller. The worker cannot find clients outside the algorithm. The platform extracts an enormous rent in the form of commissions for access to this digital “machine”, dictating prices to both sides.

In Chapter XIII of the first volume of *“Capital”*, Marx quotes the factory inspector Leonard Horner: «[...] *the operative paid by piecework, would exert himself to the utmost consistent with the power of continuing at the same rate*»⁶. And in Chapter XIX, Marx draws the following conclusion: «[...] *piece-wage is the form of wages most in harmony with the capitalist mode of production. Although by no means new [...] it only conquers a larger field for action during the period of manufacture, properly so-called. In the stormy youth of modern industry, especially from 1797 to 1815, it served as a lever for the lengthening of the working-day, and the lowering of wages*»⁷.

The gig economy has elevated this principle to an absolute. A courier or taxi driver is not paid for working time – they are paid for a specific order or transaction. On the psychological level, piece-wage labour creates the illusion of freedom and of working “for oneself” (after all, formally speaking, there is no foreman standing over the worker with a stopwatch). It compels the worker to intensify their own labour independently – working 12–14 hours a day, sacrificing sleep, and violating safety regulations – in order to earn a subsistence wage. Capital no longer needs to drive the proletariat onward – the worker extracts surplus value from himself.

The ingenious cruelty of platform capitalism lies in the fact that it has forced the proletariat to bear part of the costs of constant capital (*c*) personally. A taxi driver uses their own car; a courier uses their own bicycle and smartphone. They themselves pay for petrol, repairs, internet access, and the depreciation of their equipment. The platform extracts pure surplus value (*m*), having almost completely freed itself from the burden of maintaining and repairing the physical means of production.

And this is still not all. Marx wrote of capital’s need to maintain a *relative surplus population*, or *reserve army of labour*. The unemployed are necessary

6 - K. Marx. Capital, Vol. I: Chapter 15 // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm>

7 - K. Marx. Capital, Vol. I: Chapter 21 // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch21.htm>

to the system in order to exert pressure on those still employed and prevent wages from rising. A smartphone application is the ideal reservoir for such an army. Millions of people are registered within the system. If a courier is dissatisfied with the rate and switches off the application, the algorithm instantly passes the order to another member of the endless reserve army of migrants, students, or people who have lost permanent employment. This enables the platforms to keep wages (v) at the very bottom of the social minimum.

In *“Capital”*, Marx also describes how machines – “dead labour” – begin to subordinate human beings – “living labour” – imposing their own mechanical rhythm upon them. Platform algorithms are the perfect, sleepless overseers. They implement total digital Taylorism: counting every second of a delivery, tracking GPS coordinates, penalising workers for the slightest deviation from the route, and dismissing them automatically – by blocking their accounts – on the basis of falling ratings, without any right to trade-union protection or legal appeal. The living human being is transformed into a biological appendage to the smartphone, whose sole task is physically to move goods from point A to point B while executing the commands of mathematical code.

The gig economy is the realised dream of the nineteenth-century capitalist. It is a system in which the extraction of surplus value is maximised, while all social obligations – sick pay, holidays, pensions, responsibility for workplace injuries – are completely nullified through a legal fiction: *«you are not our employees, you are independent contractors»*.

Platform capitalism does not abolish Marx's laws – it strips away the compromises of the twentieth century, returning us to the brutal realities of the Manchester factories, only now with GPS trackers and the gamification of labour. The platform algorithm is the perfect overseer: it never sleeps and measures labour efficiency every second, transforming intellectual labour into a routine factory conveyor belt.

THE SHIFT OF ECONOMIC SECTORS: FROM THE FACTORY WHISTLE TO THE LOGISTICS ALGORITHM

At the time of Engels and Marx, the vanguard of the proletariat consisted of factory workers – textile workers, miners, and metalworkers – directly engaged in industrial production. Their concentra-

tion in the thousands within workshops and mines created the objective conditions for rapid self-organisation. The process of exploitation was completely transparent: the worker saw the machine, saw the foreman with his stopwatch, and understood that the factory owner was appropriating the fruits of his physical labour.

Today, the global labour market has undergone a radical structural transformation. While industrial production has been relocated to the Global South, between 70 and 80 % of the workforce in the countries of the imperialist core – the United States and the European Union – is now employed in services, logistics, retail, and IT. This has fundamentally transformed class consciousness.

Firstly, fragmentation and dispersal have taken place: a significant share of today's proletariat works not in gigantic factory workshops, but is scattered across small cafés, Amazon warehouses, call centres, or entirely isolated behind computer screens – the “remote workers”. Organising a strike becomes incomparably more difficult when workers are physically unacquainted with their colleagues.

Secondly, the very object of exploitation has changed. As the American sociologist Arlie Hochschild demonstrated in her concept of “emotional labour”⁸, capital in the service sector began to exploit not only physical labour, but the worker's personality itself – their smiles, empathy, and ability to smooth over conflicts with customers.

Thirdly, a sophisticated concealment of class antagonism has emerged. Capitalists in the service sector prefer to describe proletarians as “partners”, “independent contractors”, or even “members of the family”, thereby concealing the very existence of wage labour. A delivery courier is *de facto* a classic proletarian selling their labour power – the ability to pedal and carry a thermal delivery bag – yet *de jure*, and in their own consciousness, they often imagine themselves to be “small entrepreneurs”. The absence of a direct, visible oppressor – replaced instead by an impersonal algorithmic application – disorients the worker, directing their frustration towards customers, colleagues, or their own “failure”, rather than towards the system of profit extraction itself.

This is the horrifying “freedom” of millions of proletarians trapped in a permanent race, spending their last money on a van in order to begin “working

8 - The term was first introduced by the American sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in her work “The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling” (1983)

for themselves” – delivering parcels for a courier company for 14 hours a day, while raising children in whatever time remains. This is the reality depicted in the film “Sorry We Missed You” by the British director Ken Loach.

THE URBANISM OF ALIENATION: THE DESTRUCTION OF WORKING-CLASS DISTRICTS AND SPATIAL ATOMISATION

An important instrument in the transformation of the working class in developed metropolises was the restructuring of the very spatial organisation of the capitalist city. Classical industrial capitalism concentrated the proletariat in dense factory districts and working-class neighbourhoods. Despite the appalling living conditions – described by Friedrich Engels in “*The Housing Question*” – this monstrous overcrowding paradoxically forged class solidarity. Shared courtyards, proletarian taverns, mutual-aid funds, and constant close social contact produced a unified political identity capable of rapid mobilisation for strikes and street confrontation.

Having recognised this political threat, capital launched a large-scale process of urban restructuring. Drawing upon the logic already embedded by Baron Haussmann during the reconstruction of Paris in the nineteenth century – the destruction of narrow streets suitable for barricades in favour of broad boulevards – modern capitalism reshaped the metropolises through processes of deindustrialisation, suburbanisation, and gentrification. As David Harvey notes, the “right to the city” has been definitively usurped by financial capital.⁹

Historic working-class districts in the centres of Western cities were systematically destroyed or gentrified – transformed into luxury real estate, fashionable lofts, and office clusters. The working class was pushed out towards distant economic peripheries or dispersed across isolated suburbs. This spatial segregation had catastrophic consequences for the labour movement: it physically destroyed the centres of reproduction of proletarian culture. Collective everyday life was replaced by total atomisation within uniform concrete housing estates or individualised mortgaged homes. And it matters little that the son of a modern Charlotte – an inhabitant

of Ballard’s «High-Rise» – no longer listens to Margaret Thatcher’s speeches on the radio, but instead consumes 15-second compilations of clips and memes: he remains just as much a prisoner of the insane capitalist Metropolis.

Moreover, the growing distances between home and work – daily commuting – rob the wage labourer of hours of free time every day, exhausting them and depriving them of the physical possibility of participating in political self-organisation.

THE FEMINISATION OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Historically, capitalism relied upon the patriarchal family as a free factory for the production and reproduction of labour power. The classical industrial model rested upon the assumption of a “family wage” for the male breadwinner, while women’s unpaid domestic labour ensured the social reproduction of capital.

However, with the onset of capital’s offensive in the 1970s and the stagnation of real incomes, this model collapsed. Capital mobilised colossal reserves of women’s labour, throwing their lives into the furnace of global production. On the one hand, this process possessed a progressive dimension: economic independence dealt a crushing blow to the traditional patriarchal family, granting women an unprecedented degree of freedom from the dictates of the “head of the household”. On the other hand, the integration of women into the labour market took place entirely on capitalist terms.

Capital used the mass employment of women to depress wages across the board and reduce the value of labour power. Now, in order for the family to survive, both partners must sell their labour power. This gave rise to the phenomenon of the “double burden”: having been freed from exclusive confinement to the household, the proletarian woman acquired a second, unpaid shift at home after completing her paid shift at the factory or in the office.

In the Global South, the feminisation of labour assumed the form of super-exploitation in export-oriented zones – the maquiladoras of Mexico and the garment factories of Bangladesh – where capital prefers to hire young women, cynically regarding them as a more “docile” and cheaper labour force. At the same

⁹ - Harvey develops the thesis of the usurpation of the “right to the city” by financial capital in his book “Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution” (2012), drawing upon ideas formulated in “Le Droit à la ville” (1968) by the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who is recognised as one of the pioneers in the critique of everyday life, as well as in the critique of Stalinism, existentialism, and structuralism¹⁰

time, “global care chains”¹⁰ emerged in the metropolises: migrant women from the South are forced to leave their own families behind in order to perform reproductive labour – caring for children and the elderly, cleaning – for miserable wages in the service of the bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy of the North. This further atomises and fragments the global working class, shifting the costs of social reproduction onto its most vulnerable layers.

THE INDUSTRY OF ABSURDITY: THE PRODUCTIVITY OF EVIL AND “BULLSHIT JOBS”

If capitalism is so efficient, why do millions of people experience total alienation and regard their labour as meaningless? Here Marxist theory exposes the fundamental irrationality of the system: capitalism does not care about use-value (real utility) – all that matters to it is exchange-value and the circulation of capital.

KARL MARX AND THE CAPITALISATION OF DESTRUCTION

In “*Apologist Conception of the Productivity of All Professions*”¹¹, Karl Marx, through a brilliant satirical device – reduction to absurdity – demolishes bourgeois political economy and its conception of what constitutes “useful” and “productive” labour:

«*The criminal moreover produces the whole of the police and of criminal justice, constables, judges, hangmen, juries, etc. [...]. The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this way he keeps it from stagnation, and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which even the spur of competition would get blunted. [...] While crime takes a part of the superfluous population off the labour market and thus reduces competition among the labourers – up to a certain point preventing wages from falling below the minimum – the struggle against crime absorbs another part of this population*».¹²

The bourgeois economists contemporary to Marx argued that any activity which generates demand, creates jobs, and sets money in motion is economically “productive” and beneficial to society.

Marx takes this logic and applies it to the destructive social figure of the criminal: if capitalism measures usefulness solely through the circulation of money and the creation of jobs, then the criminal

becomes a genuine engine of progress and a benefactor of humanity.

Through this sarcasm, Marx exposes the fundamental contradiction between use-value (the real usefulness of a thing or action for human beings) and exchange-value (the capacity to generate profit). Capitalism is utterly indifferent to whether labour creates something constructive or merely eliminates the consequences of artificially generated chaos. For capital, the only thing that matters is the circulation of money itself.

Thus, under capitalism, destruction becomes profitable: this mode of production is capable of capitalising catastrophe itself. Illness, crime, war, and ecological crises are not tragedies for the bourgeois economy, but excellent drivers of GDP growth.

Apologists for capital often justify any destructive industry with the phrase: «*But it creates jobs*». Marx demonstrates the bankruptcy of this argument: prisons also create jobs, but this does not make them engines of human happiness.

Capitalism is a society of universal alienation. In bourgeois society, the distinction between the production of bread and the production of an antidote to an artificially created poison disappears. Both simply generate surplus value.

This nineteenth-century fragment sounds frighteningly relevant today. The modern economy is full of examples of the “productivity of the criminal”: the trillion-dollar cybersecurity industry grows only thanks to hackers; the total psychological burnout of the proletariat sustains an entire army of corporate psychologists and the pharmaceutical industry; while the clean-up of ecological disasters caused by corporations is becoming a new profitable market for “green technologies” and carbon-emissions trading. Capital has transformed destruction into one of the principal mechanisms of its own self-expansion. Capitalism survives by parasitising the catastrophes that it itself produces.

DAVID GRAEBER'S “MANAGERIAL FEUDALISM”

In 1930, in his essay “*Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren*”, J. M. Keynes predicted that technological development would lead to a 15-hour work-

10 - The terms “double burden” and “global care chains” were first introduced by Arlie Hochschild in her article “Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value” (2000). The concept also constitutes a cornerstone of contemporary left-wing feminism, particularly in the work of Nancy Fraser and Silvia Federici.

11 - We are publishing this exceptional essay by Marx after this article

12 - K. Marx. Theories of Surplus Value, Marx 1861-3 // Marx Engels Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1863/theories-surplus-value/add1.htm#s11>

ing week. Technologically, humanity reached this threshold decades ago. But why are we working more and more?

The American anthropologist and anarchist David Graeber, in his book *"Bullshit Jobs"*, offers the following answer: a reduction of working time poses a mortal danger to the political stability of capital.

According to this conception, the capitalist system took the path of artificially inflating the service sector and bureaucracy. Millions of PR specialists, telemarketers, administrators, and corporate lawyers secretly understand that their labour brings absolutely no benefit to the world. This is the existential dead end of Tyler Durden from Chuck Palahniuk's cult novel *"Fight Club"*: «We go to jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don't need».

Will a wage labourer, exhausted by eight hours of meaningless manipulation of digital paperwork, take to the barricades?

Despite the sharpness of his observations, Graeber misses the essential point: capital does nothing merely in order to "wear people down". It is always driven by the imperative of valorisation. The bloated service sector – advertising, marketing, lawyers, HR – constitutes part of the costs of circulation of capital. Capitalism is compelled to expend colossal resources not on production itself, but on forcing consumers to purchase commodities amid ferocious competition and a crisis of overproduction. This is an economic necessity for the survival of corporations, not simply a conspiracy designed to deprive people of free time.

COGNITIVE ALIENATION: THE CRISIS OF EDUCATION AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE "CLIP"

An indispensable condition for the survival of the capitalist system is the suppression of class consciousness. Today, this task is jointly carried out by the modern education system and the Internet monopolised by corporations. In his essay *"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"* (1970), the French

philosopher Louis Althusser defined schools as the principal «*ideological state apparatus*». Modern mass education has been definitively transformed from an instrument of enlightenment into a conveyor belt for producing functionally literate yet critically unthinking functionaries. It is geared towards drilling students for standardised testing and cultivating the narrow competencies demanded by the market, methodically erasing any aspiration towards a fundamental, dialectical understanding of the world.

Digital platforms, in turn, complete the process of cognitive alienation. Social-media algorithms, operating within the framework of the so-called "attention economy", deliberately fragment human perception. What the French philosopher Guy Debord called "the society of the spectacle" (*"La Société du spectacle"*, 1967) has, in the era of platform capitalism, mutated into an industry of endless dopamine-driven consumption¹³ of short-form content. The culture of deep reading – which requires intellectual effort and concentration, precisely the effort necessary for mastering political economy, philosophy, and an understanding of the historical process – is being physiologically and psychologically destroyed by "clip culture"¹⁴. At the same time, it must be understood that this is not the result of a consciously coordinated strategy on the part of the bourgeoisie. Rather, it is driven by the imperative of profit maximisation, which inflates advertising and marketing within societies of mature imperialism. In other words, the same process is at work here as in the case of "Bullshit Jobs".

The proletariat is plunged into a condition of permanent information overload and what the English philosopher Mark Fisher called "reflexive impotence"¹⁵: the abundance of superficial information creates the illusion of omniscience while making any systematic analysis of the causes of one's own poverty impossible. Capital has expropriated not only labour,

13 - The word "dopamine-driven" is derived from the name of the hormone and neurotransmitter dopamine. In neuroscience, dopamine is a chemical substance that forms a crucial part of the brain's "reward system". It generates feelings of pleasure – or the anticipation of pleasure – as well as motivation. The brain produces dopamine when we receive rapid pleasurable stimuli or new information.

In the context of this article, the concept describes how modern digital corporations literally exploit our neurobiology. A "dopamine loop" – a form of addiction – is created. The algorithms of social-media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts are technologically designed to stimulate constant micro-doses of dopamine release. You swipe through the feed, receiving a bright image, a joke, or shock content every 15 seconds – the brain experiences pleasure and immediately demands repetition. A chemical dependency emerges, comparable to addiction to slot machines.

To derive dopamine stimulation from reading a complex text, one must exert serious intellectual and volitional effort. The brain has to strain itself. Short-form videos provide the brain with an instant "hit" requiring virtually no effort whatsoever. Naturally, the overwhelming majority choose this easier path.

From the standpoint of political economy, the use of this term demonstrates that modern platform capitalism has learned to extract profit directly from the most basic chemical reactions of the human organism. By addicting the atomised worker to cheap digital dopamine, the system not only steals their free time in order to bombard them with advertising, but also destroys the very motivation for deep reflection that is indispensable for the formation of class consciousness.

14 - The term "clip culture" was first introduced by the American futurist Alvin Toffler, who used it to describe the growing role of media and communications technologies within the information society

15 - The term was introduced in Mark Fisher's seminal book *"Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?"* (2009).

but also the very time necessary for reflection, replacing genuine knowledge with algorithmic rubbish.

Modern capitalism is not an Orwellian dystopia of direct physical coercion, but rather the reality of Aldous Huxley's *"Brave New World"*. Today, the adherents of capital no longer need to burn the books of Marx or Lenin; they simply drown the atomised proletariat in an ocean of informational noise and the digital "soma"¹⁶ of short-form videos, extinguishing the very desire for complex reflection.

THE DEBT LOOP: CREDIT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MORAL TERROR

Since real wages have stagnated from the 1970s onwards, while consumption has had to continue growing in order to realise the commodities produced, capital replaced the growth of incomes with the growth of debt.

EXPROPRIATION THROUGH FINANCE

The Greek economist Costas Lapavitsas¹⁷, Professor of Economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, demonstrates in his book *"Profiting Without Producing: How Finance Exploits Us All"* (2013) that modern financialisation is not merely stock-market speculation. It represents a return to usury on an industrial scale. Financial capital extracts profit directly from workers' incomes through mortgages, consumer credit, bank charges, and microloans. The proletarian is subjected to double exploitation: first in the workplace, where surplus value is extracted, and then in the sphere of consumption, where banks extract the remnants of wages in the form of interest payments.

In 1978, the American economist Charles Kindleberger, in his classic work of economic history *"Manias, Panics, and Crashes"*, convincingly demonstrated that such credit expansion inevitably produces speculative manias and financial collapses. Yet every

collapse – as in 2008 – ends with the state rescuing the banks at the expense of the population, imposing regimes of austerity upon the working class.

DEBT AS A MORAL WEAPON

In his study *"Debt: The First 5,000 Years"* (2011), David Graeber exposes the most terrifying function of credit. Debt is an instrument of profound moral coercion and a way of shifting systemic guilt onto the individual:

«Why debt? What makes the concept so strangely powerful? Consumer debt is the lifeblood of our economy. All modern nation-states are built on deficit spending. Debt has come to be the central issue of international politics. But nobody seems to know exactly what it is, or how to think about it.

The very fact that we don't know what debt is, the very flexibility of the concept, is the basis of its power. If history shows anything, it is that there's no better way to justify relations founded on violence, to make such relations seem moral, than by reframing them in the language of debt – above all, because it immediately makes it seem that it's the victim who's doing something wrong. Mafiosi understand this. So do the commanders of conquering armies. For thousands of years, violent men have been able to tell their victims that those victims owe them something. If nothing else, they "owe them their lives" (a telling phrase) because they haven't been killed».

Capitalism has instilled in the proletariat a false ethic: you are poor not because this is how the capitalist system is structured, but because you have "failed to invest in yourself". This gives rise to a "Squid Game" mentality – the desire to escape poverty individually – which ultimately paralyses class solidarity.

PROMETHEAN FIRE FOR THE GLOBAL PROLETARIAT

In the autumn of 1895, in an obituary written on the occasion of Friedrich Engels's death, Lenin drew a lesson for the world proletariat from Marx's

16 - The word "soma" is a direct reference to Aldous Huxley's dystopian novel *"Brave New World"* (1932).

In the novel, the world government controls society not through fear, torture, or secret police repression – as in George Orwell's *"1984"* – but through total and uninterrupted pleasure. The state legally and systematically distributes to its citizens an ideal synthetic drug called "soma". If a person begins to feel sadness, reflect upon the injustice of the social order, or experience even the slightest discomfort, they simply take a dose of soma and sink into a state of serene, artificial happiness. The motto of this society is: *«A gramme is better than a damn»*. The drug renders people completely submissive and content with their servile condition.

Like the drug in the novel, digital content alleviates the symptoms of stress and existential emptiness without overcoming their real cause. It fills the brain with informational noise, leaving no physiological capacity for reading Marx, for example.

The principal horror of Huxley's system – and of platform capitalism – lies in the fact that the oppressed classes themselves voluntarily and enthusiastically consume this drug, while simultaneously generating enormous profits for the corporations of the "attention economy". Thus, "digital soma" is a technologically engineered informational tranquilliser. It paralyses the political will of the working class, replacing real resistance and class solidarity with cheap virtual escapism.

17 - Lapavitsas was elected to the Greek Parliament in the January 2015 general election as a representative of SYRIZA, but following the party split he joined "Popular Unity" in August 2015. In the 2024 European Parliament elections, he stood as a candidate for Yanis Varoufakis's party MÉPA25.

friend and comrade's book *"The Condition of the Working Class in England"*:

«Even before Engels, many people had described the sufferings of the proletariat and had pointed to the necessity of helping it. Engels was the first to say that the proletariat is not only a suffering class; that it is, in fact, the disgraceful economic condition of the proletariat that drives it irresistibly forward and compels it to fight for its ultimate emancipation. And the fighting proletariat will help itself. The political movement of the working class will inevitably lead the workers to realise that their only salvation lies in socialism. On the other hand, socialism will become a force only when it becomes the aim of the political struggle of the working class».¹⁸

We do not know when this will happen, but we are certain that today the proletariat and humanity as a whole stand before an inexorable alternative: communism or barbarism. Capitalism cannot be corrected, improved, or reformed. It must be destroyed, thereby creating the preliminary conditions for the withering away of private property and the state. Our class must arrive at this understanding through struggle and through the development of its own organisation. The task of the vanguard of the class today is to help the proletariat traverse this path as rapidly as possible. The daily practice of exposing capitalism, Marxist propaganda, and assistance in grassroots self-organisation – these are the means that will contribute to preparing the soil from which the revolutionary party of the proletariat will grow.

Technology within the capitalist system is not neutral. Artificial intelligence, robotics, and algorithms are used today not to liberate humanity from drudgery, but to intensify labour, impose total digital control, and expand the reserve army of the unemployed. Capitalism has exhausted its progressive historical role. It has become a system that sustains itself through the destruction of nature, the creation of meaningless jobs, and the confinement of millions of wage labourers within debt bondage.

We must overcome the illusion of atomised society. The proletariat has not died – it has become global, uniting within its ranks a courier from Mumbai, a miner from the Congo, an assembly worker from Shenzhen, and a programmer in the Silicon Valley whose labour will tomorrow be devalued by neural networks. We are links in a single chain of surplus-value production.

Anger without rigorous scientific theory is a powerless revolt, which will be easily absorbed by the system of capital itself. Our task today is to return Marxist analysis to everyday reality. To bring a scientific understanding of the laws of profit to the robotised warehouse, the developers' chat, and the university lecture hall. Only by recognising ourselves as a single class within this vast global factory will we be capable of breaking the machine that produces poverty and direct technology towards the creation of a genuinely human future.

As Marx wrote in *"The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte"*: «the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still traveling through purgatory. It does its work methodically»¹⁹. Only after completing this preparatory labour will the proletariat rise and, triumphantly, repeat Marx's words: «Well burrowed, old mole!». The communist revolution has not died. It has merely gone underground and continues its invisible subterranean labour – undermining the foundations of bourgeois society from within, like a mole.

March 2026



18 - V. Lenin. Frederick Engels // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1895/misc/engels-bio.htm>

19 - K. Marx. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm>

DIGRESSION: (ON PRODUCTIVE LABOUR)¹

Karl Marx

A philosopher produces ideas, a poet poems, a clergyman sermons, a professor compendia and so on. A criminal produces crimes. If we take a closer look at the connection between this latter branch of production and society as a whole, we shall rid ourselves of many prejudices. The criminal produces not only crimes but also criminal law, and with this also the professor who gives lectures on criminal law and in addition to this the inevitable compendium in which this same professor throws his lectures onto the general market as “commodities”. This brings with it augmentation of national wealth, quite apart from the personal enjoyment which – as a competent witness, Professor Roscher, [tells] us (see ...) – the manuscript of the compendium brings to its originator himself.

¹ - Karl Marx, Economic Manuscripts of 1861–63, in Marx/Engels Collected Works (MECW), vol. 30, 306–318, <https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1861/economic/ch33.htm>.

The criminal moreover produces the whole of the police and of criminal justice, constables, judges, hangmen, juries, etc. ; and all these different lines of business, which form just as many categories of the social division of labour, develop different capacities of the human mind, create new needs and new ways of satisfying them. Torture alone has given rise to the most ingenious mechanical inventions, and employed many honourable craftsmen in the production of its instruments. The criminal produces an impression, partly moral and partly tragic, as the case may be, and in this way renders a "service" by arousing the moral and aesthetic feelings of the public. He produces not only compendia on Criminal Law, not only penal codes and along with them legislators in this field, but also art, belles-lettres, novels, and even tragedies, as not only Mullner's *Schuld* and Schiller's *Räuber* show, but *Oedipus* and *Richard the Third*. The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this way he keeps it from stagnation, and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which even the spur of competition would get blunted. Thus he gives a stimulus to the productive forces. While crime takes a part of the redundant population off the labour market and thus reduces competition among the labourers — up to a certain point preventing wages from falling below the minimum — the struggle against crime absorbs another part of this population. Thus the criminal comes in as one of those natural "counterweights" which bring about a correct balance and open up a whole perspective of "useful" occupations. The effects of the criminal on the development of productive power can be shown in detail. Would locks ever have reached their present degree of excellence had there been no thieves? Would the making of bank-notes have reached its present perfection had there been no forgers? Would the microscope have found its way into the sphere of ordinary commerce (see Babbage) but for trading frauds? Does not practical chemistry owe just as much to the adulteration of commodities and the efforts to show it up as to the honest zeal for production? Crime, through its ever new methods of attack on property, constantly calls into being new methods of defence, and so is as productive as strikes for the invention of ma-

chines. And if one leaves the sphere of private crime: would the world market ever have come into being but for national crime? Indeed, would even the nations have arisen? And has not the Tree of Sin been at the same time the Tree of Knowledge ever since the time of Adam?

In his *Fable of the Bees* (1705) Mandeville had already shown that every possible kind of occupation is productive, and had given expression to the tendency of this whole line of argument:

"That what we call Evil in this World, Moral as well as Natural, is the grand Principle that makes us Sociable Creatures, the solid Basis, the Life and Support of all Trades and Employments without exception; there we must look for the true origin of all Arts and Sciences; and the moment Evil ceases, the Society must be spoiled if not totally destroyed."

Only Mandeville was of course infinitely bolder and more honest than the philistine apologists of bourgeois society.



FROM THE EDITORS:

**THE TOOL OF LABOUR
AND THE CYBERNETIC
TROWEL**

The editorial board openly acknowledges its conscious use of generative AI to create magazine illustrations, drawing on a Marxist understanding of technology. Devoid of purpose and genuine imagination, the machine serves merely as an obedient “cybernetic trowel” – a high-tech extension of the human hand and mind. By strictly directing the algorithms, we use them not to imitate machine “creativity”, but to revive the monumental visual language of the revolutionary proletarian avant-garde of 1917–1921. Although modern neural networks have been developed by corporations for profit through the predatory monopolisation of humanity’s “general intellect”, we turn this contradiction against capital itself. By refusing to sell the magazine, we create no surplus value and produce only use-value – communist propaganda. In this way, we carry out a tactical “reverse expropriation”, compelling the infrastructure of the class enemy to serve the interests of the proletariat and transforming capitalist technologies into intellectual weapons of class struggle.

THE TOOL OF LABOUR AS AN EXTENSION OF THE HUMAN HAND

We wish to openly acknowledge our *conscious* use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate illustrations for our magazine. We are not professional artists. We arrived at this decision on the basis of the Marxist conception that the tool of labour is an extension of the human hand.

Just as a builder *consciously* directs the hand with which he firmly grips a trowel while constructing a wall, we *directed* AI to achieve the aesthetic and conceptual results we required. In “Capital”, Karl Marx offers a famous analogy: the worst architect differs from the best of bees in that the architect has already built the cell in his mind before constructing it in wax. In this case, the role of the architect belongs to us, while AI assumes the role of the digital bee.

Our approach is grounded in the understanding that the machine itself is devoid of purpose. As the philosophers Evald Ilyenkov, Arseny Arsenyev, and Vasily Davydov wrote in their article “Machine and Man, Cybernetics and Philosophy”¹: *«It is not the brain that thinks, but the human being with the aid of the brain»*². Similarly, Ilyenkov explains in “The Problem of the Ideal”: *«It is not the hand that works, but the human being with the aid of the hand. And the product of his labour is located not “in the hand”, not inside it, but in that substance of nature which is thereby processed»*³. In this instance, AI served merely as our *digital trowel* – an obedient organ set in motion by human intention.

Karl Marx developed this dialectical connection between the brain, the hand, and the tool of labour – in which technology serves merely as an extension of the human being – most fully in the Grundrisse (Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1859). Marx writes:

«Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real life process».⁴

«As long as the machine remains a machine», as Ilyenkov, Arsenyev, and Davydov emphasise, *«it remains only an artificially created organ of the socially human rational will, a means of its active manifestation. And in this sense – an organ of the human brain, for by “brain” Marx always meant not merely, and not even primarily, the bodily organ of the individual, but rather the organ of the socially human rational will, of socially human needs, and of the “goals” that ideally express those needs»*.⁵

It was precisely this rational will that we exercised when composing textual descriptions (*prompts*) for the neural network. We described in detail what we wished to depict and strictly defined the stylistic framework, directing the machine towards specific historical forms of revolutionary proletarian culture – the styles employed by revolutionary artists in Russia and Hungary between 1917 and 1921.

We engaged with a visual language intended to construct a new world. This involved strict geometriciza-

1 - We refer to this article solely because it represents one of the earliest and most successfully formulated complete statements of the of the “thinking machine” from correct Marxist positions. Within the scope of this article, there is no need to dwell on each of the authors of “Machine and Man, Cybernetics and Philosophy”. Nor do we consider it necessary here to undertake a detailed examination of the figure of Evald V. Ilyenkov (1924–1979), the best known among them and, in all likelihood, the one who made the principal theoretical contribution to the work we cite. Nevertheless, we cannot refrain from offering a brief assessment of this highly controversial and contradictory figure. For contemporary Marxists, his works retain a certain value in the fields of methodology (the defence of dialectics against positivism and the analysis of the logic of “Capital”) and the history of philosophy. However, in his writings he repeatedly revised Marxism in a Hegelian direction (particularly in his specific interpretation of the ideal and other important philosophical questions) and also demonstrated an erroneous understanding of certain key categories of political economy. The same idealist limitation manifested itself in his political views. Fully sharing the Stalinist dogma that socialism existed in the USSR – that is, denying the capitalist character of that state’s economy – Ilyenkov reduced the question exclusively to the philosophical problem of alienation and the cultural underdevelopment of the masses (the contradiction between formal and real socialisation), thereby evading a class analysis of “Soviet” society. This prevents us from calling him a genuine Marxist, for one cannot become such without engaging in revolutionary practice, without participating in the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, above all against “its own” bourgeoisie. He did not struggle against this bourgeois state but supported it, albeit while occasionally criticising it, and always remained a model “chair socialist”, advocating its reform, improvement, and humanisation. Thus, he was an accomplice of our class enemy (and not merely on the theoretical front). Were it not for this final and extremely important consideration, this note would be unnecessary.

2 - Ilyenkov E., Arsenyev A., Davydov V. Machine and Man, Cybernetics and Philosophy // Lenin’s Theory of Reflection and Modern Science. Moscow: Nauka, 1966. P. 263.

3 - Ilyenkov E. The Problem of the Ideal // Voprosy Filosofii. 1979. No. 6. P. 135.

4 - K. Marx. Grundrisse: Notebook VII – The Chapter on Capital // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch14.htm>

5 - Ilyenkov E., Arsenyev A., Davydov V. Op. cit. P. 276.

tion of forms, the use of powerful diagonals to convey the dynamics of struggle, the dominance of a contrasting palette (red, black, white), typographic compositions, and photomontage. We oriented the *machine* toward the works of authors such as El Lissitzky (whose legendary 1919 poster “Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge” became the supreme expression of Suprematism in the service of revolution), Vladimir Tatlin (with his tower striving toward the future—the Monument to the Third Communist International), Alexander Rodchenko, and Kazimir Malevich.

We demanded that the machine reproduce the expressive monumentality characteristic of the Hungarian group of revolutionary artists, poets, and writers “MA” (“Today”). This art combined Cubo-Futurist dynamics with proletarian pathos, creating heavy, chiselled, monumental figures of workers and soldiers, full of tension. Our references included the works of Lajos Kassák, creator of the “picture-architecture” concept; Béla Uitz, author of the famous fervent 1919 poster “Red Soldiers, Forward!” (*Vörös katonák, előre!*); and Sándor Bortnyik, author of Futurist expressionist works on revolutionary themes, such as “The Red Locomotive” and “Red May”.

Artificial intelligence is incapable of grasping the essence of these historical events, for the realm of spiritual culture in which genuine imagination arises remains closed to it. As Ilyenkov, Arsenyev, and Davydov noted, «without imagination, there can be no question of truly creative thinking»⁶. AI merely blindly combined pixels according to calculated probabilities.

The form ultimately taken by these images is the *objectified form* of the dialectical transformation of an ideal, *spiritual perception* of the world into a *material product of human labour*, achieved through the use of an *extended hand* – that is, a form of *human life-activity*. Thus, the illustrations in our magazine are not the product of machine “creativity.” They are the product of our conscious activity, our knowledge of the history of revolutionary art, and our aesthetic choices, realised through a modern, complex, yet entirely human-subordinated cybernetic tool.

THE DIALECTICS OF THE DIGITAL TROWEL: EXPROPRIATING THE EXPROPRIATORS IN THE AGE OF AI

In our endeavour to use artificial intelligence to construct a new visual language, we inevitably con-

front a profound dialectical contradiction. On the one hand, we regard AI as a *cybernetic trowel*, an obedient organ of human will. On the other – we recognise the harsh political-economic reality: this trowel is today monopolised by capital; it has become “dead labour”, trained through the expropriation of colossal masses of social knowledge.

Does this mean that the use of generative networks makes us accomplices in capitalist exploitation and *conscious appendages* of corporate algorithms? Historical materialism teaches us not to flee from contradictions, but to resolve them through material practice. The key to such a resolution lies in the fundamental difference between our approach and the logic of capital.

As Marx wrote, the defining characteristic of capital is its drive towards self-expansion through the production of commodities (the formula $M - C - M'$). Corporations developed AI in order to generate profit.

We, however, do not use AI to produce a commodity. We do not bring our product – the magazine and all its contents, including the images generated by neural networks – to the market, nor do we make it an object of market exchange. Our product contains no exchange-value; it is created exclusively for its use-value – it serves as our *collective organiser, propagandist, and agitator*.

By refusing to sell a product that incorporates elements created with the aid of neural networks, we create no surplus value and extract no profit. If capital, like a vampire, sucks up living labour in order to transform it into profit, then we use the computing power owned by big capital to create a non-commercial, revolutionary magazine, thereby effectively compelling the machine to work *in the interests of all humanity*.

The creators of generative neural networks have carried out the greatest enclosure of the twenty-first century: they have expropriated the “general intellect”, sucking up, like vampires, the unpaid living labour of millions of people and transforming it into capital in order subsequently to sell access to it. They abolished copyright at the stage of data collection, yet rigorously enforce it at the stage of selling their services.

How can we overcome this? Only through reverse expropriation – that is, through the *abolition of private property*.

For now, by wielding this tool, we extract the synthesised experience of generations – including the leg-

6 - Ibid. P. 269.

acy of the revolutionary avant-garde – from the corporate “black box” and return it to the arsenal of class struggle. What was appropriated by capital, stolen from the working masses in order to create a monopoly, we restore to the proletarian avant-garde as an intellectual weapon for *liberation from the rule of capital*. We strike capitalism with its own weapon, brought to perfection.

Marxism examines the problem of alienation primarily through the question of who owns labour and for what purpose it is performed. Under capitalism, the worker is alienated from both the process and the product of labour because they work in order to survive, creating wealth that is appropriated by the bourgeoisie.

In our case, the process of constructing *prompts* is not alienated wage labour. It is free and conscious political activity. Yes, the physical act of drawing is delegated to the machine, but purpose, historical reflection, and ideological control remain entirely in human hands. In this context, AI acts not as a replacement for the artist, but as a high-tech printing press, *amplifying the voice* of the proletarian avant-garde many times over. We are fully aware that even by training AI with our *prompts*, we inevitably generate new data, temporarily paying tribute to capital. Yet we regard this as a forced tactical concession – the use of the enemy’s infrastructure in order to wage a strategic offensive against it.

Marx and Engels repeatedly emphasised that capitalism, in its blind pursuit of profit, itself creates the material and technical basis for communist society. By building giant factories, railways, and today – data centres and global neural networks – capital socialises production on an unprecedented scale, although the appropriation of its results remains private.

In the Economic Manuscripts already cited, Marx draws another crucial conclusion: capital develops machinery in order to reduce necessary labour time. Under capitalism, this leads to unemployment. Under communism, automation will create *free time for the free intellectual and creative development* of every individual.

Generative AI is the highest form to date of the *socialisation of spiritual production*. It lays bare the central paradox of capitalism: a technology capable of radically reducing labour time and granting humanity the space for free creative development is used solely to maximise corporate profits. It bears the birthmarks of capitalism: theft, monopolisation, and exploitation. But historical materialism does not require us to wait for the emergence of flawless, ideologically pure tools. Revolution is always made from the human and technological material *created by the old era*.

By using AI not for the extraction of profit, but for *communist propaganda*, we demonstrate what the powerful productive forces created by capitalism are capable of when freed from the fetters of commodity-money relations and subjected to conscious social will.

May 2026



HISTORY PAGES OF PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

THE BOLSHEVIKS' LAST BATTLE

We turn to one of the most tragic, yet politically crucial pages in the history of the world working-class movement: the heroic and consistent struggle of the Group of Democratic Centralism (the “Decists”). While in the late 1920s most party oppositionists harbored fatal illusions regarding the nature of the Soviet state, it was the Decists (T. Sapronov, V. Smirnov, and others) who first drew a rigorous Marxist conclusion: the counter-revolution was complete; the VKP(b) and the state machine had transformed into instruments of capitalist exploitation hostile to the proletariat, which meant that what was needed was not intra-party reform, but a new revolution and the creation of a new, genuinely workers’ party. The special value of this historical material lies in its ruthless dissection of the ideology of Leon Trotsky and his supporters. Using historical documents, we demonstrate how Trotsky’s refusal to recognize the bourgeois nature of the Stalinist regime led him to a disastrous centrism – fruitless hopes for a “left course” by the bureaucracy and the substitution of real class analysis with abstract reflections on the “international situation”.

Lenin's generation was able to guide the *engine of war* towards the realisation of a revolutionary strategy, while the *engine of the peasantry's disintegration* was filling the cities of European Russia with millions of young new proletariats, and the terrible working conditions gave rise to the growth of a spontaneous class struggle which millions of our class comrades joined. In the trenches and ships of the first imperialist world war there were thousands of Bolsheviks, anarchists, and SR Maximalists that held the experience of class struggle and the consciousness forged by it. It was this very strength that made up the backbone of October's proletariat revolution, but it wasn't enough: the civil war, the petty-bourgeois wave, and, eventually, the Stalinist counter-revolution under the conditions of a defeated revolution attempt in Europe did not allow the struggle to reach its objective.

Nevertheless, even in the second half of the 1920s, the *Decists* – group of Democratic Centralism led by old Bolsheviks Timofei Sapronov (1887-1937) and Vladimir Smirnov (1887-1937) – stalinism's most coherent critics, numbered about 2,000, of which 500 alone were in Moscow and Leningrad. Someone called them the Levellers of the Russian Revolution – in honour of the most radical wing of the English Revolution of the 17th century. They were not interested in positions inside the hierarchy of Stalin's party or state; they were fighting for the interests of the proletariat, staying true to their principles. Almost all of them were executed, but none could be brought to court and forced to slander himself and his comrades.

The clandestine centres of the "Groups of proletarian opposition", as they began calling themselves in 1928-1929, coordinated quite massive leafleting campaigns, mostly directed at industrial enterprises where they had a serious support amongst workers. It's right to highlight this aspect: even in the darkness of the thirties, when the Stalinist counter-revolution in the USSR along with nazism and fascism in Europe brought the class rule of the bourgeoisie to extreme forms of repressive dictatorships, revolutionary Marxists still held the support of the proletarian masses.

In their leaflets they called things by their name: the counter-revolution had won in the USSR; the State, the union's Communist Party, and the so-called "public" organizations (the official trade unions, etc.) were hostile towards the proletariat, they were tools of oppression and exploitation; it was necessary to prepare for a new revolution, build a new workers' party, and, in the meanwhile, lead a defensive fight in opposition to the offen-

sive of the dominant class against the workers' rights and interests. It was clear to them «*that the terms of global revolution had been postponed to an unknown future*» and that building socialism in just one country «*is equivalent to building socialism in just one county*»¹, as Edouard Dune (1899-1953) writes in his memoir. He was one of the few surviving members of the group who spent many years in the camps of Vorkuta but managed to emigrate from the USSR during WWII. In France he joined the resistance, and then, finding himself alone, he joined the Mensheviks but remained loyal to his principles, as a text published in 1947 testifies.

Already in the autumn of '26 the Decists had left the Trotskyist-Zinovievist united opposition, believing its policies towards the Stalinist leadership to be unacceptably incoherent and reconciling. As Sapronov put it with working-class bluntness «*We won't polish Trotsky's boots!*». It is important to mention that in some of the "United Opposition"'s bigger regional centres – in Donbass, Bryansk, and Sverdlovsk – the decist's influence was predominant.

The decist's organisation at the beginning was built not as a faction of the party, but as a clandestine cell system. In this way it differentiated itself from Trotskyist groups who worked hard to participate in party meetings in an unsuccessful attempt to fight the party apparatus with "constitutional means". It's significant that the group accepted both old Bolsheviks and those who weren't part of the party.

«*The fight for reform within the party won't produce anything of substance regardless of whether Trotsky or Stalin is in power. The RCP(b) is already (1926) no longer a working class party nor does it express the class's interests*» wrote Dune. It was for this reason that the Decists did not set themselves the task to replace Stalin with Trotsky, or anyone else, instead they realised that ahead of them was a «*long-term, arduous work*» to create «*a true proletarian party*». It was an incredibly difficult choice, «*Stalin intimidated his party with the danger of a schism and the death of the dictatorship of the proletariat – soviet power. Even the Trotskyists were frightened by the danger, not realising that the split was necessary for Stalin, that soviet power had been liquidated under Stalin. But now? Now, as before, the ex opposition inside the party is fragmented and unable to create a united organization between people with the same beliefs who are sitting in the cells of political isolation [...] It is morally painful to break with one's own past, to admit that decades of conscious life must be written off as mistakes. It's not a matter of facts, but of psychology,*

1 - Dune (Ivanov), E. Democratic Centralism // The Trotsky Archive. Kharkiv, 2001. Vol. 2. p. 391.

nevertheless it (our psychology) has not always allowed us to see the true state of things»².

Having created an autonomous organisation, the Decists did not speak openly, nor did they gather signatures for their documents, preferring instead to work individually with people and conduct leafleting campaigns. «Our base organisations (cells) contained up to five people, if there were more, another cell was created in the same enterprise. The representatives of the cells chose the representatives of the centres. I know of these centres: in Ukraine (Kharkiv), in Donbass (Lugansk), in the Urals (Sverdlovsk), and in Moscow. In Moscow, in addition to a local centre, there was a "literary centre". In Leningrad there wasn't such a centre, because there were very few of our supporters (I know, because I brought a suitcase full of literature there)»³. Leningrad was the main centre of the Trotskyist-Zinovievist opposition. «Only those who had revealed themselves [i.e., had been exposed] could speak on behalf of the group and speak at meetings. In the inevitable cases of party disputes they could speak on behalf of Trotskyists. Such a condition could not satisfy the hot-blooded youth. It longed for active participation. For Trotsky, the youth were the party's barometer. Indeed, the Trotskyists absorbed excellent young people, among whom talented figures grew up in the course of the struggle, whose words the old guard listened to and often followed the lead of these young people [...]. All Trotskyist's supporters became known and exiled. The decist's supporters suffered less»⁴. The Decists paid serious attention to setting up illegal printing houses and purchasing copying equipment. They even created their own "Red Cross" to aid political prisoners. It was due to the conspiratorial nature of the organisation that some Decists were killed by the Gestapo rather than the Stalinists, while others continued their activities after the Second World War without ever being arrested: one worked at the Institute of Red Professors, and another at the Institute of World Economy and International Affairs. Were there others? We don't know. But even in Brezhnev's time, in Kharkiv, where during the Stalinist era there had been a decist centre, there were groups of young workers and students who asserted that the USSR has a capitalist basis and that the State was a dictatorship of capital. There was hardly any direct connection between the Decists and these groups, but if there had been, today we would most likely be a force able to hoist the flag of proletarian internationalism.

«The decist's organisation didn't have big names, popular in the party or the country. We didn't have Lenin, Plekhanov, or Trotsky. There was confidence that time would've helped us find them»⁵. There was also confidence that time would've helped prove the correctness of the assertions and the choices made on the basis of them.

This is one of the many little-known pages in the history of our class, experience from which the new generations of Marxists must learn. Through the Decists, Bolshevism made an unsuccessful attempt to save within itself that which connected it to the strategy of world revolution. In this sense, they can be called "the last Bolsheviks".

THE DIVIDING LINE OF THE 'LEFT COURSE'

In 1925, following the XIV conference of the RCP(b), the transition from the course towards a world communist revolution to the course towards building socialism in a single country was cemented. A long counter-revolutionary phase began. In this condition the so-called "United Opposition" was formed, an unstable bloc of four groups fighting between themselves: Trotskyists, Zinovievists, Decists and the "Worker's Opposition". The history and positions of each one requires separate consideration. Here, instead, we'll talk about their short-lived union into a single bloc and its inevitable collapse. The main views of the United Opposition were set out in the 'Declaration of the Thirteen' (July 1926), the 'Declaration of the Eighty-Three' (May 1927) and the main programme document – the 'Draft Platform of the Bolsheviks-Leninists (Opposition) to the 15th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [VKP(b)]' (September 1927), which was signed by 13 members of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the party: N. Muralov, G. Evdokimov, K. Rakovsky, G. Pyatakov, I. Smilga, G. Zinoviev, L. Trotsky, L. Kamenev, A. Peterson, I. Bakaev, K. Solovyov, G. Lizardin, P. Avdeev. Members of the bloc condemned the party regime, criticised Stalin's leadership for concessions to the kulaks, sought accelerated industrialisation, demanded the fulfilment of 'Lenin's will' to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), asserted the course of a world proletarian revolution, criticised the Comintern leadership for making 'concessions' to bourgeois and reformist forces, rejecting the idea that socialism could be built in a single, isolated country.

2 - Ibid.

3 - Ibid. p. 392.

4 - Ibid. pp. 392–393.

5 - Ibid. p. 392.

By July 1926 Zinoviev was removed from the Politburo and in October the same happened to Trotsky and Kamenev. In November of the same year, the XV conference of the VKP(b) accused the United Opposition of opportunistic “social democratic deviation”. In October-November of the following year Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were expelled from the Party’s Central Committee.

The centre of the United Opposition was in Moscow. Local chapters referred back to the regional centre or directly to Moscow. The centre coordinated the work through special couriers and emissaries. The former were only responsible for delivering instructions and opposition literature to their destinations, the latter had broader powers. Some settled in a particular city, establishing opposition work there, while others visited the regions periodically, with the authority to monitor and intervene in the activities of local groups, even going so far as to remove their leaders and appoint new ones. The groups collected donations. Thus, there were all the signs not only of ideological but also organisational unity, and since the United Opposition continued to operate within the party, this constituted factional activity. Already in 1926 the Decists and the Workers’ Opposition had left the bloc due to ideological differences.

In 1927 the XV Congress took place where it was decided that *«adherence to the Trotskyist opposition and the propagation of its views were incompatible with membership of the Bolshevik Party»* at the same time 75 leaders of the opposition were expelled among which were Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, Bakaev, Yevdokimov, Zalutsky, Lashevich, Muralov, Radek, Rakovsky, Safarov, Smilga, Smirnov, Sosnovsky and others. The same happened to 23 members of Sapronov’s *«obviously counter-irevolutionary»* group. Simultaneously, a process was underway to expel ordinary members of the opposition and local activists. Over a period of two and a half months beginning on the 15th of November 1927, 2,288 people were expelled for ‘factional activity’.

At the same XV Congress, the United Opposition effectively collapsed. On the 19th of December, the Zinovievites submitted a statement of capitulation to the Congress Presidium. The fact that not everyone took this leap – for example, the group led by Safarov did not sign the declaration and was sent into exile alongside the Trotskyists – suggests that the United Opposition continued to exist in name only until 1928, when the last of Zinoviev’s supporters capitulated.

These capitulations were not solely due to repression. What else happened at the 15th Congress? Following Mol-

otov’s report, a motion was passed on work in the countryside, which outlined the intensification of measures to establish collective farms and the strengthening of measures to restrict the kulaks, but in no way did it plan to get rid of them. In this, some oppositionists saw glimpses of a ‘leftist course’ and a reason to give up the fight against Stalin’s leadership.

Two weeks later, citing the *«unsatisfactory progress of the grain procurement campaign»* Stalin travelled to Siberia, where he remained from the 15th of January to the 6th of February 1928. There he actually announced the ‘New Course’: the implementation of a complete “collectivisation” of agriculture. *«From the local authorities Stalin demanded extraordinary measures against the kulaks: the search of barns, blocking roads to prevent the kulaks from transporting their grain for sale on the free market, the confiscation of their grain, and the sale of 25 % of the confiscated agricultural produce to poor peasants at a low price»*⁶.

On the 28th of February, Pyatakov submitted a statement requesting reinstatement in the party. N. Krestinsky and V. Antonov-Ovseyenko followed suit. The departure from the opposition did not affect only prominent figures. Between 1926 and early 1928, 3,381 people declared their break from the opposition. In February 1928, a further 614 people joined them.

For Pyatakov, who had long served as chairman of the Central Committee for Concessions and deputy chairman of VSNKh, the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy, the long-awaited changes to the economic programme were sufficient reason to return to the VKP(b) and turn a blind eye to the fact that no changes had taken place either in the sphere of democracy inside the party or in international policy. Later, the same motivation would force the economists Smilga and Preobrazhensky to capitulate, having returned to the party in 1929.

As early as the end of 1924, Preobrazhensky’s book “The New Economy” was published. In it, he theorised about the *«law of initial socialist accumulation»*, asserting that the country had only one powerful source of funds for an industrial leap forward – the village. This involved an *«unequal exchange»* between agriculture and industry with the aim of accelerating the latter’s development. The nationalisation of heavy industry inevitably leads to a planned economy and rapid industrialisation, he believed, and Stalin, having adopted the “left-wing course”, found himself bound by this necessity and would have to follow this path further and further. Trotsky did not accept the “left-wing course”, as it did not include any re-

6 - Felštinsky, Yu., and G. Chernyavsky. Lev Trotsky: Volume 3. The Oppositionist. 1923–1929. Moscow, 2013. p. 191.

laxation of the internal party regime – the dissidents remained in exile. Opposition groups resumed their activities in the central regions of Russia, the Urals, Ukraine and the North Caucasus. According to Yaroslavsky, all this activity was coordinated from Moscow by the «*General Secretary of the Trotskyists*», Boris Eltsin.⁷ But the real centre linking the colonies of exiles and the emerging opposition groups was Alma-Ata. Between April and October 1928, more than 1,000 letters and 700 telegrams arrived there by legal channels alone. From there, Trotsky sent 800 political letters and 550 telegrams.⁸

But Stalin's regime did not confine itself to changes in economic policy: in 1928, a campaign was launched against the "right wing deviation" and a struggle "against bureaucratism and degeneration" among party members. People in the country began to speak of the Smolensk and Artemovsk "ulcers". An article entitled "The Smolensk Abscess" was published in the Pravda on May 12. It concerned the "Katushka" factory, where, out of over 500 workers, 200 were Party members and a further 80 were in the Komsomol. Despite this overwhelming proportion of Communist membership, the foremen extorted bribes from the workers in the form of vodka, snacks and money, and from the female workers... their bodies. Commenting on this article, a Decist named Stepan writes from exile to his unknown correspondent: «*The author of the article [...] never tires of repeating: unbelievable, unheard of, unprecedented. What vile hypocrisy! Is [this] really a rare exception, unbelievable and unprecedented? Nothing of the sort. After all, what you write about your factory is in many ways very similar to what took place at "Katushka". And how many reports do we read – even in the official press – in which the same facts are revealed. And every time they are spoken of as exceptions, and they are called unbelievable, unheard of, unprecedented*».

Fighting abscesses to prevent gangrene is a necessity for any organism, including the Stalinist state, and the need to fill the state treasury inevitably forces shifts in economic policy.

In 1927, a grain procurement crisis erupted in the country. On the private market, bread prices began to rise rapidly, and the acute shortage led to a reduction in exports: from 2.177 million tonnes of grain in 1926–1927 to 344,400 tonnes in 1927–1928. As a result, to ensure food supplies for the cities, 248,200 tonnes of grain had to be imported, costing 27.5 million roubles in foreign currency. This jeopardised the programme for import-

ing machinery and equipment – the foundation of industrialisation.

This was the actual substance of the shift in the 'general line' of the VKP(b), which many exiled dissidents greeted either with jubilation or with delighted surprise, believing that their predictions had been confirmed. There was also hope that they would be called back into the party. This did indeed happen: given the limited number of trained cadres, the Stalinist leadership was prepared to welcome the repentant oppositionists into its suffocating embrace, albeit not to their former leadership posts, but to positions of a lower rank.

Conciliators were a mass phenomenon in Trotskyism, but the opposition to the Bolshevik-Leninists, as they called themselves, was not limited to them. While Radek wrote to Preobrazhensky in May 1928 that the "centre", that is, the Stalinist leadership, should not be «*regarded as the enemy*» as long as it «*moves to the left*», and that one should «*cast aside bitterness*», Rakovsky, a member of Trotsky's inner circle, like many of his like-minded comrades among the so-called irreconcilables, wrote from exile: «*I consider any reform of the party that relies on the party bureaucracy to be a utopia*».

From this, the Irreconcilables concluded: the "left course" was some kind of manoeuvre, a zigzag by the Stalinist group.

Whilst in exile on 6 August 1928, Rakovsky wrote a short piece, less than 20 pages long, entitled "Letter to G. B. Valentinov". It was addressed to the author of the text "Reflections on the Masses", well-known among the opposition, the former editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Trud*, who had signed the "Declaration of the 83" and was expelled from the party and exiled in 1927. Rakovsky's work is the first in which the opposition attempted to analyse the phenomenon of party and Soviet bureaucracy. In it, he writes that this is a phenomenon of the «*new order*» and a «*new sociological category*», the study of which warrants a treatise in its own right.⁹ Thanks to the passivity of the party masses and the working class, the bureaucracy usurps power. The new social stratum breaks away, at least in part, from the workers. This, in essence, is where Rakovsky's reflections end – he does not answer the question of which class the bureaucracy belongs to.

Discussions regarding the nature of bureaucracy, the class character of the "Stalinist Thermidor", and the stage it had reached were a constant feature within opposition circles. Whilst for most Trotskyists

7 - Yaroslavsky, E. M. *The Dead Walk Fast // Beyond the Final Boundary*. Moscow; Leningrad, 1930. p. 159.

8 - Deutscher, I. *Trotsky in Exile*. Moscow, 1991. p. 14.

9 - Letter from H. G. Rakovsky on the causes of the degeneration of the party and the state apparatus // "The Betrayed Revolution" Today. Moscow, 1992. p. 55.

the Thermidor was not yet over, for the Decists it had already been fully realised. Hence their differences in tactics. «*I am in favour of a bloc with the centre, or that part of it which will take up the fight against Thermidor*», wrote Radek in March 1929. In early 1928, Trotsky wrote the programmatic document “On the New Stage”, the first point of which is entitled “The Danger of Thermidor”. In the article “Old Mistakes on the New Stage”, the Decists point to the «*half-heartedness*» of such an assessment, drawing attention to the fact that «*until it has consolidated its de facto rule, the bourgeoisie may, for the time being, restrict itself to formal political rights and delegate these rights to the bureaucracy. [...] The authors of the document [...] do not dare to call a spade a spade and draw the necessary political conclusions. [...] Denying Thermidor as a real fact – is this not helping the apparatus to mask the counter-revolution?*».

Whilst for the Decists, who had concluded that the counter-revolution had come to an end, there was no alternative but to organise and fight against Stalinism, those who believed that Thermidor was still ongoing clung to illusory hopes of yet another “left turn”. In the second half of 1930, those who welcomed wholesale “collectivisation” and the rapid pace of industrialisation began to break away from the opposition. After 1930, the ideas of conciliation continued to bring individual Trotskyists back from exile, but no longer on the same mass scale as before.

Another inevitable consequence of conciliation was that the irreconcilable section of the Trotskyists, both in exile and at liberty, began to show solidarity with the Decists, and at times even joined them. The OGPU noted that both factions had repeatedly held talks on joint action and a possible merger. In particular, Vladimir Kosior, brother of Stanislav Kosior, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Bolsheviks), conducted such negotiations on behalf of the irreconcilable Trotskyists with the Decists in March 1928. However, among the Decists, a negative attitude towards the prospect of a merger with the Left Opposition prevailed, stemming from their rejection of the “reformist nature” of Trotsky’s tactics. Particularly serious differences

emerged regarding strikes. Whilst Trotsky’s supporters considered it necessary to prevent strikes, the Decists set themselves the task of actively participating in them and, where possible, leading them. In the Decists’ practical work, secrecy became increasingly important (code words, ciphers, secret addresses, secret writing, meeting places, etc.). Arrangements were made for those facing arrest to go underground.

However, even among the irreconcilable Trotskyists there were those who were increasingly turning to open struggle against the Stalinists – a separate article will be devoted to them and their activities. For now, let us focus on how and on what grounds the Decists criticised Trotsky and his followers.

In August 1928, Yakov Agranov, deputy head of the OGPU’s Secret Department, passed on to Yemelyan Yaroslavsky, secretary of the Party Collegium of the Central Control Commission – whose duties at the time included combating the opposition – a document circulating among the Decists entitled “On Thermidor and Centrism”, which offered the following assessment: «*Centrism is the main danger to the working class, the principal obstacle in its struggle against the bourgeoisie. Centrism is particularly dangerous for the opposition, not so much because of prison and exile, but because of the so-called “leftist course”. The most important and pressing issue for the opposition at present is the question of the class character of the current regime. Ambiguity and vagueness, and even more so falsehood, on this issue constitute the main danger to the opposition movement, the principal source of the oppositionists’ uncertainty and instability [...]. [...] anyone who sees Stalin’s attempts to crack down on the kulaks as a move towards a left-wing proletarian line is gravely mistaken; they fail to see the other side of Stalin’s line, the intensifying pressure on the workers, the persecution of the opposition, and the expulsion of all opposition supporters from foreign Communist parties and the Comintern*».

In short, Trotsky’s main mistake lay in his failure to recognise the capitalist nature of Stalin’s state, which resulted in a centrist tactical approach that remains a defining feature of Trotskyists to this day.

APPENDIX

THE ABCs OF REVOLUTION

On the 6th of October 1928, Vladimir Smirnov, one of the leaders of the Decists, sent a letter to his comrade Taras Kharetsko. It is well worth quoting at length: «*Trotsky continues to pursue his vacillating line, [...] even im-*

prisonment and exile for himself and his closest associates have not cured him of these illusions. [...] Trotsky’s entire line, from 1923 onwards, was [...] that the opposition, together with the majority of the Central Committee (i.e. to-

gether with the so-called “centrists”), would fight against the “right-wing danger”. He expressed this [...] at the Central Committee plenum in February 1927, and he now refers to this speech, as the basis of the Trotskyists’ tactical line, in almost every letter and document. [...] To frighten the “centrists” with the danger from the right, to eagerly await “the blow of the right-wing tail against the centrist head”, to support this head [...], to dream of a bloc with it [...] – such is Trotsky’s tactic. What is this position called? A thoroughly centrist one, which stakes its hopes not on the struggle against the opportunists for its own line, but on a split among the opportunists [...].

[...] In 1923, Trotsky frightened the Central Committee by claiming that if it did not yield to the opposition, anti-party currents would develop within the party. Instead of making concessions, the Central Committee stifled the party. Now Trotsky is threatening it that if the Central Committee does not yield now, the workers will “go beyond the limits of the Bolshevik Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat”. [...] Indeed, fear of the only force one can rely on can only lead to impotence!

[...] And now it is time to examine what exactly constitutes this “internationalism” that Trotsky constantly holds up for display, and for our disagreement with which Sosnovsky accuses us of “cooling towards the international revolution”, of “the theory of opposition in a single country” and of “Stalinism in reverse”. In reality, Trotsky’s “internationalism” is merely an essential component of his entire centrist line.

[...] What does this “international perspective” consist of in domestic matters? “The internal development of the USSR and the ruling party”, writes Trotsky, “fully reflected [...] the change in the international situation, serving as a clear refutation of the new reactionary theories of the isolated development of socialism in a single country. The course of the internal leadership was, of course, the same as that of the ECCI: centrism, sliding to the right”.

[...] “The well-known disillusionment with the international revolution”, Trotsky continues, “which had partly gripped the masses, pushed the central leadership towards purely national perspectives, which found their lamentable expression in the theory of socialism in one country”. Under the influence of these purely national perspectives, “the official leadership increasingly drifted towards the position of isolated, self-sufficient economic development”. As a result, “the question of the pace of our economic development was not raised by our leadership at all”. By failing to raise the question of pace, “we were losing momentum due to a false economic approach”. At the same time, there was already

a “systematic loss of momentum in matters of the international revolution”, caused by “the centrists’ inability to assess the revolutionary situation and capitalise on it at the right moment”. But “the question of timing is the decisive question in any struggle” and, having missed it, we entered “a period of temporary, certainly, but profound weakening of the positions of the international revolution”.

All this is not only international in nature, but also dialectical: cause and effect constantly switch places: the leadership of the ECCI and the Central Committee of the RCP missed the revolutionary situation in Germany and led to the defeat of the German revolution. Then – the reverse effect of the consequence on the cause: the defeat of the revolution in Germany causes the leadership of the Central Committee of the RCP to lose faith in the world revolution. In its grief, it constructs the theory of socialism in one country, overlooks the question of the pace of our own construction, and becomes definitively centrist. Then – once again, the reverse effect of the consequence on the cause: due to the inability of centrism to assess the revolutionary situation, it misses the pace in the international movement as well – the revolutionary situation in England and China is missed. The result is a “profound weakening of the world revolution”. And the “culmination of the gigantic shift in the balance of world forces in recent years”, as stated in the letter of 9/V, was the defeat of the opposition here. Thesis, antithesis and synthesis – all in order.

There is one problem: as Marxists, we are accustomed to explaining changes in the political situation by changes in the balance of classes and the struggle between them. Yet, for Trotsky, all dialectical interaction takes place between the “world situation” and the minds of those who lead the ECCI and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party. Trotsky reproaches the Central Committee for the fact that “the official faction in 1923 discarded class criteria, operating with such concepts as the peasantry in general”. The criticism is valid. But what can be said of Trotsky himself, from whose “international perspective” even “the peasantry in general” had vanished, even the proletariat, and in whose entire chapter entitled “The Policy of 1923–26”, mentions in only one place “the pressure of new class strata, formed on the basis of the NEP, linked to the state apparatus, who wish not to be hindered in their rise and not illuminated by Lenin’s torch”?

[...] The dialectic of class struggle was missing from Trotsky’s work. But then, Trotsky’s entire “dialectic” is not Marxist dialectic, even though the term “international” was repeated every other word in his arguments. That the modern economy has long since outgrown national

boundaries, that it has already become a global economy – no ideologue of the bourgeoisie would deny this. Nor would it occur to anyone to deny that, as a result, the political situation in every country is most closely linked to the political situation in other countries. However, Marxism differs from these general principles in that, from its perspective, the economy does not determine the political situation directly, but rather through class struggle. The class struggle of the proletariat is, first and foremost, a struggle against its own bourgeoisie. This follows from the simple fact that the bourgeoisie has not created and cannot create a world state, and that the state – the instrument of the bourgeoisie's class rule – is a national state. In this sense, if you like, the class struggle is a “nationally limited” struggle.

[...] Only those who, in their pursuit of “internationalism”, have forgotten the ABCs of revolution could accuse us of “departing from the international standpoint” or of “Stalinism in reverse” for reminding them of this elementary truth. It is not the proletariat of a single country, but that of every country, that fights against its own bourgeoisie. And since the foundations of the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletariat are the same in all countries, and since the basic features and forms of bourgeois rule are the same in all countries, the experience of the proletariat's struggle in every country is an international experience. Furthermore, having set itself the task of eliminating the contradiction between the social character of production and private ownership of the means of production, the proletariat, in the course of resolving this task, must inevitably also eliminate the second contradiction – that between the global character of production and the national-state organisation of its parts. Moreover, the economies of, if not all countries, then at least entire groups of countries (such as the European nations) are so closely intertwined that a victory of the proletariat in one country cannot fail to cause profound upheavals in the economies of neighbouring countries – upheavals which sharply accelerate the onset of a revolutionary situation there. The proletariat's struggle, which is “nationally limited” (due to the national fragmentation of the world economy), inevitably and very rapidly transcends national boundaries, breaks down state borders, and can only be brought to a conclusion – the building of socialism – on a global scale.

All this is elementary. But it follows from this elementary truth that, as long as the class structure of society remains, and as long as the division of the world economy into nation-state parts remains, one cannot say, as Trotsky does, that “the internal development of the USSR (or any other country) fully reflects the international situation”. Quite apart from the utter vagueness of a con-

cept such as the “international situation”, it is perfectly clear that the political development of an individual country is determined by the “international situation” (and does not reflect it) not directly, but through changes in the balance of class forces, through the class struggle within that country. Our economy is not an isolated economy. It is part of the global economy; it plays a specific role within the global economy. Changes in the global economy are altering this role, and they are also altering the class relations that are formed on the basis of it. But the political situation here, the policy of the USSR, is determined by these class relations in our country.

[...] It is tedious to spell out these elementary truths. But what can one do, if, according to Trotsky, the “reflection of the international situation on the internal development of the USSR” consists in the fact that the defeat of the German revolution “reflected” on Bukharin, Stalin and others with “disillusionment” in the world revolution, that under the influence of this disillusionment they devised the theory of socialism in one country, failed to consider the relationship between the pace of our development and that of the world, lost the pace, and so on. What can one do when, under the guise of a “genuinely Leninist”, “international” point of view, smooth-sounding gibberish about internationalism is presented?

What, however, is the objective meaning of this chatter? It lies in the fact that behind the “subtle” analysis of how the notorious “international situation” settles “in the minds of the vanguard or the vanguard of the vanguard” (letter 9/V), they “forget” to analyse how the ideology of our “nationally limited” classes – whose interests are expressed by the “erroneous” theories of this vanguard – is reflected in the minds of this “vanguard”.

[...] its “international” viewpoint is merely a plausible cover for its centrist policy, which strives hard to portray the opportunists as misguided revolutionaries, whereas in reality they are renegades of communism and traitors to the revolution. With such an international perspective, we naturally cannot have anything in common.

[...] The Bolshevik Party was forged in the struggle not only against the outright right-wingers – the “economists” and “liquidators” – but also against centrists of every stripe, in all their various shades. It could not have been otherwise: it was only thanks to the centrists that the outright right-wingers were able, during the dark days of reaction, to recruit supporters among the workers; it was only the centrists' left-wing rhetoric that could confuse – sometimes for a long time – honest and devoted revolutionaries.

Trotsky is now playing the role of such a centrist».

June – July 2025

INTRODUCTION TO THE

«

DRAFT

PROGRAMME

»

OF THE INTERNATIONALIST
COMMUNIST PARTY

The “Communist Prometheus” group does not consider itself a “world communist party or even its sole embryo” and views its activity “as part of the practical movement towards communism, as a struggle for the creation of this party”. Based on this premise, we consider it fundamental to exchange experiences and conduct discussions with other internationalist communist organisations. “The Draft Programme of the Internationalist Communist Party” and the accompanying introduction, specifically written by the comrades of Battaglia Comunista, constitute the first in a series of publications of documents, articles, and materials from other communist organisations. We consider the in-depth study of these texts an integral part of the theoretical heritage of Marxism and a crucial element in the formation of the class consciousness of the world proletariat.

To better understand the context in which the "Draft Programme" of the Internationalist Communist Party came to be, was drawn up and made public in 1944 (within the confines of its forced clandestinity), we believe it might be useful to outline a brief history of the "Italian Left" from the First World War to the Second post-war period, when the contrasts between the different 'souls' ended in the schism of 1952. The break led to a substantial contribution to the gradual weakening of internationalist groups, in Italy and abroad.

BRIEF INTERNATIONALIST HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST LEFT

«We of the Internationalist Communist Party – Italian affiliate of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party [which is now the Internationalist Communist Tendency, ICT, ed.] - come directly from the Italian Communist Left and have made the necessary steps forward, facing the true dynamics of capitalism and the actual nature of imperialism (which, let's remember, is not just a policy). We believe that the others who come from the tradition of the Italian Communist Left have either departed from its general methodological framework – and this is the case of the ICC – or – like the Bordigists – have remained stuck (invariant?) on the positions of 1921-22, placing themselves outside revolutionary perspectives regarding modern capitalism» (Mauro Stefanini, in an e-mail, early 2000s).

Today, the term "communist left" creates quite a bit of confusion. The groups that adhere to the ICT don't use that term often. We prefer to be called "internationalists". We also try to avoid using, or use very little, the term "Italian Left", which can create a lot of confusion. In the tradition of the "Italian Left" there are three components: the Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista, the founding group, along with CWO, of the future IBRP and later ICT), the French Communist Left, precursor of the ICC, and the Bordigists, who today are represented by many groups that can't be easily counted, but all of them stem from The Communist Programme; Bordigist groups usually take the name of the "International Communist Party". Then there is another grouping, which originates from the ICC, from which it has detached, or, more precisely, it was expelled from the ICC in the early 2000s: the Groupe International de la Gauche Communiste.

For us, one of the biggest sources of confusion is that, when we say that we come from the tradition of the Ital-

ian Communist Left, we often get wrongly identified with Bordiga and Bordigism.

The Italian Left has experienced two periods in which its ideas had a wide following, the years 1919-24 and, to a lesser extent, the years 1943-49.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ITALY

Starting with the First World War and the Russian Revolution, the big problem in Italy was the creation of a communist party that could be affiliated with the Third International instituted in 1919. The prob-

lem that the Left faced was the confusion deliberately spread by the Italian Socialist Party, under Serrati, who kept open the possibility of an affiliation with the Third International, without actually doing it. Furthermore, the PSI had kept an ambiguous position expressed in the formula "neither support, nor sabotage" regarding the war, which Italy did not join until May 1915. In this way it could further muddy the waters.

During that period (1919-20), Italy was dealing with political upheavals, with workers that occupied their factories and went on strikes that numbered thousands; this period is called "Red Biennium". However, there was no working class party that could direct those struggles towards an assault on the state. The workers stayed shut in the factories and the ruling class merely had to wait until the movement died down. During that period the "Intransigents", as the comrades on the left were called at the time, managed to carry out the break with the socialists and establish the Communist Party of Italy [also referred to by the initials PCd'I] in Livorno, in 1921; but the ascending movement of class struggle was already over and the bourgeoisie was already veering into fascism.

The Party just founded had been created by the Left, and its most prominent leader was the young Amadeo Bordiga. Even then, Bordiga had a tendency towards formalism and one of his errors was calling his fraction "the abstentionist fraction", when actually it should have been called the communist fraction. The result was that many communists, who thought the parliament should be used as a pulpit to gain publicity (without actually seeing it as an avenue to gain power) hesitated to adhere, and this resulted not just in a party with a size numerically inferior to what it should have been, but also that the party ultimately appeared later than it should have. Bordiga's tactical idea at the root of his decision on the name

"abstentionist", was that the old socialist party had become corrupt and reformist because its members had gained parliamentary privileges, and this was his way of keeping reformists out. More confusion was added by the fact that Bordiga went to the Comintern's Second Congress and insisted on adding the 21st condition, which stated that all of the Comintern's decisions were binding for all communist parties. This meant that he had tied the Italian Party to the work in the parliament and the trade unions, which by some was considered a step back. However, Bordiga was coherent in his insistence that the Italian section of the International should take precedence above all. This explains why one of Bordiga's critiques of the KAPD comrades, the German left communists, was that they elevated issues they regarded as tactical to matters of principle, to be prioritised over the unity of communist action. To them he wrote highlighting that "as a Marxist I am first and foremost a centralist, and only after that an abstentionist".

Meanwhile in Italy the situation was only getting more desperate for the working class, since the revolutionary momentum had been lost. Now it was being followed by a period of reaction. At the same time the Comintern was in visible decline; at its Fourth Congress, in 1922 (though building on the Third Congress of 1921), it had decided to adopt the "united front" tactic with those very same socialist parties that had supported the imperialist war and had seriously hampered the process of establishing communist parties. For the Communist Left the adoption of the united front marks a turning point in the history of the working class. It's one of the elements that today sets us apart from the Trotskyist currents.

In Italy the left, which still controlled the party, suggested the idea of declaring a "united front from below" and tried to persuade the other parties of the International to adopt this interpretation. The idea was that the communists would have worked alongside the socialist workers in the factories, but not with their parties. However, even this was too much for the Executive Committee of the Comintern who, when Bordiga was arrested by the fascist government in 1923, had the opportunity of instating Gramsci as general secretary of the party. Gramsci had always recognised Bordiga as the true party leader, but Moscow prevailed over him in replacing the better-known leader. Under him the party was "bolshvised" and the left was gradually removed from power.

Bordiga did not actively oppose this process, since he recognised the central authority of the EC

of the Comintern, but he didn't hide his opposition to the new direction taken by the party and the International. This brought him to support, albeit without much enthusiasm and only at a later stage, the efforts of the comrades of Comitato di Intesa [Common Ground Committee] who had drawn up a critique of the party's degeneration. Among the signatories were Onorato Damen and Francesca (Cecca) Grossi, who would later marry and both would be among the founders of our Italian affiliate, the Communist Internationalist Party. The Comitato di Intesa argued that

«It is mistaken to think that in every situation expedients and tactical manoeuvres can widen the Party base since relations between the party and the masses depend in large part on the objective situation.» (The Platform of the Committee of Intesa, leftcom.org).

The EC of the ComIntern asked for the expulsion of all those who had supported the Comitato, of whose members were stripped of all duties by Gramsci, but the Left kept fighting politically against the degenerations in the party. The climax came in 1926, in two events that summarise this fight: the last speech Bordiga gave to the Communist International and the PCd'I Congress of Lyon. The former saw Bordiga denounce Stalin, the Russian Revolution's abandonment of internationalism and the way Trotsky had been treated. It is said that Stalin replied *«May God forgive you»*. The PCd'I certainly did not. At the Congress of Lyon all the party officials who had supported the Left were told by Gramsci that if they didn't vote for his thesis they would have lost their positions in the party along with their pay (which is a reason why, after this, our comrades have always been opposed to the idea of "professional revolutionaries"). Under this pressure many backed down, thus leaving the Left further isolated. At that point the left was expelled by the party and many went into exile in France and in Belgium. Damen never went into exile. Instead, he had to deal many times with being arrested and sent to jail, both during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Bordiga also stayed in Italy, but he retired into private life and devoted himself to practicing his profession as an engineer in Naples. He played no further role in politics until 1945.

THE LEFT FRACTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ITALY

The Italian Left emerged as such during the thirties particularly in France, where in 1928 (at Pantin)

the Left Fraction of the Communist Party of Italy was formed. The Fraction published *Prometeo* (originally the name of the revolutionary magazine made by the Party's section in Naples, Bordiga's section) and then *Bilan*.

The fraction was not a homogenous group, it couldn't have been.

Our comrades found themselves in the midst of the counter-revolutionary process. The problem was understanding its reasons, its nature and so on. The Spanish War divided the fraction; some comrades thought they could go to Spain to try and join the war alongside the republicans, in the hope of turning it into a genuine communist struggle – even those who opposed this idea went to Spain, to try and get the others back on communist positions. In the end, those comrades who joined the militias soon realised, at their own expense, that it was impossible to win the workers over to communism in what had become an imperialist war. The main achievement was that the comrades of *Bilan* recognised that the anti-fascist war was the prelude to the mobilisation of the working class in support of imperialism, in one way or the other.

However two tendencies, at least, existed inside the *Bilan* group. For example, whilst one tendency denied that it was possible to define the nature of the USSR with any certainty, another asserted that the counter-revolutionary policy of a party and a state was the product of a counter-revolutionary social and political development, in which the State was no longer a proletarian semi-state (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*) and the party had crossed the class line, substituting itself to the old, traditional bourgeoisie (state capitalism). But *Bilan* wasn't clear on many issues, one of which was the state during the transition period. Another was the analysis of capitalism's economic contradictions, where an essay written by Mitchell (one of the more prominent Belgian comrades) saw in late-Luxemburgist theories the only true explanation of capitalist crises. These mistakes led to the disastrous underestimation of the 1939 crisis' nature. Believing (as for Chapter 18 of Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*) that the arms production would have allowed capitalism to emerge from the Great Depression, they thought that capitalism could avoid another imperialist war. The fraction abandoned *Bilan* and substituted it with *Octobre*, which came out in just a dozen editions in the last months before the war. Vercesi (that is, Ottorino Perrone, the most notable mem-

ber of the Fraction) asserted that the working class had not been defeated and that revolution was still possible. It was no surprise that the Left Fraction in exile crumbled at the outbreak of the Second Imperialist War. For the working class, that was undoubtedly midnight in the century. Some Fraction members would be killed by Stalin and others by Hitler, but in the brutal, though more disorganised, fascist state in Italy, the left would survive even if at the border, in jail, and under house arrest.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNIST PARTY

The Internationalist Communist Party came into being in 1942, although it "officially" only made its debut on the political scene in the autumn of 1943, with the first issue of *Prometeo*, which was, of course, published clandestinely. The comrades who formed the party were concentrated mainly in Piedmont and Lombardy, that is, at the heart of the Italian working class. Generally, they came from a long history of activism within the ranks of the "Italian Left", which had given rise to the Communist Party of Italy in 1921, and even if back then they were labelled as Bordigist. It's a rather inaccurate term, although Bordiga made a major theoretical and political contribution to the "Left" itself. Generally speaking, the internationalists had experienced prison and the precarious life of exile, from which they brought back the political experience of the Fraction, following Mussolini's fall on 25 July 1943,. Even before that, many of those comrades had fought against the emergence of the Stalinist counter-revolution, a struggle that culminated in the Comitato di Intesa (1925), in which, not coincidentally, Onorato Damen was one of the main driving forces, despite – as we have seen – Bordiga's reticence, even if he can be credited with writing most of the political documents produced by the Committee itself. The Party was founded at a time when the working class, through massive strikes, was shattering the climate of social peace imposed by twenty years of fascism and reinforced by the ongoing war, thereby objectively calling into question the war itself and the capitalist system that had brought it about. The strikes, which began in Turin – the 'most working-class city in Italy' – then spread to Milan and the rest of the north. Needless to say, *Prometeo* not only enthusiastically supported the strikes, but, together with its militants, took an active part in them.

The Party was developing, amidst enormous difficulties, just as the Italian Communist Party was, so to speak, officially bringing its downward spiral to a close by backing the "Allies" side in the imperialist war, taking part in the formation of the National Liberation Committee (CLN) and supporting the government of Pietro Badoglio, executioner of workers, mass murderer of defenceless people in the wars in Africa and in the Balkans, to mention only the civilian victims of a long career in the service of the bourgeoisie.

The organisation's political positions – set out in the 1944 "Draft Programme", though in some aspects, such as on the matter of trade unions, they were still a "work in progress" – on the whole laid out with clarity the foundations upon which the revolutionary organisation would grow: certain issues that had troubled the life of the Fraction, such as the social nature of the USSR, had long been resolved by the comrades who had remained in Italy. The Soviet Union was identified for what it was: a state capitalist regime, with the "Communist" Party acting as the regime's proxy, aimed at steering the proletariat towards support for one of the imperialist camps during the war and in the subsequent bourgeois reconstruction. Finally, it was taken for granted that the trade unions, which were necessarily absent at that time, would, with the end of the conflict, become a powerful tool in the hands of the social democracy and Stalinism. The "Draft Programme", although a "provisional" document, was more advanced – in terms of its revolutionary framing of the issues – than the 1945 "Platform", drawn up by Bordiga, who was not, and would never be, a member of the party. The grey areas, the theoretical and political setbacks, and the first signs of a mechanistic-idealistic regression on Bordiga's part would take on a disruptive force over the years, until the break in 1952. The fact remains that the "Platform" was intended more as a contribution to future congress discussions than as the party's definitive statement of identity; it already contained in embryo elements which, having developed subsequently, would give rise to the era of Bordigism. Many years later, we clarified once again what the 1945 "Platform" represented for the Internationalist Communist Party: *«In 1954 the C.C. [Central Committee, ed.] received a draft of political Platform by comrade Bordiga who, we emphasise, was not a member of the Party.*

The document, submitted as an ultimatum for acceptance, was deemed incompatible with the firm positions already adopted by the party on the major issues and, despite the amendments made, the doc-

ument has always been regarded as a contribution to the debate, not as an actual platform» (Introduction to our Quaderno "*Documenti della Sinistra Italiana*" [Documents of the Italian Left] published in the early 1970s, containing the Draft Programme and the Platform of 1945).

Returning to our "Draft", it was more than enough to guide the party through the extremely complex situation of the war, both in terms of the political and military alignments on the ground and, above all, the phenomenon of the partisan movement, which drew its strength largely from the proletariat, who were generally sincere in their desire to fight capitalism and oppose Nazi-Fascism, but were completely under the sway of the ideology and political direction of the C.L.N. Its task was to keep those forces confined to the realm of bourgeois anti-fascism, diverting and extinguishing their anti-capitalist potential in the context of imperialist war, and deploying them in support of one of the warring sides. The Party, therefore, whilst denouncing as a tragic anti-proletarian deception the C.L.N.'s policy – aimed at giving post-war capitalism a new, democratic guise – strove, as far as the very narrow operational limits allowed, to provide political clarity among the partisan forces by accurately pointing out the limitations of the anti-fascist movement that had developed, in order to move it onto the terrain of class struggle, and to unite it with the main body of the proletariat that had remained in the workplaces: this, not guerrilla warfare, was the starting point for overthrowing capitalism. It should be noted, incidentally, that the Party did not fall into abstract theorising; it knew full well that many proletarians had taken to the mountains to escape persecution, to desert the war, and that they could not simply go home: for this reason, the political and military directive given was to hold their ground in defence of themselves and their families, if necessary, to preserve their experience and weapons so as to make them available to the working class in the now imminent post-war period. Neither with Kesserling [Supreme Commander of the German Army in Italy, ed.] nor with Alexander [Commander-in-Chief of the Anglo-American forces in Italy, ed.]: not with the hangman of partisans, the mass murderer of defenceless villages under the banner of the swastika, but also not with the representative of the no less ferocious British imperialism, who invited the partisans, in the harsh winter of '44, to return home as if this were not tantamount to a death sentence.

The lies, dictated by crass ignorance or self-serving bad faith, regarding the role of our comrades

during the Second World War, have accompanied us since 1944, when the PCI pointed to our comrades as Gestapo agents and urged the partisans to treat us as such. On at least two occasions, this incitement to murder was carried out: against Fausto Atti, in the area of Bologna, and Mario Acquaviva in the area of Asti.

Ours, therefore, was not indifference – perhaps tinged with cowardice, as some liked to insinuate – but the only stance that was consistently communist with regard to the war. No one else, not even the anarchists, adopted such a distinctly class-based perspective¹.

In any case, no one harboured illusions about the possibility of the party's political positions taking hold among the working class during the final phase of fascism and the opening of a revolutionary resurgence in the post-war period, but it was anticipated (and hoped) that the grief, the misery and the economic collapse would open up spaces for the party to intervene and take root. Contrary to what some historical accounts claim, the scenario that the Anglo-American "liberators" would open up was understood, in broad terms:

*«This much is certain, however: that victory – a crushing victory for the Entente powers [the Allies, Ed.] – will greatly strengthen the front of resistance of world capitalism and narrow the objective possibilities for the proletarian revolution. Proof of the correctness of this analysis lies in the observation that a section of the proletariat 'feels' the democratic war and regards it and its victorious conclusion as if it were 'their' war and 'their' victory.»*²

This assessment was, unfortunately, confirmed by the facts and reaffirmed several times in the years immediately following the end of the conflict,

in the press and at the Party's highest "moments", such as the 1945 Turin Conference and the 1948 Florence Congress.

Indeed, if there were ever any comrades who expected the emergence of a revolutionary phase in which the party might have been able to exercise its leading role, they must be sought amongst those who, disappointed by the way things turned out, would soon theorise that 'there is nothing to be done' and thus the elimination of the party as an unavoidable political instrument of the class struggle, and its transformation into a nucleus of 'thinkers' and 'restorers' of Marxism. This attitude is a constant in the history of the labour movement: defeat brings to the surface and exacerbates the weaknesses of the theory, especially if the theory's overall framework has shaky foundations.

This, of course, is a reference to Vercesi, a leading figure in the Fraction who later became one of the main channels – within the organisation – of doubts, "unspoken concerns", second thoughts on theory and, in essence, of Bordiga's opposition to the existence of the Party, which led to the split in 1952³. If in the Turin conference of 1945 the political disagreements on individual issues – such as the trade union question – were such that they fell within the normal dialectic of a revolutionary organisation and, indeed, helped it grow both in theory and politically; in Florence, in 1948, there would already be a different atmosphere: our comrades had to fight against Vercesi's liquidationist tendencies and his somersaults on the matter of trade unions, typical of the future Bordigism. These tendencies, unfortunately, would find their outlet in the split of 1952.

1 - «At the bourgeois game showed up (need we say more?) even... the terrible champions... of the most "uncompromising" form of revolutionism: the anarchists. The non-historicist but crudely voluntarist nature of their doctrine, their particular passionate, confused and often illogical 'forma mentis', and the superficiality of their analyses led [the anarchists] into the ranks of the C.L.N. side by side [...] with priests, Mazzinians [followers of Mazzini, ed.] and bourgeois. [The anarchists] were not in the least touched by the doubt that the war they were fighting fell within the category of imperialist conflicts: by joining the C.L.N., the "most radical deniers of any form of government" did not in the least suspect that they were lending their support to new organs of the bourgeois state which they "definitively overthrow"... in theory, and consolidate in practice by all means [...] A sad historical irony would have it that the first and last acts of the war tragedy (Spain and Italy) saw the anarchists come to terms (ministers, liberators, C.L.N.) with capitalism, helping to make the defeat of the working class truly totalitarian», *The Proletariat and the Second World War*, articles taken from *Battaglia Comunista* of November 1947 - February 1948

2 - Draft Programme of the Internationalist Communist Party, 1944

3- From the report presented by the E.C. in the run-up to the Party's National Congress, December 1947, in *Quaderni Internazionalisti*, op. cit., p.67: «The Party neither entertained nor fostered illusions in this regard [the onset of a revolutionary phase]; it foresaw, at the end of the conflict, the emergence of an openly reactionary historical situation, and prepared itself to speak out in it with firmness and courage, just as it had been able to do so against all odds and against all adversaries in the midst of the world war.»

And Aldo Lecci, at the 1948 congress, expressed himself as follows: «However, he [Vercesi] claimed to have been mistaken in 1945 in Turin when he believed in a revival of the revolutionary course, whereas today he realises that throughout the world the proletarian class is allied with capitalism and that everything we do can only benefit one or the other imperialist bloc [...]. Comrade Vercesi's speech today conceals an attempt to reduce the party to a club of supermen, of self-proclaimed Marxist scientists, who feel superior and disdain to engage with the reality in which the masses live [...]. These elements, who seek to hide their pessimism behind our supposed optimism, come—politically inactive—to throw grandiloquent phrases amongst us without making any positive contribution to the positions we defend and advocate, without theoretical or political refutations of our 'errors' and deviations. The comrades who have worked with us know that we have never deluded ourselves nor have we ever deluded anyone with fixed positions and perspectives. We have always been firm and precise; we have always told our comrades: "Recruit with caution; dismiss anyone who shows political incomprehension; we may have to downsize further; the situation does not allow for the development of a class-based party; the task is to train the cadres, the backbone of the party.» (Reports: Turin conference of 1945, Florence congress of 1948, p.16)

DRAFT PROGRAMME

OF THE INTERNATIONALIST
COMMUNIST PARTY

This draft programme is based on our basic programme, the “Rome Theses”, developed and approved at the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Italy (1922).

I. SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

The war, in its frantic and brutal final phase, demonstrates, alongside the decline of German power, the victorious assertion of the Allied powers, with the United States and Russia clearly enjoying military and political superiority. Thus emerges the prospect for a democratic peace, ensuring, above all, the United States' undisputed economic and financial hegemony over the world. This could mean not only victory in the war, but also a victorious peace, a consolidation, that is, of capitalism that would thus have been able to once again cut in front of the proletariat, which saw in the war's open crisis an opportunity for the revolutionary movement to succeed. The validity of this hypothesis, since the war is still ongoing, and the unpredictable may still come into play, may not be fully confirmed by the course of events, but, in the current state of the crisis and given the elements available, nothing suggests that it might. One thing is certain, though: the Allies' crushing victory will significantly strengthen the resistance front of global capitalism and narrow the objective possibilities for proletarian revolution. The correctness of this analysis is confirmed by the fact that a part of the proletariat "feels" the democratic war and views it and its victorious conclusion as "their" war and "their" victory.

The historical responsibility for this tragic deviation from the correct class line lies with the socialist and centrist parties, which have acted and continue to act towards the war not as the right wing of the proletariat, but as real and conscious forces of the bourgeois left.

II. FASCISM AND DEMOCRACY

Fascism as a necessity of bourgeois society and organic expression of the defence of privilege within the framework of an authoritarian state at the height of the capitalist crisis, is, at this point, an episode that concerns gravediggers far more directly than politics or history. But it should be noted that fascism does not die as a result of a violent, head-on struggle brought on by the proletariat, meaning it is not swept away by a revolutionary wave; this means that there is a peaceful transfer of power from one political framework to another one, better suited to the new necessities arising from the war, and that the necessities of the authoritarian State, which we have known and experienced – and which are still alive and consistent just as capitalism as a whole, from which these necessities originate, is alive and consistent – will be

at the basis of the democratic State, those same necessities with the hypocrisy and the deceit of freedoms added on, freedoms which will factually be reserved to those who hold power.

It therefore goes without saying that the conditions of social conflict have not changed even slightly, and no matter the forces at the helm of the state, our party's stance is that they are defending the interests of capitalism with all means available, the same ones fascism used, against every attempt of the proletariat to get a hold of power.

Against the democratic state, the tactics of the proletarian party remain unchanged: we believe neither in its elections, nor in its constituent assembly, nor in its freedom of press, speech, or association; but the party will take advantage of them, as well as any concession the bourgeoisie is forced to make, for the sole purpose of getting stronger and being able to hit hard. As things stand, the war has brought fascism to its knees, but it will also not fail to bring about political ruin for the traditionally proletarian parties of the National Liberation Committee, who, tied to the triumphant forces of the war to which they owe their temporary political successes, are today forced to continue it. Our Party, just as it was alone in fighting the war of Nazi-fascist imperialism, will remain alone in fighting the war of democracies.

III. OUR PARTY AND RUSSIA

Russia has ceased to be for our party the country of the first great revolutionary achievement of the world proletariat, and remains an open page for the critical study of revolutionary Marxism, which today is tasked with identifying and laying bare the historical causes, economic and political, that, in Russia, formed the basis of the defeat of proletarian power and became the decisive factor in the disintegration of the political forces of the Communist International. From the violent repression against the genuine revolutionaries of Kronstadt to the physical elimination of all opposition to Stalin's nationalist politics, it is evident in the workers' state the constant growth of this peculiar paradox: everyone is acting ostensibly to arm the revolution against any attempt to restore capitalism, and everyone, revolutionaries or not, effectively contributed to arming the militias of the most ruthless anti-proletarian reaction, which was destined to strangle the October Revolution and, along with it, its best fighters. For Marxists, the reasons for this are not to be sought in the heavens or in the wickedness of some men, but they lived inside of the proletarian

state, fuelled by a policy of compromise that economic conditions carried over to the dominant ideology in the era of Lenin and Trotsky.

In virtue of the Russian experience, the proletariat's struggle has now absorbed that revolutionary violence is historically necessary and vital only when it is carried out by class forces which veins flow with proletarian blood, and whose goal is not the resolution of generic, subjective, and situational interests, be they even tied to the life of a proletarian state, but instead pushed forward by fundamental and permanent class needs, to which the state is just an episode and a simple and temporary phenomenon. Otherwise, violence ceases to be the midwife of history and paves the way for the returns of reaction.

The Party deems that from the repression of Kronstadt to the liquidation of the Communist Party, the violence of the degenerated workers' state was an expression of a guiding will and economic and political interests that no longer coincided with the struggle of the proletariat. So tomorrow it will be less difficult for the parties of the new International to define the terms, both theoretical and tactical, of a policy against compromise.

In conclusion, we assert:

The dictatorship of the proletariat must under no circumstances be reduced to the dictatorship of the party, even if it were the party of the proletariat, intelligentsia and leadership of the workers' state.

The state and the ruling Party, as organs of such dictatorship, contain within themselves the germ of a tendency toward compromise with the old world, a tendency that gets substantiated and strengthened, as the Russian experience has taught us, in the temporary inability of the revolution in a given country to spread, binding itself with the revolutionary movement of other countries.

In a phase, then, of stalling politics imposed by the gradual nature of revolutionary development, the interests of the revolution are guaranteed by the active presence of the proletariat – above all of its most conscious forces – in the fundamental organs of the dictatorship, with elected positions, with the right of removal from office, with the free exercise of the workers' union to defend its class interests against the state and all economic strata that are not yet socialist: in a word, with the broadest possible exercise of workers' democracy. If at this stage of class dictatorship the free existence of parties is an anachronism, then criticism and opposition must be allowed within the sphere of the dictatorship's par-

ty. The exercise of the broadest possible democracy in the relations between the proletariat and the party, between the proletariat and the workers' state, presupposes a very high degree of political maturity achieved by the proletariat and the existence of objectively sufficient conditions for such implementation in all economic and social spheres of the workers' state. It is understood that it's the duty of the party exercising the dictatorship to raise these backward strata to the level of revolutionary class interests through the means and methods permitted by workers' democracy itself, such as free discussion, free expression of opinion at meetings etc...

The state – a bourgeois relic that the proletariat cannot do without to eliminate the remnants of class society, but whose disintegration it must accelerate – tends all the more to survive and grow stronger, rather than wither away, the more it isolates itself from the movement of the international proletariat, claiming to build socialism in its own sphere and posing itself as a workers' state in opposition to bourgeois states on the world stage.

IV. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

The scale and duration of the conflict, the depth and harshness of ideological clashes, the negative experience of the first proletarian state and its International, must have determined the favourable conditions for the formation and strengthening of communist organizations in individual countries, which are awaiting the moment to unite and lay the foundations of a new International.

The latter will have to take into account above all their previous negative experiences, in order to effectively become the organ of the world communist revolution. Our Party, which in recent decades more than any other has felt the lack of an international directive organ that could actually be a guide and an incentive to the proletarian struggle, and has boldly exposed its shortcomings, errors, deviations, and ultimately betrayal, and which has missed no opportunity to restore contacts among the forces of the international left, will be able to take initiative at the opportune moment. Our Party is ideologically prepared for this task of revival and states already that the new International:

a) must avoid becoming an instrument of the workers' state and its politics, but, considering itself the highest assembly of workers throughout the world, must defend the interests of the revolution even towards the workers' state;

b) must avoid bureaucratization, making of the directive centre, as of the peripheral centres, a field for bureaucratic careerism;

c) must avoid class politics being thought and realised following formal and administrative criteria.

The danger of opportunist accretions and bureaucratic authoritarianism can be neutralized in time and eliminated only through the active participation by the political organs of the proletariat of various countries in the political life of the International, through its vigilant control over the people and organs at the head of the leading and responsible centres.

V. OUR TACTICS

We have already stated that the party's tactics do not change with the apparent and merely formal changes in the external and political conditions of the State. Unless the course of the war is brutally interrupted or radically altered by the collapse of some front as a result of a successful workers' uprising, contrary to the anticipated democratic experience, under the tutelage of the victorious Allied forces, our party will put the proletarian struggle in terms of revolutionary tactics, which consists in promptly interpreting situations from the class standpoint, in adapting the watchwords of action accordingly, and in equipping in time the proletariat with the essential ideas that nourish its struggle and with the means necessary to consolidate victory. In the immediate post-war period, while under the leadership of the socialists and centrists the manoeuvre so dear to democratic reaction will be repeated: diverting the revolutionary thrust in order to run it aground on the shoals of partial and immediate demands and of compromise by taking advantage of the inevitable political, economic and moral disorientation that will descend upon all the organs of the State and upon the consciousness of the masses, as well as of the inability of the ruling class responsible for the war to organise the peace in the sense of resolving the enormous problems posed by the war, our party will adapt its tactics accordingly with the maturation of favorable objective conditions and will conduct the struggle within the channel of revolutionary tradition, so as to provide true leadership rather than trail behind events. It is therefore obvious that the tactical expedients of democracy will be cast onto the scrapheap of politics as soon

as the party judges that the situation is moving towards a revolutionary outcome.

Because our political line will not be influenced by idealistic temptations or theories of spontaneity, this will allow the party's will to fight to coincide with the will of the masses, so that they will express in a concentrated form the urgency of a practical necessity in the sense of a revolutionary assault for the conquest of power.

But there will be no serious conquest of power, unless the party first gains influence over the masses of the proletariat. To this end the party defines its tasks as follows:

a) the masses cannot be won over when and how one wishes, if objective conditions do not stir them, the tactical acrobatics of parties that would like to influence them and make them spring into action at the touch of a magic wand are useless;

b) the fighting spirit of the masses, when ignited in struggle, indicates as if in a diagram the process of instability and crisis that pervades the productive apparatus of capitalism, its markets and the whole of its political organisation. At this moment, the party can insert itself into the struggle, and be one of its determining elements, drawing the masses into its orbit to unite their energies and direct them towards the achievement of specific objectives;

c) the success of such an intervention is possible to the extent that the party has been able to create permanent organisations for propaganda, recruitment and agitation within the masses; to the extent that it has been able to win trust, through constant adherence to the life and struggles of the proletariat and its class demands; finally, to the extent that it has demonstrated that it has not deluded the masses with untimely and insincere agitation, with empty gestures such as strikes for the sake of strikes, or strikes for purposes that are contrary to the spirit and interests of the class;

d) our party, which does not underestimate the influence of other parties with a working-class tradition and the importance of that influence upon the masses, advocates the "united front", the organic expression of proletarian unity outside and beyond the parties, indispensable for the struggle and victory, a natural and free arena for the confrontation of opposing political currents, within which our party will play its leading role as the guide of the majority of the proletariat, because it is its faithful interpreter, because it represents its fundamental interests and because, above all,

it has proved itself to be its sole and reliable guide in the revolutionary struggle.

VI. THE UNION QUESTION

At present, the union question does not exist, and the remnants of the old union organisations surviving in clandestinity have proved to serve more as instruments of political agitation connected with the war than as genuine organs of the workers' struggle.

The revival of the union movement, that will follow the end of the war, will bear the imprint of its political vicissitudes and will see the traditional Social-Democratic domination of the unions greatly strengthened and its bureaucracy becoming still more authoritarian. Despite these prospects our party will raise as soon as circumstances permit the problem of the unified reorganisation of the workers' movement, it will reconstitute the network of its union fractions from the communist factory group (composed of communists and workers without a party) up to the national communist Union committee: and if it deems this necessary it will take the initiative in forming a "Front of the Union Left" to overthrow the leadership of the Confederation of Labour.

Meanwhile, the party will concentrate its attention and activity on establishing systematic links with the factories with the aim not only of building an internal apparatus, but also creating a network capable of directing the movement of the broad masses.

VII. WORK AMONG THE PEASANTRY

This war, like the previous one, and certainly on a far greater scale, must have deepened among the peasants their detachment from the world of age-old traditions, of economic and political subjection and it must have acted as a demolishing pickaxe on the one hand against the obsolete and narrow forms of agricultural cultivation and on the other against the domination of the parasitic cliques of agrarian slavery. The separation between the rural and urban populations has gone diminishing and many misunderstandings as well as more than one difference have disappeared; both have been brought closer together and almost united by the physical sufferings and the moral and political constraints violently imposed by a ruthless dictatorship and a ferocious war.

If the peasant who thinks slowly, but with clear and profound logic, has come, after so many experiences, to perceive the bond of shared responsibility linking the owner of the land he cultivates

with the political forces that wanted this war of extermination, then a great step will have been taken towards the revolution.

Our countryside, which the war was supposed to transform by driving it, as it has done to some extent, towards higher levels of economic development, in the fifth year of the war finds itself alarmingly depleted of manpower and reserves as a result of the systematic plunder carried out by belligerents, both enemy and allied, caught between the fleeting allure of the black market and monetary depreciation, which nullifies its sacrifices and subjected to the oppressive burden of the State's monopolistic and predatory intervention. We do not doubt that these developments have fostered among the peasant masses aversion and hatred against an economic and political regime which experience has shown to be both irrational and criminal.

The post-war period therefore holds rich revolutionary possibilities in this sphere as well, a sphere in which the industrial proletariat had until yesterday encountered stubborn and tenacious opposition to the common struggle for emancipation. Our party has always recognised the role that the peasantry, especially the poor peasantry, is destined to play in the Italian revolution, and from this very moment places the peasant question on the agenda, making its own the programme adopted at the Second Congress of the Italian Communist Party – a programme that remains fully alive and relevant both as a tactical orientation in the phase preceding the conquest of power and as a concrete and constructive guide during the first difficult phase of the realisation of a socialist economy.

From a practical standpoint, the party relies upon the reorganisation of the unions of agricultural labourers and of the leagues of sharecroppers and small tenant farmers; and, for the small proprietors upon the organisation of an association for the defence of their economic interests.

Central Committee of the Internationalist Communist Party

September 1944

Presented by the Central Committee in November of that year.

From a brochure published by the Internationalist Communist Party, 1945.

Correspondence with a Comrade

ABOUT THE “MANIFESTO”

The work on our “Manifesto” marked an important step in the group’s political self-definition and, as we had expected, provoked a lively response among comrades. We have always been convinced that Marxism is not a rigid dogma, but a guide to action, requiring the constant verification of theory through living practice and open, uncompromising discussion among comrades. It is precisely for this reason that we are launching a new column, “Correspondence with a Comrade”, in which we will publish our replies to readers’ questions, criticisms, and comments. In the first instalment of this column, we address the most important theoretical questions raised in the responses to the “Manifesto”: the dialectic of the destruction of the bourgeois state and the withering away of the proletarian semi-state; the falsity of the metaphysical opposition between economic and political struggle; the historical assessment of Stalinism as a consummated bourgeois counter-revolution and of Trotskyism as a tendency that failed to overcome centrism; as well as the material roots of the contemporary proletariat’s passivity in the imperialist metropolises. This polemic is not an academic exercise, but our necessary contribution to the work of preparing the ideological and political foundations of the future world communist party.

Our "Manifesto" has not gone without response. No sooner had we circulated it among our supporters for discussion than we began receiving letters with comments and questions.

This fact alone indicates that the spectre of communism is stirring in the depths of our class, that there exists a need for the theoretical comprehension of the history and present condition of class struggle, as well as a desire to define the tasks of the proletarian vanguard. It is precisely for this reason that, from the very first issue of our journal, we are opening a column titled "Correspondence with a Comrade", in which we intend to conduct a dialogue both with proletarian revolutionary organisations and with individual comrades of our class.

One comrade writes: *«To begin with, I should note the clarity of your position on certain issues (your view of the condition of the working class, your attitude towards Trotskyism, Stalinism, and other tendencies, the development of international relations, the development of class struggle, and so forth). This is, in general, what one expects from a manifesto as such, but from my own experience I can say that far from everyone considers it necessary to state such positions openly (whether because they do not dare to, or for some other reason, I do not know)».*

In another comrade's letter we read: *«You derive your continuity directly from the "Manifesto of the Communist Party". But it was written more than 150 years ago. Has there really been no development of communist theory during all that time? Should those entire 150 years simply be discarded and forgotten? That is precisely the conclusion suggested by the first paragraph. I think it would be necessary at least briefly to mention the main milestones in the development of Marxism after Marx, as well as its further development by Marx himself. The "Manifesto" is only the first stage, the foundation for subsequent theoretical development. It is essential to mention both "Capital" and Lenin's "Imperialism..."».*

Of course, in the 150 years since the publication of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party", Marxist theory has developed, and we are not calling for this entire development to be «discarded and forgotten» – no such conclusion follows from our text. We merely wish to show that: 1) the ultimate aims proclaimed in the "Manifesto" by the communist and workers' movements are *more relevant* to our epoch than they were to the epoch of its authors; 2) it is precisely our group that upholds these aims. Nothing else is required in this necessarily brief introduction to a *programmatic* document. Moreover, Marx's "Capital" and Lenin's "Imperialism..." are not *programmatic* documents with which our own *programmatic* document must establish continuity. They are, unquestionably, milestones in the development of Marxist theory and of science in general, fundamental works of the highest importance, whose analysis we share. However, this analysis is economic in character – that is, it helps to draw and substantiate political and programmatic conclusions, but does not in itself contain formulations of strategic aims.



Both comrades touched upon the question of the relationship between Marxism and the state.

The first writes: *«We have repeatedly said, referring to “The State and Revolution”, that, unlike anarchists, we hold that the state must wither away, not that it must be destroyed; accordingly, the task consists in abolishing the conditions which make the state necessary, rather than the state itself».*

The second comrade argues:

«From the fact that “the modern state corresponds to modern private property”, it does not at all follow that the abolition of private property requires the abolition of the state. Moreover, if we proceed from Marx and Engels, the relationship is the reverse. Private property arose prior to the state and constituted a necessary condition for its emergence. Hence, the state, as a phenomenon, cannot be abolished without abolishing private property and the division of labour. If by this you mean not the state in general, but the bourgeois state, then this should be stated more clearly. Namely, that the first step towards the abolition of private property (and the division of labour) is the destruction of the bourgeois state and its replacement by a proletarian, withering-away semi-state».

That is correct: our “Manifesto” refers specifically to the destruction of the *modern* state, that is, the *bourgeois* state. This is clear from the context. In the second sentence, the adjective “modern” is omitted in relation to private property and the state purely for stylistic reasons, so as not to overload the text, since the previous sentence already makes clear precisely which private property and state are being discussed.

Thus, within the context, it is easy to trace the following logical chain: “the aim of the communists is the abolition of private property” & “modern private property corresponds to the modern state” => “from the communist standpoint, the abolition of modern private property requires / presupposes / entails the destruction of the modern state”.

At the same time, this is not a question of *abstract* “destruction”. As Marx wrote in “*Critique of the Gotha Programme*”, between capitalist and communist society lies a period of revolutionary transformation of the former into the latter, to which there corresponds also *«a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat»*.¹ The bourgeois state machine cannot simply be taken over in its ready-made form or abolished in the abstract – it must be smashed, broken to pieces, and replaced by a proletarian *semi-state*, which will begin to wither away as class antagonisms disappear.

1 - K. Marx. Critique of the Gotha Programme // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch04.htm>

The same comrade writes: *«I think that the slogan “Communism or barbarism” would be better replaced with “Communism or death”, since the present condition of capitalism threatens not only the existence of civilisation, but the very existence of humanity itself».*

We used the formula “Communism or barbarism” for several reasons:

1) as a reference to the tradition of the revolutionary wing of Marxism represented by Rosa Luxemburg, who, in her work *“The Crisis of German Social Democracy”* (also known as the *Junius Pamphlet*), popularised a statement by Engels, who, according to her, formulated the dilemma facing humanity as follows:

*«Friedrich Engels once said: “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism”».*²

Naturally, instead of the term “socialism” we used “communism”, since, unlike in the time of Engels and Luxemburg, in our epoch these currents have become definitively separated and hostile to one another.

2) it seems to us that there are no grounds for replacing “barbarism” with “death”, since “death” is merely a hypothetical and, moreover, extremely unlikely scenario (given the “flexibility” of capitalism and the absence of any objective *interest* on the part of the bourgeois ruling class in the destruction of humanity), whereas “barbarism” is something we can already observe directly before us now. At the same time, we cannot in any way exclude the possibility that humanity may be destroyed in imperialist wars *contrary* to the will of the bourgeoisie.

And once again we quote from the same comrade’s letter:

«The quotation from Marx on the necessity of genuine communist action is very well chosen. Yes, this practical movement must be led by a world communist party. Yes, such a party does not presently exist. But the creation of such a party is not the organisation’s immediate practical task. In this, you are drifting towards idealism. Parties are not created through the will (whim, desire) of individual subjects. Their emergence requires a whole series of objective and subjective conditions».

We are in complete agreement. Moreover, in the “Manifesto” we emphasise that *«we view our activity as **part** of the practical movement towards communism, as a **struggle** for the creation of this [world communist] party, and our **Manifesto** as only **one of** the necessary **steps** along this path».*

In other words, we are speaking of the process of creating this party, a process in which we are already participating alongside other representatives of the proletarian vanguard. The tempo of this process is directly connected with objective conditions, and its maturation does not depend upon our subjective will. We are principled opponents of all manifestations of voluntarism.

2- R. Luxemburg. The Junius Pamphlet // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1915/junius/ch01.htm>

The comrade asserts: *«The paragraph on the demarcation from economic and “workerist” tendencies is not clearly formulated».*

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We considered that, in a programmatic document, there is no need to explain the meaning of economic and workerist tendencies; it is sufficient simply to declare that we do not belong to them, and *this* has been stated clearly and unambiguously.

Let us continue quoting the same comrade:

«Yes, class struggle is always, in its content, a political struggle, even in those cases where it takes economic forms. Therefore, the formal separation of economic and political struggle only confuses the question; it is necessary clearly to distinguish form and content, without conflating them. The task of communists is not to oppose the economic form of class struggle to its political content (this is not only foolish, but impossible), but to constantly demonstrate that the economic form is the embryonic form of class struggle, which must be developed into its highest political, that is, revolutionary, form».

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We cannot agree that:

1) *«class struggle is always, in its content, a political struggle».*

Class struggle may begin in an economic form and may even possess an economic content. This can continue for years and decades. Moreover, not every political class struggle constitutes a revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against capitalism.

In stating this, we categorically reject the metaphysical, non-dialectical separation of economic and political struggle. As Marx pointed out in his letter to F. Bolte (1871):

*«[...] every movement in which the working class comes out as a class against the ruling classes and attempts to force them by pressure from without is a political movement. [...] out of the separate economic movements of the workers there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a movement of the class, with the object of achieving its interests in a general form, in a form possessing a general social force of compulsion. If these movements presuppose a certain degree of previous organisation, they are themselves equally a means of the development of this organisation».*³

Indeed, every major economic strike inevitably brings workers into confrontation with the bourgeois state apparatus – the police, the courts, the laws – and thereby objectively acquires a political character. To sever economics from politics and to assert that economic struggle cannot develop into political struggle means falling into precisely that opportunist “econo-

³ - K. Marx. Letter to Friedrich Bolte In New York // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_11_23.htm

mism” which Lenin mercilessly combated in *“What Is To Be Done?”*. The task of the vanguard is not to deny the political potential of economic struggle, but, through participation in it, to transform the sparks of discontent with economic conditions into the flame of conscious revolutionary struggle against the rule of capital.

But we can agree that:

2) *«the formal separation of economic and political struggle only confuses the question».*

We therefore maintain that this separation should not be formal, that is, metaphysical, but concrete, that is, dialectical. The former can develop into the latter, but this is impossible without the intervention of the proletarian vanguard – the materialised consciousness of our class. And this intervention is itself impossible without the third form of class struggle already identified by Engels. We think the reader understands that we are referring to theoretical struggle, which for us is presently the most urgent form of struggle.

Lenin wrote of this in *“What Is To Be Done?”*:

*«Engels recognizes, not two forms of the great struggle of Social Democracy (political and economic), as is the fashion among us, but three, placing the theoretical struggle on a par with the first two».*⁴

We cannot agree with the assertion that:

3) *«the task of communists is not to oppose the economic form of class struggle to its political content (this is not only foolish, but impossible)».*

The economic form of struggle cannot, by definition, possess a political content; otherwise, it would be termed political. Political content corresponds to the political form of struggle, while economic content corresponds to the economic form. In many cases – if not in the overwhelming majority – economic demands (higher wages, a shorter working day, improved working conditions, and so forth) may have no connection whatsoever with political questions.

This comrade writes:

4) *«the economic form is the embryonic form of class struggle, which must be developed into its highest political, that is, revolutionary, form».*

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“ This is true, but it requires clarification. Not every instance of economic struggle can, even *in principle*, develop into political struggle. Moreover, political and revolutionary forms of struggle are by no means synonymous. The political form itself may remain *primitive* and stand very far from its highest form – the revolutionary one. In such cases, workers not only fail to oppose “their own” bourgeoisie and state, but are even loyal to them and appeal to their laws, “values”, and even symbolism, without understanding whose interests those very laws, “values”, and symbols serve (e. g. Russia in the 1990s and 2010s).

⁴ - V. Lenin. What Is To Be Done? // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/i.htm>

Is political struggle the highest form of class struggle? Undoubtedly, yes. Does this mean that every class struggle can develop into a political, and still more into a revolutionary, struggle? Undoubtedly not. Different forms may simply *co-exist* alongside one another (chronologically and/or geographically), *without developing* or exerting any influence upon one another.

At the same time, only through the introduction of communist consciousness by the vanguard of the class into the proletariat's class struggle can political struggle gain the possibility of developing into revolutionary struggle. Otherwise, even upon reaching the political level, class struggle will continue to revolve within the orbit of the interests of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie.

On this question, Lenin, in the pamphlet "*What Is To Be Done?*", quotes K. Kautsky at length, who, at the time, was still a Marxist:

«[...] *socialist consciousness appears to be a **necessary and direct** result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is **absolutely untrue**. Of course, socialism, as a doctrine, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and, like the latter, emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise **side by side and not one out of the other**; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia [...]: it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without [von Aussen Hineingetragenes] and not something that arose within it spontaneously [urwüchsig]. Accordingly, the old Hainfeld programme quite rightly stated that the **task of Social-Democracy is to imbue the proletariat (literally: saturate the proletariat) with the consciousness of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle**».⁵*

In quoting this passage, we understand that an inevitable discussion with supporters of various workerist and spontaneist currents lies ahead of us. Let us address this in advance.

First of all, in order to properly understand the Leninist idea cited above, it must be placed within the context of the *concrete historical conditions* of that time, when the tendency of the "Economists" was widespread among Russian workers. These "Economists" believed that the proletariat should confine itself to economic struggle, leaving political struggle to the liberals. There were also those who believed that the development of the workers' movement would itself *spontaneously* contribute to the growth of the proletariat's political class consciousness. Lenin, however, in his struggle against these tendencies, pointed to the tasks of the proletarian party within this specific historical context: to de-

⁵ - V. Lenin. *What Is To Be Done?* // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/ii.htm>

velop the political consciousness of the proletariat, to lead it beyond the narrow limits of struggle against the bourgeoisie within the factory, to explain that the bourgeoisie is not unified but divided into factions struggling amongst themselves, and that in the conditions of Russia at that time there also existed a feudal landowning aristocracy, as well as broad petty-bourgeois strata. All of these possessed their own particular interests, which might coincide, but would never become common or unified; the proletariat had to understand this and make use of it in its struggle.

Thus, from Lenin’s point of view, “introducing consciousness from without” meant bringing it *from beyond* the confines of the factory, beyond the confines of the relationship between factory owner and wage labourer; it meant opening the worker’s eyes to the full breadth of social life, its diversity and contradictions, and thereby contributing to the transformation of the proletariat from a “class in itself” into a “class for itself” – into a class consciously struggling against private property.

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Regarding the section “Method”, the comrade writes:
«It would seem that this section should be based upon Lenin’s “Three Sources...”. That is, it should proceed from the primacy of philosophy and political economy, through which socialism was transformed from utopia into science».

We considered that here, as in many other instances, it is sufficient simply to declare our adherence to the Marxist school in order to, from the outset, demarcate ourselves from other socialist currents. In a programmatic document, it would probably be out of place to set out in detail the advantages of Marxism over other currents of revolutionary thought. Such an exposition would inevitably be superficial and therefore unconvincing.

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Another comrade draws attention to yet another idea from our *“Manifesto”*: *«we know with certainty that theories which predict the “automatic” collapse of capitalism or point to its specific “objective” limits are unscientific».*

And comments: *«The fact that emphasis is placed on this, once again, gives a fairly clear idea of the position, but perhaps this point should be elaborated in greater detail: why exactly “we know with certainty” this. Whether this ought to be done in the Manifesto – I do not know; after all, it is fundamentally a thesis-like document».*

Yes, in the “Manifesto” we merely stated our positions in a thesis-like form. In future publications we shall return to this question.

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The idea from the “*Manifesto*” that, in catastrophic crises of overproduction, the productive forces are increasingly destroyed prompted this same comrade to write: *«If we look at the twentieth century, there is no obvious tendency towards an increase in the frequency of crises of overproduction, and I would by no means describe all of them as catastrophic... And in the twenty-first century, they have so far occurred rather rarely in comparison with the twentieth. It feels as though something different from what I have in mind is being referred to».*

What we mean here is that, in our epoch of developed, that is, monopolistic capitalism, with productive forces incomparably greater than those of its earlier stages, such crises have become far more frequent and extensive than in the epoch of its “youth”. Moreover, the bourgeois media generally do not analyse them as such. Not to mention that, in certain sectors – for example, the textile industry or the property sector – they have become *permanent*, something that did not exist in the epoch of early capitalism. In the twenty-first century, we have witnessed characteristic examples of such crises, lasting for years: during the “Great Recession” of the 2000s, when homes in the United States stood empty while hundreds of thousands remained homeless; and at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when pharmaceutical companies destroyed millions of coronavirus tests after demand for them sharply declined, instead of distributing them or storing them until demand recovered. Were these crises “catastrophic”? Not in the sense of being fatal to the capitalist system, but in the sense of being monstrous in terms of the scale of human losses suffered by our class – in the form of deaths, ruined health, shattered lives, broken families, and so forth – as well as losses to humanity’s productive forces. We believe that they were.

Let us cite a passage from the “*Manifesto*”:

«This unprecedented revolutionary wave was subsequently swept away by a counter-revolution of colossal force. During the 1920s and 1930s, Stalinism...»

And the comrade’s subsequent comment:

«Here (and not only here, though I shall confine myself to this quotation), Stalinism is described as a counter-revolution. This, in my view, is one of the cornerstones of our position, and therefore, it seems to me, some clarification should be given as to why this is so. Usually, these words are immediately followed by accusations of Trotskyism. Further on in the text, the attitude towards Trotsky is explained (which is entirely correct), but I fear that, firstly, some potential readers may simply decide not to continue reading the Manifesto, and secondly, that it is not sufficiently concrete on the question of its attitude towards Stalinism».

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Nevertheless, we believe that, in a programmatic document, it is sufficient merely to declare one's positions. All the more so given that this topic is indeed extremely important and will be addressed repeatedly in our future publications. As for the point that «*some potential readers may simply decide not to continue reading the Manifesto*», that may well be the case, but such "costs" are possible in relation to any document, or even literary text.

Another quotation from the "*Manifesto*":

«for the first time, it constituted the working class as an active subject of international relations».

The comrade comments: **«Can those who directly participated in international relations truly be called the working class, rather than its representatives or the expression of its will? »**

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This point brings us back to the discussion on the relationship between class and party, and between the party and its leaders, which our school conducted with other revolutionary currents. We shall no doubt return to it in future materials, but here we shall merely note that when we speak of the subjects of international relations, we do not mean concrete individuals. Even from the standpoint of the more adequate bourgeois schools, the subjects of international relations are not individuals but *states*, and Marxism agrees with this, though it considers this *insufficient*. Marxism goes further and poses the question: which *class* rules the state? It arrives at the conclusion that the real subjects of international relations are the *ruling classes*, which use their *states* (and other organised forces) to project their interests. Therefore, from the standpoint of Marxism, it is entirely correct to say that if the working class becomes the ruling class, then it also becomes a subject of international relations.

The comrade writes: **«I would say a subject of geopolitics rather than of international relations».**

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We deliberately avoid using the term "geopolitics", unlike, for example, *Lotta Comunista*, because we are well aware that this term denotes an *anti-scientific* approach to describing relations between nations and states, based upon a vulgar-materialist conception of the decisive role of physical and geographical conditions in the life of human society, in some cases supplemented by biologising concepts such as racism, Social Darwinism, and Malthusianism.

Another quote from the "*Manifesto*":

«The counter-revolutionary wave and the subsequent decades of bourgeois rule gave rise not only to the monsters of capitalist reaction, but also to many more or less influential ideologies of false socialism – Stalinism,

Maoism, Castroism and Guevarism, Juche, Chavism, etc. All of them were born in their time as bourgeois ideologies of “catch-up development”, designed to accompany the centralisation and acceleration of capitalist development in the respective backward countries».

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A comrade’s comment: *«Centralization and the acceleration of capitalist development create objective conditions for class struggle; such movements in the Third World were viewed positively in “Unitary Imperialism”. And although I must admit I view LC’s optimism on this point with considerable scepticism (since history had already made it clear by then that this more often than not suffocates the proletariat’s struggle), this stance still aligns with Marxism. The difference is that these ideologies transformed from national-liberationist into national-serfdom ideologies. The essence of the quoted passage is certainly clear, but it seems to me that it may lend itself to ambiguous interpretation».*

In this instance, the issue is not whether we “endorse” these historical movements and ideologies, but rather that we: 1) distance ourselves from their contemporary adherents, who not only serve the interests of various bourgeois factions but also discredit Marxism and communism; and 2) clarify the place assigned to them by the Marxist school, in contrast to the approach taken by various pseudo-communists.

It was no accident that our Manifesto extensively cited key theses from Lenin’s speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern, as they provide the key to approaching this problem as a whole, including in these specific cases.

Regarding the movements of fake socialism, it can be stated that they not only expressed imperialist interests from the outset (Stalinism) or aligned themselves with one of the imperialist blocs – specifically, the USSR bloc (as all the others did; Maoism later shifted its orientation and aligned with the US) – but some of them waged a direct struggle to destroy the Marxist movement and succeeded in achieving this goal (Stalinism, Maoism).

Certainly, some of these movements and their corresponding ideologies may have partially fulfilled a national-revolutionary role. However, this was far from their defining characteristic, nor was it sufficient grounds for Marxists to “welcome” them. For instance, Stalinism, which emerged in Russia – a country that cannot be classified as part of the “Third World” – played a somewhat national-revolutionary role in the backward countries of Central Asia under its control. Yet this is incomparable to the colossal damage it inflicted on the working class on a global scale.

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Another quotation from the "*Manifesto*":

«The most famous of these movements is Trotskyism, which currently does not even have a unified theory and has degenerated to the level of petty-bourgeois ideologies».

The comrade comments: *«As I said above, the fact that a position on Trotskyism is openly stated is important, but a contradiction seems to have crept in here. First, Trotskyism is described as a current, then it is said that this current lacks a unified theory and, consequently, is not internally coherent. Finally, it is stated that Trotskyism as a current has degenerated. I do not dispute the fact itself, but if Trotskyism lacks a unified theory, can one really speak of it as a single current rather than several? And which of them have degenerated? In general, I never cease to be surprised by how many different kinds of people call themselves Trotskyists. At times, I cannot understand what connection with Trotsky they have at all».*

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We examine this question from a historical perspective, in its development, while understanding that *any* current within society can be regarded as unified only *relatively*, only up to a certain point. Initially, Trotskyism can indeed be considered a conditionally unified current, arising on the basis of Trotsky's ideas in Russia and subsequently in several other countries, and at first relying upon cadres grouped around Trotsky himself. Over time, this conditional unity disintegrated. Nevertheless, it seems to us that all these currents may still be considered Trotskyist on the basis of their continuity with original Trotskyism – if not organisational, then at least ideological continuity. This continuity is expressed in the acceptance of: 1) the concept of the degenerated workers' state; 2) Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution; and 3) certain historical interpretations advanced by Trotsky concerning the history of the Party, the Russian Revolution, and the counter-revolution.

Another comrade writes: *«I fundamentally disagree with singling out Trotsky; in essence, he never moved beyond the framework of Stalinism».*

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We maintain, however, that Trotsky did in fact move beyond the framework of Stalinism. The fundamental principles of Stalinism, which distinguish it and upon which its entire edifice literally rests – without which it would completely collapse – are the assertions that: 1) by the 1930s socialism had, mostly, already been built in the USSR, both in the economy and in the political superstructure; and 2) in the subsequent years (at least until Stalin's death) the USSR moved ever closer to socialism, both economically and politically.

Trotsky did not share this conception. He held that: 1) *«the Soviet Union is as yet far from having attained the first stage of socialism»* economically, let alone in the political superstructure, upon which his criticism was to a large extent concentrated; and that it would be truer *«to name the present Soviet regime*

in all its contradictoriness, not a socialist regime, but a preparatory regime transitional from capitalism to socialism»; 2) under the leadership then governing the USSR, the country was moving in the opposite direction, *further away from socialism*, although the final outcome of this process had not yet been decided.

He wrote:

*«It is impossible at present to answer finally and irrevocably the question in what direction the economic contradictions and social antagonisms of Soviet society will develop in the course of the next three, five or 10 years. The outcome depends upon a struggle of living social forces – not on a national scale, either, but on an international scale».*⁶

His theory of the degenerated workers’ state, most fully elaborated in *“The Revolution Betrayed”* (from which the cited quotations are taken), although far removed from Marxism, scientificity, and theoretical rigour, nevertheless cannot be classified as one of the Stalinist theories. There are even theories which criticise Stalin personally (for particular mistakes, “excesses”, voluntarism, the excessive use of violence, especially against communists, and so forth), while remaining Stalinist in essence. Trotsky’s theory does not belong even to this category, since: a) it addresses far more fundamental questions and only to a small extent concerns itself with the qualities of individual personalities; b) it shares none of the fundamental principles of Stalinism described above.

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The same comrade writes:

«In the current period, no concrete tasks for communists are indicated. It is clear that “there is certainly no reason to expect a spontaneous class struggle among wage workers in the developed imperialist metropolises in the foreseeable future”, that “primitive accumulation of capital” and agrarian revolutions have come to an end, and that national-liberation and anti-colonial movements belong to the past. But what, concretely, is to be done under these conditions? Fight for the abolition of private property? Excellent. But how? »

We do not yet have a definitive answer to this question, and in the *“Manifesto”* we acknowledge that, for us, the problem lies precisely in how this process will develop.

But to the question *«What Is To Be Done?»* we respond with a categorical rejection of passive contemplation and academic waiting. Marx’s famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach states: *«Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it»*⁷. We have no right merely to “closely observe” the class while waiting for conditions to mature. Lenin called such a position “tailism”, trailing in the rear-guard of the spontaneous movement. The task of communists, as Lenin

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6 - L. Trotsky. *The Revolution Betrayed*; Chapter 3 // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/ch03.htm>

7 - K. Marx. *Theses On Feuerbach* // Marxists Internet Archive. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/>

wrote in the article “*Where To Begin?*”, is the immediate transition to practical organisation: the creation of an all-Russian (in our case, international) political newspaper – a collective propagandist, agitator, and organiser. This organ must penetrate every spontaneous outbreak of workers’ struggle, inseparably linking theoretical work with the practical leadership of the struggle of the masses already today, while preparing cadres for the future struggle for a classless society.

Another quotation from the “*Manifesto*”:

«Compared with the capitalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the contemporary working class exhibits a far more complex internal stratification... This is precisely why there is no mass labour movement and why the revolutionary minority is extremely weak in the centres of imperialist development».

The comrade comments:

«I think that such stratification and the relative expansion of the inter-class stratum are not in themselves the cause of the weakness of the working class: people with multiple sources of income, although occupying a less vulnerable position, are usually more sensitive to political and economic turbulence and therefore relate to it more consciously, while on the whole continuing to share the interests of the working class.»

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The words «*this is precisely why*» refer to the entire complex of factors listed in the preceding paragraph, and not solely to the more complex stratification of contemporary society. Otherwise, we have no objections. Indeed, the degree of sensitivity to political and economic turbulence does not directly correlate with income level or material position. History knows examples of representatives of the bourgeoisie who passed over to the side of the proletariat. The role of the upper strata of the wage-working class in the revolutionary movement is likewise well known. We are far removed from the position of those who consider it necessary to place their hopes in the most backward and pauperised strata of society.

In pointing to the increasing complexity of the stratification of wage workers in the centres of imperialism, we must not slide into bourgeois-sociological justifications for the decline of class struggle through abstract references to the existence of “multiple sources of income”. The true material basis of opportunism and passivity in the metropolitan countries was brilliantly exposed by Lenin in “*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*”. By extracting monopoly superprofits, the imperialist bourgeoisie possesses the economic means to bribe the upper stratum of “its own” working class, thereby creating a bourgeoisified “labour aristocracy”. This privileged stratum constitutes the principal social base of reformism and the agency of the bourgeoisie within the workers’ movement. Without a ruthless break with this opportunist stratum and the exposure of its betrayal, there can be no question of the formation of revolutionary consciousness in the imperialist centres.

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“Communist Prometheus” is a group of revolutionary Marxists. We see our activity as part of the worldwide movement of the working class aimed at overcoming capitalism. Our programme rests on the core principles of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. We proceed from the conviction that communism is neither a utopian dream nor an abstract ideal, but a historical necessity emerging from the very development of modern society itself.

We are convinced that capitalism has already exhausted its historical mission. It created the world market and unleashed immense productive forces while deepening its contradictions on a global scale – from recurring economic crises to imperialist wars. The contemporary era presents humanity with two alternatives: either the preservation of a system that generates exploitation, inequality and destruction, or its revolutionary overthrow. The choice is clear – **communism or barbarism**.

We uphold a fundamental principle of Marxism: the **emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself**. Neither reforms, nor a mere change in the ruling groups, nor the expansion of the “welfare state” can abolish the foundations of exploitation. The abolition of private property and commodity production cannot be substituted by nationalisations, state regulation, or the search for a “third way” between capitalism and communism. Society either remains within the confines of capital, or it advances toward a direct social organisation of labour.

We reject all forms of so-called “real socialism”, since they preserved commodity production, wage labour, money and the state apparatus – in other words, the very foundations of the capitalist mode of production. Stalinism, Maoism and similar ideologies were merely variants of state-directed capital accumulation, accompanying the accelerated modernisation of backward countries rather than any sort of transition to communism. By replacing the abolition of private property with its nationalisation, they disoriented the working class and discredited the very idea of socialism.

The modern working class constitutes the majority of society, yet it lacks political autonomy, since the dominant ideas remain those of the bourgeoisie. Through the media, education, culture and the routines of everyday life, capitalism reproduces itself as a “natural” and inevitable order, fostering among wage workers illusions of national unity, social partnership and individual success. It is therefore necessary to help transform spontaneous discontent into a conscious class position directed against the capitalist mode of production itself. We must take part in every manifestation of the struggle of wage workers, generalise their experience, and connect particular conflicts to the broader revolutionary perspective.

Currently there is no world communist party. We do not regard ourselves as such, nor do we claim to be its sole nucleus. Our task is to contribute to its formation as the political organisation of the world proletariat. At the same time, the party must never substitute itself for the class: it must grow together with it, synthesise its experience, link dispersed forms of struggle and give them conscious direction. Emancipation is possible only as the collective action of the working class itself; the party merely lends this action a more organised and coherent form, without separating itself from the historical movement of which it is part.

Capitalism inevitably breeds wars. Competition between capitals and states, the struggle for markets and resources, these are not accidental distortions but the very logic of the system. In the present era, the overwhelming majority of inter-state conflicts are imperialist in character, regardless of the slogans invoked to legitimise them.

In the face of the wars of modern imperialism, communists do not choose the “lesser evil” and do not side with any of the warring bourgeois camps. Whatever the immediate pretext, and regardless of who fired the first shot, each side defends the interests of capital – markets, profits and spheres of influence. Our position is therefore **revolutionary defeatism**: to turn the imperialist war into a struggle against our “own” ruling class. For this reason, we remain faithful to the slogan of the German Spartacists: **“The main enemy is at home.”** The worker’s real adversary is not on the other side of the front line, but in his own capital, embodied in his own state and his own government.

We are living in a period in which the conditions for future social upheavals are steadily maturing. Despite the present weakness of the revolutionary movement in the world’s centres of capital, the objective contradictions of the system continue to intensify. This situation calls not for sectarian withdrawal, but for persistent and patient work: the dissemination of Marxist theory, active participation in real struggles, and the formation of cadres capable of uniting revolutionary theory with revolutionary practice.

Genuine emancipation can only take the form of a collective act of the world class of wage workers. After capitalism, there will be neither exploiters nor exploited – only a free association of human beings consciously organising production and social life in accordance with common needs.