

## In this issue

Our fifth annual English edition, *Revolutionary Marxism 2021*, is out, amidst the prolonged pandemic and the economic and social crisis deepened by the former. World capitalism has failed even to make vaccines accessible worldwide, let alone implementing measures to keep billions of workers safe, such as re-planning the production process in accordance with the pandemic-induced circumstances. The ‘vaccine nationalism’ of imperialist countries, and the patents rights claimed by vaccine companies have caused almost half the world’s population to remain deprived of vaccines. Four billion people are asked to manage to stay alive with the so-called “aid” of just a hundred million doses.

The virus has of course been not the only factor that made this year excruciating for the working masses. The steadiness and determination of the capitalist class which are conspicuous by their absence in the anti-pandemic struggle have manifested themselves crystal-clearly when it comes to burdening the working class with the consequences of the lingering crisis of 2008. Masses whose countries have been bombed or destabilized by imperialism, and who fled the resulting civil wars in their homelands, swarm desperately into the USA and the EU. As scores of asylum-seekers still drown in the Mediterranean Sea each week, the looming threat of fascism in Europe is further emboldened by the anti-refugee sentiments, which are already rampant among the masses. Those sentiments have reached their zenith recently in Turkey. It is thus an indispensable duty to address that issue on the basis of class struggle. What needs to be done in Turkey and other countries is therefore to re-mould the rage against immigrants into one against those who are responsible for the crisis and poverty.

Ethnic cleansing inflicted incessantly by Israel on the Palestinian people gained a new dimension in May. The Zionists first tried to forcibly evict Palestinians from their properties in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Al Quds and then attacked brutally on those protesting the evictions and eventually killed more than 200 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Having paid lip service to human rights and

delivered a half-hearted denunciation of Israel, the imperialists showed their true colors by referring to “the right to self-defense” to whitewash Israeli massacres. That imperialist support to Israel received its response domestically, promisingly more than ever, upon the call by the Palestinian people. Thousands of protestors flocked to the streets in the USA and Europe to condemn the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip and to demand freedom for Palestine. Israel may have ceased shelling the Gaza Strip; however, the Zionist cleansing proceeds unabated in Jerusalem. Hence, the Palestinian people need a true internationalist solidarity in its struggle against the Zionism and imperialism.

The bourgeoisie has been dragging humanity to the verge of an increasingly-hard-to-reverse natural catastrophe by subjugating the relationship between humans and nature totally to own interests. Ominous developments such as the melting of icebergs and the destruction of rainforests indicate that climate change is not a prospective colossal disaster future generations would suffer, but an imminent peril which already threatens the existence of humanity. As an outcome of the uneven and unplanned development of the world economy, which works in favor of the imperialist centers, the climate change also deepens the refugee crisis by triggering new waves of immigration from the lands it has defiled.

Remedy to the deteriorating social and environmental crisis has manifested itself in the upheavals and revolts, notwithstanding sporadically. In October 2021, Indian farmers took to the streets against the bills drafted by the Modi government, clashing with the police undauntedly. The same was the case in Tunisia in January, with the convulsive nationwide protests against the social issues such as high unemployment (30%), poverty, unfair income distribution and the contraction of economy (9%) which have been aggravated by the destructive effects of the Coronavirus infection. In Algeria, the Hirak movement returned in February to the streets it had left for a while. In Columbia, after the general strike of 28-30 April, the people poured to the streets in May and June to demand the withdrawal of the bill aimed at increasing the tax burden on the shoulders of the laborers. During that period, the country appeared as if the general strike were still going on, as the youth of rural and urban laboring classes blocked the highways and halted freight transportation, trading and production processes. In October, the Sudanese people raised against the coup which aimed to annihilate what’s remaining from the revolution. The revolution of 2019, that is, “La revuelta” in Chile, the southern neighbor of Peru, terminated the rule of bourgeois parties spanning from Pinochet’s reign to the post-dictatorship period, culminating in the Constituent Assembly. Iran was another venue in which the blaze of rebellion rose. Iranians who had frequently taken to the streets since 2018, once again did the same, including important strikes of Iranian workers. Some time ago, the strike in the Haft Tapeh factory of Iran became successful. This summer, many workers from the subsectors of the oil & natural gas sector have gone on strike. The events of 2019 which had a revolutionary character were quelled by force. But it seems that a new wave will come soon. Lastly, beginning with October 2021, the Sudanese people rose against the counter-revolutionary coup that overthrew the Transitional Sovereignty Council and dismissed the transitional

government. The Sudanese masses flooding the streets of Khartoum, organizing around their Resistance Committees and fighting with massive demonstrations, especially the “March of Millions”, barricades, factory occupations, strikes etc against the counter-revolutionary military intervention, demonstrate the vitality of the Sudanese Revolution.

The major reason behind the failure of all these revolutions and popular revolts to win more than a fleeting victory is the weakness of the international socialist movement, itself a consequence of the shock and demoralization created by the restoration of capitalism in the workers’ states at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This annual issue of *Revolutionary Marxism* is coming out almost exactly on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dissolution of the most important of such workers’ states, the Soviet Union, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1991. On this occasion we devote our first dossier to capitalist restoration, something most socialist movements and intellectuals avoid like the plague. The first piece in this dossier is a bird’s eye view of the dissolution and collapse of the Soviet Union, signed by the Editorial Board of our journal. It is followed by three articles respectively by Iosif Gregorievitch Abramson, Savas Michael-Matsas, and Sungur Savran. The editorial piece describes these three articles so we will not go into a description here.

However, our discussion on the Soviet Union does not exhaust our treatment of the experience of capitalist restoration, but extends to other workers’ states, namely Cuba and China. For a long time now, Cuba has been the only country on earth to represent a workers’ state in dignified form. The relations it established with the peoples of the world on the occasion of the pandemic have gone to consolidate this image. But, after more than six decades behind it, this character of the Cuban state should not make anyone oblivious to the fact that the government is now progressing on the road to the restoration of capitalism. That is why solidarity with the Cuban working class and people is filled with such importance today. The relations established since two of our comrades participated in 2019 at a conference among revolutionary Marxists at the international level reached a new level in winter 2020. *La Comuna*, a journal brought out by Cuban revolutionary Marxists, published an article written by Armağan Tulunay, one of our comrades who participated in the 2019 conference, together with Sungur Savran. In the special issue of the journal devoted to the political crisis in Cuba born as a result of the protest movement by some artists, our comrades’ article was published as the only foreign contribution. The article examines and criticizes the mistakes committed by the revolutionary Marxist movement internationally when faced with the process of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. But even of greater significance today is drawing lessons from past experience as to what to do and what not to do in Cuba as steps are being made in the direction of capitalist restoration. This is precisely what the authors are trying to do.

Another article of this dossier is the second part of Burak Gürel’s article titled “The road to capitalist restoration in the People’s Republic of China.” Gürel shows that many of the Red Guard organizations that emerged during the early phase of

the Cultural Revolution (1966-67) represented an anti-bureaucratic socialist line. The crushing of these organizations in 1968-69 under Mao Zedong's order ensured the consolidation of the bureaucracy. Deng Xiaoping, who was declared the number two capitalist roader and purged in 1966-7, was readmitted to party-state posts with Mao's approval in 1973 and subsequently made deputy prime minister, indicating the reconciliation between the left and right wings of the Chinese bureaucracy. In addition to this development, Mao's purging and demonization of PLA commander Lin Biao in 1971 significantly reduced the prestige of not only Mao but also of all kinds of socialist politics in the eyes of the masses. Under these conditions, the PRC tightened its relations with imperialist countries, especially the USA, to relieve its isolation and accelerate its economic development. In the early 1970s, the PRC and USA formed an anti-USSR alliance, and the fermenting capitalist restoration trend quickly rallied to power after Mao's death in 1976. To those readers who have not had a chance to read the first part of this article, we recommend to go back to *Revolutionary Marxism 2019*.

From this dense dossier on the experience of the workers' states, we move on to a study of the different aspects of capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the heart of imperialism, the opening scene of the 2021 season was the storming of the Capitol building in Washington D.C. by an unruly mob on 6th January 2021, following Trump's efforts to win another four years in the White House. In the first article of this issue and the "Aspects of 21st Century capitalism" dossier, Sungur Savran takes up the significance of the event that left the entire world in amazement, stressing at the same time that it carries immense importance in shedding light on the general character of the epoch we are living in. Savran contends that this event confirms unmistakably his characterisation of Trump, as well as the far-right parties of Europe widely labelled "populist", as an incomplete form of fascism. He criticises both the literature on so-called "populism" and the currents on the left that have denied the proto-fascist character of these movements, including currents that claim the label revolutionary Marxist. The author ties the rise of these proto-fascist movements to a new tendency within the ruling bourgeoisie, particularly in imperialist countries, to break with globalism and turn to a nationalist economic orientation with the advent of the Third Great Depression. Savran also draws attention to the issuing of declarations that amount to a pronunciamiento by retired generals and admirals first in France and subsequently in the US and emphasises the threat facing the international working class. The concluding section of the article is devoted to the political line that needs to be adopted confronted to this new danger of fascism the world is facing. Savran insists on the vital importance of a double turn towards class struggle instead of identity politics and towards Marxism instead of postmodernism, post-colonialism and left-wing liberalism.

In the second article of the dossier, E. Ahmet Tonak analyzes whether the digital sector, that has become a one-hundred-billion-dollar sector today, produces surplus value, using Marx's labour theory of value, through the example of Facebook. After elaborating Marx's concept of surplus value, Tonak uses the concepts of productive/unproductive labour to indicate that only productive sectors will produce surplus

value. At this stage, the author analyzes in detail how Facebook, which he defines among productive companies, does not demand money from its users and produces surplus value. The author contends that the product produced by Facebook is a commodity just like others, that the distinction Marx makes between productive labour and unproductive labour can also be made with regard to the labour employed by Facebook, that the surplus value produced by the productive workers of Facebook is the main source of the profits of the company. Consequently, he claims that Facebook and all other digital companies are capitalist companies whose activity can be analysed in terms of Marx's labour theory of value.

Tonak's article is followed by an elaboration on the pandemic by Ertuğrul Oruç, himself a medical doctor. In his article he shows that the world has failed in its fight against the pandemic, considering the number of patients and deaths from coronavirus. In addition to this, after stating that countries could not develop a common strategy in combating the pandemic, he tries to find clues on how to combat the pandemic by examining closely some individual country experiences that clearly differ in a negative or positive way from the rest of the world. Moreover, in an environment where vaccines against the Coronavirus are developed and deaths due to the disease can be prevented, the author stresses that since the development, distribution and production of vaccines are subject to market conditions, patents are monopolized by a handful of pharmaceutical companies, and because of the vaccine nationalism of rich countries, not every country in the world has equal access to vaccines, and this has a very important role in not vanquishing the pandemic. The author states that the world's equal access to vaccines cannot be achieved through initiatives such as COVAX, which do not question and do not intend to change the current vaccine policies; instead, it can be achieved only through the planned, anti-market, ignoring-patent-rights production of the poor countries of the world that cannot access the vaccine sufficiently. In the concluding part, the author states that as a result of capitalism, whose sole purpose is to make profit, humanity is in an irrational contradiction that it cannot use the weapon to defeat the virus even though it has developed it. The author describes the condition for the world to overcome the pandemic as building a non-profit, socialist order that allows for worldwide planning, in which each country rushes to help the other in every sense, redesigns all production according to the needs of the pandemic.

Iranian Marxist Nima Sabouri's contribution analyzes the latest strike wave (June 2021) in the oil and gas industry of Iran. In recent years, the repressive neoliberal policies of the *mullah* regime in that country have faced serious mass protests. Within that context, the current strikes of the temporary and contract workers in the oil and gas industry have clear implications for the revival of class politics. As Sabouri reminds us, the workers on strike have no entitlement to minimum labour rights; they work and live in the harsh conditions of the oil and gas fields, very far from the main cities, and their families; working 10 hours a day, 24 days a month, spending the night in overcrowded dormitories. Sabouri notes that the current strikes cover more than 80 companies, breaking the isolation of the previous strike waves. Moreover, these strikes began on the day after the

presidential election, with a clear political dimension, of which the regime is very well aware. Sabouri concludes that this strike brings to the fore the importance of not neglecting temporary workers, contract workers, the unemployed, in sum all those who are employed under precarious conditions.

Our second dossier focuses on the legacy of Marxism, with texts on Engels, Lenin, and Luxemburg. In the first article, Savas Michael-Matsas discusses Engels' "Dialectics of Nature", in the context of the recent Covid-19 pandemic. He takes note of the efforts counterposing Engels to Marx, on the basis of the so-called "mechanistic dialectics of Nature" attributed to the former. In an ironical twist, Engels' studies on nature are held responsible by some for the supposed neglect of ecology and nature in Western Marxism! According to Michael-Matsas, the truth is just the opposite, and Engels' studies, together with Lenin's, offer a fresh and fruitful perspective to rethink modern materialism in a non-mechanistic way. Depending on such a perspective, he points out that the recent pandemic is not simply a "natural disaster", as claimed by many liberal commentators. Such a claim conceals the social roots of the pandemic and the mismanagement of capitalist governments, and the neo-liberal policies that have destroyed public health services. On the contrary, the pandemic has to be conceived as "Nature's revenge", as Engels would say. For the future, according to Michael-Matsas, an endless succession of new deadly epidemics can be predicted under conditions of capitalist globalization.

Another article on Engels is Volkan Sakarya's "In defense of Engels' revolutionary Marxism: An anti-critique". Sakarya engages in a defense of the revolutionary content of Engels's teaching against the claims that Engels's Marxism paved the way for philosophically mechanical, economically fatalist, politically reformist and Stalinist approaches. According to Sakarya, Engels, despite the criticisms made against him about the mechanical character of his philosophy, sees the world as a stratified, differentiated, and dynamic unity in which contingencies play a role as well as necessities, and argues that freedom comes from dominating over these necessities. Secondly, Sakarya contends that within the scope of Marx's critique of political economy, despite the criticisms directed to Engels that he distorted Marx's views on the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and fabricated a mechanical collapse theory, Engels did not make such a distortion, and his interpretation of the theory of crisis, which took into account subjective as well as objective factors, exhibits a dialectical character. Finally, contrary to the criticisms about Engels which claim that he opened the door to reformism and Stalinism politically, Sakarya argues that, Engels, far from rejecting revolutionary subjectivity, contextualizes it and tackles it in a dialectical relationship with the objective dynamics of capitalism. According to Sakarya, Engels paves the way for reading strategic and tactical goals of the working class as different but complementary moments of the cycles of class struggle depending on the objective tendencies of capitalism and does not confuse the short-term goals of the working class with the long-term ones.

Then, we turn to Lenin. Özgür Öztürk evaluates four books on Lenin: Lars

T. Lih's *Lenin* and *Lenin Rediscovered*, Alan Shandro's *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony*, and our Hungarian comrade *Tamás Krausz's* *Reconstructing Lenin*. Öztürk argues that these four works are original and valuable contributions to the recently growing literature on Lenin. They are not alternatives to each other but complementary works that collectively provide a more nuanced portrait of him. In this sense, they are all worth reading, but apart from Lih's brief biography, these books are not introductory-level material. Instead, they demand from the reader some familiarity with the subject.

This dossier is concluded with two articles on Rosa. In "Rosa Luxemburg and the Permanent Revolution", Savas Michael-Matsas points to the parallels between Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky on the question of the nature of the 1905 revolution in Russia. According to Michael-Matsas, the basic point of convergence between these two giants of revolutionary Marxism was the theory of Permanent Revolution. This theory is usually limited to debates on the relations between democratic and socialist tasks during the revolutionary process of a peripheral country, but in fact has a broader scope, and covers the processes of change and development throughout the bourgeois epoch. Studying the first Russian revolution from this vantage point, Rosa Luxemburg came close to the "heterodox" views of Trotsky – heterodox, of course, compared to the Marxist orthodoxy of the Second International. She described the revolution as a "revolutionary situation in permanence", and recognized a world-historical turning point in it, which marked the beginning of a series of proletarian revolutions in Europe. Michael-Matsas notes that there were not only similarities but also differences between Luxemburg and Trotsky, since Rosa still did not see the Russian revolution solving not only democratic but socialist tasks too. Yet, he emphasizes that today the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg is actual more than ever.

Sungur Savran made a presentation at a conference organized by our Russian comrades in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) that dealt with the use and abuse of Rosa Luxemburg as a critic of the Russian revolution, based on her pamphlet *The Russian Revolution*, written in autumn 1918 in prison. We publish his contribution in the dossier on Rosa Luxemburg. Savran contends that Luxemburg's pamphlet, along with other differences between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, have lately been used to set the latter as an alternative to Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks in the form of "Rosa the democrat" vs. "Lenin the ruthless dictator". The author demolishes the well-entrenched belief that the pamphlet represents the true thinking of Luxemburg by showing, with the help of two books published in 1922, one by Clara Zetkin, prominent German communist, and another by Adolf Warski, a leader of Polish communism, that Luxemburg changed her ideas and aligned her thinking with that of the Bolsheviks on the most sensitive questions in the heat of the German revolution of November 1918.

We hope our readers will enjoy reading our current issue and some will contribute to the journal by submitting manuscripts and actively promoting *Revolutionary Marxism* among broader audiences.

# Friends of Palestine

## Against Imperialism and Zionism



The Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism Platform is fighting Zionism and its lackeys in Turkey since 2018.

It aims to support the Palestinian cause, in the quest for the total destruction of Israel and the foundation of a free, democratic, secular and socialist Palestine from the river to the sea, for Arab and Jewish Palestinians.

It aims to unmask the fake support of the despotism regime in Turkey to the Palestine issue, and to point to its complicity with Zionists by not heeding the boycott, divestment and sanctions call of Palestinians, and by maintaining economic, military and diplomatic relations with Israel.

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