

MARXIST REVIVAL

TOWARDS 21ST CENTURY MARXISM

**CAPITALISM ISN'T
WORKING**



ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

Marxist Revival 2. Summer 2014

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This journal

IRMT and AWL, Summer 2014

This is no.2 of Marxist Revival magazine. We invite other groups to submit contributions to no.3, and to consider becoming part of the project.

In no.1 of Marxist Revival we explained our case for internal democracy as a precondition for building a revolutionary organisation; shared debates between AWL and IRMT on the Stalinist states, on Israel-Palestine, and on other questions; published an important case-study on the recent development of capitalism and the working class in Turkey; and reported on discussions among revolutionary Marxists in Australia.

In no.2 we discuss how world capitalism has changed since the days of Trotsky, Gramsci, Lenin, and Luxemburg, and what "imperialism" and "anti-imperialism" mean today; and carry articles in which our activists reflect on recent practical activities in the class struggle.

In later issues we plan to continue these debates, and open up many others.

We have started Marxist Revival as an international discussion journal of revolutionary Marxists — that is, of activists who learn from the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and their comrades, and who recognise that the many changes in the world since Trotsky's death in 1940 can be dealt with only by new discussion and analysis, not just by invoking old texts.

Marxist Revival is an open forum for all activists in that

broad tradition. It is not just an open forum. The two organisations which produced no.1 of the magazine, the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, have their own ideas, close on many issues but not identical: we will promote the ideas we have in common, debate the issues on which we disagree, and work to draw other groups with a similar approach into the production of the journal. But Marxist Revival will be open for disputations, polemics, and divergent views: we are inviting both groups and individual activists who disagree with IRMT and AWL, yet are interested in international discussion among revolutionary Marxists, to become involved in practical activities and theoretical discussions.

There are almost no other such journals of international Marxist discussion. Arguably today, in the era of the internet, mass air travel, and English as a global lingua franca, activist Marxist debates are more separated off into national units than they were a hundred years ago, when the technical difficulties were a hundred times greater.

Whether we win or lose the coming struggles will depend on ideas, policies, and organisation. Let us raise our eyes outside our national confines, and discuss and organise with an urgency appropriate to the times.

We were at the Labourstart conference in Berlin on 23-25 May and at the Lutte Ouvriere fete near Paris on 7-9 June. We held a Marxist Revival seminar in Köln in November 2013, and will hold another in Hamburg on 11-12 July 2014. We will be at other international left and labour movement events over the year. We invite your group to join us in Hamburg or at another event to discuss no.3 of the magazine, and continuing cooperation.

Battle on the London Underground

Ira Berkovic, AWL, June 2014

In November 2013, London Underground management announced a radical programme of cuts and closures across the Tube network. Catalysed by a 12.5% cut in central government funding to LU's parent company, Transport for London, the plans involved the closure of every ticket office on the entire network, a massive reduction in staffing levels (of nearly 1,000 jobs), and a pay cut of between £6,000 and £12,000 for workers redeployed to lower-paid grades under the new staffing model.

The RMT, the majority union on London Underground and the union in which Workers' Liberty members who work on the Tube are active, immediately went into dispute with the company and began balloting for strikes. Taking the initiative in industrial campaigns, and calling disputes early, is something Workers' Liberty Tube workers have consistently argued for within RMT. Two-day strikes were called for February 2014, a departure from a previous culture of calling series of one-day strikes.

Workers' Liberty members, along with others, have long argued for such a departure, arguing that management can easily ride out one-day strikes. We have also consistently argued for strikes to be called as part of ongoing programmes of industrial action, which also include creative actions-short-of-strikes. The February strikes were announced alongside an overtime ban, and an innovative "revenue action", where station staff would open ticket barriers at certain times during the day, hitting LU's profits without inconveniencing passengers.

Since February, there have been four days of strikes (two in February and two in April), which have won some concessions from management. Although the cuts proposals remain live, bosses have now committed that, whatever happens, no worker will lose salary, and have climbed down from plans for unsupervised stations.

Workers' Liberty members in RMT have also been integral to the "Hands Off London Transport" (HOLT) campaign, a coalition involving trade unions, disabled activists, passenger advocacy groups, student unionists, and others. We argued that the dispute should not be seen as merely industrial, but rather as a political fight for the future of public transport in London. HOLT has organised public rallies, demonstrations, and leafleting against cuts at local Tube stations.

Within both the political and industrial campaigns, Workers' Liberty members have sought to foreground issues of liberation and equality. We have helped produce materials that look at the specific impact of LU's proposed cuts on women, black, LGBT, and disabled workers and passengers. Equality issues have been a much greater focus for the RMT in this dispute, in part as a result of our arguments down the years. Workers' Liberty members play leading roles in the Women's and LGBT Advisory Committees of the RMT, and our emphasis on liberation and equality issues in this dispute is part of our revolutionary socialist-feminism that sees liberation struggles and class

struggle as intrinsically intertwined.

Workers' Liberty members who work on London Underground work with other socialists and rank-and-file militants to produce the bulletin *Tubeworker*, which began publication in 1991 and is (we believe!) the longest-running consistently-produced socialist workplace bulletin in British labour-movement history. The bulletin is produced monthly, and put together at open editorial meetings. *Tubeworker* has consistently argued for some basic principles in all disputes, including:

- Disputes to be run by strike committees of the workers involved.
- Industrial campaigns designed to win, involving escalating action, and creative action-short-of-strikes, financed by strike funds to support sustained action.
- Political and community campaigns to accompany, complement, and extend the focus of industrial campaigns.
- Equality and liberation issues at the heart of struggles.

HOLT, the union's much-increased emphasis on equality issues, and the departure from the one-day-strikes formula, show that headway we've made and the impact an organised group of revolutionaries in a particular industry and union can have through consistently making patient, determined arguments.

The headway on other aspects has been uneven — for example, activists did set up a "strike committee" of sorts, but it has remained largely limited to existing activist layers rather than being broadened out to be more representative of wider sections of the workforce. And although the announcement of the "revenue action" was a bold step, that Workers' Liberty members pressed for and supported, in the event the action was poorly supported and effectively undermined by those who opposed it (some for reasons that it was simply unfamiliar and experimental, others on the basis, often only half-expressed, that anything short of all-out strike action is not "real" militancy and shows weakness).

There is also a risk that the old dogma of one-day strikes will simply be superseded by a new dogma of two-day strikes — an improvement, for sure, but still some way from a less mechanical culture of planning ongoing and escalating industrial campaigns, involving a range of different actions, designed to maximise both the pressure on the employer and workers' sense of participation and ownership over any dispute.

There is still much that we get wrong, and plenty we could improve on. One particular challenge is how to avoid seeing ourselves primarily as the "best activists" — the most enthusiastic leafleters, the producers of the best union newsletters, and so on. We positively aspire to be those things, but we are more than that too.

Fundamentally we are a group of people united by our common belief in revolutionary socialist ideas, a desire to convince our workmates of those ideas, and to transform our movement on the basis of them. Even small steps like making sure *Tubeworker* features articles about class politics beyond London Underground (and beyond London!), selling our newspaper *Solidarity* at work and at union events, and inviting colleagues and union comrades to Workers' Liberty's meetings, reading groups, and other activities are key to making sure we retain our identity and self-conception as organised revolutionary socialists.

A Workers' May Day in Turkey

The following report by the Association of International Workers' Solidarity (UID-DER) was first published on the UID-DER site, 23 May 2014

On May Day tens of thousands of workers in many towns and cities across Turkey voiced their demands and anger against capital and the AKP government, as a manifestation of the undying tradition of May Day despite all the repression and bans. However in Istanbul, the heartland of the working class in Turkey, workers were once again deprived of a May Day celebration. The AKP government applied undeclared martial law in Istanbul, making the city look like it is under a police siege. The excuses offered by the government for the ban (possible safety and public transport issues, etc.) were realised by exactly what it did to suppress a demonstration in and around Taksim. In its effort to prevent people entering Taksim it brought the traffic into a complete standstill in the most crowded and central parts of Istanbul.

On the face of it DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions) and KESK (Confederation of Public Employees Unions) bureaucracy were pushing for a rally in Taksim. But in reality they did nothing for a showdown with the government.

Knowing very well that DISK and KESK bureaucracy will not do any real preparation for Taksim, UID-DER was prepared for the possibility that there might not be a May Day rally in Istanbul. And UID-DER's local branch in Gebze, a big industrial town near Istanbul, organised a May Day rally in Gebze together with EMEP (Labour Party). Some other left parties and civil organisations joined the rally as well. Among the workers in the rally there were striking leather and port workers.

During the march from the gathering point to the square where the rally was to be held there was a minivan accompanying the marching contingents furnished as a mobile sound system for music and speeches. Many working class songs and marches were played from the minivan and the main theme of the speeches was the significance and importance of May Day in relation with the problems of the working class. It was constantly emphasized that there is no way out other than the way of struggle.

UID-DER had carried out a campaign for months in the run-up to May Day with the main slogan "Higher wages, lower work hours!" This campaign was at the same time part of the preparation work for May Day. In the UID-DER contingent there were workers from a number of industries such as metal industry, petro-chemical industry, leather production, textile, education, health service and so on. Workers' spouses and children joined the contingent as well.

On the front lines of the UID-DER contingent was UID-DER Women's Committee with its banner "Working Women in the Front Lines of Struggle!" Some housewives and woman workers formed this part of the contingent. They carried many placards expressing their demands such as "Equal pay for equal work", "Nursery for every workplace", "Longer maternity and nursing leave", "No night shift", "Stop violence and harassment against women!"



As a meaningful sign of international struggle of the working class a sub-contingent of Iranian migrant and refugee workers with their own banner followed the Women's Committee's sub-contingent. They voiced their demands focused particularly on the release of those combative workers in prison in Iran, who have been put under every pressure by the mullah regime.

The streets of Gebze were rocked by the slogans chanted by the vibrant UID-DER column which was received with great sympathy. The main slogans chanted by the contingent were: "Long live May Day, Long Live Organised Struggle", "Long Live May Day, Long Live Socialism", "All workers of the world, unite", "We will bring down the capitalist system, we will build a classless society", "No imperialist wars", "Crisis-War-Unemployment, Solution is workers' power", "Long live unity of workers, fraternity of peoples".

UID-DER's disciplined and vibrant workers' contingent had a strong impact on workers in Gebze and they expressed their liking with praising words.

Workers in UID-DER's ranks together with their class brothers/sisters voiced their anger against bosses and their determination for struggle. They felt that they were not individual workers but part of a big class and that by means of struggle it was possible not only to achieve certain rights but also to change the world.

When the marching contingents reached the square they were received by the May Day March and the Internationale was played from the stage. Speakers from the stage called for struggle against work accidents, sub-contracting, imperialist wars and other attacks. Slogans were chanted in unison. The demands expressed in the slogans and the worker songs and marches performed by UID-DER's Music Band echoed not only in the square but also in the streets of Gebze. Songs of struggle were sung all together, and workers in the square danced the Halay (a popular folk dance). Workers in the square from all ages thanked UID-DER for the organisation of the rally.

The May Day rally organised in Gebze was a good example of a workers' mass meeting as it was marked by conscious and combative workers, and not by the union bureaucracy. Speeches, demands, discipline, spirit all reflected clearly the independent class interests of the working class. Many workers who were prevented from voicing their demands and fighting for them because of the effect of bourgeois ideological oppression are getting conscious and beginning to fight thanks to the work of UID-DER. UID-DER marches forward, the struggle grows!

On the joint activities of IWSN and Marxist Revival in Iran

The report below was first published in Militaant No 70, 9 April 2014.

As you are aware, because of systematic suppression by the Islamic Republic over the past three decades, and economic pressures — internal and external — and also its inherent weakness, Iran's labour movement lacks self-confidence. A working class that once set up workers' councils, that is, organisational bodies that are the initial seeds of workers' power and a workers' state, is today in a situation where it does not even have the right to form its independent and free organisations. Any attempt towards building such organisations is met with the fiercest response from the government's security forces. So restoring workers' self-confidence and proving to them that they are 'not alone' on this path is a key component of our activity. A part of this is related to the joint efforts of the working class on a world scale and, in other words, the 'international' aspect of activities, which have the following objectives:

First, returning self-confidence to the working class: international protests, if they are organised and widespread, are one of the levers that can apply pressure on the regime and force it to retreat. The effect of this type of support can be seen in the way that the practical leaders of the Iranian labour movement (like Shahrokh Zamani, Reza Shahabi, Behnam Ebrahimzadeh and others) have become known to the world, and that this regime knows that if in any way it endangers the lives of these leaders in its prisons, then it will have more problems on a world scale. Therefore, unlike a few years ago, it cannot purge the internationally-known activists easily and quietly.

In addition, the labour activists who are in jail are always looking to see what others are doing for them outside prison. This is the reason for the regime's sensitivity towards the mass media, and its efforts to prevent this process through threatening imprisoned workers and their families outside prison.

For example, when the film of the 2013 May Day events in Turkey, which were organised by the Association of International Workers' Solidarity (UID-DER), and with the presence of activists from Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network and the Shahrokh Zamani Support Committee, was shown to some workers, their positive reaction and their sense of confidence towards these support actions were completely clear and visible.

Second, the gains of the workers' movement: the widespread and serious workers' protests of the near future that have already started (from Esfahan Polyacryl to Haft Tapeh in Khuzestan province to tens of other cases in the past week), would be easily smashed by the regime were it not for the support and solidarity of the workers' international allies. To highlight this point we need to give just one example: a while ago the AKP government in Turkey banned strikes in the airline industry and other strategic and important industries. The purpose of this ban was very clear. To oppose this ban the airline industry workers took action



and began an illegal strike and were able to cancel hundreds of flights. The action, which took place during just one day, sent a clear warning to the government. On the day of action, European trade unions declared that: "If Turkish planes breaking the strike were to land in our country, we will not allow them to return."

Third, using international experiences: because of systematic suppression by the capitalist government of the Islamic Republic for over three decades, in many cases the labour movement has turned towards reformism and appeasement (like writing petitions, a tendency towards open and legal activities) or have not been able to pass on their own revolutionary experiences and traditions (for example the rich experiences and useful lessons of the early part of the 1979 revolution) to the younger generations. Without a doubt that is why, in order to grow and to be strengthened and to prepare for the coming periods, the Iranian labour movement needs the experiences of the struggles of the working class throughout the world. This will not be possible without having contact with the real allies of the Iranian labour movement on a world scale.

Therefore links between the revolutionary workers' organisations of various countries and the labour movement inside Iran must be created, and not only for making it possible to transfer experiences and lessons of struggles to the Iranian labour movement, but also to create the ground for practical support for the labour movement inside, using, for example, protests, solidarity campaigns in support of jailed labour activists, putting pressure via international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and other organisations that the regime of the Islamic Republic, because of its membership must abide by their rules, fundraising and financial aid and so on.

It is also important that the ground is prepared for creating and maintaining links between vanguard workers in exile as well as between them and other vanguard workers inside the labour movement in Iran, and to enable the mutual transfer of their experiences.

In summary, these are a part the duties of Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network's duties and its "Iranian workers are not alone!" campaign, and comrades from Marxist Revival.

To familiarise you with these various actions and tasks, we refer you to some of our previous activities on our website.

The difficulties of victory

Janet Burstall (Workers' Liberty Australia)

The Progressive PSA rank and file group won a majority on the Central Council [the broad, occasionally-meeting committee] of the NSW Public Service Association [the union for employees of the state government in New South Wales, Australia] in November 2012.

The complacent Labor coalition dictatorship of the union found itself the victim of a landslide defeat magnified by the election rules which it itself had made to shut out the Progressives from having any voice. It was a huge achievement for the PPSA to win the 2012 election and open up the space at least for activists to advocate on Central Council; and it was also a substantial achievement for Workers' Liberty members who have worked within the PPSA.

The result came with a twist, though. Progressives have no positions on the seven member Executive [the small committee which runs the union day to day]. The PPSA candidate won election for General Secretary of the PSA, but left the Progressives immediately after the election. A coalition of Labor Party factions holds the other six Executive positions

Members voted for a more effective union answer to the aggressive attack on public sector employment by the NSW state government. But re-orienting and rebuilding the PSA in order to meet this challenge faces many obstacles in overcoming the legacy of the old leadership, and in a government that is very seriously committed to shifting resources from the public sector to the private and reducing labour costs.

Previously, the undemocratic election rules designed by the old regime had meant that the Progressives were excluded from Central Council, despite winning 47% of the vote in 2008. As a result, the Progressives have a lot to learn about running a union. The Progressives are a broad-based membership group, rather than a tight-knit left-wing political faction. That is both a strength — and a weakness.

The platform of the PPSA was for making the PSA strong again, for more democracy and accountability, and a more effective campaign against the government.

The efforts of Progressives to get the PSA to engage members in a union wide campaign against the government have produced some tentative steps, but not won the wholehearted backing from the General Secretary, the Executive, the staff, or even Central Council, which is needed for real change in a union with a by no means exceptionally active rank and file.

After 18 months on Central Council, the Progressives understand better the challenges of making the PSA stronger. A majority on Central Council does not mean the Progressives can lead staff, or influence day to day priorities and decisions. The critical points are:

- Many workplaces do not have a well-functioning workplace group that can organise members to take action, and many Departmental Committees had not had elections in many years under the ALP old guard that ran the PSA until 2012. Under the Progressives, members are regaining this avenue to express their concerns and opinions, but it



Australian trade unionists will rally against the Budget of Tony Abbott's conservative federal government on 6 July

takes time to build up member participation.

- PSA organisers and staff are needed to provide critical support to workplace and delegate bodies.

- Activist members and workplace delegates are essential to advocate for members to both the employer and the PSA, and to build a sense of solidarity in each workplace.

- To win against the government we must have an industrial campaign that enables members to unite and press claims on the employer by taking action on the job, as well as winning community and other union allies by supporting their claims against government policies of cuts and privatisations.

If the General Secretary were to explain in stronger terms the serious threat to union representation, jobs and public services posed by the government, and told members that industrial action will be necessary, this would help to build towards industrial action. But she is not communicating this to members.

The Progressives can make the PSA stronger with a perspective and plan for fighting the government that they take up both at Central Council and amongst the PSA membership. This will be a big challenge as there are diverse views within the PPSA. This plan needs to look both outwards to the issues facing NSW government workers and the whole working class, and inwards to the organisational issues in the PSA.

Our specific task as Workers' Liberty members in the Progressives is to focus on explaining the attacks on NSW public sector workers in terms of class, and linking up with workplace activists to build strength in workplaces. We want to make education, organisation, and agitation amongst the PSA membership a higher priority for the Progressive PSA, to move it forward to broader activity from its past when it was heavily focused on union elections.

Class struggle in globalised capitalism

Tom Harris and Martin Thomas, AWL

I

We oppose the conquest, annexation, or political domination of weaker nations by stronger powers, and against that advocate the right of all nations to self-determination.

We oppose the economic domination of stronger capitalist centres over weaker — such processes as:

- using market power to impose unfavourable terms, drain away profits, and crush infant local industries by denying reasonable temporary tariff protection;
- making weaker centres bear more of the burden in crises
- using accumulated debt to siphon off vast revenues in interest charges, and to enforce economic “openings” to metropolitan capital.

Against that economic domination, we make specific demands such as cancellation of debt, but our fundamental answer is working-class struggle against the domination of capitalist market imperatives all across the world.

Political self-determination is not our answer to the economic domination. Even when fully achieved, it is no guarantee against the economic processes. There is no “super-self-determination”, no “second independence”, which can transform political self-determination into a guarantee.

“Economic independence” is impossible for single countries in the modern world. The search for that “economic independence” via high tariff barriers and restriction of trade, pursued in the mid 20th century by many states from Argentina to Ireland, is a snare which leaves the working class chained to the “national” bourgeoisie as it tries somehow to impel its pauper enclave to bypass the logic of the world economy.

We do not demand “economic independence”; we demand working-class struggle against capital both international and national.

Since the collapse of the Portuguese empire in 1974-5, and of the Russian empire in 1989-91, old-style colonial empires no longer exist. Old-style colonial rule, or attempts to gain it, still exist — by China in Tibet, by Israel in the Palestinian occupied territories, by Turkey and Iran over the Kurds, by Serbia in Kosova in the 1990s, by Russia in Ukraine now, etc. — but it is chiefly a tactic of the weaker, middle-ranking capitalist powers, seeking domination in their neighbourhoods, and unable to rely on economic clout to gain them a sufficient position.

It is not the fundamental policy of the big powers. For them, old-style colonial rule over territories which are now urbanised and imbued with some level of national consciousness and confidence is too expensive. To focus on making their own territories centres for the international banks and multinational corporations, and their flows of revenues, is far preferable.

II

The big powers, especially the USA, retain huge military apparatuses. The USA has major military bases in 18 countries worldwide, and large armed fleets in the oceans. It makes 37% of the world’s military expenditure, as much as the next nine military powers added together.

During the Cold War, that US military machine was frequently used to “send in the Marines” to save pro-US dictatorships in poorer countries from overthrow by movements which the US suspected were friendly to the USSR. After its defeat in Vietnam in 1975, and its fiascos in Iran in April 1980 and Lebanon in October 1983, the US became more cautious. It preferred support for local semi-allies or allies or proxies, like the “Contras” in Nicaragua, to large-scale and direct military action. Where it reckoned countries to be of little strategic weight, it accommodated to them “going Communist” rather than invading.

Military caution became coupled with economic confidence. From the mid-1980s a new, neo-liberal capitalist world order began to settle down after the tumult of the 1970s and early 1980s. Free trade expanded. Financial markets became more central and more global. More and more countries had developed substantial bourgeois states — as distinct from apparatuses of government dominated by landowners or bureaucrats or military rulers — which oriented more and more to establishing their states as good terrains for global capital.

The USA had seemed to be losing economic hegemony when it ended the dollar’s convertibility to gold in 1971, and when US pundits panicked about being overtaken by Japan in the 1980s. In fact the USA, as a financial centre and a centre of technology and communications, was central to this new neo-liberal order.

38 more countries joined the IMF between 1984 and 1993. GATT’s successful Uruguay Round of international trade negotiations, in 1986-94, included 123 states, 21 more than the previous Tokyo Round (1973-9). GATT became the World Trade Organisation in 1995, and has now expanded to 160 states. A system of “imperialism by invitation”, or “by negotiating to be let in”, has developed. It proved to have enough momentum and resilience to absorb all the ex-Stalinist states after 1989-91.

The collapse of the USSR boosted the military self-confidence of elements in the US ruling class, and encouraged them to think that “sending in the Marines” could work again, as a supplement to the new economic order. Between 1991 and 2003, things seemed to go their way. The US won the Kuwait war (1991), helped establish international protectorates over Bosnia (1995) and Kosova (1999), and seemed to crush the Taliban in Afghanistan (2001). Those actions did not bring the US colonies or semi-colonies. All the High Representatives in Bosnia have been Europeans, and Kosova is supervised by a European Union “mission”. But the actions did what the US ruling class wanted: they knitted territory, apparently more or less stably, into the capitalist world concert, and all with minimal US casualties.

After success came hubris. In 2003 it was already becoming clear that US military action in Afghanistan was rebuilding a base for the Taliban rather than quenching it. Yet US government decided that by a “short, sharp shock” it



In 1926 Liberals in Nicaragua rose up against the Conservatives who had taken power through a coup in August 1925. The US sent in marines to help the Conservatives and eventually broker a deal in which the Conservatives retained power with a new president. Augusto Cesar Sandino and other Liberals continued fighting, and the marines remained until 1933. Cartoon from the US Communist press of the time.

could rid itself of Saddam Hussein's regime and easily and cheaply install a pro-US, market-friendly regime in Iraq. That regime, in turn, would generate leverage to swing things towards world-market compliance and more-or-less bourgeois-democratic governments, easy to do business with, when, sooner or later, the old Arab-nationalist dictatorships (Mubarak, Assad, Gaddafi, Ben Ali) and kingdoms (Saudi Arabia, Jordan) collapsed in the Middle East.

The US ruling class's calculations were wrong. Their arrogant attempts to do a neo-liberal "year zero" on Iraq — purging the old state machine down to the level of junior officials and traffic cops, promising sweeping privatisations and flat tax, handing over vast contracts to US corporations like Halliburton — created chaos and rancour. The Iraqi exile neo-liberals who the US hoped would lead Iraq for them had no grip. People turned to the mosques, the Islamists, and the sectarian militias.

In 2008 the USA attempted, and comprehensively failed, to negotiate an agreement which would allow a huge continuing US military and political presence in Iraq. George W Bush signed a deal to get all US troops out by the end of 2011, and the Iraqi government insisted on it. The net result of the US invasion was the replacement of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship by a corrupt, sectarian, authoritarian Shia-Islamist government closely allied to Iran. Chinese corporations have got a bigger slice of Iraq's reviving oil industry than US ones. And this Iraqi government has proved unable even to sustain stable governance. In June 2014, Sunni ultra-Islamists have seized large areas of the

country.

The US ruling class has become more cautious again. It maintains its military apparatus. It will deploy it again, ruthlessly and bloodily, when it sees sufficient interests at stake and sufficient chances of success.

We will oppose that. We will also liberate ourselves from the "inverted neo-conservative" mindset which traps many left-wingers. The "neo-conservatives" saw US military hyperpower as all-powerful to create a smooth, free-flowing bourgeois world by judicious military "short, sharp shocks". Those left-wingers invert the vision, and see US military hyperpower as all-powerful for destruction and regression or even for renewed old-style colonial conquest. Neither the "neo-conservative" vision, nor its inversion, is true. The US military is not all-powerful.

We must distinguish the usual real role of big-power military action in the world today from "liberal interventionist" illusions. The global capitalist economy does not have, and is not likely to have, a proper system of bourgeois-democratic global law. The US military will not be, and will not become if nudged, an agency of a bourgeois-democratic international rule of law, even to the extent that a bourgeois police force can administer a rule of law in a bourgeois democracy like Britain.

Our opposition to US military actions must not spill over into positive support, or implied support, for regressive and reactionary forces which clash with the USA, often in pursuit of those regressive forces' own regional-imperialist ambitions.

III

In the name of “anti-imperialism”, much of the British far-left has reduced itself to the role of cheerleader for whatever force comes into conflict with the United States and its allies, however reactionary and tyrannical that force might be. “Anti-imperialism” has been given as justification for siding with, and even applauding, the Iranian dictatorship, the reactionary Islamist insurgencies across the Middle East and North Africa, genocidal Serbian imperialism in Kosova, and countless other examples.

In some cases, socialists have used “anti-imperialism” as a reason to support governments which clash with the USA but behave in old-fashioned imperialist ways themselves. Much of the far left has responded to the Russian annexation of Crimea, and semi-annexation of parts of eastern Ukraine not by condemning but by offering excuses. Russia, they argue, is merely acting within its own reasonable self-interest to prevent itself becoming “encircled” by the EU and NATO.

Others have talked up the “anti-imperialist” credentials of the Iranian regime. Iran, so the argument ran, was standing up to US domination of the Middle East. Therefore, its role was essentially progressive. Any criticism of the regime’s appalling human rights record or its brutal suppression of the Iranian people had to be dismissed as imperialist propaganda from a media that was “beating a war-drum”.

Ironically, the cause of “anti-imperialism” here involved ignoring or downplaying the imperialism of the Iranian regime, both in its interventions in neighbouring countries, and in its cruel suppression of national minorities within its own borders.

Where “imperialism” becomes identified with “the USA”, and “anti-imperialism” with “whoever clashes with the USA”, this “anti-imperialism” becomes not a friend of the rights and the liberation of oppressed peoples, but often an enemy of those rights and that liberation. If your nation is oppressed by a power which is at odds with the USA, these “anti-imperialists” will offer excuses for the oppression, rather than opposing it.

IV

“It would be the greatest mistake, however, to believe that the trusts cannot establish their monopoly by purely economic methods... Economically, this is fully achievable. Economic ‘annexation’ is fully ‘achievable’ without political annexation and is widely practised” — Lenin.

What is imperialism? The use of “imperialism” as a term for international policy was coined not by Marxists, but by British bourgeois politicians, like the self-described “Liberal Imperialists” of the late 19th century. In the first years of the Marxist debate which ran from the 1890s to and through World War One, the Marxist writers, mostly in Germany, referred to what would later be called “imperialism” as “Weltpolitik”. They regarded “imperialism” as a word for a specific and (as it turned out) largely unrealisable particular policy of Britain, i.e. the creation of a multinational state structure, an “Imperial Federation”, keystoned by Britain.

Soon “imperialism” came to be the common term for the visible drive by the major European powers to construct rival collections of colonies and spheres of influence, within which they acquired markets, raw-material supplies, and outlets for profitable investment, and to build up large armed forces to sustain them.

What was special about the Marxists was not that they called that drive “imperialism”. The bourgeois advocates of the drive did that too. It was not even that the Marxists opposed the drive: some bourgeois liberals and free-traders did that, too.

The Marxist response was distinctive in three ways. Firstly, the Marxists — or at least the left-wing Marxists, the Bolsheviks, Rosa Luxemburg’s circle in Germany, etc. — positively and vigorously championed the liberation movements of the oppressed peoples, rather than limiting themselves, as the liberals did, to deploring the wastefulness and brutality of colonial oppression.

Secondly, the Marxists connected the visible political drives of imperialism with underlying economic trends: the growth of huge oligopolistic corporations (“monopolies”), the rise and connection with those corporations of finance capital, the surge of the productive forces beyond what could be organised in the old framework of nation states.

By 1914 the theory of that economic connection had become a consensus among almost all Marxists. It was codified, for example, at the German Social Democratic Party’s Chemnitz congress in 1912.

From time to time, in comments aside, Marxists would remark that the underlying economic trends could in principle find different political expression than the competitive scramble for colonies and spheres of influence which developed as later-rising capitalist big powers confronted the fact of the British Empire built up in an earlier period. But they emphasised, and rightly, that in fact, in the times in which they were living, those economic trends had found political expression in that competitive scramble. Imperialist policies had gathered momentum and become deeply embedded in the rival bourgeoisies. They would not be changed by nudging and pressure from socialist street demonstrations and petitions, but only, if at all, through great crises of the capitalist system itself.

Thirdly, the Marxists argued that imperialism was the “highest stage” of capitalism. The economic trends of capitalism were driving towards decisive class clashes and the possibility of socialism, as well as towards world war over imperial rivalries. There was a race over which trend would prevail.

Lenin’s *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* crisply summarised the ideas of the pre-1914 Marxist consensus, and brilliantly flayed the ex-Marxists who had forgotten or reinterpreted those ideas as soon as war fever came. The book was written in the midst of the First World War, when the rivalry between the colonial capitalist powers had finally spilled over into a huge and terrible international conflict. Lenin’s polemic stands the test of time as a courageous and perceptive restatement of socialist opposition to imperialist war, and as a reaffirmation of proletarian internationalism in the face of a wave of war-enthusiasm and national chauvinism, or weaseling equivocation from socialists like Kautsky who wanted to dissociate from the war without pursuing revolutionary class struggle against the warring

governments.

It would be dangerous, and a disservice to Lenin, to treat his formulations as a frozen set of dogmas, to be ripped from their historical context and applied mechanically to different conditions. To do so would be to abandon Lenin's analytical method, grounded as it was in establishing the material reality of a situation, and testing politics against that fluid and shifting reality.

The word "imperialism" has come to be a general term for big powers dominating over or encroaching on other nations. There is no point trying to extract and insist on a "Marxist definition", since for the Marxists whose texts are quoted to give authority to those definitions "imperialism" was not a special Marxist term but simply the word first coined by bourgeois politicians and then commonly used by all sides to describe trends of their time.

If we try to rigidly apply a model of "imperialism" derived from the late 19th and early 20th century to our own day, we will run into some serious problems. The rival colonial empires which were prominent a hundred years ago have disappeared; so have the tariff wars.

The Stalinists made Lenin's pamphlet a holy text, and used polemical asides from it to claim that it offered "the Marxist analysis" of an issue which the pamphlet scarcely mentions, the relations between the capitalist metropolises and the poorer countries. The pamphlet is about the imperialist competition between the big powers, and refers to the economic effects of imperial rule in the colonies only in passing. After the late 1920s the Stalinists melded Lenin's passing phrases into a new doctrine that imperialism precluded economic development in the poorer countries. The doctrine was designed to persuade bourgeois nationalist forces in those poorer countries that they could get economic development, but only by copying Stalinist economic policies and allying with the USSR.

After World War Two, even among anti-Stalinists the self-proclaimed "Leninist theory of imperialism" became in fact the "dependency theory" of Stalinist-influenced writers such as Paul Baran and Andre Gunder Frank, decorated with a few quotes from Lenin.

Since the end of the Second World War, most of the former colonies have won political independence. Even the most powerful military states do not maintain colonial empires in the original sense of the word. The norm of big-power bullying is no longer one of straightforward military conquest and direct colonial rule. Instead, imperialist powers like the US draw revenue from keeping central and privileged positions in world capitalist markets, which are organised and regulated through global institutions such as the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank.

It was the economically-weakest of the big imperial powers, Stalinist Russia and fascist Portugal, which held on to their colonial empires longest. In this era, contrary to what we might superficially expect, the powers which do attempt to acquire colonies in the old style tend to be weaker or regional imperialisms, not the stronger world powers. The military and financial cost of occupying and maintaining a large colonial empire, and the political dangers that this would involve, is an unattractive prospect for states strong enough to hold a dominant position through "soft", non-military means, supplemented by what they see as occasional police actions.

V

"There is not, nor can there be, such a thing as a 'negative' Social-Democratic slogan that serves only to 'sharpen proletarian consciousness against imperialism' without at the same time offering a positive answer to the question of how Social-Democracy will solve the problem when it assumes power. A 'negative' slogan unconnected with a definite positive solution will not sharpen, but dull, consciousness, for such a slogan is a hollow phrase, meaningless declamation" — Lenin.

Whilst we are anti-imperialists, we are not merely anti-imperialists, any more than we are merely anti-racists, anti-sexists or anti-capitalists. We are all of these things, of course, but we develop our politics not on a negative basis (grounded in what we are against) but on a positive one (what we are concretely for). To let any negative position become the defining feature of a socialist programme obfuscates the measures needed to achieve our positive goals, and leaves us intellectually trapped by our capitalist enemies: we say yes where they say no, no where they say yes, up where they say down.

Two fundamental ideas are central to our positive programme. The first of these is working-class political independence. As Marxists, we believe that all existing societies are not homogeneous blocs, but rather contradictory social systems made up of classes with different material interests. The interests of the workers are in direct conflict with the interests of the bosses, of those who control the means of production and the state. In all countries, whether they be imperialist powers, subjected colonies or anything in between, we take the side of the working class and the oppressed, as against the ruling class and the exploiters. Our task is to fight for the self-emancipation and democratic self-rule of the working-class.

Since the workers' interests are opposed to those of the ruling class, the workers' movement must pursue its own, independent programme. Ceding leadership to the bourgeoisie will lead to betrayal and defeat for the workers. The interests of the workers and the local bourgeoisie can coincide, up to a point, on democratic issues of national self-determination. Even then, the bourgeoisie's version of national self-determination will always clash with the workers'. The clash cannot be set aside until some next stage. The working-class must retain its political independence, seek to wrest the leadership of the national liberation movement from the bourgeoisie, and put its own stamp on the national struggle.

Our other fundamental idea is consistent democracy. The working class needs democracy to develop its strength, and its struggle for power, and, eventually, to exercise its rule. Unlike other historical classes, the working-class is not able to exert its influence through wealth or property. Unlike the bourgeoisie, workers cannot control society through private ownership of industry and finance, through the corporate mass media or mercenary force.

Instead, our ability to organise and grow in strength relies on democratic freedoms. For the working-class to begin to realise its enormous potential power. We need to fight for freedom of speech, the freedom to organise politically and industrially, the freedom to vote and the freedom to

strike.

We include among these democratic demands the right to national self-determination, and the right to local autonomy for minorities, since collective rights, such as national rights, are as important as individual ones. This right to national self-determination should be applied, as with all other democratic demands, in a consistent way, and should be supported even when self-determination means an independent state with an unsavoury bourgeois or Stalinist government, as has been the case, to one degree or another, with all the ex-colonies which won independence between 1945 and 1991.

These two fundamental ideas, along with others, are part of our positive, socialist programme. We measure every position on questions of war, imperialism and international relations against this yardstick.

The German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously asserted that war is the continuation of politics by other means. As the American Trotskyist Hal Draper wrote, socialists must therefore identify what the politics are of which a given war is a continuation.

In some cases, this will be relatively straightforward. For example, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936 was the continuation of the Italian ruling class's aspiration to acquire for itself a colonial empire. The Ethiopians fought to maintain their national independence. Even though the Ethiopian government was deeply reactionary, the demand for national freedom was a democratic and progressive one. Socialists therefore would be obliged to support Ethiopia.

Similarly straightforward was the First World War. The war was fought by rival imperialist powers battling each other over colonies, resources and markets, killing millions of people in the process. Socialists therefore had a duty to oppose it and to strive to turn the imperialist war into civil war between classes.

In fact, the great majority of the European socialist parties failed to do that. They often justified their support for the war with arguments that national self-determination was at stake. Belgium had a right not to be invaded by Germany, just as Serbia had a right not to be bullied by the Austro-Hungarian empire. But those struggles for national self-determination were swallowed up by the wider imperialist conflict, and it would be impossible for socialists to support the Belgians against the Germans (for example) without simultaneously supporting Britain, France, and Tsarist Russia, which were fighting to save and increase their colonial empires. Taken as whole, the war was a continuation of the politics of imperialism, not of national self-determination.

In the current national dispute between Ukraine and Russia, we take the side of Ukraine. We do so because the Russian intervention in the eastern Ukraine is motivated by a Russian desire to imperialistically dominate Ukraine. The right of the Ukrainians to self-determination is a valid one, and one that even a bourgeois, neo-liberal Ukrainian government has the right to defend.

The US and west European bourgeoisie clearly have an interest in an independent Ukraine that looks to the EU. We oppose the neo-liberal economic plans they want to press on Ukraine. We demand they cancel Ukraine's debts. But they do not want to make Ukraine a semi-colony. Where big powers clash, a weaker nation fighting for independence from its neighbouring big power is always likely to get

some backing from the rival big power. That is not sufficient cause to dismiss the democratic demand for national liberation.

VI

An essential corollary of capitalist globalisation is the massive growth of the world proletariat. The international working class has at least doubled in size in the last 30 years. The working class in East Asia increased nine-fold — from about 100 million to 900 million workers. China's employed working class tripled, growing from 120 million to 350 million. By the turn of the century, China had more than twice as many manufacturing workers as the world's leading old industrial nations combined.

The large size of the "semi-proletariat" in many countries — people engaged in a fluctuating combination of casual waged work, petty trade, etc. — makes it difficult to draw precise boundaries, but by now probably more of the world's direct producers do waged work than do peasant agriculture. Far from the working class disappearing, globally its social weight has never been greater.

China's economic rise is the most spectacular case of a combined and uneven capitalist development since the 1960s which has generated rapid economic growth in parts of the South. New centres of capital accumulation have developed, and in certain cases, sub-imperialist states vying for regional predominance have emerged. Whilst many states (particularly in Africa) remain mired in poverty, the rapid spatial extension of capitalist social relations of production and the spread of waged labour have characterised the modern epoch of capitalism.

China may perhaps emerge eventually as a pole of inter-imperial power. It is currently far from reaching that status. Contradictions and tensions persist between and within states across the globe, but China currently has a symbiotic relationship with the American state. Certain elements within the US are concerned to maintain its current unipolar power and prevent the emergence of future imperial adversaries. That is not evidence that such contenders already exist.

There are tensions within the US-led world system. They may in time become acute. But for now and the foreseeable medium term, the tensions which, for example, set Erdogan's Turkey at odds with the US government, are no greater than those within the "West" during the Cold War, for example when France withdrew from the NATO military command structure in 1966 and vetoed British entry to the European Union in 1963 and 1967.

US hegemony persists, despite its setbacks due to the Iraq fiasco. The US continues to dominate R&D spending and maintains its share of global high-tech production, e.g. aerospace, pharmaceuticals, computers and office machinery, communication equipment and scientific instruments.. American-based corporations continue to invest huge flows of capital abroad and employ ten million workers overseas.

We fight through the contradictions within capitalist development, and we help the increased economic weight of the working class find political expression, instead of hoping for capitalism to bring itself down through (illusory) permanent crisis.

On the Question of Imperialism

Elif Cagli, Marksist Tutum, 2014

It has been long since the first debates among Marxists over the question of imperialism took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. But traces of different tendencies and some misconceptions that emerged in these debates can be felt even today despite the fact that so many events and important transformations took place in the meantime. For instance, a great majority of colonial countries that set the background for the debates on colonialism and national independence gained their national independence and established their own nation-states. However, no ideological and political clarity has been reached within Marxist ranks over these developments which occurred especially after the Second World War. The subject has been distorted in the sense that the kind of “dependence” based on unequal relationships of the imperialist system has been identified almost with the dependence of colonies to colonialist countries.

The natural outcome of that was a conception of anti-imperialism as something different from the struggle for proletarian revolution. Those who hollow the Marxist content of anti-imperialist struggle reduced it to a kind of “national independence” struggle. Thus, a stage of “national independence” was erected in front of the working class even in those countries which, ceasing to be colonies, have founded their own states and begun developing on the basis of capitalism! The “third worldist” current reduced the struggle for socialism to a kind of “independent national development” strategy. Thus, a challenge from less-developed or medium-level capitalist countries against this or that imperialist country in order to get a better place in the table of harsh imperialist rivalry was considered as “anti-imperialism”. On the other hand, opposition of an oppressed nation’s bourgeoisie against colonialist states motivated by the desire of gaining political independence was also promoted from the level of anti-colonialism to anti-imperialism.

This is not the whole story with the distortions. Independent nation-states which took a long way along capitalist development were declared as “semi-colonies” since they were dependent on major imperialist states. Or, on the basis of the assumption that imperialism is a new colonialism, less-developed countries were described as “new colonies”. As a matter of fact, deeds of the Stalinist school of falsifications are not secret. But the worst is wrong attitudes on these kinds of disputable subjects in the Trotskyist front which is expected to challenge Stalinism with correct ideas. For instance, while colonialist empires were collapsing after the Second World War, the “contributions” of Ernest Mandel and some other Trotskyists alike who were trying to re-assess contemporary features of capitalism did not serve to clarify the issues. On the contrary, they fell behind even Lenin’s analyses in many issues, creating confusion on the fundamental political tasks of the working class in the imperialist epoch. So, they adapted themselves to petit-bourgeois nationalism in the so-called third world countries and national liberation struggles in these countries led by petit-bourgeois nationalist tendencies were pre-

sented as anti-imperialist struggles, just as the Stalinists did. Moreover, some of them were presented as the realization of the proletarian revolution.

Although they seem to be a matter of the past, these questions are still in front of us. Today, as it was in the past, the way of strengthening proletarian struggle for revolution lies in taking a correct Marxist position on every important question and clarifying our standpoint on that basis. Maturing of the imperialist stage of capitalism on the basis of its own characteristics laid bare that the essence of imperialist expansionism stands on not colonial monopoly, but establishing hegemony over less developed countries and areas. In the light of concrete facts we must emphasize that wars for national liberation of oppressed nations which do not have political independence, so to say, their own nation state, are in fact a settling of accounts with the former colonialist period. In order to avoid a misunderstanding, we must add that national liberation struggles of the oppressed nations and colonies which have not gained their political independence yet still preserve their rightfulness as they were in the past periods. But in today’s world, the “national question” is shaped directly on the basis of the characteristics of the imperialist stage of capitalism.

Pressure of powerful imperialist countries exerted on various nations, overthrow of governments in independent countries by military force, pitching of different countries against one another in regional imperialist wars, the sharpening of national contradictions by imperialist forces are all burning realities of our epoch. Therefore it cannot be suggested that the national question is now outdated or eliminated in the imperialist stage of capitalism. But on the other hand, we must not forget that in such cases as the Kurdish question the heart of the matter is the national independence question of the oppressed nations without their own nation state and the wars for national liberation. If we talk about national inequalities at large, oppression, injustice, conflicts, it must be emphasized from the start that national question in that sense can only be resolved by the overthrow of the capitalist system.

In imperialist epoch major capitalist forces do not need to colonize weaker nations, deprive them of political independence, of their own nation states in order to be able to subjugate them. Imperialist exploitation and the hegemony mechanism fit quite well with the existence of politically independent nations with their own states. Suffice to have a look at the events in the second half of 20th century. For example, national independence obtained in former colonial countries did not disrupt the imperialist system of exploitation at all. Likewise, national distinctions were stoked in regional wars incited for imperialist interests and nations once living under the same nation-state were pitched against one another, not to form new colonies in the end, but new nation-states within the spheres of influence of various imperialist states.

From colonialism to imperialism

The word colony in European languages means place for settling in another country in order to tie it to the metropolitan country. And colonialism means seizing new lands, colonialist expansion. Colonization was based on open political annexation, i.e. eliminating the oppressed nation’s right of independent political and legal existence. The colo-

nialist country gets hold of economic, political, legal, military, and every kind of executive rights on the colonized country. And that meant an absolute monopoly right of the ruling country on the ruled one. It was impossible for any other country to claim similar rights or obtain economic advantages alike on that territory unless the colony changed its master. It was through political annexation, colonization, to have rights on other countries' economy or politics.

Under capitalism, colonization was realized particularly in geographical discoveries and conquest of overseas lands in the period of commercial capitalism (mercantilism) between 16th and 18th century. This expansion rose above seizure of rich raw material supplies of colonized countries and settling surplus population of metropolitan countries to these new lands. At the end of the period called free competition capitalism (second half of 18th century and 19th century), a transition era (1870-1900) took place in which competition led to monopolization and thus capitalism moved forward towards the imperialist stage. But between 1876 and 1900, while Germany, Italy and France were belatedly gaining new colonies in order to compete against colonialist England, the world became divided up territorially.

The imperialist stage of capitalism, which began by the start of the 20th century, started a new epoch in which industrialization rose to a tremendous level and capitalism turned into a world system literally. Relatively one dimensional commercial relationships of the former period left their place to the complex relations of monopolist powers which performed astounding leaps in capital accumulation. Crashing down all barriers in front of it, finance capital began to flow into every area, region and country that seemed profitable. Unending competition between capitalist countries brought forth a re-division of lands that had already been divided on the basis of colonialism, which means imperialist wars.

Characteristics of the imperialist stage of capitalism

In the process of capitalist development, banking capital and industrial capital fused into a growing unity which meant the emergence of finance capital. Banks turned into international associations governing finance capital. As a principal characteristic of imperialist stage of capitalism, monopolies gained a decisive importance. Imperialism is a world system based on the domination of finance capital. Imperialism is not a new colonialist system, but a type of expansionism based on division and re-division of spheres of influences by international finance capital. On the basis of Lenin, we can emphasize the fundamental characteristics of imperialist stage of capitalism which started with the beginning of the 20th century: 1) capitalist monopolist associations, 2) fusion of banking and industrial capital, 3) capital exports to foreign countries, 4) that the world has already been divided up, 5) beginning of the division of spheres of influence of the world among international economic trusts.

By the 20th century, the most prominent feature of capitalism came to be capital export and exported capital from developed capitalist countries accelerated capitalist development in backward countries. These former colonial countries gradually became more available for integration into the capitalist market. In other words regions and countries

where capital exports were concentrated did not go back compared to the former period. On the contrary, most of the old colonial countries which finance capital did not see as profitable and therefore did not invest in remained behind others. It is obvious that these explanations do not suit the interests of so-called anti-imperialist "national capitalism (!)" supporters who regard imperialism as policies of developed countries aimed to "retard" backward countries. But this is the reality: Combined and uneven development!

Imperialism is the international expansionism of finance capital, empire of finance capital. Imperialism exposed itself in its full essence particularly after the Second World War in 20th century, though all clues were given in the analysis of Marx in Capital and were subject to the assessments of revolutionaries like Lenin in the following periods. Huge capital accumulation, emerging as a result of the tendency of concentration and centralization in developed capitalist countries, reveals itself in a burning "surplus capital". This "surplus capital" has to pass through national borders and be exported in order to find out a profitable area for investment. The main factor in its emergence is not exhaustion of the possibilities of investment on a national scale, nor a saturation of the domestic market to all kinds of goods. We know that the ambition of capitalists is not to satisfy the needs of the masses. The sole factor motivating capital is the desire of obtaining a higher profit rate. On this basis, capital tends to flow out to areas or countries which seem more profitable. Therefore the most distinctive feature of imperialism is the movement of a huge amount of capital among developed capitalist countries or from developed to semi or underdeveloped ones – or to some extent the reverse.

Colonialism meant usurpation of political rights, and political annexation. But the world empire of finance capital, in fact means economic annexation; establishment of hegemony over weaker countries, and, on this basis, creation of spheres of influence under imperialist powers' control. What is essential in the imperialist epoch is the economic power of major capitalist states that enables them to subordinate even politically independent countries. Giant monopolies and financial groups, which are the distinguishing features of that epoch, compete with each other in order to penetrate this or that country's market and share the cake according to their power. A young country, the USA, where capitalism developed with lightning speed, was a new power which arose not on the basis of colonialist rivalry but directly on a new basis, that is, expansionism of finance capital on a world scale.

Capitalism, having risen to the stage of imperialism, tries to overcome the contradiction between internationalization of the productive forces and nation-state form by expansionism of finance capital. Sometimes it can be more profitable for imperialists to recognise political independence of small nations. Economic annexation is achievable without political annexation and is widely practised. Under the imperialist capitalist system, leaving aside some exceptions, most of the former colonial countries have gained their political independence and therefore the fact that the essential dependence is the economic one was laid bare. And this is just what the world capitalist system is; there can be no isolated capitalist country without economic dependence on the system. Powerful capitalist countries make all these po-

litically independent countries dependent on themselves through every kind of economic mechanism. This dependence, however, is an inter-dependence on unequal terms which is inherent in the operation of the capitalist system as a whole. Under capitalism it is impossible to escape from this dependence. And what is more important, it is utterly false to assert that less or medium developed capitalist countries must struggle for national liberation as the colonies and the semi-colonies did once upon a time by asserting economic dependence as an excuse.

The concept of the world economy occupies a very important place in all analyses of the founders of Marxism, starting from the early but basic works like the German Ideology or the Communist Manifesto. The world economy increasingly reveals itself in the imperialist stage of capitalism. Therefore, it has been a necessity to conceive all of the elements of capitalist mode of production (forces of production, relations of production, division of labour, production and division of surplus value, markets, formation of prices) not on a national scale anymore, but on an international scale. All of the concepts such as globalization, which is quite popular nowadays, indeed describe the latest phase of capitalism that has been reached in 20th century and we still live in, that is to say, the age of finance capital rule, which we simply call imperialism. At present capitalism is a world system that is realized in a single world market embracing all capitalist countries no matter how big or small, including also the countries which entered the road to capitalism with the collapse of Stalinist bureaucratic regimes. It develops in an uneven but combined manner on the basis of the international division of labour and reproduces the interdependence on unequal terms.

It is competition that creates monopolies. But existence of monopolies in no way eliminates competition. So, it is not right to deal scholastically with monopolies and competition as if they exclude each other. Within the dialectics of capitalist development, monopoly and competition form a unity in which these two contradict each other but also exist together. Competition creates monopoly; but the effort of overcoming competition through monopolization does not eliminate it. If we think it through for a moment, the final point that kind of movement tends to reach in its own dialectics would be a situation of an "absolute monopoly" that excludes competition. But this means a negation of relations of capitalist production based on private property. As a matter of fact, Marxist analysis of imperialist epoch indicates this course the highest stage of capitalism heads to. Centralization and concentration of capital, that is, the quantitative development of monopolization, increasingly enforces a qualitative transformation. The dimensions of monopolization and growth of socialization of production become enormous as the epoch of imperialism proceeds, which means that capitalism rapidly moves towards a point where it negates its very essence. Undoubtedly, this Marxist analysis points to the main tendency of monopolist development of capitalism, its course and the need of replacing it with communism. But capitalism will not leave its place to communism by a natural evolution. For this qualitative transformation to take place, the world capitalist system must be overthrown by proletarian revolutions.

It is a necessity for capital groups which face trouble during periods of big crises to seek for some more powerful

"foreign" partners, vindicating the principle that capital has no fatherland. Monopoly capitalism means monopolist marriages. And in these kinds of marriages, the important matter is not the nationality of the "bride" or "groom", but rather economic interests. The fact that every capital group resting on a nation state in regard to their origin calls its nation state for help when they get into trouble is just a revelation of the contradictory character of capitalism in its imperialist stage. Both mergers and fights! Both the need for shelter under nation states' wings, and mergers disregarding nationality with the efforts of overcoming restricted borders of the nation state! So, in spite of the tendency of capital to integrate, there is no abstract international capital free of national divides, flying over the clouds as if completely broken off from the states in the world. But in a contradictory process as we pointed out and as a result of multidimensional economic relations, powerful finance capital groups gain more of an international character than standing on a single nation-state.

Even if the imperialist states and different capital groups are in intricate relations internationally, it is a unity in rivalry. Thus, in some periods when the rivalry becomes heated, a tendency towards building up armaments and wars emerges in the imperialist countries. If important changes occur in the existing economic balance of power and the hegemony crisis deepens, the imperialist powers may have to carry on their world policy through arms in order to settle their accounts. An inseparable part of the imperialist epoch is wars for hegemony. Because of capital's need for overcoming national barriers in the imperialist epoch, monopolist competition has an international dimension. Major capitalist states compete with each other to establish their domination over sales markets, raw material markets and capital investment areas. Even if this competition is possible to carry on in a relatively peaceful manner in periods of boom, it becomes impossible in periods of big and deep crises. In such periods, struggle among imperialist states for hegemony over spheres of influence may turn into open wars for division.

Imperialist wars are nothing more than the continuation by military means of the policy of rivalry among imperialists. Imperialist wars, militarism, violent methods accompanying the re-division of the world, all these are indispensable parts of the imperialist epoch. For that reason, those like Kautsky who consider imperialism as one of the policies of finance capital and disseminate the fantasy of a peaceful capitalism must be politically condemned. As proved by various regional wars reflecting the fight for hegemony among imperialist powers, a "peaceful capitalism" is still a dangerous dream today. The US case –as the hegemonic power that marked the imperialist epoch –is a clear example of aggressive expansionism of finance capital. Years under the hegemony of US imperialism very clearly reveal the ways of maintaining this hegemony and making various independent states accept it. Imperialism means the oppression of various nations, interfering with their internal affairs, political intrigues, political gangsterism, and, most importantly, imperialist wars. If it is profitable, imperialist countries instigate national distinctions, create new national questions by pitching nations against one another. Besides, in regional wars provoked by imperialist powers, territories of the countries on the target can be

occupied and therefore the national question may also gain and regain importance.

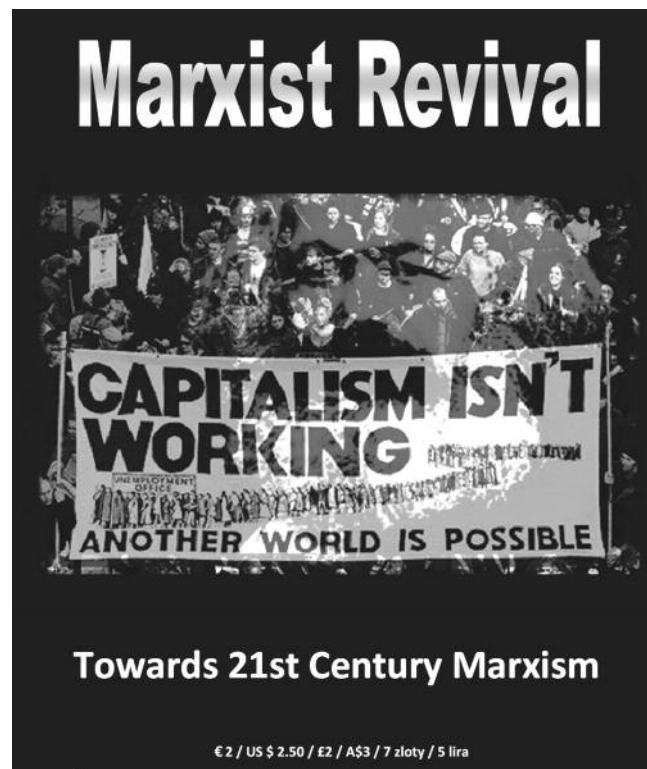
Correct attitude in the struggle against imperialism

Anti-imperialist struggle cannot be reduced to national liberation struggle. Now generally we have capitalist states in front of us with their own political institutions and apparatuses of bourgeois rule. The former question of “the oppressor and oppressed nation” left its place to “oppressor and oppressed class” under the capitalist state. But the question of taking a correct attitude against wars started by imperialist countries in their competition and struggle for hegemony to re-divide spheres of influence still maintains its importance. True, communists advocate national self-determination, oppose military interventions and annexations by imperialist countries. They consider oppressed nations’ struggles for political independence just and support them. But in all capitalist countries, communists’ main concern is to utilise revolutionary situations caused by war in the direction of the proletarian revolution. Struggle against military interventions of imperialist states is to be waged not with a view to promoting “national unity” (!) with the bourgeoisie or consolidating bourgeois governments, but accomplishing the social revolution.

In the face of an unjust imperialist attack, which brings forth the right to self-determination of the attacked country, the task of the revolutionary proletariat is in no way limited to recognising this right. On the contrary, the real task begins at that point. Because, even in just defensive wars in which the working masses, the majority of the nation, take up the armed struggle to death to save the country from occupation, the bourgeoisie has only one goal: none but to protect its own order and consolidate it! This is what the ruling bourgeoisie understands from the right to self-determination, nothing more! So, the task of the revolutionary proletariat waging its struggle under these conditions is to win the leadership of the nation and pave the way for the toiling masses to determine their own destiny. Under conditions of hot war, in all capitalist countries workers must come forward to turn imperialist wars into civil wars and end bourgeois rule in their own country. In today’s world, those who are swung to a so-called anti-imperialism by saying “support the smaller bourgeoisie against the bigger one” in regional wars which are provoked by the imperialists also disregard revolutionary situations arising in the countries under attack. And in fact what fundamentally scares all imperialist states is not a small capitalist country challenging a major one; but a proletarian revolution breaking out in any capitalist country, no matter how big it is.

A political line confining the struggle against imperialism to the recognition of national self-determination cannot go beyond bourgeois reformism. Reducing the struggle against imperialism to opposition against annexations and thus not taking sides against the economic foundations of imperialism is not anti-imperialist. A struggle which starts against annexations or national oppression can gain an anti-imperialist character only when it turns into a struggle against economic foundations of imperialist system. But this change of dimension of the struggle is neither the bourgeoisie’s nor the petit-bourgeoisie’s problem. It is only but only the revolutionary proletariat’s problem to turn any struggle against national oppression into an anti-imperialist

revolt. Anti-imperialism cannot be expected from any section of the bourgeoisie! As a matter of fact, a consistent anti-imperialism cannot be expected from the petty-bourgeoisie as well! What the petty-bourgeois democrats understand from anti-imperialist struggle is also superficial; because they overlook unbreakable ties between imperialist politics and fundamentals of the capitalist economic process. By suggesting “national capitalism” against imperialism, they spread out dreams of possibility of capitalism independent from imperialism. They are incapable of conceiving imperialism as a world system comprising indispensably all capitalist countries, or they are not willing to do so. Yet this highest stage of capitalism means nothing more than the maturation of conditions of proletarian revolution and formation of the material basis for socialism. While rising to the level of a world system, capitalism indeed heads for its end.



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Notes on the imperialism of our era

Maziar Razi, IRMT, June 2014

In the earlier period, while industrialising their economic base, and based on the needs and the crisis of the period, capitalism in the European countries attempted to export manufactured commodities to other countries of the world. As a result of these steps, the primary accumulation of the 'Third World' was blocked. In the modern period, changes were observed in the development of capitalism: the change from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism. This process, in turn, caused important changes in the 'peripheral' countries. As the processes of primitive accumulation of capital on the world scale process of capitalist reproduction became dependent on the reproduction of capitalism in the 'metropolitan' countries and the expansion of the international division of labour, gradually the 'national' economies in all countries of the world became dependent on the capitalist world market. In fact, from then on the social production in the underdeveloped countries was at the service of strengthening capitalist production needs in the metropolitan countries. This meant that the normal backwardness of the peripheral countries became a permanent underdevelopment coupled with economic dependence.

The causes of changes in capitalism were such that, because of the centralisation and concentration of capital in the metropolitan countries, the control of the main sectors of production were in the hands of powerful 'trusts'. Thus, competition in various sectors of capitalist production gradually decreased and thus 'price wars' were replaced with 'maintaining stable prices'. With this method, monopoly capitalism, gained 'surplus profits' in addition to the average profit rate. Increases in surplus profits in some production sectors by a specific number of capitalists (who had no control over total production) naturally lead to saturation and over production within those sectors. And that, in turn, led to a decline in profit rates (the inherent contradiction of capitalism). In other words, capitalism faces an 'excess of capital' and therefore the phenomenon of 'wandering' capital appears in society. In order to gain further profitability or 'staying alive' this capital must either be used in other areas of production or be put into action in a new market. Obviously with the centralisation and concentration of capital after a while the internal markets become saturated. European capitalism is thus put in a position that in order to resolve its crisis it now attacks the markets it invaded before (looting and the export of manufactured commodities) in a different way (mostly capital export). The modern invasion of the European countries is synonymous with huge leaps in the organic composition of capital. The massive increase in fixed capital shows itself as the second 'industrial technological revolution' (using electrical power instead of steam engines, the use of the internal combustion engine, etc.). In other words, unlike in the previous period (the capitalism of free competition) industry in department II (machinery that produces consumer appliances) has a significant role in the recent period (mo-

nopoly capitalism), whereas in the previous period department I (machinery that produces machines) had a determining role. This process leads to a strong tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

In such a crisis-ridden situation in the capitalist countries (in which there is generalised commodity production) there are three solutions available to capitalism: (1) Increasing the profit rate (and the surplus value) through increased exploitation of the workers; (2) Imposing more competition between capitalist firms (in favour of monopolies and to the detriment of others) and (3) Expansion and finding untapped markets in other parts of the world. Of course, monopoly capitalism, which has recently come to power, puts the first solution into effect by limiting workers' wages and starting wars, thus raising exploitation levels. However, workers' struggles and their organised resistance will limit the raising of surplus value through this channel. The second way, competition between capitalists and the strengthening of monopolies (to the detriment of other capitalists) within the borders of a country, also has its limitations. That is because this method was effective as long as the number of monopoly companies was low. With the increase of these sectors, their total profitability will become less and less. That is because in the production process the total surplus value will be divided among many more monopolies.

Therefore in this era the third option becomes the only source for raising profit rates for monopoly capitalists. It is here that the initial seeds of the world imperialist system are formed. The crisis of over accumulation of capital in the metropolitan countries makes this process inevitable.

Imperialism and the export of capital to the backward countries

In the late 19th century, due to the concentration and centralisation of capital, along with the pace of advancement of technology monopoly capitalism was faced with two objective and continuous crises. First, in addition to the periodic crises of capital overaccumulation (which has existed during all eras of capitalism), monopoly capitalism was also faced with a constant crisis of capital overaccumulation. Because of the concentration and centralisation of capital, capitalists are faced with capital accumulation which has lost its profitability. In other words, the capital used in commodities is of 'low value'. In addition, the competition between capitalists that led to the bankruptcy of some of them exacerbates this crisis. For the first time in the history of capitalism a permanent crisis caused by overaccumulation of capital arose. Second, a crisis of overproduction of commodities in department I also occurred. The market for machinery produced in department I (locomotives, cranes, railways, etc.) in the metropolitan countries became saturated.

Therefore, to solve this dual crisis, the objective need of monopoly capitalism focuses on the export of capital and its manufactured commodities. However, this is synonymous with cheap raw materials for the metropolitan countries. Undoubtedly, access to cheap raw materials could reduce the crisis of overaccumulation. In this period, the 'fixed' (raw materials) share of circulating capital increases, and the variable part of fixed capital (machinery) is reduced due to the overaccumulation crisis. Therefore, the insane incursions of capitalism into other countries of the

world can be seen. The export of excess machinery to these countries hits two birds with one stone. First, the overaccumulation of capital and machinery in the metropolitan countries decreases, and on the other hand, the same capital and machinery are used to obtain cheap raw materials from other countries of the world. In this era the 'looting' of countries of the world takes place in another way (and much deeper than before). All production in this period is aimed at the metropolitan markets, since the markets of the periphery countries, due to blows from the previous era, were not prepared to absorb the commodities produced in their own country. Thus imperialism appeared on the international scene and, together with it, the backwardness of other parts of the world became fixed and permanent. Also, the establishment of imperialism meant a new division of the backward countries between the European countries.

If the era of 'free competition' capitalism was characterised by the destruction of traditional industries in the peripheral countries and controlling the markets of circulating commodities (but without blocking the processes of independent capital accumulation); in the era of imperialism, in contrast to the period before, the independent processes of capital accumulation in the peripheral countries are completely stopped and bankrupt artisans become low-wage 'workers' in the raw materials industries of the imperialists. Naturally, the new situation leads to intensified backwardness in the periphery and strengthening of the major economic sectors in the metropolitan countries. At this stage, the local capitalists lost their independence and began to serve imperialism. Due to the lack of a material economic base for the 'healthy' development of capitalism, they turned into a bunch of fraudsters, thieves, gangsters and usurers. Therefore the rise of imperialism in these countries not only did not lead to 'bliss' and 'happiness' but, on the one hand, retained the ancient relations and, on the other hand, increased backwardness and installed a state composed of a number of fraudsters at the top. Establishing and strengthening of backwardness in these countries was tied to economic links with the metropolitan countries. Plans to transform the peripheral countries (or capitalist investment in them) in preparation for benefiting from these collapsing economies were on the agenda of the imperialists. Thus, in this era the needs of imperialism did not only rely on looting and exporting consumer commodities (though these actions would continue), but were based on the reconstruction of the periphery economies, and was concentrated on economic planning aimed at solving the crisis in the metropolitan countries. Naturally the extraction of raw materials and developing economic intervention in these countries was not compatible with maintaining the former relations. For example, to accelerate work in Iran the modernisation of transport, such as railways and modern drilling equipment, had to be used to access the oil (though the old relations still remained).

At the political level, for total control over the internal market of the peripheral countries, imperialism needed local state power. In this period, a permanent military presence and guaranteeing the dependence of the local powers on imperialism was necessary to make the internal markets safe. The control of raw material sources had to be guaranteed in this way. However, competition between the imperialist states for access to markets and raw materials of the

peripheral countries began. The imperialist wars over grabbing the raw material sources with the support of the dependent states intensified. Imperialist wars, coups and conspiracies against the peripheral countries have roots in the objective needs of imperialists in this era. The cause of wars between the European powers was that in the metropolitan countries, although in this period capital investors remained focused on the national level, but the overaccumulation of capital dragged them to the international level. At the national level powerful financial oligarchies and capitalist trusts took shape and the nation state served them. As a result, disputes and competition between international monopolies over the division of the world was promoted to disputes between the imperialist powers.

Thus imperialist interventions led to a special, unusual and complex situation in the peripheral countries. A complex combination of pre-capitalist, semi-capitalist and capitalist relations of production that through exchange relations with world capitalism, brought the productive forces of capitalist society under the control and domination of the world market, and preserved as such, leading to permanent economic crisis and therefore resulting in a constant social and political crisis. The indicator of this unusual situation is the existence of military dictatorships that suppress mass explosions, where the masses form their struggle not only around democratic demands but also question the whole existence of the sick and distressed capitalism system.

Imperialism since Lenin

In order to organise an international revolution it is obvious that the nature of present day imperialism must be analysed. Unfortunately most Marxist political organisations at the international level have not gone further than Lenin's pamphlet, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in their analyses. Obviously we, as a revolutionary Marxist tendency, will not be able to come to a precise understanding of the developments of contemporary imperialism, especially its relationship with the peripheral countries, and developments in the growth of capitalism in these countries, if we rely solely on this pamphlet. Hence, initiating an international debate about the roots of the recent developments in the imperialist system is essential.

Imperialism is the moribund stage of monopoly capitalism or "late capitalism". The classical period of imperialism ended with the First World War. Since then the world capitalist system has faced a deep crisis. The crisis of the world system is characterised by the outbreak of revolutions and destructive wars. The First and Second World Wars; the revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, and widespread workers' strikes across the world; workers' revolts in Spain, Italy and France, all reflect the decline in the world system (1917-1970). Imperialism, which attributed all the crises and wars to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and "East Block" promised "peace" and harmony. But the past years have shown that imperialism cannot survive economically without provoking wars and killing people in other parts of the world. The intervention in Yugoslavia, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (from 1992 to the present) correspond with the decline of the world system. At this stage, all the contradictions of the imperialist system have become more

prominent than before. The main cause of war is that late capitalism is facing a permanent crisis of over-accumulation. This situation necessitates more intense competition than before for making surplus monopoly profits. In contrast to the previous period (the classical age of imperialism), while all the laws of motion and the contradictions of global capitalism remain in place in this stage; the way that capitalism acts in other parts of the world changes.

If in the era of classical imperialism there was a tendency towards interventionism, export of capital to the peripheral countries; in the new era the focus is centred on the production of consumer commodities for the domestic markets of the peripheral countries. This trend has led to increased under-development in the peripheral countries. Let us look at this in more detail:

First, during this period the development and expansion of industrial production, the production of synthetic raw materials in the advanced countries was achieved. The export of capital to the dependent countries changed direction towards other metropolitan countries. The cheap labour power of the peripheral countries was no longer compatible with the extensive use of industrial technology. Therefore the production of synthetic raw materials (synthetic fibre, rubber, plastics, etc.) in the metropolitan countries replaced the raw materials of the peripheral countries. The result of these changes was the transfer of investments of foreign capital from raw materials into manufacturing. As a result, the direction of imperialism's interventions in other countries around the world began to change.

Two, in contrast to the earlier period, when the domestic markets of the backward countries were not particularly attractive for imperialism; in the latest period, with the growth of high-earning consumer layers, the markets of these countries came to the attention of the metropolitan countries. The fastest way to control the markets of these countries, and also to eliminate other imperialist competitors who offer their products in the market, was to produce in those countries themselves. At this stage, foreign capital, together with the local bourgeoisie, took over the important parts of the market. The tremendous growth in the assembly industries in this period is representative of these new developments. At the same time as the production of consumer commodities, the unequal exchange between metropolitan and peripheral countries intensified. This is because the "product of labour" in the metropolitan countries was more productive than in the backward countries. Thus, "value" from the backward countries was transferred to the metropolitan countries. In addition, the imperialist world order changed the equality of international profit rates to the detriment of the backward countries. As a result, the economic dependence was further exacerbated. In the previous period, for instance, at the time of the First World War (1917), Britain's annual income from foreign investments was estimated as £200 million, and profit from unequal exchange was £130 million. However, in the 1960-1970 period the annual losses of the backward countries due to unequal exchange were \$22 billion, while the income of the metropolitan countries from private investments was \$12 billion.

Third, because of the reasons given above, Department II (the production of consumer commodities) boomed, but in Department I (the production of the means of production),

growth remained limited. The lack of exchange between these two economic sectors led to renewed growth of the productive forces. Also, despite the use of cheap labour to produce consumer commodities, there is no crucial change in the exports of these countries and the commodities remain mainly for domestic consumption.

Fourth, the expansion of Department II (the production of consumer commodities) without the expansion of the internal market leads to the quick monopolisation of production and this, in turn, to the constant crisis of over-accumulation and limited industrial growth. The above factors further exacerbate inequalities at a world level. In other words, the interventions of imperialism in this period led to the emergence of a specific type of capitalism. For example, the deformed (and abnormal) type of capitalism seen in Iran. In this era, according to the stage of imperialism, politically (or directly) dependent governments change into governments of indirect rule. The position of these countries changed from the colonial countries (of the classical period of imperialism) to semi-colonial ones (of the late capitalist era). Imperialism no longer needs the backward countries for the export of capital from the metropolitan countries; instead it prepares these countries to absorb the over-produced (or excess) means of production. In this period, to create the necessary facilities for such planning, capital does not take the form of "exports" but is given as long-term loans or grants to the peripheral countries. The role of the International Monetary Fund and similar organisations in this period is to ensure the current needs of imperialism. Thus, through the above types of help, the states and deformed (i.e., made by imperialism) native capitalism of these countries, lay the foundations of the economic infrastructure (banking, transportation, etc.) so as to attract the commodities of the metropolitan countries.

If during the previous period the class composition of the ruling elite of the backward countries was made up of large landowners, merchants and moneylenders, was formed to meet the needs of imperialism; today "industrial" national bourgeoisie and the upper layers of the petty bourgeoisie meet such needs. The moneylenders have become the bankers and the landowners have changed into factory owners. However, due to the weakness of the deformed native bourgeoisie, the main power that advances the purposes of imperialism is concentrated in the hands of a powerful state. In this period the dividing line between "native" and "comprador" capitalism, which existed during classical imperialism, disappears; and the degenerated capitalist states, together with the deformed bourgeoisie, maintain their economic dependence on imperialism. In this period the classical "bourgeois-democratic" revolutions have been superseded, because capitalism is itself in power. The struggles of the oppressed people of these countries for freedom from the yoke of imperialism are linked with the struggles against native capitalism. Because the Iranian (or similar) bourgeoisie, whatever guise it may adopt, was itself imposed by imperialism on society and is in the camp of world capitalism. As a result, in these societies democratic demands are always tied to anti-capitalist demands.

The Necessity of Marxists' Convergence and the Marxist Revival Project

The following is Maziar Razi's speech at the Marxist Revival seminar in Cologne, Germany, on November 22, 2013. The speech has been translated from Persian.

In the current situation the convergence of Marxists at the international level is on the agenda. The concept of convergence, from a Marxist perspective, is to break with the existing series of distorted views and traditions in the labour movement and, on that basis, to determine the components for Marxist convergence for the purpose of intervention in the Labour movement and preparation for the socialist revolution.

In order to determine the components of convergence, Marxists must return to Karl Marx's own theories, analytical approach and method.

What is our motive?

Our motive is in fact the same as that of Marx during his period. Having broken away from the elitist socialists, Utopian socialists and the philosophers of his time, Marx was able to transform socialism into a science. We also agree with such a motive: i.e., to update or to clarify the science of the liberation of humanity in relation to the present situation of the living labour movement. In other words, our motive is to re-define Marxism for use in the twenty-first century. By breaking away from the distorted and non-socialist tendencies operating under the cover of "socialism" and "Marxism", we, like Marx, can enable ourselves to achieve a true and scientific Marxism and realise the convergence of the Marxists quite successfully.

Obviously, in order to break away completely from these distorted views, we must have components with which we show our differences from these views.

Before explaining our components, it is necessary for us to use the Marxist method to review the task, method and significant points of the present situation of the international labour movement and to deduce from the current situation the necessity of the convergence of Marxists at the international level and the Marxist Revival project.

What is our objective?

Our final objective is the same as that which Marx himself sought: "formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat."^[i]

One hundred and sixty-five years after the Communist Manifesto was first published this theory still holds true. Not only is there no doubt about its validity but in the present world situation, its necessity is felt even more than ever before. Other than a general outline, Karl Marx did not write much in relation to the specifics and the different aspects of socialist society, or the transition period to the socialist formation, which begins with the seizure of power by the proletariat, through which the socialist classless society is born. Limiting himself to the outlines and future perspectives was not because of any theoretical weakness, conversely it was Marx's materialist conception of history and his scientific method that clearly separated him from

the petty-bourgeois Utopian socialists who imagined the future with idealistically pre-determined plans and models.

Marx believed that the proletariat and all of its toiling allies, after overthrowing the supremacy of the bourgeoisie, will plan the new society carefully. However, what Marx was quite sure about was that capitalism was no longer able to satisfy the needs of the majority in society, and therefore must be overthrown by the proletariat, which itself is the product of the birth and growth of capitalist relations and becomes the "grave digger" of those relations.

Like Marx, we also believe that in the 21st century our task cannot be anything other than making preparations for the overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat and establishing the socialist order. This is because capitalism imposes wars and massive destruction, that is, with the destruction of massive capacity of the productive forces, has propelled humanity into regression. Thus, the working class and the oppressed masses of the world have constantly been the main victims of these conflicts, and capitalism's huge profits generated from war. All this not only proves the state of degradation and decay of world capitalism, but also demonstrates the dilemma facing humanity: "socialism or barbarism". The working class, by eventually relying on its own power, as the main and genuine producer, by organising the social revolution, by enduring the defeats and the victories, will create a new order; a new order which will indeed serve the interests of humanity. This will be the communist system where eventually the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" will be put into effect.

What is our method?

Marxists' convergence, according to Marx's teachings, can only be realised through using the critical-revolutionary-practical method. Marx, in his critique of Feuerbach in Theses on Feuerbach, says that Feuerbach's problem, like all the materialists prior to him, is the fact that he "does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary', of 'practical-critical', activity" (first thesis).^[ii] Here the adjective "critical" is used to mean the need to find the roots of the current situation of workers' struggles; "revolutionary" means that the objective is to change and to transform the present situation; and "practical" means purposeful action or conscious activity. We also shall use the same method for Marxists' convergence, in order to re-define Marxism as a science – the science of the conditions of the liberation of the working class.

What are the reasons for proposing the Marxist Revival project today?

What is the present world political situation? Today, in the current situation of the struggles of the working class, we are witnessing two phenomena side by side. To see and to have an understanding of these phenomena, one needs neither any special analysis nor exhausting discussions; anyone can see them.

The first phenomenon is the protests of the millions of people against the systematic threats and attacks of capital-

ism. Particularly in the past few years, through their routine struggles, the masses have been able to develop a better understanding of the true nature of capitalism and the states protecting it. Following the thirty years of Neoliberalism's domination and the stagnation of class struggles throughout the world, in the past few years we have witnessed protests, risings and uprisings of millions around the world. The real nature of the banks, financial centres and the capitalist states as their protectors, has now unfolded in front of the eyes of the masses. The disclosure of countless documents and testaments has debunked the myth of the citizens' "right to privacy".

Not long ago, if we, the Marxists, were to claim that the banks and the financial institutions had been defrauding and taking advantage of people, nobody would have paid us any attention. If we had claimed that the capitalist states are the sponsors of the banks nobody would have paid any attention. But now, there is no need to bring these matters up. Today, millions around the world, from Greece to Spain and from Latin America to North Africa, who have taken to the streets and are protesting against the social programmes of austerity and restrictions have reached this level of consciousness.

The disclosures made by Julian Assange and Edward Snowden (and other whistle-blowers), have deepened this consciousness. At the international level the masses in huge numbers have reached anti-capitalist and even socialist consciousness. Holding a critical view, they demand a change in the present conditions; they are demanding a break with capitalism and want to go beyond this system.

The second phenomenon is that, despite the fact that these changes in the objective conditions and the consciousness of the masses in favour of revolution have taken place, we have not witnessed any socialist revolution. The Marxists, who for over three decades have prepared themselves in their own organisations for such a day, in order to lead the masses towards the socialist revolution, have either been completely absent or their presence in the calculations of the class struggles has been insignificant or slight. The Marxists are more than ever scattered and divided. The political and organisational crisis among a wide range of Marxists has actually become deeper than before. The theoretical crisis is palpable. Fundamental Marxist beliefs, and specifically Karl Marx himself, have been thrown aside and even buried under a pile of theoretical deviations, dogmatism and ideological concepts. In the conflicts and wars between the imperialist states and the reactionary capitalist states in the Middle East, some of the "Marxist" organisations, implicitly or explicitly, sided with imperialism; while others, implicitly or explicitly, sided with the reactionary regimes of the region. Bureaucracy, splits and differences are rife in the various Marxist groups. The reality is that Marxism, as the science of the working class liberation, has been distorted and forgotten. In addition, socialism's crisis of credibility throughout the world, caused by the deviations of the "Socialist Camps" such as the USSR, China and their dependent states, still remains. The deliberate and systematic distortions of the fundamental ideas of Marxism by the Moscow Academy of Sciences on the one hand, and the practical co-operation of Moscow and Beijing with the bourgeoisie against the labour and communist movements around the world on the other hand, have inflicted massive

and disastrous damage to the working class internationally. Consequently, globally millions of working class people are doubting socialism. In the eyes of millions of workers and toilers around the world the credibility of socialism has been undermined.

Putting these two inconsistent phenomena side by side helps us reach one conclusion: the masses are ready for the socialist revolution but the Marxists are in crisis and are not able to intervene and lead the masses in order to reach their objective, which is the total smashing of the capitalist states and establishment of socialism.

To surmount this appalling situation today, the Marxists need to seek a solution. The solution is the same as the one that worked during Marx's time: to update and to evolve the science of the proletariat's liberation (scientific socialism which is the same as Marxism) and to break away from all the elitist and utopian tendencies hindering Marxism, using the critical-revolutionary-practical method.

What are the pre-conditions for reviving Marxism?

For Marxists to align in Marxist Revival and re-define Marxism in the 21st Century, there are two pre-conditions that they need to consider and carry out collectively and generally:

First, to review and examine the roots of Marxism (avoiding biased and one-sided methods, or what Marx clearly called "ideological" analysis). To look into the opinions of the socialists before Marx and jointly to research and study, in order to define and clarify the reason why Marx had to break away from the socialists who came before him. Also to look into his break with the pre-existing philosophies and to discover his method of analysis of social issues. These pre-conditions are of course the minimum key points and obviously not enough. These measures must be taken collectively and generally among the Marxist tendencies.

Second, to review and to learn lessons from socialism in practice during the last century. This means to analyse Russian socialism and Chinese socialism (and Cuban, Venezuelan, guerrilla warfare, and so on). This review and process of learning lessons must also take place collectively and generally and without bias and taking sides.

It is with this background that Marxists hold the responsibility of their original duty which is to re-define Marxism for the 21st Century.

However, for the re-defining of Marxism, it is not enough to master and arm ourselves with the knowledge of the historical roots and to draw positive and negative lessons from the 20th century's revolutionary experiences only. According to Marx, the Marxists must also be involved in the critical-revolutionary practices of today's current working class struggles at the international level and intervene along the path of changing the present situation. The interventions of Marxists in the working class's current movement can only take place if the critical-revolutionary-practical method (conscious activity) is applied. For this to be realised, it must rely on a socialist programme. A socialist programme not only includes the theory, the historical and international experiences of the communist movement, but also mainly conscious activity, which is the same as the conscious actions of the workers themselves in their class struggles today. It has been said that without revolutionary theory the revolution will not be victorious. Namely, revolutionary theory without a socialist

programme cannot guarantee the revolution's victory. However, this theory itself has two parts: first, a historical and international part and also, the practical substance of the proletariat's conscious activity. These two parts of the theory which make up the socialist programme are absolutely vital, because the socialist programme cannot remain suspended, for it will not last without an organisational framework, and gradually under the pressure of the ideology of the ruling class will be crushed. In fact, a socialist organisation is the highest expression of the transition of the socialist programme into the working class's current struggles. What kind of organisational form can it have? Karl Marx explains in his *Communist Manifesto*:

"The communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

"The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat." [iii]

The organisational form that is meant here by Karl Marx, today cannot be anything other than the "workers' vanguard party".

Thus, the highest form of Marxists' convergence is to organise themselves within a workers' political party with a socialist programme stemming from the science of Marxism. It ought to be stressed here that in their routine struggles, the masses will reach socialist consciousness and will realise the necessity of the socialist revolution and the need to overthrow the capitalist state. According to Marx, the workers' vanguard party is organised by "the most determined" (intellectual-workers and worker-intellectuals) who joined together around a socialist programme. The members of this party do not converge on the basis of "Marxism", because Marxism is a science. Marxism is the theoretical foundation of the cognition and change of capitalist society. Marxism's validity, as with any other science, is evaluated based on the data currently available. Marxism, as with any other science, is able to change and evolve based on new data. Therefore, Marxist activists will join a socialist and a practical programme.

However, the present conditions are not ready for establishing such an organisational body today. As a result of the crisis in the credibility of socialism, Marxism's crisis and the labour movement's lack of vanguard workers, today the conditions are not favourable for direct intervention in the workers' movement towards the socialist revolution. But at the present time it is possible to create a bridge between the present situation and the ideal one. Marxist Revival is our proposal for creating the bridge that can take us from where we are to reach where we want to be. In order for all of us to co-operate in this project, we would need a series of components. Like Marx's idea, these components must be based upon repudiating elitism on the one hand, and utopianism (that is socialism from above) on the other, in the socialist movement. The general outline of these

components has been presented below. We believe, the acceptance of these components helps the start of the process of convergence among Marxists for the final objective, which is unity on the basis of a socialist programme.

On the one hand the four components are based on Karl Marx's repudiation of the socialists of his own time, and on the other hand, they represent the practical experiences of the labour movement of his time. The first three components (socialism as a science, a socialism "from below" and a socialism that is democratic) exhibit his repudiation of the "top-down" socialists (such as Babeuf, Saint-Simon and the Utopian socialists), and the first component (to reject the concept of ideology) is mainly Marx's conclusion in regard to his past and the young Hegelians (such as Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach). The fourth component (socialism's radicalism) consists of the experiences of workers' struggles within the spontaneous labour organisations, such as the trade unions, and the role of the communists in organising the socialist revolution and the battle against the capitalist state, specifically regarding the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871.

I shall try to present the historical roots of these components, before coming to the conclusion.

What were the historical roots of Marx's repudiation of elitism and utopianism?

The workers' political movement has on the one hand emerged from petty-bourgeois radicalism and on the other hand from unionised spontaneous organisations. If we suppose that the mother of this infant is the trade union, the father is petty-bourgeois radicalism. The child, however, on the day of its birth separated itself from both its mother and father.

The reason for this is the fact that although the spontaneous movement of the working class in the 18th and 19th centuries had a decisive role in the advancement of labour struggles, they limited the workers' resistance merely to economist consciousness. The unionised and economic struggles of the working class never resulted in their class liberation, but eventually suffered under the influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. As a result, the political movement of the working class was compelled to split completely and firmly from this mother forever.

The political movement of the working class, on the other hand, has been the historical product of petty-bourgeois democracy. Amongst the left-wing of the Jacobins, there emerged a group which stood against the supporters of the bourgeois revolution, and disclosed the bourgeois deception of the masses by "equality" and "fraternity". The very first political ideas of the working class were formed by Babeuf and his followers in the Great French Revolution. In the beginning Marx and Engels themselves co-operated with the press, and appeared in the movement, of the ultra-left democratic petty-bourgeoisie. Splitting from the radical democratic forces of "populism", Lassalle and Wilhelm Liebknecht established the first social democratic organisations in Germany. Plekhanov, the father of "Russian Marxism" and the founder of the Russian workers' political movement, in the beginning was a member of the populist Land and Freedom organisation. In England, the founders of the workers' political movement often came from within petty-bourgeois radicalism.

While syndicalism confined the labour movement, petty-

bourgeois radicalism ultimately served the interests of the small independent producers. The radical petty-bourgeois ideas of the 19th century ultimately inhibited the continuous struggle of the working class for its own specific interests.

After rejecting the ideas of the reactionary, feudal, bourgeois and other socialists in the Communist Manifesto, Marx specifically had criticisms of the radical socialists, who were involved in workers' struggles (Marx himself had earlier been influenced by some of the ideas of the radical socialists). Marx scrutinised the radical socialist ideas with a critical-revolutionary view. At first, he criticised the socialists who had a radical petty-bourgeois past, who were from those groups mainly involved in the Great French Revolution and had supported Babeuf (the left-wing of the Jacobins) and years later were followed by the Blanquists. These were radical socialists after the defeat of the French revolution, the Jacobin's left-wing headed by Babeuf came to a series of ideas. They reasoned that basically the working class, in the general definition of the word, would not be capable of going through another revolution because it has actually been defeated during the French Revolution. The right-wing of the Jacobins used the working class, but could not bring the working class to victory, therefore a new method was needed. Thus, Babeuf believed that the solution for the communists is in the hands of a number of elitists and experts in socialist affairs. These socialist elitists in many different ways and with different means, such as using terrorist or radical methods would reach the capability of toppling the capitalist state and then only themselves (without the working class) would move on to building a "temporary dictatorship" or an "educational dictatorship". In other words, these socialist elitists who are communist and socialist activists will then take over power.

One of Karl Marx's first criticisms was directed at this theory. He criticised this tendency very harshly and ruthlessly and explained that through plotting coups and operations dependent on a number of elitists, we would not be able to realise a socialist revolution. This would in fact defeat the purpose. We communists basically rely on the mass of workers. If the workers do not join to carry out the revolution, then obviously an elitist cannot do that for them (as Marx put it: the liberation of the working class must take place by the workers themselves). Marx made a ruthless critique of these positions of elitism.

Thus, having repudiated the socialism of these elitists, Karl Marx took the first step towards forming Marxist socialism.

The next step was to deal with the Utopian socialists. These socialists, such as Saint-Simon, who unlike the petty-bourgeois socialists, believed that revolution is basically useless; that revolution only brings about chaos and bloodshed. He reasoned that there is no need for using such extreme methods and that we must find ways to avoid having revolutions. The ways that Saint-Simon had in mind were, for a number of people with goodwill, a number of well-to-do socialists make an ideal world (a utopia) and then through peaceful negotiations from above and through forming social welfare by the elites who run the country, socialism will be established step-by-step and stage-by-stage. In other words, through peaceful actions and modernism, the intellectuals gather together and reach

socialism reasonably and without a revolution and chaos and massacre.

Marx opposed this idea too; he not only opposed this theory, but also all the other similar theories that were presented by Robert Owen from Great Britain. These Utopian socialists perhaps did make some positive changes. For example, in Lanark, Scotland, Robert Owen who was a capitalist himself, had a factory in which the workers did not sell their labour power, but in exchange for their needs they voluntarily worked there. In other words, they were not exploited and had a relatively higher income, and the level of production was rather good too. However, in these communities there was no place for the individual creativity of the workers. Everybody had to wear a uniform and look the same way and accept the same culture. This was exactly the problem that Marx opposed and called this method reactionary. He basically stood against these Utopian socialists and rejected them.

All of the petty-bourgeois Utopian socialists also had one similarity, and that was the fact that they had a completely undemocratic approach to the building of their ideal socialism. In fact, they were elitists who wanted to assume power in place of the working class, or they did not in fact recognise the creativity of the working class. They presumed that the working class should fit in the specific moulds and patterns which these elites had in mind in order to reach socialism. Thus, they were named "Utopian socialists" by Marx.

Therefore, the history of Marxist socialism is synonymous with the repudiation of the petty-bourgeois ideas, elitist ideas, utopian ideas, and the modernist ideas of a number of intellectuals. Based on the components of socialism, Marx discussed and opposed this method of building of socialism with his revolutionary-critical method many times throughout his life.

Marx and Engels were among the first communists who separated their organisation from petty-bourgeois radicalism on the theoretical and political levels. They wrote the following on petty-bourgeois radicalism in 1850:

"At the moment, while the democratic petty bourgeois are everywhere oppressed, they preach to the proletariat general unity and reconciliation; they extend the hand of friendship, and seek to found a great opposition party which will embrace all shades of democratic opinion; that is, they seek to ensnare the workers in a party organisation in which general social-democratic phrases prevail while their particular interests are kept hidden behind, and in which, for the sake of preserving the peace, the specific demands of the proletariat may not be presented. Such a unity would be to their advantage alone and to the complete disadvantage of the proletariat." [iv]

"While this utopian doctrinaire socialism, which subordinates the total movement to one of its stages, which puts in place of common social production the brainwork of individual pedants and, above all, in fantasy does away with the revolutionary struggle of the classes and its requirements by small conjurers' tricks or great sentimentality, while this doctrinaire socialism, which at bottom only idealizes present society, takes a picture of it without shadows, and wants to achieve its ideal athwart the realities of present society; while the proletariat surrenders this socialism to the petty bourgeoisie; while the struggle of the different

socialist leaders among themselves sets forth each of the so-called systems as a pretentious adherence to one of the transit points of the social revolution as against another – the proletariat rallies more and more around revolutionary socialism, around communism, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of Blanqui. This socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”[v]

What are the components of Marxist Revival?

First component: Marxist socialism is a science. It is neither an aspiration, nor a social model, nor a fixed ideology, nor a pre-determined design to be imposed from above. Marxist socialism, like any other science, is based on a specific analysis of existing reality that is dynamic. Marxist socialism is based on a programme for the transformation of capitalist society. Marxist socialism starts from the living practice and the critical-revolutionary critique of the oppressed masses of their society, and codifies a programme for the transformation of the present society into a new society. Marxist socialism is in fact the science of the comprehension and transformation of capitalist society. It is the science for dismantling the capitalist mode of production and replacing it with the new socialist mode of production for the benefit and social welfare of all the people of the world (in a socialist formation, social classes and therefore the state, have disappeared and the law of value does not operate, commodities are replaced by use-values and the products of labour. The ownership of the means of production in society takes on a social and collective character, supervision over the society's affairs is democratic and done by the people).

Scientific socialism is rational. It does not start from a utopia. It does not have a set formula for the liberation of humanity. Marx says: We are witnessing today that the workers' struggle is ending in socialism because of the logic of the struggle. Socialism emerges from the heart of the labour movement. The proletariat transforms itself in the process of its continuous class battles. The proletariat that we see today, that in some of the elitists' opinion is “uneducated” and “dispirited”, according to Marx, will “in its continuous class battles” reach consciousness and will become “fit for political domination”.

Marx explains how by starting with the present bitter realities in society, we must recognise what sorts of tendencies exist within it and what direction they are taking. The tendencies that goes further than the present situation should be reinforced by the intervention of the communists (the workers' vanguard party). On the basis of which demands that were realised in today's class life, can we support the working class in gaining the competence in class domination through the continuous battles. Marxist socialism is scientific because we need to make these developments according to the present situation.

Second component: Marxist socialism is connected to the labour movement and forms itself from below, and it does not recognise the pretentious intellectual “elites” and “theo-

reticians” who have nothing to do with the labour movement. Marxist socialism condemns elitism. It rejects the intellectuals who suppose they can make decisions on behalf of the toiling masses and play the role of the educator, without even being taught themselves. Marxism in its origin, basically believes in the principle of workers' self-liberation. Marx is correct to say that “the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves.” Marxism respects the individual creativity and innovation of the workers and everyone in society. Marxist socialism considers the class position as the only fundamental difference, and not differences in nationality, language, race, religion, and so on. Genuine Marxism does not believe that socialist consciousness is brought to the working class from the outside of this class, by some intellectuals. In direct opposition to the belief of the traditional left, Marxism believes that socialist consciousness emerges from within of the working class itself, and the practical leaders of the workers are their genuine leaders, not the pompous saviours, who have actually no contact with the labour movement but consider themselves the guardians of the working class.

Marxism is based on socialism from below and is not elitist. The revolutionary vanguard that Marx has in mind, absolutely did not mean that some individuals from outside the class, impose themselves on the labour movement and take political power.

Beginning with the critical-revolutionary practices of the toiling masses and everyone involved in social production, Marxism intended to advance society to socialism. The social engineering and model-building that some “scientists” and “professors” have put forward, are against this view. Marx states that we must build socialist society moving forward from the critical-revolutionary practice of the real human beings. Marxist socialism builds from below and has nothing to do with the dictatorship of charitable individuals from above. Marxism does not believe in a monolithic and ideological human being. Marx believed that the only way to reach socialism was for human beings to take control of their fate in all areas, including the economic sphere. Socialism covers all aspects of civil society. Certainly, it is the struggles of the working class that historically move this objective forward, but the picture of socialist society that it draws for us is: the withering away of all classes in society (including the proletariat itself). The proletariat's revolutionary dictatorship is a means for the withering away of classes. That means all human beings reaching socialist society, and not just the working class. The working class is the only class with the revolutionary prognosis, simply because the working class reaches this conclusion through the logic of its struggles.

Third component: Marxist socialism is completely democratic. It believes in independent labour organisations and democratic rights for everyone. It stands for the right to organise factions and the right to express opinions for everyone in society. Genuine Marxism believes that the process of transition from capitalism to socialism will not be possible without observing and applying a democracy that is very much superior to the superficial democracy of the bourgeoisie. It means that political democracy, merged with economic democracy exists (for everyone in society to have political and economic equality). Freedom of speech, press

and democratic rights will be for all the people, and not just for the party, a small number of individuals or a special class.

Marxist socialism demands no kind of superiority and discrimination with recourse to force and “dictatorship” in society. The concept of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” by Marx has been distorted by the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, specifically by the Stalinists. What Marx meant by the “dictatorship of the proletariat” state was not for the proletarian state to enforce “dictatorship” (with today’s distorted concept of despotism by the bourgeoisie and Stalinism). He meant it to have the “right to veto” and not to impose despotism. In other words, this phrase is the highest form of democracy that ever existed in history. Unlike bourgeois democracy which is exactly dictatorship and imposition of the minority’s will upon the majority of the toiling people in society, reinforcing workers’ democracy (revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat) is the only form of government that can respect the rights of all people, including those opposed to it. However, after the capitalist state has been toppled and the transition period from capitalism to socialism has begun, the new workers’ state (soviet government), will stand up against a small minority’s preparation for a comeback and its repressive apparatus (police and intelligence networks), and will resolutely defend the rights obtained by the majority in society and will not allow the return of capitalism and its repressive apparatus.

Marxist socialism is democratic. Socialism cannot be realised with bayonets. Marxist socialism believes in workers’ independent organisations. Marx was one of the first socialists to defend workers’ independent organisations, i.e., trade unions. Although they try to improve the present situation, these unions are the only organisations that allow the workers to take a step forward in their consciousness. Marxism believes in conscious interventions. The concept of “vanguard” from Marx’s point of view is not for some to take over the workers’ movement and call themselves “leaders”, “professors” and “elites” and try to educate everybody else, but to have a good understanding and assessment of the present situation and tendencies, meaning with a scientific analysis and understanding the communist vanguards work within the movement and take it step-by-step forward towards the socialist revolution. This is what Marx meant by “vanguard”: to intervene in the present situation and around workers’ demands and tries to help them in their next step. The vanguard communists stand in the front row of the anti-capitalist front and have the most resolute elements and their only advantage is the fact that they realise the perspective and the final objective. Marx stated that the communists do not build a separate movement from the working class. They intervene in that movement as they find it but with the right to have a tendency and a democratic transition.

In the First International, the right to tendency was accepted: the supporters of Proudhon, Bakunin and even the European socialists argued against Marx. Everyone’s rights were officially recognised.

All of humanity should have the right to intervene, not only the working class. While the political revolution means the conquest of political power by the proletariat and workers’ councils, but the social revolution on the path

to socialism must be done by all the people; this is not possible unless everyone in society intervenes in making decisions and power is spread among all the various layers of toilers in society.

Fourth component: Marxist socialism is radical and revolutionary. It takes workers’ liberation beyond the legal framework. It stands for smashing the capitalist state apparatus. It looks for political struggles in the streets, in strikes and revolutions, and not behind the closed doors of the intellectuals’ gatherings who are totally out of touch with the current anti-capitalist movements. Marxist socialists stand for the preparation of the working class for general strikes and arming the masses for the mass insurrection and overthrowing the capitalist state.

Revolutionary Marxism believes in mass movements. Revolution is nothing but having the masses come on to the streets. Marxism believes in going beyond the existing legal institutions and smashing the state apparatus. Marx drew the following lessons from the Paris Commune in 1871: using the existing state apparatus, the masses cannot reach socialism. The proletariat must smash the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie. Marxism believes that the legislative, judiciary and executive must become integrated. The legislators must implement the law, and not some bureaucrats, professors and intellectuals. In other words, the state bureaucracy must be abolished. Marx stated that the free assemblies of the masses of independent producers should organise society. The Russian revolution of 1917 formed this kind of government through organising the workers’ soviets.

Marxism also believes that economically socialism is not a national matter and it must be built on the international level. Marx claimed that if socialism is not built on the international level, then it will “return to the old filth”, because the bourgeoisie is an international phenomenon. If communism is not established on the international level, then it will mean the distribution of poverty. The workers’ socialist revolution can even occur in an underdeveloped country, but building socialism must be achieved on the international level.

[i]

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm>

[ii]

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>

[iii]

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm>

[iv]

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm>

[v]

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/ch03.htm>



Comrades from Marxist Revival ran a stall at the annual Lutte Ouvrière fete on 7-9 June, which is a meeting point for the far left not only from France but from across Europe. We also ran a forum at the fete which explained the purposes and plans of Marxist Revival.

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