

*Without revolutionary theory
there can be no revolutionary movement.*
V. I. Lenin, *What is to be done?*

Revolutionary Marxism 2019

Special annual English edition

www.devrimeimarksizm.net
contact@devrimeimarksizm.net

Devrimci Marksizm
Üç aylık politik/teorik dergi
(Yerel, süreli yayın)
İngilizce yıllık özel sayı

Sahibi ve Sorumlu Yazı İşleri Müdürü: Şiar Rıřvanoğlu

Yönetim Yeri: Adliye Arkası 3. Sokak Tüzün İşhanı No: 22/2 ADANA

Baskı: Net Copy Center, Özel Baskı Çözümleri, Ömer Avni Mh., İnönü
Cad./
Beytül Malcı Sok. 23/A, 34427 Beyoğlu/İstanbul
Tel: +90-4440708

Yurtdışı Fiyatı: 10 Avro Kıbrıs Fiyatı: 20 TL

Fiyatı: 15 TL (KDV Dahil)

Cover Photo

Soviet troops examining the fallen eagle – the symbol of Nazism (Berlin, 1945).

Revolutionary Marxism 2019

CONTENTS

	In this issue	5
Fascism		
Sungur Savran	The return of barbarism: Fascism in the 21st century (1): Historical roots: classical fascism	15
Mustafa Kemal Coşkun	Is fascism a non-class ideology?	49
Turkey		
Kurtar Tanyılmaz	Turkey's economic crisis	55
Topics in the history of socialism		
Armağan Tulunay	The greatest revolutionary woman in history: Rosa Luxemburg	69
Burak Gürel	The road to capitalist restoration in the People's Republic of China: Maoism, bureaucracy, and mass movements	85
Celia Hart	Welcome ... Trotsky	109
Sungur Savran	Captive Bolshevik: Nâzım Hikmet and Stalinism	119
40th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution		
Praxis Collective	How did the Iranian revolution transmute?	145
Araz Bağban	A revolution between two dictatorships	159
Network of Marxist journals		
Tamás Krausz	The Hungarian Soviet Republic from a century-long perspective	179
Katerina Matsa	October 1917 and the everyday life of the Soviet masses	185
Jock Palfreeman	Marx and human rights	197

In this issue

More than ten years have passed since the collapse of the US financial system and the beginning of the Third Great Depression of capitalism. As the crisis unfolded, geographically and sector-wise, from the US to Europe and to less developed regions, and from the financial sector to the so-called “real economy” spheres, it became clear that a new period had begun. A period that is characterised by huge turmoil in economic, political, ideological, and even military fields.

For bourgeois writers the crisis was an accident, an unwelcome surprise, and would inevitably give way to “recovery”. Once again, history has proved them wrong. The crisis was no accident, and there is no real recovery on the horizon. On the other hand, Marxists had already predicted the crisis and its outcomes. What we are witnessing today is just another confirmation for revolutionary Marxist theory and practice.

First of all, the so-called “globalisation” wave of the last 25 years is indisputably fading away. Nationalism is on the rise, not only economically but also politically and ideologically. This can be seen in Brexit with its ups and downs, in Trump’s “trade wars” against China, the EU and other countries, in the rise of protectionism worldwide, and in the quest of especially the BRICS countries for an alternative to the current structures.

These developments have been accompanied by what we may call “the rise of fascist tendencies”. Especially in Europe, nowadays far right, fascist and proto-fascist movements and parties are achieving significant successes. Marine Le Pen in France, the Golden Dawn in Greece, AfD in Germany, and others in Austria, Sweden, Finland, whether in power or not, are not simply “populist” figures or movements. There are then governments such as the Orbán government in Hungary and the PiS government in Poland (taken up perceptively by Tamás Krausz and Ewa Groszewska in articles published in *Revolutionary Marxism 2017*), which are from

a different political family, but quite repressive in their policies. Overall, fascism is a real threat for humanity once again.

This third issue of *Revolutionary Marxism* went to press just before the elections for the European Parliament, scheduled to be held on 23-26 May 2019. In “normal” times, the balance of power within this –mostly advisory– parliamentary organ may not have drawn the attention of revolutionary Marxists. However, this time it is different: from now on, the president of the European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, will be elected by the 705 members of the European Parliament. And there is the possibility that the successor to Jean-Claude Juncker may be an “extreme right” figure, such as the Italian Lega Nord leader Matteo Salvini.

Moreover, the rise of despotic, fascist or proto-fascist tendencies is not limited to the old continent. From Trump to Duterte in the Philippines, Modi in India, Erdoğan in Turkey, Bolsonaro in Brazil, a new “brown wave” is shaking the world. The connection between capitalism and democracy was already weak, today it is breaking tumultuously. The world is on the verge of barbarism.

Yet this is only half of the story. On the other side of the same coin, we are witnessing the rise of revolutionary activism. In just one year, labouring masses revolted against repressive regimes all around the world. The “yellow vests” revolt in France is perhaps the most conspicuous of these. However, many serious uprisings occurred in other parts of the globe. From Iran to Tunisia, from Romania to Slovakia, from Nicaragua to Armenia, and to Jordan, to Iraq, Haiti, Algeria, Hungary, and Sudan, the masses stood up for revolt, and in some cases managed to overthrow the existing corrupt governments. It is noteworthy that, especially in the Muslim countries, a new phase of the Arab Revolutions of 2011 is developing. Once again, the alternatives are clear: either socialism or barbarism. It is the duty of revolutionary Marxists to organise on national and international levels, to advance the mass movements, and to save humanity from the danger of capitalist-imperialist barbarism. Our journal aims to contribute to these mass struggles.

Our dossier on fascism is obviously inspired by the rise of far right, racist, reactionary movements around the world, movements that are brought together under the misleading term “right-wing populism”. In the first instalment of a longer article, Sungur Savran delves into a comprehensive analysis of what he calls “classical fascism”, that is the international fascist movement with Nazism and Italian fascism at their head in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. By examining that experience, he tries to bring out the distinctive characteristics of fascism as a political movement and a regime. He contends that Nazism is the real laboratory of fascism and dwells on the forms and modalities of its development and later tests the general propositions he develops against the specific example of Italian fascism. His main proposition is that

fascism cannot be understood unless we set it in the context of the historical decline of the capitalist mode of production. According to Savran, fascism should be seen as the hopeless attempt of certain national components of the global capitalist system to save themselves from the profound crisis created by the contradiction on the world scale between the advanced socialisation of the productive forces and the lack of central planning, which is the only socio-economic relationship susceptible to cope with that socialisation, by resorting to an economic policy of a closed economy and autarchy (self-sufficiency), a policy that is entirely at odds with the stage humanity has attained. The insane nationalism/racism and warmongering of fascism are but indispensable aspects of this strategy. In order to implement this strategy, fascism needs to mobilise the petty-bourgeois masses gone astray as a result of the crisis with the purpose of atomising the working class. In short, according to Savran, fascism is distinguished by the reintroduction of barbarism into human history at the highest level of civilisation due to the contradictions engendered by the twilight of the capitalist mode of production. This analysis will then form the ground on the basis of which Savran will take up, in our next issue, the nature and prospects of the family of political movements described as “right-wing populism”. Savran’s article is a companion to a piece that he wrote for *Revolutionary Marxism 2017* upon the election of Donald Trump, titled “The Great Challenge: Winning the Working Class Back from Ideological Irredentism”.

The second article in the dossier on fascism is a short criticism by Mustafa Kemal Coşkun directed to Ernesto Laclau and Michael Mann. First of all, Coşkun touches upon the emphasis of both Trotsky and Poulantzas on the petty bourgeoisie in the analysis of fascism. According to Coşkun, the common aspect of these two analyses, leaving aside the differences, is nothing other than their identifying especially the petty bourgeoisie as the supporters/bearers of fascist ideology. Then, he mentions the post-Marxist Laclau’s objection to this approach. He emphasises that Ernesto Laclau objects to such an approach since the process of unearthing the class belongings of concrete ideologies’ key elements is undertaken completely arbitrarily. Moreover, Laclau argues that none of the elements, which Poulantzas had thought of being characteristic of a class, are such when handled single handedly. After submitting a critique of Laclau, the author asserts that Michael Mann had also made the same mistake - that is, he completely severed the relationship between the social and the class. According to Coşkun, this unavoidably leads either to the outright elimination of class from analyses or to the eclectic articulation of utterly different variables to class, just like Mann does.

In his article “Turkey’s economic crisis”, Kurtar Tanyılmaz aims to reveal the main reasons behind the ongoing and deteriorating economic crises of Turkey in order to reach a realistic picture about the consequences of the crisis and on the

social outcomes for the Turkish working class. According to Tanyılmaz, it is highly possible that the current economic crisis could transform itself from an external debt crisis to a real sector and banking crisis. Tanyılmaz maintains that the permanently increasing current account deficit and external debt of the Turkish economy are the product of the contradictions created by the form of integration of the Turkish bourgeoisie with the world market in times of a world economy in depression and in this sense indicating to structural and chronic problems, not especially related with AKP government period. Nevertheless, he also points out that the AKP government under a strongman-regime is also responsible for the economic crises as a triggering factor, as well as an escalating one, because it has also adopted and implemented the same strategy and market rules but this time with hesitation and resistance because of differing interests within the bourgeoisie class fractions. Tanyılmaz concludes that the force responsible for the crisis is primarily the Turkish bourgeoisie with its different fractions and then the AKP regime and therefore the struggle to be carried out against this crisis should be primarily on a class basis. The price for this crisis should be paid by those who are responsible for it! This struggle must of course contain very broad sections of society, should be in alliance with other oppressed groups, including women, Kurds, Alevis and immigrants, but this common struggle should be aimed at the establishment of a class base, centered on the needs and demands of the working class.

Our third dossier is on a variety of issues of importance for the history of the socialist movement worldwide. The falsifications that Stalinism had heaped upon the development of the international socialist movement, including the tragic Moscow Trials, and the later row between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, involving more calumny and invective than serious political analysis and criticism, combined with other prejudices of all sorts, had already left a contorted picture of the movement, crying out to be set right. The collapse of most attempts at socialist construction, starting with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1989-1991), passing through the internecine struggle in the former Yugoslavia, and culminating in the elemental dissolution of the workers' states under supposedly communist parties in China and Vietnam has brought even more distortion and banal representations of the history of the socialist movement. Witness the two films that were released in Russia on precisely the Centenary of the October Revolution, the greatest emancipatory event of the modern age. *The Demon of Revolution* presented Lenin and the Bolsheviks as the executors of the plans of the German Kaiser to bring down Russian Tzardom through the services of the renegade Marxist, Parvus. And the film *Trotsky* represented one of the greatest revolutionaries of the 20th century, who in the end died a martyr for the cause, as a self-serving, maniacally egotistic, lustful villain. So there is an immense amount of

work to be done in order to set the record straight.

We begin the dossier with an article by Armağan Tulunay on Rosa Luxemburg on the centenary of her assassination at the hands of reactionary forces with the active complicity of the Social Democrats. Rosa was no doubt the greatest woman revolutionary in history. Tulunay discusses the development of her revolutionary character, her struggle against inequality both in her private and political life, her first open and integral theoretical struggle against revisionism that had emerged within and spread out from the German Social Democracy, her debates with Lenin (despite the fact that she is a revolutionary Marxist that cannot be separated from him), her being the vanguard of internationalism against the imperialist war and the social-chauvinistic attitudes assumed in this war, her life as a totality of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice, and finally, her tragic death for the case of humanity and communism. Tulunay reminds us that, the last words of Rosa Luxemburg's last writing ("I was, I am, I shall be!") that came to be identified with her, were written not for her own self but for revolution. Tulunay's article, by demonstrating Rosa's revolutionary Marxist theory and practice, responds to those who try to put her against Lenin and Trotsky as their democratic critic.

In his paper entitled "The road to capitalist restoration in the People's Republic of China", Burak Gürel traces the roots of capitalist restoration in the Mao era. Gürel defines the character of the pre-1979 China as a workers' state and examines its historical achievements. He then investigates the political power and material privileges of the bureaucracy. After critically analyzing Mao's ideas on bureaucracy and capitalist restoration, the paper explains the development and defeat of the anti-bureaucratic opposition before and during the early phase of the Cultural Revolution. The second part of Gürel's paper (to be published in *Revolutionary Marxism* 2020) will focus on the later episodes of the Cultural Revolution (1967-1969) and other turning points on the PRC's path towards capitalist restoration.

From China, we pass on to Cuba, one of the last remaining workers' states in the world and no doubt the one that is worthiest of attention and support against imperialist ill will and the prospect of self-afflicted capitalist restoration. We are publishing an article by a Cuban author of quite an acclaim at least in Latin America. The late Celia Hart, whose parents were both heroes of the Cuban revolution, became a Trotskyist as a result of her disappointment while she was studying physics in East Germany in the early 1980s. Here she "welcomes" Trotsky and tries to bring out those aspects of his Marxism that are also present in the thinking and practice of Ernesto Che Guevara, the great hero of the Cuban revolution, second only to Fidel Castro. Celia Hart is categorical as to the necessity of returning to Trotsky for the future of socialism.

Our last piece delving into the history of the socialist movement focuses on

the often neglected militant life of Nâzım Hikmet, the world-famous Turkish poet of the 20th century. Nâzım, as the Turkish left collectively has called him, was a member of the Communist Party of Turkey (the TKP) from his youthful days all the way to his death in 1963. Established in 1920, the TKP became very early on a Stalinist party through and through, tail-ending the Kemalist wing of the Turkish bourgeoisie for decades. As Nâzım was a member of that party, received opinion, both in Turkey and internationally, perceived him to be a Stalinist and a sympathiser of Kemalism. In a contribution that runs against the current, Sungur Savran brings out an entirely different picture. He dwells on two very important episodes in Nâzım's life. In the first instance, Nâzım appears as the leader of a left opposition in Turkish communism between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, even going so far as to form a rival party to the official TKP, a party which has gone down in history under the label Opposition TKP (1929-1936). He is ferociously attacked by the Comintern, by then firmly under Stalinist leadership. The second episode comes in the 1950s while he is on exile in the Soviet Union: he writes a devastating critique of the Stalinist bureaucratic system in the form of a play (*Did Ivan Ivanovitch Exist or Not?*) in 1955, even before the famous 20th Congress and continues his criticism of Stalin through his poetry. His visit to Havana in midsummer 1961 awakes in him a new revolutionary zeal that lies entirely outside of the official Soviet view of the world. Given the dearth of historical documentation, Savran does not reach definitive answers, but the questions he raises need to be answered if the history of Turkish communism is to be written in a manner loyal to historical fact.

Forty years ago, in February 1979, the Shah's regime in Iran, perhaps the major stronghold of imperialism in the Middle East since World War II, was brought down by a massive revolution in which millions participated, from the well-off Bazaar merchant to the oil workers and the poor. However, this veritably popular revolution was soon hijacked by one of the most reactionary leaderships any revolution in history fell prey to. Our dossier on the Iranian revolution, containing two articles by Iranian Marxists, is an attempt to come to grips with this paradox, one that has vexed Marxists for decades now. That the question is relevant for other countries with a majority Muslim population was amply proved by the parallel rise of the popular revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia in the heyday of the first spell of the 21st century Arab revolution between 2011-2013, when both revolutions might have been lost to the Ikhwan al-Muslimin had it not been for the resistance of the masses (without forgetting, in the case of Egypt, the fact that it was neither the revolution nor Ikhwan, but Bonapartist counter-revolution that came on top). So, the question may now be generalised: not only in Iran, but probably in all the countries of the majority Muslim world, proletarian revolution in the future will only be victorious not only by successfully defeating the ancient regime, but also through successfully

grappling with Islamist movements, winning the hearts and minds of the poor and labouring masses from them, and eliminating the danger that emanates from their triumph over the revolution. (On the rise of the Islamist movement and its relationship to other revolutions in the Muslim majority countries, the article by Burak Gürel, “Islamism: A Comparative-Historical Overview” in *Revolutionary Marxism 2017* and that by Sungur Savran, “Revolution as the Driving Force of Modern Middle East History” in *Revolutionary Marxism 2018* may be consulted.)

We are firmly of the opinion that the two accounts given here provide very interesting clues of the contradictory nature of the forces that went into forging one of the greatest revolutions of the 20th century and lay the basis for a future discussion, at a more concrete level, of both the mistakes of the Iranian left, which they do discuss, and also the correct line to be followed both before and during the revolution.

The first article is by an Iranian communist collective that publishes the journal *Praxis*. It provides a long-term Marxist view of the trajectory of the development of Iranian capitalism under the Pahlavi dynasty and under the yoke of imperialism especially of the post-Second World War period, with special emphasis on the land reform of Mohammed Reza Shah and the miserable state of poverty and backwardness the Iranian peasantry suffers throughout the period. The article accords great weight to the historical analysis of Bijan Jazani, an early martyr of the Iranian revolutionary movement, in bringing forth the salient characteristics of the development of capitalism in Iran. Turning then to the events of 1978-1979 that precipitated the fall of the Shah and the rise of Khomeini, the article dwells on both the activities of the Khomeini team while he resided in Paris and the meeting held in January between the representatives of imperialism and the Khomeini movement. All in all, in explaining the turn of the revolution in the Islamist direction, the emphasis is on the part that these relations established through these contacts.

The Iranian revolution that toppled Pahlavi’s dictatorship in 1979 was the last mass revolution of the twentieth century, alongside the Sandinista revolution in distant Nicaragua. This revolution is both a tremendous success and a great disappointment. In our second piece on Iran, Araz Bağban, an Iranian revolutionary Marxist based in Turkey, takes up this paradoxical nature of the revolution. The earth-shaking events of 1978-1979 destroyed the seemingly unshakable fortress of imperialism in the Middle East and broke down the imperialism-designed-order in the region. However, in a short span of time, a religious dictatorship replaced the Pahlavi dictatorship. Nevertheless, Bağban points out that the 1979 Revolution was not an “Islamic revolution”. The driving force of the revolution was not Islamic revival or Shiite self-awareness. It was a product of a revolt coming from a common will of a people that suffered from deep social inequalities. The 1979 Revolution

reached a triumph at the end of an intense period of mass demonstrations that continued for a year, but the foundations of this victory were laid many years before. In order to understand this revolution, it is necessary to start a long journey like the people who made it. Observing how the Pahlavi dictatorship was born and how Iran's society changed along with it reveals the depth of the revolutionary movement, which turned into flames from sparks within a year.

With this issue, our third, we are making another stride forward. Readers will remember that *Revolutionary Marxism* is the annual English edition of a journal, *Devrimci Marksizm*, based in Istanbul, that has been published in Turkish since 2006 (it is now at its issue number 38, coming out in May, immediately after *Revolutionary Marxism 2019*). The concern that lay behind the publication of the English annual version was related to our understanding that, by its very nature, Marxism is an international and internationalist school of theory and practice. We have been fighting, in this day and age when Marxism has long been and is still constantly being declared dead, to show its relevance for the present world and for future generations. But this effort is not relevant only for Turkish speakers. And therefore we have decided to make what for us is a titanic effort, given our limited financial and human resources, and reach out to the rest of the world in the most commonly understood language in the world for the moment.

The new stride forward in our effort of internationalising the spread of Marxist ideas is to have established a network of Marxist theoretical journals with other journals in other countries. For the moment we are creating this network with journals from our own immediate region, i.e. the Middle East and the Balkans: *Epanastitiki Marksistiki Epitheorisi* from Greece, *Dversia* from Bulgaria, and *Praxis* from Iran. The network is yet in its infancy: we will be exchanging articles hopefully on a regular basis. However, we aim both for a deepening and for a widening of this initiative. First, we hope to do more with our present partners: a candidate activity that presents itself immediately is common workshops and conferences. But further on we are planning to spread our net wider to other Marxist journals of theoretical orientation, not only in the region, but all around the world. The ultimate aim would be, in a rather utopian vein, to create an "International" of Marxist theory, so to speak.

Let us add that we regard this as an antidote to the excessive priority that journals published in Anglo-Saxon countries gain simply because they are published in the *lingua franca* of the times, English. We also have to publish our annual issue in English simply to be able to speak to Marxists of other climes, but at least the presence of such venues will compensate, if only partially, for the inordinate and one-sided attention to theoretical work done in the Anglo-Saxon countries. We also happen to think that those of our Anglo-Saxon fellow Marxists who do not

understand the problem we have posed in this last paragraph are rather blind to the impact of cultural imperialism in our Marxist camp and recommend to them a more thoughtful reflection on the issue. We finish the announcement regarding the Network of Marxist Journals by calling out to those Marxist journals who share our concerns to join our network in the future.

The first round of exchange of articles with journals being published in other countries involves, in this issue, three countries and one individual author. The network dossier really begins with an article in the dossier on Iran. Of the two articles there, the first is by the Communist Collective *Praxis*, which is as we have pointed out a part of the Network. (The second, as we have already indicated, was written by an Iranian comrade based in Turkey.)

The second article that belongs to the network, the first one we have included under this dossier, is by an individual Marxist in Hungary. As the readers of *Revolutionary Marxism* are well aware, our Hungarian comrade Tamás Krausz is a regular contributor to this journal. Tamás is a leading member of the collective that has been bringing out *Eszmélet*, a prestigious journal of Marxism in Hungary, but here his contribution is in an individual capacity. In this article, he evaluates the achievements and the fall of the early Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919. He states that the memory of the 133-day long Soviet Republic has been systematically dishonored in the past three decades. But that was a glorious memory, since the masses had become an independent political actor during the experience. Moreover, he notes that “The Hungarian revolutionary development inspired great thinkers and artists such as the worldwide famous Marxist philosopher, György Lukács or Lajos Kassák, who was a great figure of revolutionary art.” He then evaluates the formation and fall of the Council Republic, by comparing it to the Russian case, and drawing on Lenin’s explanations for the period. According to Krausz, the councils tried to actualize “the demand for social justice, collective ownership, free education and health care, the abolition of class oppression and exploitation.” Towards this goal, some concrete measures were taken such as the “eight-hour workday, the reduction of flat rents, the moving of proletarian families to the large bourgeois flats, the increase of wages by 10-80%, the expansion of social security, the defence of children and trainees and the declaration of female emancipation.” Moreover, “The Hungarian Soviet Republic also abolished all forms of the oppression of minorities, it recognized the rights of ethnic minorities, it banned prostitution, it established the first sanatorium for lung diseases, it introduced free entrance to Margitsziget, and the list can be long continued.” We can and must learn from that valuable experience of those 133 days, and it is “our duty to preserve and continue the positive, humanist legacy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which was the first Hungarian experiment of a socialist revolution and a social self-governance.” Let us

add that this article by Krausz is the text of a contribution sent to the international meeting organised in Istanbul on 10 February on the Centenary of the Communist International organised by the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) of Turkey.

In a similar vein, Katerina Matsa, A Greek Marxist, a psychiatrist of the first order in her country, analyses, in her “October 1917 and the everyday life of the Soviet masses”, the various aspects of the “cultural October” of the early 1920s in the Soviet Union. This was a time when, despite the enormous hardships including civil war, famine, and disease, the Soviet people demonstrated striking achievements in all areas of social life, especially the arts. As is well known, the “Russian avant-garde” was a product of these years. Matsa gives examples from various fields such as theatre, poetry, music, and painting. Most importantly, the everyday life of the masses was changing considerably. According to Matsa, “By introducing a utopian surplus in all pores of society, the October Revolution made revolution itself a component of everyday life.” Matsa also emphasizes the flourishing of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union during these years. However, by the end of the twenties, everything had turned for the worse: “The Stalinist bureaucracy imposed itself through the containment of the process of social creation and the enthusiasm of the masses.” She concludes that, “As long as the Stalinist bureaucracy gained power, exploiting the isolation of the Soviet republic by imperialism, the process of development of a new Soviet culture was being halted. As a result, the cultural movements gradually lost their autonomy and became institutionalized.” However, for Matsa, the “cultural October” of the early 1920s is not just history to be told, but a very important experience to gain inspiration from.

Our last article in the network dossier is written by Jock Palfreeman, a Marxist of Australian origin, now in prison in Bulgaria for defending a man against neo-Nazis attacking him because of his skin color. Palfreeman’s paper, “Marx and human rights”, is a reply to a Bulgarian liberal human rights activist, Krassimir Kanev. According to Palfreeman, the widespread liberal claim that Marx was against human rights is simply not correct, and depends on a superficial reading of Marx’s texts. In fact, Marx had thought that the liberal-bourgeois version of the human rights discourse was very limiting, and was serving to protect the rights of capital, not of people. As *Revolutionary Marxism*, we agree with the main arguments of Palfreeman’s paper. However, we have serious reservations about and objections to his own account of Bolshevism, superficial in our opinion if not outright false. In proceeding in this manner, Palfreeman is in fact disconnecting Bolshevism from Marxism, and identifying it with Stalinism – a procedure that reproduces the errors of his liberal opponent and plays directly into his hands.

The return of barbarism: Fascism in the 21st century

(1) Historical roots: classical fascism

Sungur Savran

It is no longer easy to deny that fascism has become once again a topical issue threatening to shape the future of humanity. Not long ago, even a decade or two, the term fascism was used and abused to characterise all kinds of regime under the sun that displayed any type or degree of repressive proclivities. Yet no one imagined that a regime akin to the ones ruled by Hitler or Mussolini with their notorious savagery would in the near future become a realistic prospect. Today things have been altered radically.

From the United States and Brazil through the entire European continent all the way to India and the Philippines a plethora of political movements and governments have arisen that are variously referred to as populist, ultra- or far-right, racist, nationalist, authoritarian, autocratic, and exceptionally fascist or neo-fascist. It is ironic that the same people who, in the past, labelled any kind of repressive government “fascist” rather than characterising them more correctly

in most cases as a military, Bonapartist, Caesarist etc. dictatorship, now refrain from using the epithet fascist for the entire family of movements and, more and more, governments that form a nebulous constellation in the horizon, threatening the future of humanity. And yet, since almost everyone is viscerally aware of the lurking danger, the whole world is also asking the inevitable question: “is this fascism or not?”

We have already studied and analysed this newly rising threat to humanity in some previous articles. The most comprehensive of these in the English language is the article that was published in this journal in its 2017 annual number.¹ This was written immediately after the election of Donald Trump in November 2016. It analysed his politics in connection with a host of other movements, in particular the whole family of European parties extending from Marine Le Pen’s Front National (now Rassemblement National) and UKIP during the Brexit referendum all the way to Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary and Pravy Front in Ukraine. We have also published several articles in Turkish on the same issue, comparing these movements to Erdoğan’s regime in Turkey, with respect to their commonalities, as well as their sharp differences (which lead us to characterise Erdoğan’s regime not as fascist, but “Rabiist”, a form of despotism rooted in the Islamic predilections of his movement, the AKP).²

We have been, for some time, characterising this group of movements as “proto-fascist”. Let us quickly explain what we mean by this. We think that these formations are transitory and transitional forms that act as the channel for the rise of fascism in Europe and elsewhere. On the one hand, they share many of the traits of fascism, in particular that of putting racism and nationalism at the service of directing the grievances of the working classes not towards capitalism through class struggle but to all that is foreign and alien to the “national community”. Thus they strive to replace divisions on the basis of class by national unity among the autochthonous population and chauvinistic hostility to all that is “alien”, from immigrants to Islam. This immediately makes them candidates for being classified as fascism, since this is perhaps the constitutive element in the formation of classical fascism. Preliminary inspection also shows that these movements are quite strong within the petty-bourgeoisie and other middle strata of society, which also indicates a close similarity between these movements and fascist parties of the era of classical fascism.

However, it is also clear that these parties lack some of the distinguishing characteristics of classical fascism. Among these one stands out very clearly:

1 Sungur Savran, “The Great Challenge: Winning the Working Class Back from Ideological Irre-
dentism”, *Revolutionary Marxism* 2017.

2 For the meaning of our concept “Rabiism”, see in English Sungur Savran, “Turkey: Atlanticism
versus Rabiism”, <https://socialistproject.ca/2016/07/b1286/>, 29 July 2016.

very few of these movements have built structures similar to the paramilitary organisations that are the hallmark of the classical fascist parties. In fact, those that wield at least a minimal kind of militia are also more overtly fascistic in their discourse and in their usage of fascist symbols, the cases of the Golden Dawn, Jobbik and Pravy Front being the more conspicuous ones.

Our assessment is this: this group of movements are early or precocious forms of fascism that already have the substance of the historical movement but not the organisational forms and weapons of a fully-fledged fascism. In their dialectical development they may, even in the near future, metamorphose into fully-fledged fascist parties. They have the tendency to do so. If political circumstances require and/or allow them to undergo that kind of metamorphosis, then they are very likely to accomplish this. So we are face to face with the rising threat of fascism once again.

This article has been devised to ground this whole thinking in the historical analysis of fascism in its classical variety. We provide an overall analysis of classical fascism of the interwar period of the twentieth century, in particular in its German and Italian varieties. This way we can come to a general understanding of what fascism is and discover, in particular, its place in the historical development of capitalism. This will make it possible for us to study, in subsequent work, the current situation and in particular what we call the proto-fascist family of parties, in particular in Europe, in the light shed by our analysis of classical fascism here.

The main thesis of the article in its entirety will be that fascism is a form of barbarism that is thrown up by capitalism at a certain stage of its development. We will start out by showing that the historic decline of capitalism takes a cyclical form manifesting itself in profound crises called “great depressions”. Fascism is a product of, and an actor within, the drama played out in those great depressions. It presents itself as a solution where none exists and therefore leads to barbaric methods of handling the problem. Thus, we submit, fascism is itself a cyclical phenomenon closely connected to the death throes of capitalism. The recent rise of what we call proto-fascist movements is a clear indication of this cyclical nature.

Let us then proceed to elaborate on and substantiate these ideas.

The cyclical form of capitalist decline

This may be expressed in simple form through three distinct propositions.

Proposition 1: After having developed the productive forces of humanity at a revolutionary tempo, at a certain stage of its development, the capitalist mode of production becomes a barrier to further development. As a result, the epoch of capitalist decline begins.

As is familiar to most readers, the proposition summarised here is a cornerstone of the materialist conception of history that Marx most clearly enunciates in the Preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* published in

1859. Marx formulated the proposition that each mode of production raises, at a certain stage of its development, barriers in the way of the further development of the productive forces by generalising from his observations on the epoch of transition from feudalism to capitalism and expressing it as a general law of transition from one mode of production to another. No doubt, this transition does not occur automatically, but requires the intervention of class struggle and politics. When this law becomes effective, an **era of social revolution** sets in.³

Capital was written with a view to demonstrate that this law is valid for capitalism as well. As opposed to the efforts of bourgeois thinkers to present capitalism as a mode of production that will survive forever, *Capital* purports to prove scientifically that this law applies to capitalism as much as it does to other modes of production.⁴ In an article in English, published in the first issue of *World Revolution/Revolución Mundial*, we strove to demonstrate that the scientific aim of Marx in writing *Capital* was to show how the capitalist mode of production prepares its own demise. We explained there in detail that the fundamental law of motion of capital implies a vast level of socialisation of the productive forces, that private appropriation poses a barrier in the way of this socialisation, and that the contradiction between this socialisation in the productive forces and private property in the means of production places the abolition of the latter on the agenda of history.⁵

Proposition 2: The imperialist stage is the period when the socialisation of the productive forces has reached an advanced level, when it has come into contradiction with the capitalist mode of production, and when the age of socialist revolutions that create the dynamics of the elimination of capitalism has set in.

Lenin's work *Imperialism*⁶ signals the question of socialisation loud and clear. With the help of many an example, Lenin affirms that production in the imperialist stage is based upon socialised productive forces and that this renders socialism a necessity. That is in fact why the subtitle reads "The Highest Stage of Capitalism". The next stage in historical progression is thus socialism, without any intermediary stages in between.

This aspect of Lenin's theory of imperialism has been neglected in favour of the emphasis on the importance of monopolies or the export of capital or the bellicose nature of imperialism. In our own work, we have striven to explain that

3 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, New York: International Publishers, 1970, p. 20-21.

4 See in particular Chapter 32 of Volume 1 of *Capital*: "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation".

5 "Das Kapital: The Book for Communism", *World Revolution/Revolución Mundial*, No. 1, Autumn 2018, pp. 117-135.

6 V.I.Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, v. 22, pp. 185-360.

the real significance of *Imperialism* lies, beyond the famous five characteristics, in Lenin's effort to situate imperialism, in Chapter 10 of the book, within the historical development of capitalism and that the socialisation of the productive forces is decisive in defining the place of imperialism in this history.⁷

When the second proposition is combined with the first, it becomes clear that the age of transition from capitalism to communism has already started, which of course implies that the age of socialist revolutions has also set in. This second point was confirmed by the transformation of the Russian revolution of 1917 into a socialist revolution only one year after the book *Imperialism* was published and later by the revolutions that occurred in the footsteps of October.

Proposition 3: The conversion of private property into a barrier in the way of the further development of the productive forces does not manifest itself in an absolute manner. It appears in the form of the aggravation of the economic crises that are a law-like form of capitalist development, economic crises that grow over into great depressions that are ever more threatening.

This third proposition is the aspect of the entire thesis of capitalist decline that has been understood with the greatest of difficulties, one may even venture to say has not been understood in general. The widespread perception is that as the productive forces enter into a contradiction with the relations of production, capitalism rises as an **absolute** barrier in the way of the productive forces, i.e. technology, formation of skills, productivity of labour, quality of the soil, air, the environment etc. The "barrier" thesis is interpreted to imply that capitalism will no longer be the basis of inventions and that scientific advancement and technological innovation will be arrested. We are of the opinion that not a single line to this end can be found in the voluminous writings of Marx and Engels.

Roughly a decade ago, in the immediate aftermath of the event universally dubbed "global financial crisis" experienced in 2008, we contended that the "barrier" thesis manifests itself in periodic or cyclical form, that for the "barrier" to become effective, and not simply a latent tendency, a profound crisis needs to wreak havoc in the world economy and that the financial crash of 2008 was the harbinger of the onset of a new period best labelled, we think, as the Third Great Depression.⁸ It is these great depressions, which last for decades, as opposed to ordinary economic crises, that bring out into the open the truth that capitalist private property has become a barrier against the development of the productive forces. The world economy has undergone a vast level of socialisation and each country, each unit of production, each economic agency has become indissolubly

⁷ See, in Turkish, Sungur Savran, *Kod Adı Küreselleşme. 21. Yüzyılda Emperyalizm*, 2. Basım, İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2011, Bölüm 4: "Emperyalist Aşamanın Tarihsel Anlamı", p. 92-99.

⁸ Sungur Savran "Capitalist Crisis or the Crisis of Capitalism?", E. Ahmet Tonak (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on the World Bank and the IMF*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2011.

attached to the others. But market regulation, indispensably linked to private property in the means of production, has dragged these units that are now linked to each other through numerous ties into a chaotic crisis. Capitalism can no longer cope with this state of things.

The fact that within the Third Great Depression fascism has also raised its head once again suggests that this political movement is itself a product and an expression of the profound crises tied to the historical decline of capitalism. The fact that fascism once again presents a potential to become a mass movement, albeit under the form of proto-fascism, suggests that this phenomenon itself is a product and an expression of the cyclical depressions connected to the historic decline of capitalism. The Second Great Depression of the 1930s gave us what might be called the “classical” age of fascism with German Nazism and Italian fascism being the most prominent examples. The Third Great Depression, for its part, has so far led to the rise to power of fascism, if only as a coalition partner, in several countries of Europe (Ukraine, Austria, Italy) and opened up the possibility for a fellow traveller to reach the most important office internationally, the White House. This is no coincidence. Fascism is an expression of the absence, within the system, of a solution at this critical juncture that capitalism has brought humanity, an imaginary solution and a real barbarism.

Methodological propositions

Before we move on to our study of fascism, we will add two methodological propositions to the three substantial ones summarised above.

Methodological proposition 1: Fascism is an international phenomenon and its study should proceed from an analysis of the overall international situation.

Fascism develops in waves and has an international character. If the above substantial propositions are true, then these two properties follow from them. Fascism comes in waves because the historic motion and the decline of capitalism are both cyclical. The rise of fascism, it now transpires, has been a product of the crises of the world economy growing over to great depressions. And since great depressions are, alongside the historical decline of capitalism, worldwide phenomena, fascism itself needs to be studied as a world phenomenon.

There are two implications to be made explicit: First, the fundamental causes of the rise of fascism should be sought not in national peculiarities, but in the character of the overall world situation. Needless to say, inequalities of national development are a part of this overall world situation. The uneven development of a totality is but a law of dialectics. But, for instance, it would be misguided to look for the fundamental cause of the rise of fascism in Italy in the archaic socio-economic nature of the *Mezzogiorno* akin to pre-capitalist relations or the primary moving force of Nazism in the Prussian militarist tradition. We are not saying that these did not have any part to play in the success of fascism in these two countries.

We are saying that these can only act as auxiliary or second-order causes.

The second implication is that national peculiarities are, at a general level, instrumental in determining the diversities between the fascist currents and regimes that are born in the different countries. No doubt, the question of the *Mezzogiorno* rendered the agricultural aspect of Italian fascism more prominent than in the Nazi case; no doubt, the reactionary trends in the armed forces bequeathed by the Prussian military tradition made it possible for Hitler to rise under the protection of army officers. We are not saying that fascism will emerge as an identical movement in each and every country. What we are saying is that the determining characteristics of fascism can only be studied on the basis of the general overall situation in the world at large.

Methodological proposition 2: Among the concrete forms fascism takes at the national level, some reflect the decisive characteristics of fascism more directly and loyally, while others exhibit only certain of these fundamental characteristics, and still others share none of these characteristics and hence cannot be labelled as fascist, but are nonetheless close enough to share a kind of kinship with it. If we go even further, some repressive state forms, while not being fascist, may, however, be functioning as fascistoid regimes under the hegemony of fascism.

What is said here obviously bears the mark of what was earlier said about the rise of fascism in waves and the international character of the fascist phenomenon. Reactionary and repressive movements and regimes born of the dynamics of a certain age are not necessarily all fascist in the full sense of the term. But after fascism begins to mark that age and becomes decisive as an international phenomenon, these may themselves turn into appendages of fascism. Examples abound from the 1930s, the decade that served as the hotbed of classical fascism. It is quite controversial which among the repressive and reactionary regimes of that period were fascist and which not. Germany and Italy were indubitably fascist. Other countries are added by many authors. For Michael Mann, Austria, Hungary and Romania were also ruled by fascist regimes at a certain stage.⁹ Trotsky is of the opinion that the Pilsudski regime in Poland bore the characteristics of fascism.¹⁰ However many of the countries eligible to be characterised as fascist in the Europe of the 1930s are just that, there will always remain others that were not themselves fascist but came under the hegemony of the fascist camp, more particularly of Nazi Germany. Take Franco in Spain: His was not a fully-fledged fascist regime, but represents the diktat of a home-grown reactionary regime. At the opposite end, the France of Marshall Pétain or the Norway of Quisling bear the marks of

9 Michael Mann, *Faşistler* [original title: *Fascists*], Istanbul: İletişim, original year of publication: 2004, p. 25.

10 Leon Trotsky, "The Only Road", *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971, p. 282.

the Nazi occupation forces rather than the dynamics of class struggle in those countries. However, despite these differences, all three stand out as regimes that form an integral part of the fascist bloc of countries during World War II, although one cannot characterise them as fascist in the full sense of the word if viewed solely from the angle of their domestic dynamics.

The same methodological principle has another implication. If the fascist regime displays divergences from country to country, if fascist regimes in certain countries manifest the fundamental character of fascism in a clearer light than others, then the study of fascism should, at a preliminary stage, be conducted on the basis of a single country or several countries, rather than “taking an average” of the whole gamut of countries that may be considered as fascist. For the 1930s, the country that is most fitting for this task is Nazi Germany and only in second place can we put the fascist Italy of Mussolini. In 1932, Trotsky starts his extremely important brochure “What Next?” with the following lines:

Capitalism in Russia proved to be the weakest link in the chain of imperialism, because of its extreme backwardness. In the present crisis, German capitalism reveals itself as the weakest link for the diametrically opposite reason: precisely because it is the most advanced capitalist system in the conditions of the European impasse. As the productive forces of Germany become more and more highly geared, the more dynamic power they gather, the more they are strangled within the state system of Europe—a system that is akin to the “system” of cages within an impoverished provincial zoo.¹¹

Germany, that is to say one of the two giants of the period that had been developing industry at a breathless pace (the other being the United States), is separated from the rest of the major European countries by its lack (or rather paucity) of colonies. That is the main reason why its shadow was cast over the two world wars. Next to Germany, Italy pales into insignificance. Hence, it was in Germany that fascism, that deadly contradiction of capitalism, found its foremost expression.

So in the same way as Marx studied the capitalist mode of production with reference to England, where capitalism had assumed the most advanced and pure forms in the mid-nineteenth century, in the same way as the Soviet Union should be the centre of the study of the experience of the construction of socialism in the twentieth century as the locus of most advanced and pure forms of this kind of society, so should Germany of the time be considered as the central territory of the fascist experience so far in history.

In this article, while tracing the contours of the classical age of fascism, we will

¹¹ Leon Trotsky, “What Next?”, *Struggle Against Fascism*, p. 142 (for bibliographic information see next footnote).

dwell first and foremost on the characteristics of Nazi Germany and only later turn to the Italian experience to see if this latter instance corroborates or else refutes the analysis that we have carried out.¹²

Fascism as an escape route from the historical cul-de-sac of capitalism

Fascism emerges in capitalist society under the conditions created by a very grave economic crisis. In Germany, the main laboratory for the classical period of fascism, the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazi party reveals in clear terms the part played by economic crisis in making this possible. The Nazi party was born as a reaction to the revolutionary process that started in Germany in November 1918 and led to the foundation of a short-lived Soviet Republic in Bavaria in 1919. The party gained strength very rapidly between 1919 and 1923. The draconian conditions posed to Germany in the Versailles Treaty signed in the aftermath of the war and the skilful manner in which Hitler harped on this question had a big part to play in this rapid ascent. An additional factor is the *Freikorps* militia established by the war veterans after the Great War, which created a natural environment in which the Nazis and similar movements flourished (and we will see below that a similar process was experienced in Italy). However, the Nazi party declined as rapidly as it rose after the famous failed “Beerhall Putsch” in Munich in 1923. However, it was not the failure of the “Beerhall Putsch” that led to the lack of interest shown in Hitler and the Nazis between 1923 and 1929. The damage created by this was overcome swiftly as the state took this reactionary movement under its wing and released Hitler from prison after a short while. The real reason is that Germany was stabilised with the support extended by international powers, in particular the United States, in the wake of the hyperinflation of 1923, this latter year also marking the end of the revolutionary wave in Germany that had started in late 1918. As long as economic and political stability reigned, the Nazis were condemned to a marginal existence, fighting barely for survival, far from their earlier stellar political success.

The resurgence of Hitler and the Nazis came in the wake of the deep economic crisis, better known as the Great Depression, which started with the New York

¹² While providing information on Germany and Italy, we will not cite sources each time, unless it is a question of very delicate data, a special interpretation or quotations. So we think it would be best to cite our sources at the outset. On Germany, we base our analysis on the following sources: Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, London: Penguin Books, 2009; Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015; Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *The Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism*, London: Free Association Books, 1987; Daniel Guérin, *Fascisme et grand capital (Sur le fascisme II)*, Paris: Petite Collection Maspero, 1971; Arthur Rosenberg, “Fascism as a Mass-Movement”, *Historical Materialism* 20.1, (2012), pp. 144-189.

stock market crash of 1929. The same movement that had marked time and waged a struggle for survival between 1923 and 1929 now displayed a meteoric rise and won the hearts and minds of millions of people and in the space of little more than three years, rose to power on 30th January 1933. It should be noted that when conditions became ripe, fascism was able to rise to power with dazzling speed. In Italy as well, a small party was able to grab power in the space of two years. It is true that the Nazis needed a little more time than the fascists of Italy, but, on the other hand, they were able to establish their absolute monopoly of power in much speedier fashion than Italian fascism, almost within a year after coming formally to power, even less if one takes into consideration the capacity to control the levers of power after the notorious *Reichstag* fire, whereas for Mussolini the attainment of absolute control had to wait for four years.

This succession of clearly demarcated periods, i.e. the quick success of the period 1919-1923, the stagnation of the period 1923-1929, and the meteoric rise to power between 1929-1933 under conditions of the Great Depression brings home almost under laboratory conditions the fact that fascism is a virus that flourishes in an environment of crisis, in particular of economic depression. A social phenomenon of world historical proportions like fascism certainly has a complex web of causes. But to reduce it to its bare outline, its primary, major cause is the horrible social crisis born of the Great Depression. All of the fascist movements that were developing and gaining strength around the same time in the different countries of Europe (Austria, Romania, France, Spain etc.) were likewise products of the Great Depression.

None of these managed to come to power before Nazi occupation of the respective countries because it was in Germany that the combination between the post-war social crisis and the onset of the economic crisis, on the one hand, and the contradiction between Germany's economic power and its position in the imperialist hierarchy, on the other, came together to make the German crisis more profound than that of any other country. It might be in order to elaborate somewhat on this last point.

That which rendered Italy and Germany more fragile than all the other major capitalist-imperialist powers first under the circumstances of the post-war situation and then, later and more importantly, in the context of the Great Depression, that which caused a more severe disruption in these countries than elsewhere was the fact that these countries were late in attaining national unification (1866 in Italy, 1871 in Germany) and hence achieving a full take-off in the domain of the development of capitalism, all this resulting in their retardation in the domain of acquiring colonies. Having lost World War I and being burdened now moreover with the humiliation of Versailles, Germany was preparing, so to speak, for fascism and the Second World War. However, without the Great Depression the conditions for what happened later would not have matured.

The economic programme of Nazism offered as a panacea to German society torn apart under the stress of economic crisis pointed in a direction that was an alternative to the so far normal development of capitalism. If we are to formulate this alternative in terms that would be more comprehensible for today's reader, the economic programme of Nazism rose on the basis of a type of self-sufficiency (or in more technical economic jargon, autarchy) as opposed to globalism. We will consciously refrain from simplifying our task here. In the aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash, under the conditions of the Great Depression, the whole world had moved away from globalism. France had turned its face to the so-called Gold Bloc, Britain to the Commonwealth; in the United States, the New Deal of Roosevelt rendered, from capital's point of view, developments within the domestic market of that country more important than the world market. From Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina etc.) to Turkey and Egypt, underdeveloped countries opened up to new horizons making use of industrial policy and even planning to develop a domestic market for industrial goods in the morose environment of the depression where every country was trying to save its skin.

All this was true and yet the orientation in the economic policy of the Nazis had a **qualitatively different character** from these. To understand why, it would be useful to look at the two different periods of the economic policy pursued by the Nazi government. The autarchy orientation was not adopted wholesale at one go. The first three years of the Nazis in power is distinguished from the period before Hitler seized power by its Keynesianism *avant la lettre*. The policies that the Nazis started to implement immediately in order to raise the level of employment, in particular public investments, the construction of expressways, the establishment of Volkswagen as a state company etc. really represented a different orientation from the economic orthodoxy of the time, which had a marked bias for private enterprise and a deep-rooted prejudice against state intervention in the functioning of the market.

But it was this very orientation that lifted German capital out of the deep stagnation the economy found itself after 1929. It was in line, in particular, with the interests of the powerful metallurgical industry of Germany. Economic policy had been entrusted to someone outside the original Nazi cadres, a certain Dr. Schacht, who had served as the governor of the Central Bank under the previous regime. His main partner was the iron and steel giant Krupp. Despite its quasi-Keynesian orientation, economic policy under Schacht paid due attention to the sensibilities of the globalist wing of German big capital, serving the needs of exporters, attributing great importance to international capital flows, which had saved Germany from its 1923 hyperinflation, refraining from alienating the American financier class, and for this very reason trying to curb the policy of repression against the Jews, lest this damage Germany's reputation on the international arena.

The great turnaround came under the guidance of Hitler himself. This went

so far that the new draft programme, called the “Four-Year Plan”, which aimed for a shake-up of economic policy, was kept secret from Schacht! This plan was devised to restructure the economy in accordance with the needs of an armaments and war policy that stipulated the military revival of Germany, largely disarmed by the Versailles Treaty. The new strongman of the economy was one of the lieutenants of Hitler, Hermann Goering, who had been appointed to the powerful position of leader of the armaments industry. It should not be deduced from all this that the Nazis had shifted to a policy that ignored the interests of the German big bourgeoisie, doggedly pursuing their own politically charged agenda.

For one thing, imperialist expansion was the common demand of all fractions of German monopoly capital. Moreover, the German bourgeoisie was filled with gratitude towards Hitler for breaking the back of the independent workers’ movement in these difficult days of economic crisis. Finally, another great donor to the Nazi party, the electro-chemicals giant IG Farben was totally immersed with its men in both the preparation and the implementation of the Four-Year Plan.

Hence, the divergence of orientation was not between the Nazis and German monopoly capital, but within the ranks of the latter. Despite some temporary disagreements within the bourgeois class, German imperialist capital was now reorienting itself to a new path of capital accumulation. Schacht himself was to be dismissed in November 1937, to be replaced by one of Goering’s men, a certain Dr.Funk.

The crucial point here is that German capital was now freeing itself, in a relative sense of course, from the immediate constraints of the world market. The German economy had been suffering under the caprices of the world market all the way since the end of the war, had fallen prey to the gravest hyperinflation of all history in 1923, and had come near the precipice in 1929, faced with a crisis of over-accumulation accompanied by a social crisis engendered by skyrocketing unemployment. Naturally, in a world where the productive forces have long outgrown the frontiers of single countries and the international economy has become tightly integrated, it is impossible to free a single country from the forces of the world market on a durable basis. The answer of the Nazi regime to this contradiction was to increase the scale. In Nazi terminology, the answer to this question is the *Grossraumwirtschaft*, or in other words, “Large Space Economics”.¹³ Let us now look into how the transition to that kind of economics was effected.

War economics, war as economics

An economy based on armaments and military spending is, before all else,

¹³ Alan S. Milward, “Fascism and the Economy”, Walter Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism. A Readers’ Guide*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

an economy that is fired by public orders for production and delivery. At a time when the world economy was in a deep depression, when even the US economy, after having recovered somewhat thanks to the New Deal, entered a new spell of stagnation in 1937, the German economy had started to face bottlenecks in the areas of capacity utilisation, employment, and supplies of raw materials. Whereas there were more than six million unemployed at the peak of the economic crisis for Germany in 1931-1932, by 1938 the country had attained a level of employment that could be called full employment, with even a scarcity of labour force posing problems to the economy.¹⁴

Full employment naturally gave a bargaining position to the working class and despite the circumstances created by the fascist regime in the trade union and political domains, this made itself felt in roundabout ways. From 1936-1937 on, the social malaise that grabbed German workers revived Hitler's fear of working class revolt, a nightmare for Hitler since the November revolution of 1918.¹⁵ The implication of all this was that in order to satisfy the needs of the working class and avert a head-on clash, the country had to increase, in the domain of agriculture, the supplies of food as well as of raw materials. On the other hand, in order to be able to import foodstuffs and inputs for the industry, the country had to increase its exports, which necessitated new foreign markets. In other words, the economic orientation established by the Four-Year Plan, by its very logic, had to make appeal to "Large Space Economics". Germany needed *Lebensraum* ("living space"). Given the scale and intricacy of modern productive forces in the imperialist era, autarchy was only possible with "Large Space Economics".

To sum up, Germany had to expand outwards. The war economy made economically motivated war a necessity. What set Hitler's vision apart from the previous expansion drive under the Kaiser during World War I was that, rather than setting its eyes on a conquest of British colonial possessions, it was geared towards the absorption of Eastern Europe and, subsequently, Russia (by now a part of the Soviet Union) as the strategic prize of its war effort. This is what Hitler wrote on the topic in the Second Book of *Mein Kampf*:

We National Socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy tendency of our pre-War period. We take up where we broke off six hundred years ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze towards the land in the east. At long last we break off the colonial and commercial policy of the pre-War period and shift to the soil policy of the future.

14 See Charles Bettelheim, *Nazizm Döneminde Alman Ekonomisi. Kapitalizmin Çöküşünün Bir Görünümü* [Original title: *L'économie allemande sous le fascisme*.], Ankara: Savaş Yayınevi, 1982, p. 206.

15 This analysis is due to British Marxist historian Tim Mason, cited in Ian Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, ibid, pp. 103-106.

If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states... For centuries Russia drew nourishment from [the] Germanic nucleus of its upper leading strata. Today it can be regarded as almost totally exterminated and extinguished. It has been replaced by the Jew... He himself is no element of organisation, but a ferment of decomposition. The giant empire in the east is ripe for collapse. And the end of Jewish rule in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a state...¹⁶

The persistence of Hitler's hopes regarding an alliance with Britain in the prospective war against the Soviet Union, another originality of the Hitler strategy, was consistent with this strategic orientation. If the Third Reich had to fight its deadliest enemy whatever the cost and if the mobilisation of Britain's might alongside that of the Reichswehr was clearly a guarantee for the definitive defeat of Bolshevism, then obviously Hitler could not start his strategic drive for colonies by setting his eyes on Britain's possessions. This was the factor that differentiated Hitler's strategy from that of the Kaiser and moved Germany in its war drive towards the East, however much the Nazis may have cloaked this under the guise of the unity of the German nation and the protection of German minorities.

In the years 1938-39, Germany successively invaded Hitler's home country Austria (the *Anschluss*), Czechoslovakia (the reason adduced was the Sudet region, where a very sizeable German population lived), and Poland (here the excuse was German interests in the so-called Danzig or Gdansk Corridor). This entire drive was the prelude to the formation of the *Grossraumwirtschaft*. With the onset of the world war, the remaining countries of Eastern Europe (Hungary, Romania, the rest of the Balkans) would be added to the list of German colonies.

The character of Nazi colonialism should be understood very well. In addition to pillaging the economic resources (including whole factories transported westwards) of the countries they occupied, the Nazis made the native labour force work like slaves, in the literal sense of the word. One of the mechanisms of control exercised by Nazism over the German working class was the creation of the conditions for full employment and at least a minimal level of subsistence, thanks to the very high rate of exploitation that German monopoly capital established abroad.¹⁷ To put it somewhat differently, not only did German nationalism play

¹⁶ Kershaw, *Hitler*, p. 155.

¹⁷ On the question of the narrowly economic impact of the Nazi regime on the working class, sources provide information that is not always consistent. Since this is not the core of our topic we do not delve into this subject in any depth. However, let us say in summary form that at the beginning the Nazis obliged German monopoly capital by ferociously attacking the gains and wages of the working class, which led to great losses and impoverishment for the German proletariat. But conditions changed to a certain extent when the German economy started to recover from the economic crisis thanks to public investments and armaments expenditure, this leading to a scarcity

a very important part in the rise of Nazism to power, but later it also served as a decisive principle in the achievement of its objectives on the part of German imperialism. The nationalist economic policy pursued was an element that pushed the German proletariat to adopt the position of German citizen rather than the class position of proletarian. In short, it is impossible to understand fascism, in particular the Nazi experience, without understanding the part played by fascist nationalism.

Jews, workers, Bolsheviks

The Nazi goal of establishing a *Volksgemeinschaft* (a national or ethnic community) is, in this sense, indissolubly enmeshed with its economic programme. Neither the claim that Germans belong to a superior race, nor anti-Semitism is the product of Hitler's caprice. The fascist form of nationalism, racism, the demeaning or even decimation of other nations and "races" are all forms of consciousness created by imperialism in response to hard times. The entire gamut amounts to an ideology that monopoly capitalists of single nations in dire difficulty opt for in order to save only themselves when they realise that they cannot save the system as a whole.

Nazi nationalism, rising as it did upon the dogma of the superiority of the German race, had several functions. First of all, it aspired to make hostility to other nations the binding material between classes so that Germany would no longer be divided according to class. Racism was also a most convenient ideology to serve as the rationale for the drive of Germany to bring other European nations to submission. In other words, while Nazism was an opposition force, nationalism was to serve to reshape German society on the basis not of class but of race; once the Nazis gained power it would then function as an ideology that would bring the German nation into a frenetic clash with other nations.

Given the historical development of Europe, anti-Semitism was a natural fellow traveller to this racist nationalism driven to folly. For one thing, from the point of view of the need to substitute class solidarity by the "unity of the nation", an "internal enemy" would obviously be very handy. Anti-Semitism was a powerful instrument in this context, since it made a religious (or racial) prejudice that already existed within the minds of the great masses of people a fundamental prop of the political and ideological orientation.

Secondly, the pillaging of the property of Jews would create opportunities

of labour supply and an upward bend of wages. There seems to be consensus on the upward move, but not on its degree. Whatever the subsequent development of wages, the working day was kept very long throughout, which meant that absolute surplus value production was pushed to very high levels. This last point was stressed by Sohn-Rethel (Jane Caplan, "Afterword", Sohn-Rethel, *German Fascism*, *ibid*, p. 165.)

for Germans from many different walks of life belonging to the “Arian” race. The forcible “Arianisation” of capital and the economy at large, in other words, the expropriation of Jews through both coercive methods and economic means, the expropriation of a people specialised throughout history in the commerce of money and goods, meant that whatever they possessed would soon pass into the hands of “Arian” Germans. There was no reason why German big capital should complain, but this was not all. The property of Jewish shopkeepers and small businessmen was a big reward for the German petty-bourgeoisie, which formed the greatest source of support for Nazism.

However, the “Jewish question” was not confined to Germany. The Jews were a national and religious community that had spread over the surface of Europe, albeit in uneven fashion, and even in America, North and partially South. (They were also a presence on the Asian and African continents, but only marginally.) Hence, Nazism treated the Jews as a Europe-wide problem. For Hitler, the Jews of Eastern Europe, in particular those of Poland and Russia had a vital importance. These were conceived as both the temporary labour force of the quasi-slavery system of labour the Nazis were to establish in those countries and an excuse for dividing the peoples of those countries by casting Jew against non-Jew, thereby winning the latter over to their side. It should be remembered that the most ill-famed concentration camps (e.g. Auschwitz or Treblinka) were located within Poland.

Another use to which anti-Semitism was put to was that it allowed the Nazis to depict the financial capitalists of the US and Britain as actors of the “international Jewish conspiracy” against Germany and thus turn the people’s attention from the workings of world capitalism to a “national” actor of foreign origin and thereby absolve German magnates of suspicion. The pretence of anti-capitalism on the part of fascism is converted here into hostility against “foreign capitalists”. Goebbels can thus say, in a travesty of anti-capitalism, that their aim is that “in the future, Germany is no longer the proletarian of the universe”.¹⁸ There is no doubt that the strong impact of foreign financial capital due to the tribulations born of the financing of the reparations imposed by Versailles on Germany played directly into the hands of Hitler.

Hostility towards the working class is the second element within the Nazi strategy, side by side with racist nationalism. Obviously Nazism does not target each and every worker as such. What it aims to destroy is the entire spectrum of the independent organisations of the working class. In the brilliant insight of Trotsky, Nazism works to destroy all of the institutions of proletarian democracy.

At this juncture the historic role of fascism begins. It raises to their feet those

¹⁸ Cited in Guérin, *Fascisme et grand capital*, *ibid*, p. 80.

classes that are immediately above the proletariat and that are ever in dread of being forced down into its ranks; it organizes and militarizes them at the expense of finance capital, under the cover of the official government, and it directs them to the extirpation of proletarian organizations, from the most revolutionary to the most conservative.

Fascism is not merely a system of reprisals, of brutal force, and of police terror. Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society. The task of fascism lies not only in destroying the Communist vanguard but in holding the entire class in a state of forced disunity. To this end the physical annihilation of the most revolutionary section of the workers does not suffice. It is also necessary to smash all independent and voluntary organizations, to demolish all the defensive bulwarks of the proletariat, and to uproot whatever has been achieved during three-quarters of a century by the Social Democracy and the trade unions. For, in the last analysis, the Communist Party also bases itself on these achievements.¹⁹

It was impossible to provide a better, more distinctive definition of fascism in the 1930s. This remained true all the way to the early 21st century. Let us clearly draw the necessary conclusion explicitly: *On the question of the theory of fascism, Trotsky represents the incomparably most advanced position within Marxism.*

The reason why fascism attacks all the positions of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society is the immediate goal of fascism, advanced as a solution to the problems of capitalist imperialism in crisis, to raise the rate of exploitation for German monopoly capitalists in the sharpest degree possible. At the same time, though, it is the realisation that the **organised** working class is the biggest antagonist vis-a-vis a barbarism that threatens the entire world with full-scale catastrophe. As long as the working class, the most organised class of capitalist society outside of the bourgeoisie, a class prone to class solidarity, a class reared in collective action, conserves its own will power in independence of imperialist interests, it will inevitably rise as a potential threat to this kind of political orientation cut of the cloth of nationalism, racism, war, and mass murder.²⁰ We

¹⁹ Leon Trotsky, "What Next?", *Struggle Against Fascism*, *ibid*, p. 144.

²⁰ The opposition of the working class to fascism continued under forms hard to believe even under the extremely difficult conditions of the Nazi regime. See Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, *ibid*, pp. 232-34 and 242-44. Anarcho-communist-Trotskyist historian and militant Daniel Guérin narrated the impressions and experiences during his visit to Nazi Germany within the first year of Hitler's rule in the first volume of his book, the second volume of which was devoted to a theoretical analysis of the fascist phenomenon in Germany and Italy in comparative fashion: Daniel Guérin, *La peste brune. Sur le fascisme I*, Paris: Petite Collection Maspero, 1969. Chapter 14 to 16 of this first volume are extremely valuable as testimony to concrete experiences of resistance to Nazism carried out under conditions of illegality by both social democratic and communist workers. However, this rather short narrative ends with the following episode: when Guérin asks a communist militant

have already seen that the very first function of German nationalism, raised to a power through anti-Semitism and the myth of the “superior race”, is to break up the organisations of the working class that aim to establish collective solidarity all in the name of a new imagined “unity” of the nation.

In a country like Germany, where the working class wielded extremely powerful organisations, both in the area of trade unions and in the political domain, as well as in Italy, where working class organisations closely trailed behind their German brothers and sisters, the atomisation of the class could certainly not be obtained by fiat. That is why fascism brings together all the elements that it can organise from among the popular (or plebeian) masses, starting with the broad masses of the petty-bourgeoisie, but extending to many other classes and strata, such as public employees, who regard themselves, just like the petty-bourgeois, superior to the worker, the unemployed, precarious workers, the lumpen-proletariat, the war veterans etc. It mobilises these masses on the basis of an agitation against the organised workers, harping on their desperation in the socio-economic field under conditions of economic crisis. It establishes paramilitary organisations (the SA and the SS) to break strikes and attack trade unions. It also makes use of the already existing paramilitary organisations of war veterans (the *Freikorps*). (We will see below that Italy has its corresponding structures.)

One of the first Marxists who recognised “the mass movement character of fascism with deep social roots” is the German socialist leader Clara Zetkin, close comrade of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.²¹ Another Marxist who discovered, quite early on, the part played by the petty-bourgeoisie in this mass movement was Antonio Gramsci, one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Italy (PCd’I) during the rise and early domination of fascism in the country:

Because fascism has bred on and flourished on the terrain of this crisis in its initial phase, because fascism has struggled against the proletariat and risen to power exploiting and organising the lack of consciousness and stupidity of the petty-bourgeoisie filled with hatred against the working class which managed through the force of its organising to alleviate the counterblows of the capitalist crisis in its direction.²²

about the future, his interlocutor “sighs in hesitation” and then adds: “‘Everything depends on Moscow!’” (Ibid, p. 121). What “Moscow” was to do after May 1933, the date of this conversation, we all know. Due to the criminal policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it was only after 1941, when the Soviet Union itself was finally forced to engage in a life-or-death struggle against Nazi Germany that this most powerful fortress of the international proletariat would join the fight to destroy the deadly enemy of the class.

21 Cited in Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship. The Third International and the Problem of Fascism*, Londra: NLB, 1974, p. 51 and 51n. See also Renzo de Felice, *Le interpretazioni del fascismo*, Roma: Editori Laterza, 1977, pp. 158-59.

22 Antonio Gramsci, “La crisi italiana”, *Scritti scelti*, Marco Gervasoni (ed.), Milano: Radici BUR,

The idea that the mobilisation of the petty-bourgeoisie is the core of the strength of the fascist movement lies at the centre of Trotsky's crucial analysis of fascism in the early 1930s.²³ Another early theoretician of fascism and Nazism, the German Arthur Rosenberg also insists on the character of mass movement of this current.²⁴ Still another early analysis provided by the anarcho-communist-Trotskyist historian and militant Daniel Guérin in his comprehensive two-volume study in 1936 also displays the same approach.²⁵ However, despite pointing to the importance of the mobilisation of the petty-bourgeois masses in the struggle against the proletariat, all these theoreticians of fascism are categorical in asserting that fascism is but the unbridled dictatorship of monopoly capital.

It is imperative to dwell on this last point, lest any sceptical approach tends to advance the independence of the fascist movement from the monopoly capitalist class. It will be in order to refer to a foremost historian of Nazism working outside the Marxist framework:

Such scholarship [on Nazism]—both marxist and non-marxist—broadly accepts two structural connections between capitalism and the rise of Nazism. First, it is clear that there was an increasing readiness among powerful sectors of the industrial élite long before the Nazi political breakthrough to discard the Weimar Republic in favour of a more palatable authoritarian solution which would restore profitability in the first instance through repression of labour. Secondly, among an industrial sector in many ways split and disoriented by the economic crisis of the early 1930s, there was an increased willingness in the deepening recession even among sections of industry not especially well disposed towards the Nazis to tolerate at least a Nazi share in government in order to provide the political framework within which the capitalist system could reproduce itself.²⁶

This willingness continued after the Nazis seized power and gradually established a monopoly over government and also later during the war years. The same historian stresses that the German bourgeoisie sustained its partnership and cooperation with the Nazis in their policies of pillaging, exploitation, destruction, and mass murder **to the very end**. There is some opposition even in the *Reichswehr* (the army), but none within the ranks of the bourgeoisie!²⁷

Alfred Sohn-Rethel, benefiting from a special position among Marxist

2007, p. 256.

23 Trotsky, *Struggle Against Fascism*, *ibid*.

24 Rosenberg, "Fascism as a Mass-Movement", *ibid*.

25 Guérin, *Fascisme et grand capital*, *ibid*.

26 Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, *ibid*, pp. 55-56. Our emphasis.

27 *Ibid*, p. 76-77.

theoreticians of Nazism since he worked for an economic institution of the big bourgeoisie established by the large conglomerate groups of the country in the 1930s, narrates how the German *haute bourgeoisie*, together with the higher echelons of the state bureaucracy (including, of course, the top brass) formed ruling class policies in cooperation with the Nazis. The incident he recounts takes place at the end of 1935, when there breaks out a fiery debate as to whether the tempo of growth within the armaments economy should be doubled so as to be able to begin the intended assault on the Soviet Union according to plan (i.e. in spring 1939):

The controversy over the acceleration of arms production generated one of the most acute crises that the regime had experienced and, as always at such critical junctures, its inner dialectic became particularly tangible. This dilemma kept all the informed circles within the economy agog: the banks, the managing boards of the big concerns, the directors of the trusts and their political departments, the large-scale agriculturalists and the Army officers from the Bendlerstrasse. It formed the only topic of conversation at the social functions of Berlin high society.

The unique feature of the situation was that what was at stake shook the ruling strata of German high bourgeoisie out of their fatalistic acceptance of events and challenged them to take up a position, — as though the policies of the Reich could be thought out afresh, as if the power handed over to Hitler and his Party could be retracted and the whole development subjected to a complete revision. Suddenly all the sluice-gates of criticism and discussion seemed to be opened. Everything was spoken out loud: the excesses of the Nazis, their incompetence and cocksure arrogance, their outrageous corruptness, their frauds and embezzlements, their crimes, the dangerous nonsense of their Nazi ideology, the madness of their racial policy.

It is not difficult to anticipate the ending this frenzied debate came to. The Führer decides that the armaments tempo will be doubled. There is no longer even a trace of the revolt against the “folly” of the regime within the ranks of the bourgeoisie or the army.²⁸

The Nazis start working on the proletariat while they are still an opposition force. The NSBO (National Socialist Enterprise Cells Organisation) is established in 1928. These cells are more successful in small and medium enterprises than large ones. The Reichstag fire after Hitler has risen to power gives the Nazis a great excuse for starting their assault on trade unions. In the wake of the May Day celebrations, organised by the Nazis themselves, union centres and their

28 Sohn-Rethel, *German Fascism*, ibid, pp. 99-101.

property are seized by the government. The Labour Front is established as an organic extension of the Nazi party under the leadership of a loyal cadre, Dr. Robert Ley. Independent unions are gradually shut down between January and October 1934. Workers are regimented in so-called “enterprise communities”, of which bosses make an integral part. This kind of corporatist structure, in which bosses and workers coexist, are more common under Italian fascism. Henceforth, the institution of “arbitration” replaces all kinds of collective bargaining. The independent organisations of the working class are now a thing of the past.²⁹

We finally come to the greatest enemy for Nazism: Bolshevism. The greatest obsession of Hitler’s political life is the November revolution in the immediate post-war Germany. This glorious revolution he regards as the greatest enemy of the German nation. His fear of the working class does not solely derive from his allegiance to the interests of the monopoly bourgeoisie. It is also because he has seen with his own eyes that when the day comes, when a revolutionary situation is born, communism can become a formidable power within the working class. That is why the Soviet Union is seen as the deadly enemy for Nazism. The belief that the destruction of the Soviet Union is the condition for the overcoming of all economic and political crisis for capitalist imperialism is one of the few guiding ideas of Nazism. In this sense, the occupation of the Soviet Union by Nazi armies in 1941 in contravention of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is, in effect, the execution of the cardinal imperative of the war drive for Hitler.³⁰

Hence, the Nazi occupation of and the rule established over parts of the Soviet Union wield a double significance in contraposition to its other colonies: on the one hand, Russia is the biggest of these colonies, endowed with immense natural wealth and a large labour force. The fantasies that Hitler has conjured regarding the Soviet territory has an air of a belated repetition of the British India story about it. Ukraine and the Volga region will be turned into the grain depot of Europe; poor working class families from Thuringia and poor peasants from the Harz mountains will be settled here as colons to engage in production; the Crimea will become a summer resort in the image of the French Riviera, where Germans will travel in their Volkswagens to spend their summer holidays etc.³¹ On the other hand, the destruction of the Soviet Union implies that by dealing the main enemy the final blow Germany will have secured a guaranteed future.

Interestingly enough, anti-Semitism is put to use even here. In a historical context made possible by the fact that many great leaders of the international

²⁹ Guérin, *Fascisme et grand capital*, pp. 174-78.

³⁰ See Sohn-Rethel, *German Fascism*, *ibid*, p. 95: “the war against Russia had been firmly decided ever since autumn 1935... War against the U.S.S.R. formed the basic military objective for German rearmament.”

³¹ Kershaw, *Hitler*, *ibid*, pp. 628-630.

Marxist movement from Marx to Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg are Jewish, the Nazi administration presents Bolshevism as a worldwide Jewish conspiracy, dealing blows both to Jewry and Marxism simultaneously, and uses each as a reason to strengthen the hostility to the other in the minds of the German populace. But at the same time, we encounter here the weakest link of the comprehensive world view established by Hitler: both American and British financial capital and its arch-enemy Bolshevism are Jewish!

To sum up, anti-Semitism, a rabidly aggressive attitude to the organised sections of the working class, and the paranoia concerning Bolshevism are not secondary elements nor ornamentations that are wilfully developed in order to cheat the people, nor again fantasies divorced from the real struggle, but are fundamental and indispensable elements of the Nazi strategy.

Barbarism

Nazi power is the return of barbarism to the universe of humanity at a stage when civilisation has reached its highest level. The crimes of this regime includes, but goes way beyond, the crimes of the typical imperialist war and bourgeois dictatorship.

The repression, torture and murder that Nazism exercised over its political opponents domestically we can presume to be ordinary crimes, perhaps raised to a power, committed by a capitalism and imperialism desperately fighting for its survival. Had Nazism consisted purely of these, there would have been no need to label it “barbarism”. We could even have called it an extremely “modern” regime!

One has to look elsewhere in order to identify the practices and the conceptions that lead us to define Nazism as a barbarism. First, Nazism represents a return to a pre-social universe, a “state of nature”, in which no rights are recognised except for the strong and the powerful. One of the practices of the Nazis, less commonly discussed, but no less odious for that, is the “euthanasia programme”. All persons deemed susceptible to harm the future of the German race, starting with the mentally disabled, were murdered systematically. On the basis of this practice, started even before the war, the lives of hundreds of thousands of Germans were taken. The victims of the “euthanasia programme” were usually executed in mobile gas units prepared for this purpose. The later mass murder of Jews in gas chambers is nothing but the continuation of a practice started at an artisanal level by means of methods of mass production or rather mass extermination.

The second aspect of the barbarism is of course the atrocities that plagued the Jews. Having promised to solve the “Jewish question” at the level of continental Europe, Nazism proceeded gradually in this area. First, the Jews were made into scapegoats in Germany from 1934 on. During the so-called *Kristallnacht* on the night of 9-10 November 1938, the homes and businesses of the Jews were raided and ransacked all around the country and many cases of mass murder were recorded.

From then on, Germany became a real hell for the Jews. With the occupation of Poland, the deportation of the Jews started. (Later, not only Germany's Jews, but those of the occupied countries and even of Italy, an allied nation, were deported to Eastern Europe.) Poland gradually became the centre of all European Jewry and turned into the centre of the "solution" to the so-called Jewish question. With the occupation of Soviet territories, the Jews of Russia and those of other republics became the victims of a hunting spree. Russian Jews and others will be massacred summarily. The apogee of this kind of cruelty is the mass execution in cold blood of 43 thousand Jews, most of them children and non-combatant women, in 1943, in Babi Yar, Ukraine, in the space of two short days.

At a certain stage of the war, Jews also functioned as slave labour, especially in Poland. Obviously, the most vulnerable part of the population under the Nazi occupation were the Jews. A deep-rooted anti-Semitic tradition in Eastern Europe, in particular in Poland, caused sections of the native Christian population to be friendly to the Nazis and made the Jews doubly vulnerable. This is how a proletariat was created that could not even raise its head under the force of repression.³² The plan was that after the annihilation of the Soviet Union, the Jews would be sent wholesale to Russia and would be used as slaves unto death. But the fact that the Soviet Union did not capitulate before Germany spoiled all of these plans.

As an alternative solution to the Jewish question a country of exile was sought for them outside of Europe. As may be anticipated, Palestine was one such alternative. The fact that the Zionists entered into a bargaining process at this stage and also collaborated with the Nazis is a phenomenon of historic significance, long kept secret but very important for the light it sheds on the nature of the Zionist movement.³³ Another oft-mentioned country of exile for the Jews was the island of Madagascar off the east African coast.

However, the materialisation of this kind of project of exile was nigh impossible. Sending millions upon millions of Jews, men, women and children, to Palestine or Madagascar would have been such a costly venture and logistically so difficult that soon enough the plans were dropped. Even the deportation of Jews from Germany and other countries of Western and Central Europe to Eastern Europe had been carried out with the greatest of difficulties.

In the meanwhile, Poland and more generally Eastern Europe had become, from the point of view of the Nazis, a warehouse for Jews, so to speak. When, in November 1941, Germany declared war on the United States in the footsteps of its ally Japan after the Pearl Harbor incident, when therefore the war henceforth became a veritable world war, the "final solution" was to come on the agenda. There is general consensus among historians that the implementation of the "final

³² Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, *ibid*, p. 76-77.

³³ See Ralph Shoenmann, *The Hidden History of Zionism*, Veritas Press, 1988.

solution”, or, in other words, of the Holocaust was decided at a lakeside meeting at Wannsee in January 1942. The gas chambers were now to be operated and the massacre of around 6 million Jews by means of industrial mass production methods would take pride of place in the annals of modern human barbarism.

Thirdly, the combat methods of the Nazi army in the Soviet Union cannot but be labelled “barbaric”. The rules of engagement given to the *Einsatzgruppen*, established outside the command structure of the *Reichswehr*, Germany’s standing army, and put under the hierarchical order of the SS, were unambiguously based on the principle of cold-blooded murder. As a result of these rules that included the immediate killing of Soviet commissars, partisans and Jews, millions of Soviet citizens died in situations where they would have been taken prisoner of war under other circumstances. Permit us to add a symbolic example: the first victims of Auschwitz, the greatest concentration camp of the Nazis were not Jews but Soviet prisoners of war!³⁴ The number of Soviet citizens estimated to have died in the Soviet-Nazi war that lasted from the spring of 1941, when Germany first moved into Soviet territory, to the spring of 1945, when the Red Army entered Berlin, is daunting: 20 million!

Hitler constantly reiterated that Bolshevism would destroy Western civilisation and that the German nation had to prevent this from happening. The Nazis depicted the Bolsheviks as monsters who were still using the “Asiatic” barbarian methods of their ancestors. Today, it is an incontrovertible fact that the force that then brought Western civilisation to the brink of annihilation was the Nazi regime itself, as it is indubitable that barbarism is neither Asiatic or European, but the product of a ruling class that is in the throes of its death agony.

We wish to conclude this section quoting a passage from Trotsky.

Fascism has opened up the depths of society for politics. Today, not only in peasant homes but also in skyscrapers, there lives alongside the twentieth century the tenth or the thirteenth. A hundred million people use electricity and still believe in the magic power of signs and exorcisms. The Pope of Rome broadcasts over the radio about the miraculous transformations of water into wine. Movie stars go to mediums. Aviators who pilot miraculous mechanisms created by man’s genius wear amulets on their sweaters. What inexhaustible reserves they possess of darkness, ignorance, and savagery! Despair has raised them to their feet, fascism has given them a banner. Everything that should have been eliminated from the national organism in the form of cultural excrement in the course of the normal development of society has now come gushing out from the throat; capitalist society is puking up the undigested barbarism. Such is the physiology of National Socialism.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid, p. 141.

³⁵ “What is National Socialism?”, *Struggle Against Fascism*, p. 405.

If we have quoted this paragraph here, the pleasure of sharing with the reader the inimitably superb literary style of its author is not the sole reason for this, although we must admit that has played its part. The year is 1933. Nazism is now in power but has not yet had the occasion to show that unique barbarian face it will disclose in a few years' time. Not in 1933, nor before his death in 1940 could Trotsky have said anything further. He has discovered the barbaric nature of Nazism, that is more than could reasonably be expected. Today, leaning our back on an immense material that is the fruit of decades of research, we can go much further. So we must move forth, warn humanity with all the urgency that the situation requires, organise and fight against the new wave of fascism in ascendancy.

The Italian test

We noted at the beginning of this article, as part of our methodological propositions, that we were going to take Germany as the model country of classical fascism. And this is what we have done so far. But again in the same methodological section, we stated that Italian fascism came in second place after Nazism in understanding classical fascism. Now, we wish to test our argument regarding Germany against the backdrop of the experience of Italian fascism.³⁶

One of the points that make Italian fascism significant is that it is the pioneer. Having come to power on the crest of the October 1922 "March on Rome" of his fascist bands, Mussolini took the political and social life of Italy under his monopoly in the course of the following four years. In a certain sense, Mussolini assumed the function of "role model" for Hitler. The relationship between these two ruthless dictators thus started with a superior position for Mussolini only to be reversed gradually (in line with the place of each country in the imperialist hierarchy and their military might) in favour of Hitler.

From 1936 on, the two countries more and more moved closer to each other, tying the knot with an official alliance in 1939. But due to the clear-cut military superiority of his own country relative to Italy, Hitler displayed constant impatience with his ally (most clearly on the question of the occupation of Greece) and never trusted him in earnest.

36 Just as in the case of Nazi Germany, in the case of Italy as well, in order not to slow down the flow of reading, we will not make a reference to our sources unless we quote a certain passage. Hence we prefer to provide our sources from the outset: Angelo Tasca, *Nascita e avvento del fascismo*, Milano: PGrecoEdizioni, 2012 (original date of publication 1938); Emilio Gentile, *Fascismo. Storia e interpretazione*, Bari: Editori Laterza, 2018; Giuseppe Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci*, 2nd Edition, Bari: Editori Laterza, 2008; Daniel Guérin, *Fascisme et grand capital*, *ibid*; Arthur Rosenberg, "Fascism as a Mass-Movement", *ibid*; Pierre Broué, *Histoire de l'Internationale communiste 1919-1943*, Paris: Fayard, 1997.

This is not the place to study in detail the rise of Italian fascism, its advent to power and the policies it pursued once in power. What is of interest to us is the following question: to what level is what has been said on Germany above valid for the fascist experience in Italy? There are naturally important differences between the two countries and the two regimes. We will be touching upon some of these below. But on issues such as the socio-economic basis of fascism, the position the movement holds within class struggles in general, and the solutions it intends to bring to the crisis of capitalism, the two countries are almost identical twins.

Let us start by pointing out that post-war Italy is little different from post-war Germany. Italian fascism grew by leaps and bounds as a result of a multi-dimensional crisis in the wake of World War I. Italy had belatedly entered the war alongside the Allies and had, thanks to this, taken its place among the victors. But in a strange way, the Italian people “were to experience the humiliation and crisis of the vanquished although the country was on the winning side and felt that way”.³⁷ To an extent because some of the coveted territory was impossible to recover (from Austria and Yugoslavia), post-war Italy was shaken with a “myth of mutilated victory”. Hence, not unlike Germany’s state of shock as a result of the Versailles Treaty, Italy found itself faced with a social crisis as it came out of the war. The war veterans (the *arditi*) were full of rage against both those who drifted Italy into war and those who remained behind the front.

On the other hand, parallel to the German revolution, the Italian proletariat threw itself into a passionate struggle under the impact of the October revolution. The years 1919 and 1920 were to pass into Italian history as the “*bienniorosso*” (“two red years”). The industrial proletariat, starting with the metal workers of Turin and elsewhere, went, time and again, on strike and organised general strikes, crowned these with factory occupations, and protected the occupied factories with armed workers’ militia. However, due to the shortcomings of Italian socialism, this movement was not to result in a revolution. The end of the *bienniorosso* (fall 1920) coincided with the onset of a profound economic crisis that took Italy into its grip. The crisis created a disruption in Italian society with mass layoffs of workers.³⁸ The proletariat having failed to provide a way out, it fell to Mussolini’s fascist movement to bring an answer to the crisis. Fascism grew by leaps and bounds in the next two years and seized power.

Akin to the rise of Nazism to power within the space of three years, this swift conquest of power had, as its main factor, as Gramsci pointed out in the quotation we earlier made from him, the skilful exploitation by Mussolini of the hatred felt

37 L. Sturzo, *L'Italie et le fascisme*, p. 54, cited in Tasca, *Nascita e avvento*, *ibid*, p. 537.

38 Angelo Tasca formulates the importance of economic crisis for the rise of fascism as a general law: “without economic crisis, no fascism”. (*Nascita e avvento*, *ibid*, p. 554).

by the petty-bourgeoisie in crisis towards the proletariat.³⁹ In the same way as the *Freikorps* in Germany acted as the source of and model for the fascist paramilitary organisations, in Italy as well, the *arditi* of the war veterans acted as a source of inspiration and of human material for Mussolini's base organisations called *fasci* and what were called the *squadri* (bands). To the extent that these were used by the state and the bosses against the big strikes of the *biennio rosso*, they would flourish and advance rapidly. The number of *fasci* was one hundred in June 1920, but would rise to 800 by the end of the year.⁴⁰ By 1922, the fascist party, with its 200 thousand-strong membership, its armed militia, its trade union federation wielding a membership of half a million, and its youth and women's branches, had become the strongest organised force in the country. Tasca formulates in law-like fashion the importance of paramilitary organisations: "Without armed organisations, no fascism."⁴¹

Armed organisation is of capital importance not only in the march to power, but also when in power. Having become prime minister in November 1922, Mussolini found himself seriously challenged in the aftermath of the assassination in 1924 of the socialist member of parliament Matteotti. While the whole of Italy was waiting for his demise, Mussolini managed to hang onto power. Gramsci explains in clear fashion the power of a fascist party in contraposition to other bourgeois parties:

In effect, to imagine that the crisis of the Mussolini government can be reduced to any ordinary governmental crisis is absurd. Before all else, there is the militia, which obeys no one but Mussolini, which places him outside the field of a normal political manoeuvre. A struggle was waged for months in order to overcome the obstacle posed by the militia, but this on an inappropriate terrain. Work was done on the army, the king was discovered, but in the end everything returned to the same point. Mussolini is not going.⁴²

Having survived thanks to this special power, Mussolini had a law passed in parliament in November 1925 that gave him the power to "bring under discipline" all organisations, closed down the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) together with all opposition parties at the end of 1926, and had Gramsci incarcerated, only to be released shortly before his death for treatment in a hospital. As for the

39 Modern historians confirm the observation made by Gramsci. See Gentile, *Fascismo*, *ibid*, pp. 11-12: "Sociologically, this new fascism was the expression of the mobilisation of the middle strata... Moreover, the majority of the leaders of the *Fasci* and the heads of *squadristismo* came from the middle strata: demobilised officers, journalists, professionals, employees, artisans, shopkeepers, students, and intellectuals."

40 Broué, *L'Internationale communiste*, *ibid*, p. 195.

41 Tasca, *Nascita e avvento*, *ibid*, p. 562.

42 Antonio Gramsci, "La caduta del fascismo", *Scritti scelti*, *ibid*, p. 269.

repression unleashed on trade unions, this goes all the way back to the time before fascism came to power, with the preliminary suppression of the unions of the rural proletariat and the poor peasantry. In April 1926, the fascist regime promulgated another “discipline” law for the unions that organised industrial workers, to be followed by a decision to allow fascist trade unions alone to function. 1926 is also the year when the first step was taken in the direction of corporatism. But corporatism was met with resistance on the part of the bosses (just as it was also in Germany) and could only materialise with a law that was passed in 1934, when fascist unions proceeded to organise in unison with bosses’ organisations.⁴³

The fascist orientation of the Italian economy had to wait for the severe effects of the 1929 crash. Just as in Germany, Italy also adopted the direction of the armaments economy and after 1936 autarchy became the fundamental orientation. In the month of March of that same year, in a speech he made to the “Assembly of Corporations”, Mussolini declared that even in peace time, but *a fortiori* in war time, Italy had to achieve the utmost economic autonomy, adding that war would probably arrive rather quickly. In 1937, a decision of the Grand Fascist Council stipulated that Italy attain the maximum level of autarchy, with the exception of imports for military needs. Italy had by that time already occupied Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in 1935. In May 1936 in Rome, the erstwhile capital to the ancient Roman Empire, an “empire” was solemnly declared once again and Italy started to implement a policy of expansion towards the Balkans in phased manner. The Mediterranean was declared to be “*mare nostrum*” (“our sea”) once again.

All this shows that Italian fascism, just like German Nazism, turned towards the establishment of an autarchic economy in response to the economic depression that rocked the world market. If there is a difference in the scale of the ventures, this is because Italy is way behind Germany in the imperialist hierarchy and in military might. That is in fact why Germany should be taken as the typical example of fascism that embodies the tendencies that Italy displays as well, only with much more violence. The orientation is the same; there is only a quantitative difference between the two cases.

The most important difference Italy displayed from Germany was that anti-Semitism carried no weight for the fascist regime. If Italy started to repress its own Jews in 1938, that was mostly a result of the rapprochement between the two countries. This does not mean that the Italian regime was not racist in nature. In Italy as well, in order to develop a superior race, the regime had developed a programme for an “anthropological revolution”. It was evident that the effect of

43 For corporatism, more of a force in Italy than in Germany, in addition to our earlier sources, the following may be consulted: Edmund S. Phelps, “Korporatizm ve Keynes: Keynes’in Büyüme Felsefesi”, Lorenzo Pecchi/Gustavo Piga (der.), *Keynes’e Dönüş. Torunlarımızın Ekonomik Olanakları* [original title: *Return to Keynes: Economic Possibilities for Our Grand Children*], İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012.

“eugenics” was strong here too. The difference lies only in the fact that the Jews did not form a specific weight in Italian society and that therefore anti-Semitism came on the agenda in belated manner.

Planprinzip oder Führerprinzip!

The significance of fascist barbarism, witnessed more powerfully in Nazi Germany and relatively more meekly in Italy, should by now have become clear. In the age of imperialism, when the productive forces of humanity are organised in the form of units of gigantic dimensions (corporations, so-called multinational companies etc.), often integrated over the entire gamut of industries, when the world economy has connected all nations with indissoluble ties, the market system, based as it is on the independent decisions of each production unit along the requirements of its own interests, a consequence of private property in the means of production, the market system, this system of mutually independent producers of commodities, finds itself periodically in a situation where it cannot respond to the level of integration the system has acquired. In great depressions, themselves a result of the periodic fall in the rate of profit, the market economy has begun to act as a mechanism of crisis propagation or diffusion and as a barrier in the way of the necessary coordination and cooperation for the recovery of the world economy. Whether we are talking of the Great Depression of the 1930s or the contemporary Third Great Depression, when a crisis of such proportions and such geographically widespread reach is born, the world economy becomes a stage for impending catastrophe, where no one knows where the next blow will come from, and world politics turns into a life and death situation, where no actor can think any longer about anything but saving their own skin.

It is this situation that creates the preconditions for fascism. The bourgeoisie, as we can see in the case of the Third Great Depression, continues for a time to pursue the same old policy persistently, with great enthusiasm and bravado, hoping that the entire world system will come out of the crisis unscathed. But in the end, certain national fractions of the world bourgeoisie who feel they are in the direst of situations, who have been cornered by the developments, who have become the weak links of the world order, start to abandon the dream of common salvation, turn to a new kind of solution that promises salvation for that nation alone, and adopt a new ideological, political and (given the circumstances, inevitably) military orientation. The productive forces are crying out for planning. The system, including those national fractions of the world bourgeoisie in question, refuses planning, repulses it hatefully. The plan that cannot be imposed on the entire world system will then have to be made at the national scale. The heyday of the cosmopolitanism of capital is nearing its end; now is the time for fascist nationalism. All plans, not only economic, but political and military as well, will henceforth be made to fit the needs of the beloved “nation”. Every man for himself

and let the devil take the hindmost!

However, productive forces have reached gigantic proportions in such a manner as to make all national boundaries a fetter on economic success. Neither the idyllic world of the countryside, nor the abstinence of the artisan's world rules now. The fascist salvation project of the single nation has to expand its scale endlessly as well. Conquest becomes an imperative! The nation that is trying to save itself through fascist nationalism is bound to take the road of belligerence! Fascism implies war and, ultimately, world war.

But even this does not suffice. For capitalism has already created a single world economy. For fascism to be a solution, it ultimately needs world domination. The dream of Hitler, the most emblematic of all fascists so far in history, the dream regarding the settling of accounts between a Europe dominated by Germany and the United States of America, is, beyond its significance for a sick mind, is based on the intuitive comprehension of the elephantine magnitude of the crisis the world was undergoing at that time. The meaning should be clear: within the parameters of the crisis of capitalism, the market is no longer able to re-establish a working totality of the world economy. Now, that same totality **needs to be forcibly re-established**. The extraction of surplus value through economic methods under the normal functioning of capitalism is now being replaced by a jungle where the extra-economic methods of coercion become paramount. Slave labour, the enslavement of entire nations, genocide, all this is the logical consequence of the rise of fascism, itself the product of the historical decline of capitalism. Imperialism, having colonised far away climes and enslaved distant peoples is now colonising and enslaving nations that are themselves imperialist or acted imperialistically at one time (e.g. the Russians, no longer imperialists now because of the class nature of the Soviet Union). We are here face to face with the negation of capitalism by itself.

Another form of barbarism may be found in the annihilation of all the rights acquired by humanity through arduous struggles. The Nazi regime created a political structure in which all law was repealed and the will of the fascist leaders became the categorical imperative. The apex of it all is the despotism of a single man. Let us leave aside for a moment the working class, whose will was trampled upon by means of torture and execution and the practice of the Gestapo and the SS. The German bourgeoisie and the German intelligentsia, heir to the great social, intellectual, artistic, and cultural legacy of centuries, the grandchildren of Goethe and Beethoven, of Kant and Hegel (not to mention Marx!), abandoned all responsibility in the administration of its country and its own honour and dignity to a one-time corporal, who happened to be a semi-ignoramus, driven to the extremes of folly, obsessed with personal complexes! Is this not a return to barbarism from within the most advanced technique and civilisation?

In order to discover the secret, let us lend an ear once again to our agent within

the German *haute bourgeoisie*, Alfred Sohn-Rethel. After having described the work of the ministries, the aeronautical industry, the economic bureau of the armed forces, and the monopoly corporations within the context of the feverish preparation for war of the Nazi regime around 1935-1936, Sohn-Rethel has this to say:

Everything that was undertaken, whether it was the regulation of agriculture, the production of synthetic raw materials or the systematisation of the entire metal industry, — everything exceeded the narrow horizons of each individual firm, even the largest of them. And wherever an interested party saw his horizon transcended, then his thoughts lost themselves in the maze. At this borderline he no longer thought rightly or wrongly, he no longer thought at all! There began his nightmare. And it was from this nightmare that Hitler must rescue him: 'The Führer will put it all right!'

This blind faith in the Führer stemmed from the uncontrollable character of the global situation. Thus in the vacuum of real values the Führer was imbued with awesome power.⁴⁴

Let there be no misunderstanding. The urgent appeal of the productive forces developed by capitalism for planning is outside the intellectual toolkit of Sohn-Rethel. He is trying to understand the confidence felt for Hitler on psychological bases. But in fact the picture he is depicting clearly shows how the chaos that drives single actors to desperation in times of crisis in an utterly integrated world should really be subjected to collective planning and how in the absence, even impossibility, under capitalism of such planning every nation feels the need to take refuge in its own Führer or Duce.

The *Führerprinzip* of Nazi Germany, then, is the alternative resorted to in the absence of the planning principle.

Socialism or barbarism!

Our aim in this article was to show that there are inextricable ties between the historical decline of capitalism and fascist barbarism. Faced with the socialisation of the productive forces, themselves products of the capitalist mode of production, the market, in other words the resource allocation method of capitalism, has become a fetter in the way of the advance of humanity. Fascism is the attempt to overcome the barriers set up by the historical decline of capitalism, which manifests itself in the form of profound economic crises (Great Depressions) with periodic intervals, within the limits of capitalism itself. Fascism tries to do this without abolishing the market, within the framework of a market system whose functioning is

⁴⁴ Sohn-Rethel, *Fascist Germany*, *ibid*, p. 104. Our emphasis.

determined by the despotic domination of a single national fraction of the world bourgeoisie rather than the mutual competition of the capitals of many countries. The premise of this method is self-sufficiency or autarchy in the economy. Yet the internationalisation of the productive forces is in fact an indissoluble part of socialisation. Hence, autarchy makes inevitable the expansionism of the single imperialist despot, or in other words, war. The logical conclusion of autarchy in the imperialist epoch is world domination, the replacement of economic methods by coercion.

Thus fascism turns out to be the insanely logical outcome of the tendencies of monopoly capital. We have already seen that the methods it uses in order to achieve world domination (nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, fear of communism etc.) are the very basis of its barbarism. Thus, in its period of decline, capitalism is transformed through self-negation into barbarism.

This means that we reach a conclusion that lies beyond what Marxists have generally advanced so far on the question: it is true that **fascism is the drive of finance capital to smash all the independent organisations of the working class by using the petty-bourgeois masses as a battering ram by making use of their deep grievances.** It is this, but not only this. **This historically extremely specific assault is, in its outward manifestation, the parading of coercion as master on the stage of history as a pseudo-solution to the crisis, trampling upon even the logic of capitalism itself and, in its essence, the institution of barbarism.** Capitalism resorts to barbarism in spite of itself. The definition of fascism is only complete with this second element.

This means that fascism is not one of those states of exception or extraordinary regimes that capitalism has recourse to from time to time. It cannot be compared to Bonapartism, Caesarism, military dictatorship, autocracy etc. Because fascism is **not a form of administration** whereby capitalism finds solutions to its ordinary problems through repressive methods. Fascism is a form of dissolution of human civilisation. It is **a form of dissolution that presents itself outwardly as a solution.**

If all this is true, the answer to the question that has been asked time and again since 1945, that is since the demise of classical fascism, as to whether fascism will rise onto the stage of history once again or not has been answered. As long as capitalism survives as a moribund system, as long as its death agony continues, fascism is bound to come on the stage of history. Whenever its death throes return after a period of temporary relief that may sometimes last for several decades even, fascism will also offer itself as the pseudo-solution to the crisis of capital. Unless revolution does away with capitalism, fascism will show its face as scary as the face of death.

This is the reason why the famous slogan of Rosa Luxemburg is that prophetic: “Socialism or barbarism!” Rosa had first had recourse to this slogan in a text that

she published in 1915 under the title of the Junius Brochure: “Friedrich Engels once said: ‘Bourgeois society is face to face with a dilemma: A turn to socialism or a return to barbarism’.”⁴⁵ Later, on 31 December 1918, at the founding congress of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), during the last important political speech of her life, while putting forth her ideas on the programme of the party, she insisted, without using the slogan itself, that at the beginning of the 20th century not only had socialism become a necessity, but that if victory were not achieved, barbarism was what really awaited humanity:

They [the bourgeoisie] have reached the point that the dilemma that humankind faces today can be described as: either the fall into anarchy, or salvation through socialism. It is impossible for the bourgeois classes to use the results of the world war to find any kind of way out, on the terrain of their class supremacy and of capitalism.

...

Socialism has become a necessity, not merely because the proletariat is no longer willing to live under the living conditions that the capitalist classes serve up to them, but also because, if the proletariat does not fulfill its class duties by realizing socialism, then we will all have to face ruination together.⁴⁶

These words uttered by Rosa only a fortnight before her death are prophetic. Yes, the date is 1918. That is to say, the “Great War” (World War I), with its massacres and genocides, has already occurred and become part of the shared experience of humanity. But it is still not easy to foresee that humanity will face a barbarism on the scale of Nazism. We salute the memory of Rosa Luxemburg in this year 2019, the centenary of her death at the hand of German social democracy and the counter revolutionaries. We also evoke the memory of Karl Liebknecht, audacious co-leader, together with Rosa, of the revolutionary Marxist wing of the German working class movement in the immediate post-war period.

Prophetic or not, Rosa Luxemburg was entirely right. Fascism (Nazism) rose as the concrete image of barbarism over Germany first, Europe next, and the whole world finally only two decades after those words were uttered. And it was socialism that stopped fascism. What vanquished Nazism was the Red Army, the heroic partisan war of the Soviet peoples, the *Résistance* in France, the partisans of Italy, Yugoslavia, and Albania, the *Kapetanios* in Greece, all with a communist

45 Rosa Luxemburg, “Junius Broşürü: Alman Sosyal Demokrasisi’nin Bunalımı” [*The Junius Brochure*], *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı. Seçme Yazılar*, haz. Peter Hudis/Kevin B. Anderson, Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2010, p. 477.

46 Rosa Luxemburg, “Our Program and the Political Situation”, <https://www.rosalux.de/stiftung/historisches-zentrum/rosa-luxemburg/100-tage-dokumente/englisch/artikel-rl/by-henry-holland/our-program-and-the-political-situation/>.

movement at their core, the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean communists fighting against the brutal Japanese imperialism. Were it not for socialism, fascism could perhaps have caused a much greater devastation than all that happened.

At the very beginning of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels predict that in a situation where the contending classes cannot overcome each other, society may face a full-scale catastrophe:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionaryreconstitution of society at large, or in **the common ruin of the contending classes**.⁴⁷

It is unfortunate that, to the best of our knowledge, the founding fathers did not pursue this seminal idea of “common ruin” in their later work. This task now falls to the younger generation of Marxists, like so many other theoretical tasks that are awaiting to be completed.

Unless socialism is victorious, imperialist capitalism will drag humanity towards barbarism. In the future this may take the form not of anti-Semitism but hostility against the Muslims or other forms. Whatever the ideological cover, if fascism inflicts a heavy defeat on the working class and succeeds in atomising it in a certain country or continent and proceeds to invade the rest of the world, it is clear that it will bring even more ravage and devastation on humanity than that caused by Hitler, given the level of progress reached by the weapons of mass destruction. In the long run, the choice is not between a democratic and liberal bourgeois society and socialism. The choice will again be between socialism and barbarism. When socialism wins, this will be the negation of the negation.

47 Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, London: Verso, 1998, pp. 34-35. Our emphasis.

Is fascism a non-class ideology?

Mustafa Kemal Coşkun

Let us begin with a question that is deceptively simple and has proven to be pretty controversial: Are ideological elements attributable to specific classes? For instance, does fascism, being primarily an ideology, have a class content?

Trotsky had *inter alia* argued that the fascist movement could only rise over the base of the petty-bourgeoisie. Such a movement could not only establish a forcible hegemony notably over conscious workers but, more importantly, could also influence workers who did not have class consciousness ideologically. A similar argument has been put forth by Poulantzas as well.¹ Indeed, according to him, the main class that plays a role in fascism's seizure of power is the petty-bourgeoisie. The fundamental characteristic of this class is based on the fact that it merely reveals its unity as a class only when various economic activities of its various fractions produce the same effect at political and ideological levels. The petty-bourgeoisie is thus united as a class. There are some sub-unity factors that give way to the involvement of the petty-bourgeoisie's ideology into the dominant ideology, which are anti-capitalism within the limits of the status quo, the myth of hierarchy, and state fetishism. The historical role of fascism is to forge an alliance between big monopoly capital and the petty-bourgeoisie.

¹ Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Verso Edition, 1979.

The common aspect of these two analyses, leaving aside their differences, is nothing other than their identification of the petty-bourgeoisie as the main supporter/bearer of fascist ideology. Ernesto Laclau, however, objects to such an approach since, according to him, the process of unearthing the class belongings of concrete ideologies' key elements is undertaken completely arbitrarily. Moreover, Laclau argues that none of the elements, which Poulantzas had thought of being characteristic of a class, are such when handled on its own. Indeed, liberalism that is taken to be the bourgeois ideological element of the stage of competitive capitalism has been the characteristic ideology of feudal lords in Latin America. Or militarism cannot be necessarily regarded as an imperialist or feudal ideology. The version of militarism experienced in the Third World countries after the Second World War had anti-imperialist characteristics. Therefore, for Laclau, trying to comprehend any ideological element through class identity would be a pointless attempt. This implies that all ideological elements could be the main ideology of any class.

Laclau concludes the following based on these: (1) Evaluation of the ideological and political existence of classes through a process of reduction is not possible any more. The class character of an ideological discourse is revealed by the principle of articulation (i.e. the articulation of interpellations forming this ideology). Fascism does not involve any associations on its own; it is neither a bourgeois, nor a feudal, nor a petty-bourgeois, nor a proletarian ideology. The class statement here only appears through the articulation of fascism to other ideological elements. But where does the distinction lie? This distinction is based on the associative power of a specific signification nucleus to different fields of ideological articulation. Therefore, classes do not signify an ideological and political reduction process but exist within an articulation process. (2) Articulation, in this case, requires non-class contents that constitute the raw materials over which ideological class practices function, that is, interpellations and conflicts. A class establishes its hegemony to the degree that it succeeds in articulating different worldviews, not imposing a single worldview upon the remainder of the society and thus neutralizes the potential contradictions of different worldviews. For instance, if the working class tries to impose socialist ideology upon the remainder of the society, it will fail, but if it articulates its own ideology to other ideologies adopted by the "people" (nationalism, liberalism, social democracy, etc.) it can succeed. (3) If this is the case, classes and empirically observed groups do not have to overlap with one another. Individuals are the bearers and intersection points of an accumulation of conflicts with not all boiling down to class conflicts. Moreover, it cannot be argued that the class articulating this accumulation of conflicts has to be the one that the individual should belong to.

Laclau has persistently underlined that in order for a class to establish its own hegemony it should articulate popular democratic interpellations to its own

ideological discourse. Let us give this the benefit of doubt for a second. But Laclau has already stated in his critique of Poulantzas that his attribution of class belongings to concrete ideological elements was downright arbitrary. According to Laclau, ideological elements tackled on its own do not necessarily possess any class statements and one can only talk about a class statement on the condition that these are articulated in the form of a concrete ideological discourse. Yet, the problem is this: say, there needs to be an ideological discourse that can be attributed to the working class so that this class can articulate other ideological discourses with no class belongings to its own ideological discourse. In other words, there should at least be one ideological discourse belonging to a class and this class should be able to articulate non-class ideological discourses to its own. Laclau responds to this argument by underscoring the fact that class ideologies could exist at the abstract level of the mode of production. For example, if socialism is an ideology it is one abstractly expressed at the level of the mode of production and if the working class wants to become a hegemonic class with its ideology it should be able to articulate it to the ideologies at the concrete social level. However, the claim that the conflict emerging at the level of the mode of production is abstract refers in fact to an arbitrariness because people continuously go through this conflict within concrete social formations in their everyday lives. Then, class conflict not only takes place at the abstract level of the mode of production but it can also take place, or is experienced, and can be unfolded at the level of concrete social formation. Yet another problem appears at this point: a popular democratic interpellation that the working class has articulated to its own ideology does not necessarily have to render the ideology of the class revolutionary but, on the contrary, may very well bring about more reactionary consequences. Simply put, what if the process of establishing hegemony with the support of the “people” by articulating socialism to nationalism gives way not to people’s adoption of more progressive ideologies (like socialism) but more reactionary understandings within socialist ideology? That is, how can such negative effects brought about by the articulation of popular democratic ideologies on the ideology of the working class be eliminated or can they be eliminated considering the fact that all articulations to socialism will not engender progressive consequences? Laclau must have realized such problems in his further work (notably in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* that he co-authored with Chantal Mouffe). His solution, however, has been to sever the tie between the objective class positions and hegemony entirely, that is, total dismissal of the idea that hegemony could only be established by classes. What follows is the total severance of the connection between the working class and its social position, that is, between economy (mode of production) and politics (ideology).

This has lately been a common problem for many authors. A more recent

example that suffers from the same defect is Michael Mann's book titled *Fascists*.² Mann argues that we have to comprehend the social basis and functions of fascism well but we should not identify the social with class. To him, theorists of class focus on "social basis" and "objective functions," thereby overtly ignoring fascists' own beliefs. Another problem emerges at this point as well. If there is no such basis, whether class or objective, the question "where do fascists' own beliefs spring from?" begs an answer. Mann's response to this question will be discussed below but now let us continue with his critique of the class-based theorization of fascism.

According to Mann, none of the theories of middle-class holds firm any more. Mann argues that most fascists are neither economically deprived nor particularly middle-class based on the examples of Italy, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Austria. Since persons from all classes became fascists, this is exactly why it is unlikely that class consciousness or class conflict would directly explain much of fascism. Besides, fascism, according to Mann, is usually neither particularly bourgeois nor particularly petty-bourgeois, its class composition is complex and variable. Accordingly, Mann defines fascism as *the pursuit of a transcendent and cleansing nation-statism through paramilitarism* rather than defining it in relation to a class category. He puts forth this definition in terms of five conditions that contain internal tensions. The first is *nationalism* signifying a deep and populist commitment to an "organic" or "integral" state. The second is *statism* involving both goal and organizational form; to Mann, fascists worship state power. The third is *transcendence* referring to fascists' rejection of conservative, liberal, social democratic, and socialist claims. According to Mann, they attacked both the capital and labor. Fascist nation-statism was expected to be able to transcend social conflict, first repressing those who fomented strife and then incorporating classes and other interest groups into the state's corporatist institutions. Yet all classes supported fascists for exactly these reasons. Nevertheless, Mann argues that transcendence was never actually accomplished as all fascist regimes leaned toward capitalism in practice. In this sense, Mann claims that fascists had an aim to actually transcend capitalism while he dismisses the fact that fascism was a product of the imperialist monopoly capitalism. The fourth condition is *cleansing* all its opponents that were seen as enemies. The last one is *paramilitarism* which is the basis of a fascist radicalism effecting people's class transcendence by "knocking heads together."

Mann states that the four components of fascism, which he refers to as the sources of social power, are necessary for his definition of fascism. These are ideological, economic, military, and political sources of power. According to Mann, class theorists tend to elevate economic power relations in their explanations,

2 Michael Mann, *Fascists*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

while nationalist theorists emphasize ideology. To him, all four sources of social power are needed to explain the most important social and historical outcomes.

Within this framework, Mann associates the rise of authoritarianism and fascism with the crises seen in these above-mentioned four sources of power. Each of these components were effective in Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Spain, where fascist regimes emerged (and studied by Mann), but they had different specific weights in each country.

According to Mann, fascists were people who believed in a paramilitary, transcendent, and cleansing nation-statism and could not simply be a vehicle for class interests since neither their organizations nor their values allowed them to be simply a vehicle for class interests as they were distinctive. They rather sought to cleanse the nation of its enemies and so to transcend class and political conflict.

Mann quite appropriately argues that one must take fascist movements and the possibility of a future rise of fascism very seriously. In this sense, Mann's attempt at understanding fascism and fascists is invaluable because the history of the rise of fascism also coincides with the history of the incompetence of theories of fascism, as Mandel also stressed. A systematic analysis of fascism will also make the struggle against it more effective.

Yet, I believe that Mann's book has two important weaknesses. First, Mann takes class theories as ones that purely and simply reduce fascist movements to the middle-class or the interests of capitalist classes. However, explaining the world through class theories, i.e. through class struggles, refers to the analysis of a part of the whole together with other parts, for instance, analyzing the political field together with the other parts of the whole (economic, cultural, ideological, etc.), not merely reducing all issues to class. Indeed, Trotsky revealed the relationship between the petty-bourgeoisie and finance capital in his analysis of fascism. He investigated this relationship within the framework of the crisis of capitalism by demonstrating the ways in which the fascist movement was incorporated into the bourgeois state apparatus through a holistic analysis. Hence, class theory does not mean reducing everything to class.

Yet, Mann makes a second mistake and fails to notice the class characteristic of fascism, as he understands class theory in this way, and lists a wide range of various characteristics each of which may vary as per different countries. This, in turn, makes it harder for us to recognize fascism, thereby blurring the view about what and whom we should fight against. Mann mistakenly assumes that perceiving the world through class struggle is essentialism. What follows for Mann will merely taking one more step to sever the ties between economy and politics, just like Laclau.

Such a perception is in fact a major problem in social sciences. Indeed, analyzing social events from a class struggle perspective is often interpreted as an essentialist approach. This unavoidably leads either to the outright elimination

of class from analyses or to the eclectic articulation of utterly different variables to class, just like Mann does. Thus class becomes invisible in social analysis, it is disguised. Yet on the contrary such a perspective requires thinking about economic, political and ideological-cultural elements together since all these emerge, develop and transform within the framework of class struggles. Therefore, it will not be inaccurate to state that the literature on fascism needs further studies that are not eclectic or essentialist but are able to analyze fascism through a holistic comprehension of social events.

Turkey's economic crisis

Kurtar Tanyılmaz

1- Introduction

Today's world is dominated by the concept of post-truth, which reveals a thin line between fiction and non-fiction, between honesty and fraud, the concept that can be seen in almost every field, especially in politics. It is hard to tell how influential postmodern narratives have been, but we cannot deny that today's capitalism is upside down, the social crisis is severe, and the bourgeoisie is out of touch with facts and reality. The current US President Donald Trump is the epitome of this trend, as he deals with political and economic issues of modern-day capitalism not with facts but with his post-truth attitude. However, it is worth noting that other major representatives of the bourgeois world also demonstrate this point of view. For example, Jean Claude Juncker, the former President of European Commission, expressed his views on the measures to tackle the growing austerity in the European economy in 2011: "When it becomes serious, you have to lie". Not long ago, Janet Yellen, the president of the former US Federal Reserve (Fed), replied to a question: "Would I say there will never, ever be another financial crisis? [...] You know probably that would be going too far but I do think we're much safer and I hope that it will not be in our lifetimes and I don't believe it will be". Yellen, aged 70, added that she never expected a similar financial crisis as in 2008.¹

One of the leading figures in Turkish bourgeoisie, who also addresses problems in a "post- truth" manner, is president Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP). In 2008, interpreting the effects of the world financial crisis on

¹ *Milliyet*, 29.06.2017.

Turkish economy as “tangential”, Erdogan and his party members claimed that Turkish economy was a victim of “games played on the economy”, “interest rate lobby” and “external forces”. However, we are facing a crisis that shows signs of a long-term austerity. Below we will refer to factual evidence of the crisis. Although Erdogan’s claim that “there is no crisis, only manipulative moves” is meant to conceal true causes of the present austerity, actions speak louder than words. If there is no crisis and “we can help ourselves” (as Erdogan said to his ministers that Turkey doesn’t need US firm McKinsey’s consultancy), why did Erdogan and his son-in-law, the Treasury and Finance Minister Albayrak, go to England to meet with international financial investors? Why was Mc Kinsey authorized to audit the consulting firm, even though it was later abandoned? Why did Erdogan try to assure the representatives of American companies he met in Istanbul that “there is no compromise on the free market”?

Contrary to the AKP and Erdogan’s efforts to cover up the facts that cannot be denied, Turkish people, a vast majority of whom belong to the working class, live the worsening effects of this crisis every day. The purchasing power of the workers is rapidly decreasing. On the other hand, the threats of unemployment and debt are increasing. The Life Conditions Survey of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) reveals that 54.6 million people “are squeezed under housing costs”, that 47.5 million “have difficulty to pay their debts and installments”, that 26.8 million people “cannot afford meat every other day”, that 25 million people “cannot afford unexpected expenses” and 16.3 million “cannot afford heating costs”.²

It is crucial to have a clear view of the people “who will pay the bill” against the post-truth approach, which is disconnected from reality and promotes the interests of the bourgeoisie. Our goal is to reveal the ongoing phase of economic crisis in Turkish capitalism, its roots, the targets in the near future, the reactions of the big bourgeoisie and the AKP government alike, and finally the impacts of the economic crisis on the working class. Only a clear and realistic account of the crisis and its consequences can shed light on the social outcomes for the Turkish working class and the ways in which it should respond to the crisis.

2- From external debt crisis towards recession

Representatives of imperialist financial capital such as the IMF, Goldman Sachs and Fitch constantly stated in their reports that Turkish economy was “overheated” and about to face a severe crisis. One of the indicators they applied for this prediction was the huge increase in the current account deficit and the external borrowing of the private sector. On the other hand, for the past 10 years, Turkey’s economy has been among the most “fragile” economies in the world.

² <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/yalcin-dogan/ekonomik-krize-care-yine-baska-bahara,20471,21.09.2018>.

The concept of fragility in international financial circles refers to the possibility that borrowers (creditors) to a country can rapidly recall their capital if the foreign debts in that country increase regularly and are at the risk of not being paid (at least at the level of the promised earnings). If we analyze Turkish economy from this perspective, the trade deficit and its ratio to GDP, the stock of external debt and its ratio to GDP has constantly been on the rise over the years. According to OECD, Turkish economy is among nine most sensitive countries in terms of external shocks (e.g. economic crises and/or capital flights), as it is the economy with the highest ratio of current account deficit to GDP and external debt, and the second highest according to its inflation rate.³ By contrast, in terms of its foreign exchange reserves to GDP, Turkish economy is among the lowest in the world.⁴ It is obvious that an economy with such a high level of foreign currency debt can keep foreign capital only by offering high interest rates to international investors and ensuring the stability of its currency (keeping the inflation rate low).

In this section of the article, we explain why Turkish lira depreciated (since the beginning of 2018, Turkish lira has devalued almost 60 percent), why the external debt, mostly belonging to the private sector (68 percent of the country's total external debt), so much increased (around 500 billion dollars) and why the foreign trade deficit has been constantly increasing.

In the light of concrete facts, the current crisis in Turkish economy should be characterized as a crisis of external debt and foreign currency. This finding is important to refute all "conspiracy" claims as unfounded. If an economy has been so fragile for years, it is already open to all sorts of external interventions, regardless of whether or not there is a conspiracy.

The most important factor, distinguishing the economic crises of Turkish capitalism in 1994, 1998-99 and 2001 from the earlier ones, is that this time not the state but the private sector is highly indebted. In the near future, this external debt crisis is likely to turn into a real sector crisis, as big companies from various sectors are now seeking help from the state to prevent bankruptcy. The crisis in the production sector will probably spread to the banking sector, which gives credit to the real sector companies, leading to a double crisis. If the companies in the real sector and corresponding banks come to the brink of bankruptcy, the state will attempt to bail out the banks; thus, the socialization of a large part of the private sector debt will be on the agenda. We can foresee that this will increase the state's

3 According to data in August 2018, the ratio of current account deficit to GDP was 6.96 percent, the ratio of external debt to GDP 51 percent (in 1990 it was 26 percent) and inflation rate 16 percent.

4 According to data in August 2018, the ratio of foreign exchange revenues to the national income was 12 percent. Moreover, the Central Bank's foreign exchange reserves, which amounted to 124 billion dollars in June 2018, fell to 88.7 billion dollars; within three months there was 35.3 billion dollar decrease! (13.09.2018).

budget deficit and public debt.⁵ It is still possible to say that the current economy is in a state of stagflation, which implies a phase whereby inflation increases and the whole economy stagnates. In the coming months, there are strong signs that the economic growth will slow down and the stagnation will spread.

Credit Default Swap (CDS), the main indicator of a country's credit risk premium has increased for Turkey to record levels of 492 points, surpassing many other emerging economies (24.09.2018). On the other hand, the real sector confidence index, which is one of the leading indicators of the course of an economy, is at its lowest level in the last 10 years (24.09.2018) and the consumer confidence index has decreased to the lowest level after the global crisis (26.10.2018). For Turkish economy in 2019, both the OECD (0.5 percent) and the IMF (0.4 percent) forecast a decreasing growth together with Argentina. The optimistic forecast of the New Economic Program (NEP) that unemployment will rise to 12.1 percent at the end of 2019 is a warning that we should prepare for a severe increase in unemployment. The decreased volume of loans in the banking sector, the rapid growth of bad loans, the fall of the capacity utilization rate to 76.2 percent, the fall of İSO PMI (Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, Manufacturing Industry Purchasing Managers Index) to 42.7 in September 2018 (considering that values below 50 imply recession and that this value is the lowest since April 2009) – all these negative trends point out that production, investments and consumption are slowing down and the economy is rapidly cooling down.

3- Reasons of economic crisis specific to Turkish capitalism or who is responsible for it?

If we do not refer to conspiratorial factors such as the “external forces” and the “interest rate lobby”, we must determine the real causes of the economic crisis. Is the current economic crisis (which also influences all aspects of social life) a product of the “crisis of AKP regime”, as it is widely accepted in the opposition circles, or of the structural problems of Turkish economy?

We have mentioned above that the Turkish capitalism is in a severe economic crisis due to its “fragile” structure with continuously increasing foreign trade deficit and the private sector's foreign debt as the most important indicators. The goal of our analysis is to find out the roots of the crisis and determine who is responsible for it. Should we look for them in the one-man based authoritarian regime, the political choices and economic policies followed by the AKP governments, or in the structural contradictions of the Turkish capitalism's integration into the world economy?

⁵ News that the government is preparing to help banks for non-accruing loans (17.09.2018) support our foresights on this issue.

We should take into account different dimensions of the issue and distinguish between the factors that trigger and/or escalate the crisis and the underlying causes of the crisis. First of all, we have to point out the depression character of the world economy as the background of this crisis. With the global financial crisis in 2008, the world economy entered a phase in which the so-called Third Great Depression deepened. Although 10 years have passed, we can say that the stagnation in the world economy continues despite the partial improvements in various economies and intensive state interventions.⁶ While some economies are growing fast, others are growing slowly. In general, when we look at the course of fixed capital investments, the unemployment and world trade volume as a whole in advanced capitalist countries, it is not possible to talk about positive development. As the latest IMF report indicates, there is a significant decrease in the growth rate of the world economy for the coming year. Even for 2019 and 2020, there is a possibility of recession again.

Here one can ask why the present conditions of the world economy influence all economies at the same level, except for the countries such as Argentina or Turkey. The answer to this question lies in a series of contradictions and tensions created by the way in which these economies relate to world capitalism. Despite a long crisis of capitalism from the 1970s, the international bourgeoisie adopted a strategy called neoliberalism. The aim was to increase the rate of surplus value through liberalizing capital movements and heightening competition in the heart of the world working class, so as to overcome the crisis. The same strategy, which had a damaging impact on the working class, was adopted by the Turkish bourgeoisie following the military coup on 12 September, 1980, under the changing conditions of the balance of class forces in the country. However, Turkish capitalism, being relatively less developed and technologically backward, “a rowing boat to the ocean”, was forced to compete with other economies, leading to a permanent foreign trade deficit. Exports gained momentum, foreign exchange flowed into the country, whereas imports increased more than exports, thereby leading to greater outflow of foreign currency. The necessity of getting loans from abroad to finance the foreign trade deficit made the country dependent on external financing. Since the 2001 crisis, the AKP government, adopting the regulations implemented by Kemal Derviş (the former head of United Nations Development Program, who served as the economy minister in 2001-2002 and launched Turkey's recovery from a huge financial crisis) in line with the IMF agreement, sought to stabilize the shocks created by this process through the “independence” of the central bank. The Turkish capitalism functioned in the following way: You offer higher interest

6 For the background of the stagnation in the world economy see Sungur Savran, “Üçüncü Büyük Depresyon’un 10. Yılı: Kapitalizmin can çekişmesi” (“Tenth year of the Third Great Depression: Death agony of capitalism”), *Devrimci Marksizm*, no. 36, 2017, p. 37-90.

rates than the world capital markets in order to find cheaper credit abroad and you are able to repay international investors which brought foreign currency into your country without devaluing your currency (keeping inflation rate low) when demanded; thus, you give confidence to international investors.

To the extent that the “independence” of the central bank refers to the implementation of monetary policies to establish this “confidence”, it indicates the dependence on international financial circles.

We have mentioned that it is necessary to give high interest to the foreign exchange needed to close the foreign trade deficit resulting from the unprotected world market integration of an economy with relatively weak international competitiveness. However, in economies such as Turkish, the liberalization of capital movements as a requirement to implement the neoliberal strategy contains the following contradiction: Capital inflows of international investors in pursuit of higher interest rates lead to overvaluation of the national currency, in this case Turkish lira, thereby promoting import of finished and intermediate goods, which increases the import dependency of the production structure. Because the overvaluation of national currency consequently cheapens the prices of foreign currencies and thus the prices of foreign goods, import seems more attractive than domestic production. Such relationship leaves these economies dependent on the international financial system and makes them more fragile and vulnerable to capital movements. The critical point is the following: The capital accumulation dependent on foreign capital inflows and foreign debt favors local big bourgeoisie, as in these conditions they still initiate a relatively profitable production. Nevertheless, if we look at the big picture in Turkey, Turkish working people always pay the bill out of public resources, as it was in the last five economic crises of Turkish economy in the last 25 years. This reveals the class character of such relationship with the world market.

We have pointed out that the increasing current account deficit and external debt of Turkish economy stem from the contradictions created by the integration of Turkish bourgeoisie into the world market. Thus, we emphasize structural and chronic problems of Turkish economy which are not only related to the AKP government. In other words, the main reasons behind such development are capitalism as a whole and the Turkish bourgeoisie trying to take part in the world capitalist system. However, our statement does not minimize the important role that the AKP government has played in this process. Although the current account deficit has existed for 30 years, this problem exponentially grew in the AKP period,⁷ because the AKP governments adopted and implemented the same

⁷ From 1923 till 2002, throughout 80 years, foreign trade deficit in Turkey totally amounted to 247 billion dollars while in the last 15 years, under the AKP regime it reached 967 billion dollars (*Cumhuriyet*, 20. 02. 2018).

strategy and market rules we have summarized above.

It is necessary to mention another aspect of the issue. Why are the AKP's policies and preferences facing such a severe crisis now, although they coincided with the rules of international markets and did not experience economic turmoil for many years? We believe that there are two main factors. The economic policies and preferences of the AKP as an internal dynamic were important. We cannot deny the role that the financing of construction, energy and infrastructure investments through external loans with cheap interest rates, and thus paving the way for a rapid growth of the economy, boosting domestic demand by debiting households and finally canalizing these loans via public procurements to Islamist and/or supporting capital groups, which increased the power of the AKP government and President Erdogan.

However, the main external dynamic that drew the boundaries of this internal dynamic was the decision of the US Federal Reserve to end monetary tightening policy,⁸ which was meant to prevent the deepening tendencies of the world economic crisis and lead to gradual raises in interest rates since 2013. Accordingly, as this signaled the end of "a lot of money, cheap interest" period, international financial investors began to withdraw their capital from the Developing Countries ("emerging markets") and to land their money to "safe" and developed economies, like such as the US, with relatively higher interest rate.⁹ Under these conditions, an economy such as Turkish, with high foreign exchange obligations and dependency on the international financial system, ought to raise interest rates if it wanted to play by the rules of capitalism. However, the AKP government and President Erdogan, who obeyed the rules of international markets and served to neoliberalism for years, have been trying not to fulfill their requirements. They are "squeezed between Atlanticism and Rabiism, between Wall Street and Islamic banking, between amendments on interest rates and the independence of the Central Bank."¹⁰

8 This policy of quantitative easing, in many emerging economies, including Turkey, resulted in increasing debts of private companies and banks and in that time the global debt stock grew by 75 percent from 2008 to 2018 and \$ 250 billion. Within the global debt stock, the share of emerging markets has increased from 7% in 2008 to 26% in 2018. (Güven Sak, *Dünya*, 17.09.2018).

9 On the basis of the roadmap for the period in question, the Fed is expected to pump money more than \$ 1 trillion from global markets by the end of 2019. According to a recent study by IMF on this issue, interest rate increases and balance sheet reduction will reduce capital inflows to the developing economies by \$ 70 billion in the next two years (https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/en/Documents/financial -SERVICES / Economic-gorunum_ocak-2018.pdf). The capital outflow from funds focused on emerging markets reached the highest level of 1.5 years (*Dünya*, 18.06.2018).

10 Sungur Savran, "Dolar neden yükseliyor? Ya da Türk lirasının baş aşağı düşüşü (3): Wall Street ile İslami finans arasında kalakalmak", ("Why is the dollar rising? Or the upside down of the Turkish lira (3): Caught between Wall Street and Islamic finance"), *Gerçek*, 27.05.2018.

In brief, the main responsibility for the current economic crisis lies with Turkish big bourgeoisie as a whole on the one hand; on the other hand, the factor that triggered and escalated the crisis, different in comparison with other countries, is the contradiction that the AKP government and Erdogan are confronted with changing conditions in the world economy, but at the same time they represent the other capital faction in the changing conditions.

Seen from a higher perspective, this crisis is the expression of the struggle and conflicts of Turkish big bourgeoisie in different strategies of capital accumulation and world market integration. While the AKP generally acts in accordance with the common interests of the big bourgeoisie, it is, as a representative of the Islamist faction of the bourgeoisie, seeking strategically different alliances. Its search for an alternative to the Western alliance and different international relations it establishes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have a permanent impact on the economy.

For instance, Turkey is a NATO member, but wants to purchase missiles from Russia. Likewise, the EU is its main market, but it gives trade preferences to the Middle Eastern countries. Such conflicts deepen the crisis, although they are not the main cause.

4- Who will swallow the bitter pill?

Since the beginning of the crisis, the AKP government and President Erdogan have denied the crisis, placing the responsibility to “external forces” and creating the impression in the masses that the crisis will not hit the economy. We have to make a distinction between the government’s attitudes and concrete behaviors. Despite the rapid depreciation of Turkish lira and significant decrease in foreign exchange reserves, the government’s first contacts with international capital circles both in Turkey and abroad indicate that it plans to overcome this turbulent process through winning the confidence of these circles. The explanations of the Treasury and Finance Minister Albayrak that “they will not struggle against the markets but will have a strong communication with them” and that “the key word for this period will be adaptation”, means a declaration of loyalty to the markets from the very beginning.

An important indicator of the AKP’s roadmap is the New Economy Program (NEP), previously called the Middle Term Program (OVP). The main orientation of this program was to recover from crises, or at least extend its negative effects till local elections with measures aimed at preventing the emergence of a liquidity crisis in the foreign exchange and Turkish lira, increasing exports and paying the private sector’s debt out of the public resources.

This orientation is consistent with TÜSİAD’s (Turkish Industry and Business Association) statement that “the priority of the new period is to ensure the stability

of the financial system". The intention to conclude an agreement with Mc Kinsey¹¹ (although it was cancelled later), the implementation of a new stabilization package, and a quasi "IMF program without IMF" mean nothing else than the implementation of austerity policies, as we are familiar with the former IMF programs. It is also consistent with Erdogan's intention "to reign the country as a corporation". This type of orientation, i.e passing on important functions of public control institutions (like Turkish Grand National Assembly and State Audit Court) to a foreign audit firm, makes clear that Erdogan's rationale ("It's not necessary, we ourselves can afford it") cannot go beyond the boundaries of heroism; what is decisive is the fear to show confidence to the markets.

Ege Cansen, a liberal economist who represents the intellectual wing of the big bourgeoisie very well, lays out the policy that must be followed: "The money-fiscal decision to be taken under current conditions is to **ease the money and cut the budget**". What does this expression mean? It means saving companies and banks that may become insolvent and cutting the budget, especially social expenditures. He ends his article in the following words: "As a result, companies will be relieved and people will be squeezed. If one refuses to swallow the bitter pill, s/he has to accept the bitter end".¹²

We can say that the NEP, which the AKP government puts forward, is quite compatible with its political orientation to pass the costs of the crisis to the laborers who make up three quarters of the society. In addition to the measures such as a tax reform, private insurance system, and flexible working conditions for public servants under the name of public employment based on performance, layoffs and growing living costs also mean that the burden on the working class will increase.

Let us put aside the prediction that the world trade volume will shrink further and trade wars will become more and more intense, and assume that the promotion of export strategy to overcome the crisis is realistic. In this case, the following problem arises: How can we transform a production structure whereby exports depend on imports? NEP aims to reduce imports and promote domestic production. However, the AKP governments, which have been in power for 16 years, have not made any progress on this issue, so the dependency on imported products, especially intermediate inputs and energy, has increased every year,¹³ resulting in the constant increase of the foreign trade deficit. "Export of high value-added products" as an economic policy target has been on the agenda for

11 Behind Mc Kinsey's "success story" lies not only its enforcements of the so called austerity measures for companies in order to increase exploitation but also a number of cases of corruption in their relations with companies and states.

12 Ege Cansen, *Sözcü*, 04.10.2018.

13 Import dependency ratio amounts to approximately 65-70 percent of Turkey's exports. This means that in order to produce 100 units of goods, 65-70 percent of imported intermediate goods are used.

30 years. Nevertheless, until now, although there has been no concrete progress on this issue under the AKP governments, the question is – why do they come up with an idea to mobilize domestic production 16 years later?

The main reason is the continual pursuit of Turkish big bourgeoisie, whether Islamist or Westernist wing, of a greater integration with world capitalism since the 1980s, so as to get a bigger share from the surplus-value pie of the world market. The most important result for a technologically backward economy with limited international competitiveness to establish capitalist production relations with international capital is the following: obtaining more surplus value in the world market requires, as a precondition, both borrowing capability from the international financial circles and intensive pressure on the domestic working class. But this precondition has structural limitations, as it was revealed by the crises in the past.

It is possible to escape from the vicious circle of this bourgeois orientation, but this requires, first of all, a political will aimed at abandoning capitalist relations of production. If you are going to reduce dependence specific to the existing capitalism, beyond any heroic words like “we ourselves can afford this”, you must undertake capital controls and exit from the Customs Union. Since we have not seen any concrete step taken towards a radical change in the production structure based on the dependence of exports to imports, which has also been a structural problem during the AKP governments, there is no other way out of the crisis, except to suppress wages and to pave way for layoffs, provided that an increase in exports is intended.

The steps taken so far confirm our assumption. The initiatives to realize “structural reforms” through transferring dismissal pays to the Unemployment Fund, aimed at easy “hire and fire” practices, transferring the Unemployment Fund’s money to public banks for other purposes, and the statements given by the president of the Ankara Chamber of Industry (ASO) that “this debt belongs to the whole of us”, or “wages of the worker should be paid by the state” point out the reality that both the government and the employers target the pockets of the working people.

For a long time, Turkish bourgeoisie has expressed the desire “to make Turkey a European China” by pulling down labor costs in order to increase its competitiveness on the way to become Europe’s manufacturing base.¹⁴ During

14 Former TÜSIAD president Omer Sabancı, “Turkey can play the same role of China for European SMEs” (*Hürriyet*, 29.06.2006), Guler Sabanci, one of the leading figures of Turkish big bourgeoisie, “We are now China of Europe” (*Hürriyet*, 23. 01. 2011), former Minister of Economy Zafer Çağlayan, “in the future, Turkey will be Europe’s China” (*Hürriyet*, 09.02.2011), or “Turkey thanks to its dynamic and young population and its cheap labour is perceived as ‘China of Europe’” (*Fortune*, 29. 05. 2015). Considering that the country has the lowest minimum wages in European countries (*Evrensel*, 29. 08. 2018), the longest working hours (1855 hours) among OECD countries

the state of emergency (OHAL) and in conditions of economic crises nowadays, the working life is likely to be converted almost into a prison camp. The detention and arrests of the workers who recently protested against the slavery working conditions based on subcontracting system at the construction of the Third Airport in Istanbul indicates that an undeclared state of siege in the economy and “economy management by whipsawing” will continue in the coming period.¹⁵

5- In order not to accept a bitter ending: class struggle!

We have tried to show that in the background of the economic crisis of Turkey lies the crisis of world capitalism as a whole; but we have also emphasized the role of the collaborative efforts of Turkey's big bourgeoisie and the AKP government under Erdogan's leadership, albeit with different priorities. That the impacts of the crisis on Turkey's economy have been so severe we owe to the political choices of the AKP / Erdogan as a contradiction of the inner struggle of the Turkey's bourgeoisie. In the light of these determinations, we have concluded that Turkish bourgeoisie is primarily responsible for the crisis and then the AKP regime.

This conclusion implies that the crisis stems neither from a “one-man- regime” nor from the AKP's wrong economic policy preferences and managerial errors. We claim that the crisis is a product both of the restrictions of capital accumulation and struggle with different priorities of capital factions to overcome it. In this sense, the crisis has a class character.

Foreign debts are permanently increasing because of the dependency of Turkish bourgeoisie on international finance circles with the aim of making Turkey a part of uneven capitalist relations of production. Hence it becomes an obstacle to social welfare and living conditions.¹⁶ Therefore, we conclude that the struggle against this crisis should be primarily on a class basis; i.e. the bill of this crisis should be paid by the ones responsible for it. These debts belong to the 1%, not to 99%!

In the conditions where the crisis of the world economy is getting deeper, trade

(average 1765 hours) (*Cumhuriyet*, 21. 12. 2017), the Turkish bourgeoisie unfortunately has gone a long way in fulfilling this objective.

15 Since the AKP's inauguration in 2002, the number of workers affected in the strikes banned was 192.000 and within the period of state of emergency since the two years it was more than 154.000. In other words, six of the 14 strikes were blocked in the OHAL period (*Cumhuriyet*, 15.06.2018).

16 Unemployment rate for the year 2019 was set at 12.1 percent even in the NEP forecast (i.e. with optimistic and official figures). It is clear that the real figure is much higher. The indebtedness of households increased day by day, and the ratio of household debt to disposable income increased from 4.7 percent in 2002 to 50 percent in 2018. Recent research of a Public Union Confederation reveals that at least eight out of 10 public employees are indebted, and that one out of three working families lives under the poverty line (*Cumhuriyet*, 14.10.2018).

wars are escalating, and possibilities for joint agreements between different social classes are diminishing, the solution can only be based on a class struggle. When the power balance between the classes has been achieved, any government comprised of working classes should first refuse to pay of the foreign debts of a handful of domestic and foreign large banks and capital groups, and should definitely oppose the payment of these debts to the laboring class through state banks. Banks and companies should be asked to pay the losses of the employers, not the workers; otherwise, these banks and companies should be expropriated under workers control, the Customs Union should be exited, capital movements should be taken under control, wages should be increased according to the average rate of inflation, working hours should be reduced and employment should be aimed for everyone.

Such a mobilization that puts the interests of the working people at the center should avoid the following political orientation in the light of past experiences and lessons: conducting a political struggle on the basis of opposing Erdogan's authoritarian "one-man regime" which is highly widespread in opposition parties and in most socialist circles. This approach, "Let us first establish a democracy..." is, of course, meaningful and legitimate to the extent that it puts ahead a struggle for liberty against despotism as a goal. But the real problem is: what social and class forces will you stand for in this struggle for "democracy" or liberty? The pillar of the political orientation haunting the Turkish left for many years is great expectations of democratization wave via the EU relations as an external social force. However, the EU, as the representative of a wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie, could not go beyond being a pragmatic institution in its own interests for years. Let us remember that in 2011, when the effects of the world economic crisis were worsening in the European economies, Germany's enforcing and proliferating attitude towards Greek economy riding out a crisis was almost the same as the IMF's. Similarly, to expect too much from "progressive" bourgeois circles in Turkey as an internal dynamic is another pillar of the political orientation in the leading opposition and leftist circles.

One of the leading targets of the big bourgeoisie in Turkey for many years has been to become a dominant power in the Middle East and Africa (MENA) and the Caucasus region economically as well as politically. Another target is, as we have mentioned above, to make Turkey the "China of Europe" in relations with the EU as the main export destination.

In terms of both objectives, there is a consensus between Erdogan / AKP and different fractions of Turkish bourgeoisie, although they have many other conflicts.¹⁷

Erdogan gave many gifts to the other wings of the bourgeoisie, and he may have fought

¹⁷ The most illustrative example of this tension is Erdogan's move to control the İş Bank, which is one of the biggest and most important financial institutions on the side of the Western bourgeoisie, by demanding to transfer the bank's shares to the Treasury and Finance Ministry.

a lot in the past with the TÜSİAD bourgeoisie. But today he promises a gift to the Western bourgeoisie: when the world economy is turned upside-down, when Trump has surrendered to a trade war, he decides to take a one-hand decision, manages the country as a joint-stock company, serves capital through a quick decision-making process, and attacks the working class.¹⁸

The above mentioned objectives of the Turkish bourgeoisie determine their opportunistic attitude towards democracy at the same time. Former TÜSİAD chairman Tuncay Özilhan has stated clearly a short time ago:

We have to admit that the expectation that liberal democracy, the rule of law and the market economy will bring peace and prosperity to the whole world is empty. In this age, where the economic and political balance of power is re-formed and almost tectonic changes are taking place, countries need to make a **quick and effective decision** to keep pace with the pace of change. In many countries, we are entering a period of **strong leaders** to adapt to change and deal with the consequences of change affecting large masses.¹⁹

In case of a deepening crisis moving towards a collapse, the question of who is going to pay the price is of utmost importance. We can foresee that the “costs” (unemployment, abolition of severance pay, etc.) will be largely extended to the laborers. So, in the conditions of crisis where class interests are so sharply confronted, there is no chance of winning a struggle aside from the fact that left intends to pursue a politics independent from imperialism and the bourgeoisie. Precisely for this reason, arising political expectations in search of a compromise and common interest based relations with “progressive” fractions of the bourgeoisie, widespread in the Turkish left, would weaken the struggle capacity of the working classes against the despotic regime and the economic crisis in the country at the same time.

To avoid heavy social costs of a deepening economic crisis for working classes, the most important task is to organize a united workers front around urgent demands and involve all layers of laborers, including the supporters of the government some call the “other neighborhood”. This struggle must of course contain very broad sections, should be in alliance with other oppressed groups, including women, the Kurds and migrants, but this common struggle should be aimed at establishing a class base founded on the needs and demands of the working class.

18 Sungur Savran, “Rabiacılığın istibdatı” (“The Autocracy of Rabiism”), *Gerçek*, August 2018, no. 107.

19 *Hürriyet*, 18.01.2018 (highlighted by the author).

The Mediterranean: new basin of world revolution!

RedMed

www.RedMed.org

About us

RedMed (Red Mediterranean) is a web site that publishes news, opinion, commentary and political declarations from around the Mediterranean Sea, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Black Sea region, Transcaucasia, and the broader Eurasian region. It works hand in hand with the Balkan Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky to establish links between socialists and revolutionaries from these regions. These two have been organising the Euro-Mediterranean Conferences held every year in Athens, Greece, of which the fourth was convened this year in June. They are also holding together a one-day conference on the Centenary of the October Revolution this December in Istanbul, Turkey.

Its aim is to link up with revolutionary organisations and militants in the countries of the Mediterranean basin, which has been turned into the epicentre of world revolution thanks to the Arab revolution and the class struggles that are taking place in response to the havoc wrought by the capitalist economic crisis in the southern periphery of Europe.

To this end we will provide our analysis of the events in southern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. We will try to understand the forces, in particular the class forces, that have gone to shape the different upheavals in the Arab world, in Palestine, in Iran, in Turkey, in Kurdistan and in southern Europe, so as to be able to draw the correct conclusions regarding the way to move forward in establishing workers' power in the whole region.

We welcome letters, comments, news about struggles, debates and material in different languages. We would appreciate very much if people would volunteer translating the different articles and declarations that we publish in the web site into their native tongue.

Let us join hands to bring down the yoke of imperialism and capitalism in the Mediterranean and extend the revolution to other climes!



@RedMedOrg



/RedMed



@contact@redmed.org

The greatest revolutionary woman in history: Rosa Luxemburg

Armağan Tulunay

*“Here lies, buried
Rosa Luxemburg
A Jewess from Poland,
A pioneer of the German working class
Killed on the orders of
The German oppressors. You, the oppressed ones,
Bury your discord!”
Bertolt Brecht*

In the wake of Germany’s 1918 November revolution, the Berlin uprising on 5 January was crushed by the reactionary bands called Freikorps organized by war veterans, under direct orders of social democrat Friedrich Ebert and defense minister Gustav Noske. Despite all the pressure on Spartacists, now called the German Communist Party, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht refused to leave Berlin and instead hid in party sympathizers’ homes in working class

neighbourhoods, playing hide and seek with the German police and Freikorps. House number 43 in the Mannheimer street was to be their last stop. In the night of 14 January, they were caught by the reactionary forces and brought to Eden Hotel, occupied by the Infantry Guard Regiment of captain Waldemar Pabst. After an identity check as a mere formality and an interrogation, captain Pabst talked with the social democrat defense minister Noske and ordered the transfer of Luxemburg and Liebknecht to Moabit prison. In fact, he was given permission to execute both. Karl Liebknecht was shot at the head after being severely tortured and his corpse left at a mortuary of the nameless. On the other hand, Rosa Luxemburg, supposedly taken out of the hotel for prison transfer, was beaten to death and her corpse thrown to Landwehr canal. When her corpse was finally recovered months later, on 31 March, it was unrecognizable. Noske, fearful even of the corpse, tried to get rid of it but the news quickly spread. Rosa was identified by her friend only by some pieces of her gloves and a medallion. A grand funeral was organized for them on 25 January, Rosa missing. On 13 June, the streets were once again filled with revolutionary workers and soldiers and Rosa was buried next to Liebknecht.

Mathilde Jacob recalls a moment just before her grave was covered with red flags, accompanied by the singing of Internationale: “A youth delegate used the words of Heinrich Heine in her speech: ‘I am the sword, I am the fire. I illuminated you in the darkness and rushed forward in the wake of battle, fought on the frontlines. My friends’ corpses lie beside me (...)’. But we have no time to rejoice nor mourn. The trumpets call, a new war begins.”¹

Rosa Luxemburg is of the same age as the first working-class state of 1871 Paris Commune. She was born with the revolution, lived for the revolution and died for the revolution. Just as Trotsky, one of the two great leaders of the October revolution, said after Luxemburg and Liebknecht: “To be sure reaction could not have chosen more illustrious victims. What a sure blow! And small wonder! Reaction and revolution knew each other well as in this case reaction was personified in the guise of the former leaders of the former party of the working class, Scheidemann, and Ebert whose names will be forever inscribed in the black book of history as the shameful names of the chief organizers of this treacherous murder.”² 100 years have passed since that dark night of 15 January 1919 in Berlin. Rosa ended her article with “I was, I am, I shall be!” She wasn’t talking about herself, but the revolution. Against those who cheered the defeat of the 5 January uprising with “order prevails in Berlin”, she was giving voice to the proletarian revolution:

1 Annelies Laschitzka, *Rosa Luxemburg. Her Şeye Rağmen, Tutkuyla Yaşamak*, Turkish tr. Levent Bakaç, İstanbul: Yordam Books, 2008, p. 475.

2 Leon Trotsky, “Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg”, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/profiles/rosa.htm>.

“You foolish lackeys! Your ‘order’ is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will ‘rise up again, clashing its weapons,’ and to your horror, it will proclaim with trumpets blazing: I was, I am, I shall be!”³ Now as ever, when capitalism brings the whole mankind to its demise, when the maxim of “socialism or barbarism” is truer than ever; revolution is looking for its leadership all over the world through the countless uprisings and movements, waiting for its time to rise up. After 100 years, the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg survives through the struggles today.

A life of struggle since childhood

Rosa Luxemburg was born on 5 March 1871 in the Polish city of Zamosc under Russian rule. She was the last child of a Jewish family. Her family moved to Warsaw when she was three. She began her first struggle with life there when she was merely a child. She was confined to bed for a year after her leg was encased in plaster due to a problem in her hip bone when she was five. She faced another problem after the cast was removed: her encased leg was shorter than the other and this made her limp for the rest of her life. In 1880 Rosa entered exams in Warsaw to qualify for the Russian secondary school for girls. It wasn’t easy to be admitted to a Russian school as a Jew. The school had a quota for Jewish students, but Rosa considered entering the school due to the quota dishonorable. This wasn’t the only discrimination she faced. Her native language was Polish, but the school’s was Russian. Her country, Poland, was not free. To add to all of that, she was limping. And this 10 years old girl challenged all that. She tried to walk in a way that didn’t show her limping; since this made her walk slowly, she left for school early; she put immense effort to learn Russian quickly. Perhaps the seeds of a revolutionary were seeded back then, against all these inequalities. She wrote this widely circulated poem, despite being in Polish, then:

I demand retribution.
To those enjoying themselves, well fed,
No idea how millions earn bread
Never knew, never felt.
A smiling face,
A cheerful laughter
Brings pain to me
As those condemned
To poverty and ignorance
Never knew cheer nor smile.
All their troubles,
All their hidden tears

3 Rosa Luxemburg, “Order Prevails in Berlin”, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1919/01/14.htm>.

Should be put on the conscious of the gilded,
And avenge all they have done.⁴

In the back of a photograph she gifted to a school friend, she wrote: “My ideal is a social order where I can love anyone. In order to get to that, in pursuit of this ideal I may need to learn to hate as well”. And she did, her hatred against the enemies of the proletariat, her class grudge against bourgeois made Rosa the Rosa Luxemburg that we know.

In Warsaw, she contacted an organization called Proletariat, formed by a small group of intellectuals and a workers committee. At the age of 17, during a debate on the choice between an organization like Russian Narodniks or a proletarian one like German social democrats, she chose a proletarian revolutionary organization. As the proletarian organization made a significant impact in a short time, the state oppression increased. Many of its members got arrested. After hiding for a period, Rosa Luxemburg left for Zurich via illegal means, hiding in haystacks. Then, Switzerland was the only country allowing women to study at a university. Rosa started her university education in the natural sciences and mathematics field but later changed to economy and law, graduating in 1897. But she got her real education outside of the Zurich University. At that time, Switzerland was a safe haven and a place of exile for Russian and Polish revolutionaries. She met people like the “father” of Russian Marxism Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich and Axelrod there. She was constantly reading and discussing with Russian and Polish political refugees.

Her longtime comrade and lover Leo Jogiches also entered her life then. She ignored and belittled the struggle for the freedom of Poland occupied by three separate countries; deeming it nationalistic and instead, calling for the joint struggle of Russian and Polish workers; criticizing Poland Socialist Party (PPS) in that direction. In line with this criticism, she was among the founders of Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland (SDKP). During this time, she became the lead author and editor of the party publication *Workers' Cause*.

She represented the party, shortly after its foundation, at the II. International Congress in 1893. She passed her first test in a public speech in front of a group of almost only men including names such as Engels and Plekhanov. She pleads for the acceptance of SDKP's membership application to II. International. A witness of this speech described the scene like this: “She was a small woman with a disproportionately large head. A small nose on an otherwise typical Jewish face... She was obviously limping, with frequent stops. She did not give the best first impression, but after a short while you saw her as the smart, lively and energetic woman as she was”.

⁴ Laschitzka, p. 22 [re-translated from Turkish].

A Belgian socialist present at the venue, Emile Vandervelde says: “At the age of 23, Rosa was unknown in the German and socialist circles. (...) She was a tough nut for her opponents. I still can’t forget how she pushed her way through the delegates to stand on a chair, in order to be better heard. She wore a specially sewn beautiful dress to hide her slim, tiny figure and her disability. She defended her theses so passionately, with such fire in her eyes that the majority of the mesmerized delegates voted to accept her delegacy.”⁵ Even though this vote was in her favor, a later voting meant that SDKP’s membership would only happen later in 1896 in London Conference. Right after its acceptance in International, Tsarist police forces increased their repression on SDKP; most of its militants were arrested. The organization soon lacked the funds to even publish *Workers’ Cause* and disbanded. Rosa could have worked to refound the organization in Poland. Instead, she opted to work in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) which was at the heart of the international movement and possessed immense prestige and influence over it.

In order to avoid being deported from Germany for political reasons, she arranged a fake marriage with a German immigrant she met in Zurich and left for Berlin on 12 May 1898. This was a journey that transformed Rosa from an unknown Polish communist to a theoretician that had a significant impact on the debates in SPD, the largest social democratic party in the world, and even in the Second International; and a heroic revolutionary later. In the rest of this article, instead of chronicling her life as we have done until now, we will try to discuss Rosa with her place in the history of Marxism and her special traits.

“If you think a speech of mine won’t attract attention, you are mistaken”

Her speech at the Zurich Congress made a surprising impact, yet Rosa Luxemburg was unknown in Berlin, and she didn’t stand out with her agitation skills to her acquaintances. Furthermore, she was in the same environment with the heavy hitters of International. She was Jewish and Polish. She was a young person at 27. Most importantly, she was a woman. But Rosa did not let any of these keep her down. It was an election year when she arrived in Berlin and she was tested by her duties during this time and proved herself to the party.

She had to know the party policies by heart to be successful at election activities. After arriving at Berlin in the middle of May, she read all party publications she could find in a couple of weeks and learned the policies in their slightest details. At the beginning of June, she was sent to Upper Silesia, an old Polish city annexed by Prussia in 18. century, to agitate among Polish workers. This

⁵ Elzbieta Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg Bir Yaşam*, İstanbul: Belge Publishing House, 2008, p. 70 [re-translated from Turkish].

had been a resounding success for Rosa. Mining workers, who had never seen a female orator before, were mesmerized by this tiny Polish-speaking woman who made them proud of their forbidden native language. The word travelled from mouth to mouth of the “woman from Poland”; meeting venues were filled with people wanting to listen to her speeches; all of her speeches ended with enthusiastic applause.⁶

Rosa talked about her success in one of her stops during Silesia tour in a letter she wrote to Jogiches: “Everything was perfect at Goldberg yesterday. The meeting room was chock full, and a sizeable crowd outside, they were standing on top of each other to be able to look inside from the windows. Comrades told me that they have never seen such a crowd before”.⁷ She regretted not being able to make these speeches in Dresden, Leipzig or Berlin, they would make such an impact. She prepared for that day, studying Germany meticulously. Once she told Jogiches that she could speak German like Bismarck, she could give a conference “no worse than Bebel” and “in no later than six months she will be one of the best orators in the party”.⁸

In response to the Jogiches’ concerns before the Upper Silesia tour she said: “If you think a speech of mine won’t attract attention, you are mistaken”. She was right in that. Rosa Luxemburg kept getting better and better as an orator, and she not only gained the love of the workers but also the contempt of the social democrats on their way out of working-class ranks and finally, of course, the contempt of bourgeois. Trotsky writes:

I remember how, at a congress at Jena I think, her high voice, taut like a wire, cut through the wild protestations of opportunists from Bavaria, Baden and elsewhere. How they hated her! And how she despised them! Small and fragilely built she mounted the platform of the Congress as the personification of the proletarian revolution. By the force of her logic and the power of her sarcasm, she silenced her most avowed opponents. Rosa knew how to hate the enemies of the proletariat and just because of this she knew how to arouse their hatred for her. She had been identified by them early on.⁹

6 Ettinger, p. 108 [re-translated from Turkish].

7 Rosa Luxemburg, *Sevgiliye Mektuplar: Yoldaşım ve Sevgilim [Letters to Jogiches]*, tr. Nuran Yavuz, İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2006, p. 43.

8 Ettinger, p.108 [re-translated from Turkish].

9 Leon Trotsky, “Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg”, 1919, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/profiles/rosa.htm>.

A great theoretician, a sharp pen

Rosa Luxemburg was not just a good orator, but also a theoretician with a firm understanding of politics and an author with a sharp pen. Her Ph.D. thesis, which she completed in Zurich in 1897, can be seen as her first comprehensive work. The thesis studying the industrial growth of Poland was later turned into a book that garnered a big response, many articles discussing it. In one such article, Robert Seidel, a friend from Zurich writing at a periodical called *People's Law* (*Volksrecht*) writes: "Our comrade's book is a short book of merely 95 pages, yet it has more content and substance than many thick books. The book reviews a large literature in Polish, Russian and other languages. When we say 'reviewed' we do not mean simply copied, as most people do, but rather processed with original thought. The book is not the work of a developing mind, rather it is the ripe fruit of a developed one. No doubt, Rosa Luxemburg is one of the most important names working on Poland and Russia, and will continue to excite us."¹⁰

The brilliance of this work as seen by her contemporaries, and celebrated as revolutionary by her comrades, is the brilliance that will make her a leading theoretician among her contemporaries in German Social Democracy. She had a bright mind. But she did not content with it, instead, she carefully combined her intellect with exceptional energy and discipline, a meticulousness that considered every little detail. She questioned ideas with no regard to their originators, instead of being content with her current knowledge she would keep reading to reinforce her arguments. She wrote masterfully, using striking metaphors and expressing herself in a brave and efficient manner.

She already had a formal university education in economy. She developed novel theses on the historical conditions of capital accumulation, reproduction of capital and conflicts in this process, dissolution of primitive communist societies before class societies and analysis of this process in different regions and societies. She did not just work on economics but also on the national problem, wars, struggles of the masses, the spontaneity of mass movements and party-organization issues. Even though she was highlighted in her struggle against Bernstein revisionism and her anti-imperialist-war stance together with Liebknecht, her theoretical contributions were not limited to these, instead encompassed a much larger field.

Trotsky comments: "By the force of the strength of her theoretical thought and her ability to generalize Rosa Luxemburg was a whole head above not only her opponents but also her comrades. She was a woman of genius. Her style, tense, precise, brilliant and merciless, will remain forever a true mirror of her thought."¹¹

¹⁰ Laschitzka, p. 73 [re-translated from Turkish].

¹¹ Leon Trotsky, "Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg", 1919, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/profiles/rosa.htm>.

Defender of Marxism against revisionism

Eduard Bernstein was a theoretician who was exiled from Germany during the days of the anti-socialist law, he lived in London and was considered respectable for a while. He led the newspaper published by socialist refugees. His thoughts which were published as a small Manifesto in the central publication of German Social Democratic Workers' Party, was heavily criticized by Marx and Engels in 1879.¹² In all likelihood, he did not dare go further while Engels was alive and once he was dead, Bernstein started writing a series of articles named "problems of socialism" in the theoretical journal of the German party, *New Times (Neue Zeit)* starting from 1896.

Bernstein presented his opinions as some innovations on Marxism, taking into account the changing concrete situation; but in fact, this was an assault on the revolutionary essence of Marxism. Rosa Luxemburg was not the first to criticize Bernstein revisionism in German social democracy but she was the first to oppose the revisionist assault on Marxism with a holistic ideological and theoretical struggle. Rosa Luxemburg was almost a step ahead of even Lenin and Trotsky in Marxist theory. She was the first to identify that the path of Kautsky, so-called "father of Marxism", would lead to Bernsteinism even though at the time Kautsky had kept his distance from Bernstein's revisions.

To summarize Bernstein's thoughts: according to him, capitalism's development makes its downfall impossible. Because capitalism has adapted. The development of the credit system, means of transportation and communication, cartels and trusts have become tools of harmonic continuation of the economy. Aside from this, as the field of production gets more diverse, more and more of the working class becomes a part of the middle class, solidifying the middle class. Finally, as the trade unions develop and through their struggles, conditions of the working class get better. As a result, the contradictions of capitalism do not get intensified as predicted by the theory and it won't. Bernstein's conclusions from these findings are that the goal should not be to take capitalism down by revolution but rather tame it through reforms. Bernstein tried to present his deviation from Marxism not as such but as the correct way of reaching socialism. He did that by distorting the Marxist method; but presented his theses as a calm analysis of the concrete realities, a renovation of Marxism while staying in it.

Rosa Luxemburg studied Bernstein's article series and the book titled "*Preconditions of Socialism*" and started a front for the revolutionary program of the working class against revisionism. Her article titled *Social Reform or Revolution?*, later made into a brochure, was published in seven parts in September 1898. There she proved in every detail what kind of a swamp Bernstein found

12 Sungur Savran, "120 yıl sonra Friedrich Engels", *Devrimci Marksizm*, no 25, Kış 2015-2016, p. 203-205.

himself. She was aware of the implied comparison in the title of her article and insisted that while defending the revolution one does not need to oppose reforms, but instead these two are inseparably connected and that reforms are crucial tools for the revolutionary struggle and the revolution itself is the final goal. On the other hand, Bernstein's famous words "The movement is everything, the final goal is nothing" very clearly state separation between these two and how he had abandoned the final goal of revolution, substituting it with reforms.

It is one thing to say capitalism's contradictions haven't intensified as predicted, but completely another thing to say that it won't ever be, or that it is capable of creating new mechanisms that will solve its contradictions and crisis. The first one is a claim on the speed of its development, while the other points to a change in its direction. By stating that capitalism can create new mechanisms of harmony, Bernstein debases socialism, deposes its status of historical inevitability. This leads him to focus not into the revolutionary abolishment of capitalism and its contradictions but rather relaxing them as already being done by class struggle. Against the claims of another revisionist social democrat Konrad Schmidt that "appetite grows as one eats" meaning the workers will always want more after each successful small reform and therefore focusing only on small reforms will not necessarily disengage the workers from socialism; Rosa Luxemburg argues:

Konrad Schmidt simply falls back on the idea that an apparently mechanical movement, once started, cannot stop by itself, because "one's appetite grows with the eating," and the working class will not supposedly content itself with reforms till the final socialist transformation is realized. Now the last mentioned condition is quite real. Its effectiveness is guaranteed by the very insufficiency of capitalist reforms. But the conclusion drawn from it could only be true if it were possible to construct an unbroken chain of augmented reforms leading from the capitalism of today to socialism. This is, of course, sheer fantasy. In accordance with the nature of things as they are the chain breaks quickly, and the paths that the supposed forward movement can take from the point on are many and varied. What will be the immediate result should our party change its general procedure to suit a viewpoint that wants to emphasize the practical results of our struggle, that is social reforms? As soon as "immediate results" become the principal aim of our activity, the clear-cut, irreconcilable point of view, which has meaning only in so far as it proposes to win power, will be found more and more inconvenient. The direct consequence of this will be the adoption by the party of a "policy of compensation," a policy of political trading, and an attitude of diffident, diplomatic conciliation. But this attitude cannot be continued for a long time. Since the social reforms can only offer an empty promise, the logical consequence of such a program must necessarily be disillusionment.¹³

13 Rosa Luxemburg, "The Consequences of Social Reformism and General Nature of Reformism",

With these words Rosa Luxemburg states that as much as social reforms and revolutions are in some ways reinforcing each other, they are also external to one another in other ways. In her article “Social reform or revolution” she clearly states the destination of reformism and reformist thought:

It is contrary to history to represent work for reforms as a long-drawn-out revolution and revolution as a condensed series of reforms. A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their duration but according to their content. The secret of historic change through the utilization of political power resides precisely in the transformation of simple quantitative modification into a new quality, or to speak more concretely, in the passage of a historic period from one given form of society to another. That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society. If we follow the political conceptions of revisionism, we arrive at the same conclusion that is reached when we follow the economic theories of revisionism. Our program becomes not the realization of socialism, but the reform of capitalism; not the suppression of the wage labor system but the diminution of exploitation, that is, the suppression of the abuses of capitalism instead of suppression of capitalism itself.¹⁴

In making reforms the goal as opposed to revolution and separating Marxism from its revolutionary core, Bernstein also tried to distort Engel’s opinions to reinforce his own, but Rosa invalidated these efforts too. Bernstein sought such reinforcing opinions in the forewords to Marx’s book *Class Struggles in France* by Engels. What does Engels say in the foreword?

... Even in the classic time of street fighting, therefore, the barricade produced more of a moral than a material effect. It was a means of shaking the steadfastness of the military. If it held out until this was attained, victory was won; if not, the outcome was defeat. This is the main point which must be kept in view, also when examining the outlook for possible future street fighting.¹⁵ In the Latin countries, too, it is being realized more and more that the old tactics must be revised. Everywhere the German example of utilizing the suffrage, of winning all posts accessible to us, has been imitated; everywhere the unprepared launching

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch05.htm>.

14 Rosa Luxemburg, “Conquest of Political Power”, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch08.htm>.

15 Karl Marx, *Fransız Üçlemesi*, tr. Erkin Özalp, İstanbul: Yordam Books, 2016, p. 29.

of an attack has been relegated to the background.¹⁶

The irony of world history turns everything upside down. We, the “revolutionaries”, the “overthrowers” — we are thriving far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow. The parties of order, as they call themselves, are perishing under the legal conditions created by themselves.¹⁷

What Engels defends in the foreword is nothing more than the basic approach to the opportunities afforded by legality and making full use of these. Bernstein completely separates what Engels said from its context and turns it into a maxim to hold indefinitely. Rosa Luxemburg states that what Engels had in mind when he made comparisons between legal political work, elections and the barricades was: “not the problem of taking power eventually, but today’s struggles; not the attitude of proletariat to the state in the moment of revolution but its attitude within the limits of capitalist state.”¹⁸

When Engels notes the possibilities afforded by positions held in the parliaments; Bernstein, just like when he turned the means-end relation upside down, tried to turn it into making parliament the goal and distorted Engel’s opinions in this direction. Engels emphasizes the possible gains to be made by legal struggles, but also clearly states that socialism cannot be achieved through a sequence of reforms: “And if we are not so crazy as to let ourselves be driven to street fighting in order to please them, then in the end there is nothing left for them to do but themselves break through this dire legality.”¹⁹ That Engels considers street fighting crazy does not validate Bernstein’s opinions either. After saying how the new long and wide avenues and streets built after 1848 are so unfit for street fighting, Engel comments:

Does that mean that in the future street fighting will no longer play any role? Certainly not. It only means that the conditions since 1848 have become far more unfavorable for civilian fighters and far more favorable for the military. In the future, street fighting can, therefore, be victorious only if this disadvantageous situation is compensated by other factors. Accordingly, it will occur more seldom at the beginning of a great revolution than at its later stages and will have to be undertaken with greater forces. These, however, may then well prefer, as in the whole great French Revolution or on September 4 and October 31, 1870, in Paris, the open attack to passive barricade tactics.²⁰

16 *ibid*, p. 31.

17 *ibid*, p. 33.

18 Rosa Luxemburg, “Conquest of Political Power”, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch08.htm>.

19 Marx, *ibid*, p. 33.

20 *ibid*, p. 30.

Alas, one cannot find these words of Engels in the foreword to the first few editions of *Class Struggles in France*. Such statements were to be removed by pressure from SPD leadership. SPD asked Engels to soften his radical revolutionary tone, allegedly due to the threat of new anti-socialist laws in Germany, and Engels opposed party managers' concerns to remain solely in the legality. Yet he still crossed out a few sections and the first few editions were published as such. Therefore, this text that Bernstein tried to use as a justification to his revisionism was one that was censored by SPD leadership for its revolutionary aspects. Engels later tried to publish this foreword in full, but this would only happen later in the Soviet Union.²¹

Bernstein's reformism was not an innovation that was brought about by the changing conditions, rather it was an attempt to separate Marxism from its revolutionary essence, and from its program of building a working-class state. Rosa Luxemburg made history among her peers through her relentless defense of Marxism and proletarian revolution against revisionism. Her article "Social Reform or Revolution" debunked Bernstein's theses. As a result of this debate, known as the revisionism debate in German social democracy, Rosa was chosen as the lead editor of *Saxon Workers' Paper* (*Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*). She was the first woman to ever hold such a post.²²

Rosa Luxemburg won the debate against revisionism, but in reality, Bernstein was just saying what others in the party would not, he was not alone in his thoughts. These events were paving the way towards an SPD government that would strangle the revolution and murder Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

A revolutionary who argued with Lenin, but cannot be separated from him

Rosa Luxemburg also argued against Lenin in certain subjects. Briefly, these can be summed up in four topics. The first is the national problem and a nation's right to self-determination. Despite coming from Poland, an oppressed nation, Rosa ironically tends to underestimate the importance of the national question

21 *ibid*, p. 15. This distortion of Engels' ideas was not limited to this censorship, efforts went on to portray him as someone defending peaceful transition to working class power no matter what. Some passages in the foreword were cherry-picked and published as such in SPD periodic *Vorwärts* to enforce this misconception. Against this, Engels insisted on publishing the full article, and yet the more comprehensive version published later still had to be edited by him.

22 Rosa Luxemburg has many other theoretic works and contributions. Since our subject is Rosa Luxemburg as a revolutionary, we won't get into these details. An example of her contributions is her theory of imperialism which has significantly different features than Lenin's. See Özgür Öztürk, "Rosa Luxemburg, Sermaye Birikimi ve Emperyalizm", *Devrimci Marksizm* [Revolutionary Marxism], issue 20, Spring 2014 and Sungur Savran, *Kod Adı Küreselleşme: 21. Yüzyılda Emperyalizm*, 2nd edition, İstanbul: Yordam Books, p. 76-79, 316-330.

and at the same time, considering the level of integration of Poland with Russia, she claims it an economic impossibility for Poland to gain independence. Despite her claims, Poland became an independent state in 1914 and managed to survive economically.

The second topic is that of party and organization. While Lenin defends a disciplined organization, bound to a revolutionary program, Rosa criticizes this approach. Right after the Bolshevik-Menshevik split, in her article “Organizational Problems of Russian Social-Democracy” at *Iskra* analyzing this split, she wrote her criticisms of the organizational principles of Lenin as stated in *What Is To Be Done?*

Third, are the differences of opinion between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin on war. Rosa, Lenin, and Liebknecht, in a period when social democrats stood by their bourgeoisie, were the voices of proletarian internationalism against the war. They fought to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. Therefore in this essential distinctive issue, they stood at the same place, however, they had their differences. For Lenin, due to the conditions of war, parallel to the discussions of the party, illegality is a way to preserve the revolutionary party of workers. Rosa Luxemburg paid the price of her disagreement by staying in a prison for most of the war. Lenin and Rosa agreed on founding a new International after the treason of II. International during the war, yet where Rosa saw the opportunity to work with centrists aligned with Kautsky, Lenin drew a line between them and sought to build a new International. Most importantly, as pointed out by Sungur Savran in the 25th issue of *Devrimci Marksizm*, discussing the war politics and the position of Marxists in this question, Rosa Luxemburg, unlike Liebknecht, opposed Lenin’s revolutionary defeatism.²³

Fourth are the discussions around the October revolution. The contents of this were about the practice of the revolution, nations’ right to self-determination, constituent assembly, and democracy/dictatorship.

For us, Rosa was wrong in all of these points, but the main point we want to make is not the rightfulness of Lenin but rather point that they were always on the same side throughout these debates and considered each other as great revolutionaries. Missing this point and focusing merely on the discussions themselves is the way liberals operate in order to justify their positions.

Clara Zetkin, in *Reminiscences of Lenin*, quotes Rosa Luxemburg talking to her at the 1907 Stuttgart congress preparation meeting: “Take a good look at him. That is Lenin. Look at the self-willed, stubborn head. A real Russian peasant’s head with a few faintly Asiatic lines. That man will try to overturn mountains. Perhaps he will

23 Sungur Savran, “Savaş karşı savaş: Cihan Harbi’nde Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg”, *Devrimci Marksizm [Revolutionary Marxism]*, issue 25, Winter 2015-2016, p. 64-66.

be crushed by them. But he will never yield.”²⁴ Against the efforts of the right wing of German SPD to obstruct Congress delegation of Rosa at the same congress, Lenin made her a delegate in the name of Russian social democracy, and thus supported his comrade’s fight against the backward elements of working-class movement. His famous words likening Rosa to an eagle was said after she was murdered:

Like a good old Russian fable: “Eagles may at times fly lower than hens, but hens can never rise to the height of eagles.” (...) But in spite of her mistakes she was—and remains for us—an eagle. And not only will Communists all over the world cherish her memory, but her biography and her *complete* works (the publication of which the German Communists are inordinately delaying, which can only be partly excused by the tremendous losses they are suffering in their severe struggle) will serve as useful manuals for training many generations of Communists all over the world.²⁵

In the same place where he said these, Lenin was also listing Rosa’s mistakes and said that she was an eagle despite all of those. Rosa paid for her erroneous position in her polemics against Lenin with her life. She declared war against revisionism, she detected the hints of centrism even before Lenin but could not make the necessary political and organizational conclusions from these. She did not separate herself from the German SPD before too late. She did not grasp the importance of the Bolshevik party, Lenin’s theory of organization and could only start founding a new working class party after the failed revolution. Finally, when she was belatedly trying to fulfil those tasks, lacking the mechanisms to protect the leadership against counter-revolutionary forces, she was murdered, together with Liebknecht, by Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske who chose to enter the treasonous government that suppressed the revolution. After the October revolution, Rosa criticized the Leninist-Trotskyist concept of dictatorship for being undemocratic. She defended an immediate transition to a democratic state as the dictatorship of the working class. Just four months after making these points, she lost her life to the same forces that Lenin and Trotsky denied any political freedom in Russia.

Despite paying the heaviest price for her mistakes, she remained an eagle in Lenin’s eyes. Because they, together with Liebknecht, were on the same side when revolution met counter-revolution. This is why the German working

24 Clara Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, 1924, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1924/reminiscences-of-lenin.htm>.

25 V.I. Lenin, “On Ascending A High Mountain; The Harm Of Despondency; The Utility Of Trade; Attitude Towards The Mensheviks, Etc.”, February 1922, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/feb/x01.htm> (Here Lenin refers to the fable “Eagle and cuckoo” by Ivan Andreyevich Krylov).

class embraced him as just like Liebknecht and Luxemburg when he died five years later on 21 January 1924. They commemorated the three great leaders as “3L” throughout that January. On 1935, Trotsky said, “our efforts for the Fourth International can be seen in the leadership of 3L.”²⁶ Their common ground was being the bravest, most unyielding representatives of working-class internationalism and revolutionary Marxism. Their common ground was being the leaders of 1917 October and 1918 November revolutions.

The greatest revolutionary woman in history!

As with Karl Liebknecht’s maxim of “the enemy is within”, Rosa Luxemburg’s response to social democrats backing their own imperialist bourgeoisie is also embedded in our memories forever: “Then we need to change the ending of *Communist Manifesto* as such: workers of the world, unite during peacetime and fight during wars!” Why, then, was Liebknecht alone in parliament against war? Why is Liebknecht remembered as the champion against war, even though they both had the same position? In that period, women in Germany, and elsewhere, could not enter the parliament yet; they did not really have the right to elect and be elected, that is why. In such a moment, Rosa Luxemburg became one of the leaders of the international socialist movement. In a photograph of International Socialist Bureau, during the International Conference of Socialists in Stuttgart 1907, she was the only woman among so many men. Despite distancing herself from women’s liberation movements, she leads women in politics. She is the greatest revolutionary woman in history.

26 Leon Trotsky, “Luxemburg and the Fourth International”, 1935, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1935/06/lux.htm>.

Revolutionary Marxist journal
Revista Marxista Revolucionaria

World Revolution Revolución Mundial

For the refoundation of the Fourth International
Por la refundación de la Cuarta Internacional

Issue 1 / N° 1
Autumn / Otoño 2018



Why "World Revolution"?
¿Por qué "Revolución Mundial"?

Savas Michael-Matsas

Are China and Russia imperialist?
¿China y Rusia son imperialistas?

Levent Dölek

Karl Marx and the future
Karl Marx y el futuro

Savas Michael-Matsas

October revolution and women
La revolución de octubre y las mujeres

Armağan Tulunay

Estudios sobre el imperialismo
Studies on imperialism

Daniel Gaido

Resolution of the Euro-Med Conference
Resolución de la Conferencia Euro-Med

World Panorama
Panorama Mundial

Jorge Altamira

Argentina under IMF
Argentina bajo del FMI

Gabriel Solano

Das Kapital and communism
El Capital y el comunismo

Sungur Savran

Marxism and women
El Marxismo y las mujeres

Viglicea, Frencia, Altamira

The strategy of the CP of Uruguay: 1968-1973
La estrategia del PC del Uruguay: 1968-1973

Nicolás Marrero

The road to capitalist restoration in the People's Republic of China

Part 1: From the Chinese October to the Cultural Revolution

Burak Gürel

The People's Republic of China (PRC), which was founded on 1 October 1949 after a long period of national liberation and civil wars, has a special place in the experience of bureaucratic workers' states in the twentieth century. Being the most populous and one of the poorest countries of the world (with a per capita GDP even lower than India by 1950),¹ the PRC was an important factor determining the fate of revolution and socialism in the Third World. The importance and impact of the Chinese experience is not restricted to this fact. Unlike the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and despite several waves

¹ Maddison Project Database, 2018, <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018>.

of purges, most leading cadres of the Chinese revolution retained their positions during the first thirty years of the PRC history. Moreover, a sizable part of these cadres initiated and led the capitalist restoration process after 1978.

The impact of Maoism should be understood within this context. Mao Zedong was an extremely important figure not only as one of the twelve founders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its undoubtedly most powerful leader from the mid-1930s to his death in 1976. For the purposes of this paper, Mao's importance reaches beyond these facts. Mao was a leader who frequently claimed (particularly in the 1960s) that the PRC had a serious bureaucratization problem and the proletariat and poor peasantry should struggle against it. For Mao, an unsolved bureaucratization problem might lead to capitalist restoration in which the former bureaucrats would transform themselves into a new bourgeoisie.

The developments after 1978 proved Mao's foresight to be true. This anti-bureaucratic posture clearly distinguishes Mao from all leaders of the bureaucratic workers' states in the last century, including Joseph Stalin, who declared the irreversible victory of socialism in the USSR. On the other hand, this fact does not mean that Mao was an anti-bureaucratic crusader such as Leon Trotsky without any responsibility for the bureaucratization and later capitalist restoration of the PRC. As we will see in the remainder of this paper, Mao's analysis of bureaucracy was thoroughly problematic.

More importantly, in the critical episodes of the Hundred Flowers campaign (1956-57) and Cultural Revolution (1966-69), Mao was scared that the anti-bureaucratic mass campaigns would get out of his control and thus ordered their demobilization (by force, if necessary). He was also the chief architect of the USA-PRC alliance against the USSR in the 1970s. In short, Maoism was not the solution but an important cause of the problem. However, since it was promoted by a prestigious leader (in one of two greatest socialist revolutions in modern history) through a massive propaganda machinery (of the PRC and its various allies and sympathizers across the world), Mao's theory of bureaucracy and capitalist restoration influenced a wide spectrum of the international left, especially the 1968 generation who was alienated from the USSR's ossified and reformist model. Despite its various weaknesses and betrayal in practice by its founding father, we should take Mao's theory of bureaucracy seriously and criticize it in the same manner.

Another important aspect distinguishing the Chinese experience from the Eastern European and Soviet experiences is the restoration of capitalism without a regime breakdown and under significant control of the party-state. In this respect, Vietnam is similar to China. And Cuba has been taking steps in the same direction since the withdrawal of Fidel Castro from political life. Capitalist restoration started in China earlier than in these two countries and somehow became a model for them. Finally, with the exception of a few partial and temporary success

stories (such as Poland and Vietnam), no previous bureaucratic workers' state other than the PRC achieved a significant economic growth momentum following a capitalist restoration. Various factors including China's historical peculiarities, significant leaps in physical infrastructure and the quality of the workforce (the so-called "human capital" of the non-Marxist development literature) in the Mao era, and a significant flow of industrial capital from the West to Asia in the late 1970s and after, underlined the tremendous economic growth of the country since the early 1980s. However, up until today, Chinese and Western academics and policy-makers have largely decontextualized this success and presented it as a triumph of capitalism (or the "socialist market economy" in the official Chinese parlance) over state socialism. In this way, China's economic success has inspired the restorationist bureaucracies of many states, which have taken significant steps towards capitalism. This is true even for Cuba, where socialism has the greatest prestige and legitimacy. For these reasons, Chinese experience deserves careful scrutiny.

The present paper (first part of a two-part paper) comprises six sections. The second section defines the character of the pre-1979 PRC as a worker's state and examines its historical achievements. The third section investigates the political power and material privileges of the bureaucracy. The fourth section critically analyzes Mao's ideas on bureaucracy and capitalist restoration. The fifth section explains the development and defeat of the anti-bureaucratic opposition before the Cultural Revolution. The sixth section focuses on the period between the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in Summer 1966 and the rise and fall of the Shanghai People's Commune in February 1967. Another paper (to be published in *Revolutionary Marxism* 2020) focuses on the remainder of the Cultural Revolution (1967-69) and other turning points on the PRC's path towards capitalist restoration.

PRC as a workers' state

The bureaucratic character of the PRC will be analyzed in the next section. Here I will discuss the fundamental characteristics and historical achievements of the PRC as a workers' state. Although the factories of the "national bourgeoisie" (the bourgeois fraction which did not ally with Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist Party during the civil war) were not expropriated in the first few years of the PRC, large-scale and heavy industry was organized based on state ownership by the mid-1950s. Medium and small-scale and light industries were organized by the cooperatives founded at the local (usually neighborhood) level. Eradication of unemployment was the most important achievement of the PRC for the welfare of the masses. Job security for everyone remained a principle in the entire Mao era. Moreover, workers benefited from free healthcare and education services provided by their workplace (*danwei*). Serious inequalities existed within the

proletariat. For instance, compared to their counterparts working in cooperative enterprises, the workers of the state-owned enterprises (especially the largest, “key” enterprises) enjoyed higher wages and pensions and were able to send their children to better schools. Nevertheless, due to strong job security and rapid expansion of social services, the urban proletariat enjoyed more favorable conditions of life and work after 1949.²

The achievements of the PRC in the countryside were also striking. For centuries Chinese peasantry had struggled with unemployment and underemployment, exploitation by landlords and moneylenders, poverty, famine, and the near absence of healthcare and education services. Rural plight gave way to numerous peasant revolts and finally to the communist-led peasant war that ended in victory in 1949. Rural plight was rapidly eradicated in the aftermath of the revolution. The collectivization of rural economy, which had been completed in the mid-1950s, made the provision of employment (and therefore a basic income) to every rural household. Rural collectives organized basic healthcare and education services (mostly) with their own financial sources. It was, of course, impossible to equalize the city and countryside rapidly. Hence, compared to the few urban areas, the crowded and impoverished countryside remained backward in terms of living and working conditions, scope of social security, and quality of education and healthcare services. For instance, unlike the retired workers of urban enterprises, elderly villagers did not receive a pension. Moreover, the PRC leadership quickly recognized the limitations of the urban areas in terms of infrastructure and employment creation. In order to prevent mass urban unemployment and ghettoization (which is often called as “Latin Americanization” in the Chinese academic and policy literatures), the Chinese government put strict restrictions to rural outmigration through its residential registration (*hukou*) system established in 1958. Hence, finding urban jobs with higher pay and benefits was out of question for the rural majority until the start of the *de facto* relaxation of the *hukou* system in the early 1980s. Also, unlike urban workers receiving standard wages, the members of the rural collectives received dividends from the total annual production according to their specific labor contributions measured by the “work points system.” Hence, the households with more able-bodied workers received higher income than others. Since rural production was predominantly agricultural, the villagers’ dividends seriously fluctuated due to changing weather conditions which affected agricultural production. Significant regional variation of natural conditions (climate, soil, water, etc.) led to significant income inequality among the villagers of different regions. Despite these serious limitations, after 1949,

2 Joel Andreas, “Reconfiguring China’s Class Order after the 1949 Revolution”, in *Handbook on Class and Social Stratification in China*, ed. Yingjie Guo, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016, pp. 22-25.

Chinese villagers experienced rapid improvement of welfare and tremendous equalization in terms of income and access to social services.

Founded on the basis of stark poverty and isolated in the international arena (as the Maoist leadership shares with Khrushchev the responsibility of the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s, a part of China's isolation was self-imposed), the PRC's economic development faced certain limits. In order to achieve rapid economic development without the Soviet aid, the Maoist leadership designed and implemented the campaign known as the "Great Leap Forward" (1958-61) in a haphazard fashion. A strange combination of bureaucratic commandism and boundless optimism led to setting scientifically impossible/unsound targets especially for agricultural production. Under the pressure of the nationwide frenzy of reporting record breaks in production, rural cadres grossly exaggerated local agricultural production. Both the upper-level local cadres and the planners in Beijing then set up higher tax requirements on these new figures. Weather conditions, which were favorable in 1958 and fed the bureaucratic optimism, turned out to be unfavorable in the following two years. Unfortunately, this was not enough to lead the Chinese bureaucracy to set up realistic production and taxation targets. Peasants were therefore forced to transfer increasingly higher quantities of grain to the state at the expense of their own consumption. This quickly led to an economic collapse and mass starvation (taking about 30 million lives). Strong ties between the peasant masses and the CCP leadership received a serious blow as a result of the miserable collapse of the GLF. Although China received significant economic assistance from the Soviet Union in the 1950s, this assistance dropped in the late 1950s and completely stopped in the early 1960s as a result of the Sino-Soviet split. In order to increase its influence over other Third World countries, the PRC provided significant foreign assistance and became the largest non-OECD donor country in 1972. As a result of its military competition with the US, USSR, and India, the PRC's military expenditure increased rapidly in the 1960s. Intensification of the economic pressure forced the PRC to rapprochement with the US, Western Europe, and Japan (on anti-Soviet basis) from the early 1970s on, before Mao's death in 1976. This rapprochement strengthened the tendency of capitalist restoration in the PRC.

Despite all its problems and limitations, the workers' state significantly contributed to the long-term development of the Chinese economy. Rural collectivization made the agricultural sector (which comprised 80% of the workforce and produced half of total output by 1952) a part of central planning. By direct taxation of agriculture and manipulation of trade terms between agriculture and industry in favor of the latter, rural collectives provided large funds to industry.³ The provision of low-priced staple food to urban workers made an

3 For detailed statistical figures on the transfer from the countryside to the cities see

extra contribution to the industrialization effort. As a result, the share of industry within GDP quadrupled in the Mao era.⁴ Although a large body of literature claims that the agriculture in the collective period failed despite making large resource transfers to industry, the agricultural production did not fall behind the rapid population growth. This success cannot be easily downplayed. Its primary reason is the mobilization of rural labor by the collectives. During the slack seasons of agriculture, collectives mobilized villagers in infrastructure works. Strikingly enough, over a quarter of the total rural workforce was employed in infrastructure construction and maintenance activities without receiving much extra payment from the central government.⁵ Despite allocating the bulk of the central government budget to industrial and military buildup, based on the massive and low-cost mobilization of rural labor, the share of irrigated area within total cultivated area tripled (from 16.3% to 49.4%) between 1949 and 1982.⁶ This made China one of the most advanced hydraulic nations of the world. Furthermore, based on collective mobilization of labor and financial resources, an average Chinese commune had (at least) one primary and secondary school and a clinic by the 1970s. Another important characteristic of the rural collectives was their high capacity to absorb extra labor. Between 1960 and 1976, the government dispatched about 40 million people (comprising middle, high school and college students, workers, and technical personnel) to the countryside for various political and economic reasons. These people joined the collectives and made significant contributions to the development of basic education and healthcare services and the construction of small-scale rural industries in return to payments that were not much different from the rural average.⁷ Hence, a development process, which could have taken very long had it depended on government spending, was completed in a few decades. Rural collectives developed small-and-medium-scale

Kong Xiangzhi and He Anhua, “Xin Zhongguo Chengli 60 Nianlai Nongmin dui Guojia Jianshede Gongxian Fenxi”, *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu*, no: 9, 2009, pp. 5-13. For a historical assessment of this issue see: Ho-fung Hung, *The China Boom: Why China Will Not Lead the World*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016, pp. 34-51.

4 Angus Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long-Run: 960-2030 A.D.*, Paris: OECD, 2007, p. 60; Lu Aiguo, *China and the Global Economy since 1840*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000, p. 91.

5 Author’s calculation based on the following sources: James E. Nickum, “Labour Accumulation in Rural China and Its Role since the Cultural Revolution,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol: 2, no: 3, 1978, p. 280; State Statistical Bureau, *Statistical Yearbook of China 1983*, Hong Kong: Economic Information Agency, 1983, p. 120.

6 Zhongguo Shuili Nianjian Bianji Weiyuanhui, *Zhongguo Shuili Nianjian 1991*, Beijing: Shuili Dianli Chubanshe, 1992, p. 653.

7 Wen Tiejun, *Basi Weiji: Zhongguo de Jushi Jingyan, 1949-2009*, Pekin: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2012, pp. 32-72.

industry in the same manner. The output of “Commune and Brigade Enterprises” increased by 5.9% per year between 1962 and 1971, and 23.5% per year between 1971 and 1978.⁸ In short, the industrialization was not confined to the cities but spread to the countryside as well. This signified a great leap forward for a poor rural economy such as Chinese. Considering the continuity of rural industry’s contribution to the national economy (14.3% and 37.5% of the GDP in 1980 and 1995, respectively)⁹, it is clear that workers’ state significantly contributed to China’s economic development in the long run.

Nevertheless, all these leaps forward did not bring China closer to the necessary abundance for achieving socialism. First of all, the end of long external and civil wars, economic recovery, improvements in basic healthcare (especially the nationwide spread of vaccination), and the neglect of population planning resulted in the doubling of the country’s already huge population within three decades (541 million in 1949 to 961 million in 1978).¹⁰ Therefore, despite steady increase in total economic output, per capita increase was slow. Similar to the USSR, the production of goods for mass consumption did not increase in China fast enough. As a result, between 1952 and 1978 per capita consumption increased by 2.3% annually. Urban housing also remained a big problem.¹¹ Furthermore, the huge economic gap between China and the imperialist countries did not narrow down. China’s share in the world’s total output even decreased from 5.2% to 4.9%.¹² This illustrates the significant limitations of the progress a self-reliant poor country can make in a capitalist world economy. China’s persistent backwardness compared with the imperialist countries helped the capitalist restorationist wing of the bureaucracy led by Deng Xiaoping to take power shortly after Mao’s death. In brief, although the workers’ state managed to develop the economy and improve the welfare of the population, it lost its vitality since it failed to overcome the relative backwardness and poverty of China, and eventually capitulated to capitalism.

Material privileges and political domination of the bureaucracy in the PRC

The most important difference between the bureaucracy in the workers’

8 Chris Bramall, *The Industrialization of Rural China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.23.

9 Chenggang Xu ve Xiabo Zhang, “The Evolution of Chinese Entrepreneurial Firms: Township-Village Enterprises Revisited”, International Food Policy Research Institute Discussion Paper 00854, 2009, p. 3.

10 China Today, <http://www.chinatoday.com/data/china.population.htm>.

11 Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, s. 205.

12 Maddison, p. 44.

states and bourgeoisie in capitalist states was that the former did not own the means of production. For this reason, bureaucracy could not obtain the surplus value and invest it in expanded production. Nor could it transfer it to personal property such as high volumes of cash, houses, luxury goods, and pass it to the next generation through inheritance. As Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union clearly demonstrated, inequality among the bureaucracy and ordinary workers in terms of income and wellbeing had two main sources. First, there was significant and increasing gap between the salaries of high-level bureaucrats and ordinary workers. Second, there were significant and growing inequalities between the two groups in terms of the quality of housing, education, transportation, and holiday opportunities. A huge gap between the mental and manual labor was the main source of this inequality. Material abundance and equality were two preconditions to bridge this gap to a significant extent. As long as the world revolution's progress was limited, capitalist world system remained intact, and workers' states were confined to the periphery and semi-periphery of the world economy, these preconditions could not emerge and mature. Moreover, in order to legitimize its existence and privileges, bureaucracy in a workers' state was always ready to prevent the implementation of the measures that might decrease the gap between mental and manual labor. In order to maintain the bureaucratic power and privileges, democratic debate and decision-making was ruled out. Trotsky clearly predicted that increasing power and privileges fed the bureaucracy's tendency to transform itself into bourgeoisie:

If the differences between city and country have been mitigated in certain respects, in others they have been considerably deepened, thanks to the extraordinarily swift growth of cities and city culture – that is, of comforts for an urban minority. The social distance between physical and intellectual labor, notwithstanding the filling out of the scientific cadres by newcomers from below, has increased, not decreased, during recent years. The thousand-year-old caste barriers defining the life of every man on all sides – the polished urbanite and the uncouth muzhik, the wizard of science and the day laborer – have not just been preserved from the past in a more or less softened form, but have to a considerable degree been born anew, and are assuming a more and more defiant character.

The notorious slogan: "The cadres decide everything", characterizes the nature of Soviet society far more frankly than Stalin himself would wish. The cadres are in their very essence the organs of domination and command. A cult of "cadres" means above all a cult of bureaucracy, of officialdom, an aristocracy of technique. In the matter of playing up and developing cadres, as in other matters, the soviet regime still finds itself compelled to solve problems which the advanced bourgeoisie solved long ago in its own countries. But since the soviet cadres come forward under a socialist banner, they demand an almost divine veneration and a continually rising salary. The development of "socialist" cadres

is thus accompanied by a rebirth of bourgeois inequality.

From the point of view of property in the means of production, the differences between a marshal and a servant girl, the head of a trust and a day laborer, the son of a people's commissar and a homeless child, seem not to exist at all. Nevertheless, the former occupy lordly apartments, enjoy several summer homes in various parts of the country, have the best automobiles at their disposal, and have long ago forgotten how to shine their own shoes. The latter live in wooden barracks often without partitions, lead a half-hungry existence, and do not shine their own shoes only because they go barefoot. To the bureaucrat this difference does not seem worthy of attention. To the day laborer, however, it seems, not without reason, very essential.¹³

As long as a workers' state remains under the pressure of the world capitalist system and backward in comparison to imperialist countries, the bureaucracy can take the capitalist road as a vehicle of faster economic development and transform itself into a bourgeoisie in a way to advance its existing material privileges to the highest level possible:

The juridical and political standards set up by the revolution exercised a progressive action upon the backward economy, but upon the other hand they themselves felt the lowering influence of that backwardness. The longer the Soviet Union remains in a capitalist environment, the deeper runs the degeneration of the social fabric. A prolonged isolation would inevitably end not in national communism, but in a restoration of capitalism.¹⁴

Trotsky's analysis also holds true for the post-WWII era which witnessed the rapid increase in the number of bureaucratic workers' state. No such state was founded in rich countries. Workers' states which were founded in poor and middle-income countries could integrate with each other in a serious way. However, the two largest workers' states, the PRC and the USSR, became fierce enemies from the early 1960s on. Despite the opposite claims, Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy also applies to the Chinese bureaucracy. The collection of statistical data nearly halted in the first and most chaotic phase of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69). Even without this problem, collecting data on wage inequality was not easy due to the political risks involved. Nevertheless, the available data reflects the material privileges of a bureaucratic strata. As Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate, there was a significant gap both within the bureaucracy and between the bureaucracy and the ordinary workers.

13 Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where It is Going?*, New York: Pathfinder Press, [1937] 1983, pp. 237-239.

14 Ibid., pp. 300-301.

Table 1. Highest and lowest wages in the PRC in the 1960s (Yuan)¹⁵

Position	Highest salary	Lowest salary
State cadres	579.5	30
Judges and court personnel	522.5	33
Military personnel	414	33
Engineers and technicians	302.5	37.5
College teachers	372.5	49.5
Police	138	33
Industrial workers	99	33
Middle school teachers	155.5	43
Postal workers	124	33
Cooks	78	33
“Anti-socialist elements” (among technical school graduates)	33	23

Table 2. A special regulation on cadres’ housing prerogatives issued in Shanghai (1956)¹⁶

Grade A of special rank	a fine residence of 200 square meters with a large garden
Grade B of special rank	a fine residence of 190-195 square meters with a large garden
Rank 1	a fine residence of 180-185 square meters with a large garden
Rank 2	a private, modern-style apartment of 170–175 square meters
Rank 3	a first-class apartment of 160–165 square meters
Rank 4	an ordinary semiprivate apartment
Rank 5	a modern-style apartment of 120–135 square meters
Rank 6	an ordinary apartment of 100–115 square meters with a bathroom
Rank 7	a traditional-style apartment of 80–95 square meters without a bathroom
Ranks 8 and 9	simple board-assembled houses

Moreover, a significant gap existed between the educational opportunities of the high-level bureaucrats and ordinary workers. Even middle school graduation was considered a significant success for the latter group. Also, middle school graduation was the highest educational attainment of the great majority of the villagers. Access to healthcare was similarly unequal. High-level bureaucrats and their families had access to higher-quality healthcare facilities than the rest of the population. In short, although the PRC made a historic achievement by guaranteeing stable jobs and income to the workers and peasants, significant

15 Michel Korzec and Martin King Whyte, “Reading Notes: The Chinese Wage System,” *China Quarterly*, no: 248, 1981, p. 251.

16 Wu, p. 28.

inequalities among the high-level bureaucrats, workers, and peasants continued to exist. On the other hand, since Mao himself often brought these inequalities to the political agenda and encouraged the attacks on them especially during the Cultural Revolution, these inequalities did not reach a high level as in the USSR and Eastern European regimes.

The historic uniqueness of Mao Zedong's theory and practice

What distinguishes Mao Zedong from other leaders of the bureaucratic workers' states is his explicit recognition of the fact that bureaucratization was indeed a fundamental problem of the PRC which could be solved only by the mobilization and democratic supervision of the masses. Mao acknowledged that an unresolved bureaucratization would lead to capitalist restoration. According to Mao, material interests of the bureaucracy and ordinary people conflicted. The existence of a bureaucratic strata is based on the huge gap between the mental and manual labor. Bureaucracy legitimizes its existence by using its expertise in the areas of material and cultural production. As long as the masses' cultural level and capacity of supervision and governance remains low, bureaucracy could maintain its privileged position. For this reason, bureaucracy maintains itself by leaving economics and politics to the conduct of the so-called experts, suppressing all independent mass initiatives, and keeping the culture of the workers and peasants at a relatively low level. For Mao, all bureaucrats sharing these traits were potential capitalist roaders. They waited for the right time to completely overturn the revolutionary gains in terms of class equality. In Mao's perspective, despite all of their deficiencies, the great majority of the party and state cadres were not bureaucrats. According to him, the bureaucrats constituted a small but effective group occupying key positions in the party and state organs and carried out various sabotages to pave the way for capitalist restoration. In Mao's understanding, capitalist roadism included two sets of activities. The first one was blocking the attempts to bridge gaps between the mental and manual labor, city and the countryside, and worker and peasant. The second was giving concessions to private property and market mechanism:

Although classes may be eliminated in a socialist society, in the course of its development there are bound to be certain problems with "vested interest groups" which have grown content with existing institutions and unwilling to change them. For example, if the distribution according to labor is in effect they benefit from higher pay for more work, and when it came to change over to "distribution according to need" they could very well be uncomfortable with the new situation...No sooner do people gain some superiority than they assume airs

[...] It would be dangerous.¹⁷

With the socialist revolution they themselves come under fire. At the time of the co-operative transformation of agriculture there were people in the Party who opposed it, and when it comes to criticizing bourgeois right, they resent it. You are making the socialist revolution, and yet don't know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party.¹⁸

They fight among themselves for power and money; they extend their hands into the Party; they want fame and fortune; they want positions and, if they do not get them, they are not satisfied; they choose to be fat and to be lean; they pay a great deal of attention to wages; they are cozy when it comes to their comrades but they care nothing about the masses. This is the bureaucracy that is fighting for power and money.¹⁹

It is known that some high-level party-state figures such as Liu Shaoqi objected Mao's proposal of rapid collectivization of the rural economy. They advocated the continuation of private land tenure and capitalist production relations – albeit with restrictions – for a longer time. By using his uncontested prestige in the society and the state, Mao defeated the opposition. Rural collectivization was completed within five years (1952-56), which was a huge success in a continent-size country like China. The contradictions between Mao and other leading cadres were not restricted to this issue. They arose again during the Great Leap Forward (GLF) campaign (1958-61). The campaign was conceived under the worsening of the relations with the Soviet Union with the expectation that the Soviet aid would halt in the near future.²⁰ In the same period, the United States repeatedly declared that it would consider using nuclear weapons against China. The main objective of the GLF campaign was to make China a strong industrial and military power in a self-reliant manner. By curbing consumption, increasing savings, and mobilizing the labor force without paying full wages, the GLF campaign aimed

17 Mao Tsetung, *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977, pp. 62-63.

18 Quoted in: "Reversing Correct Verdicts Goes Against the Will of the People", *Peking Review*, vol. 19, no. 11-12 March 1976, p. 4.

19 Mao Zedong, "Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy", February 1970, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_85.htm.

20 Chris Bramall, *In Praise of Maoist Economic Planning: Living Standards and Economic Development in Sichuan Since 1931*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 281; Stephen Endicott, *Red Earth: Revolution in a Sichuan Village*, Londra: I.B. Tauris, 1988, p. 46. Soviet aid completely stopped in 1960. An abrupt halt in 1957 was an early signal of it and a factor that motivated the CCP leadership to implement the Great Leap Forward (Wen, s. 48).

at constructing a strong agricultural and industrial infrastructure rapidly and with minimum cost.

Table 3. Grain production and death rate in China (1957-1962)²¹

Year	Grain production (Milliontons)	Death rate (per 1000 people)
1957	195	10.80
1958	200	11.98
1959	170	14.59
1960	143	25.43
1961	147	14.24
1962	160	10.02

However, this campaign led to the collapse of the economy very quickly. Adverse weather conditions led to a sharp drop in agricultural production in 1959. Since the CCP leadership put unrealistically high production targets and the low-level bureaucrats did not dare to report the sharp drop of agricultural production, the state failed to make a downward readjustment of the agricultural taxes (collected in kind). This led to mass starvation in the countryside, taking at least 30 million lives. As the situation in the countryside worsened to the extent that food supply fell sharply and created food shortages in the urban-industrial areas, the GLF campaign was abruptly terminated in 1961. Although Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping did not object the GLF, they used its collapse in order to increase their power in the party-state, especially in the realm of economic decision-making, at the expense of Mao's. Starting with 1961, they approved the expansion of household plots (from nearly zero to about 15% of the available farmland) and relaxation of the state monopoly of the rural trade (by allowing limited trade in the open rural markets).

Mao viewed these measures as serious concessions to private property and free market. In order to counter this tendency, he launched a new campaign known as the "Cultural Revolution" in 1966. The Cultural Revolution was organized through bypassing the party's established hierarchy and mobilizing the masses around Mao's personal charisma. At the beginning of the campaign, Mao declared Liu and Deng as the leading representatives of bureaucratic reaction and bourgeois tendencies inside the party-state. According to Mao, Liu, Deng and (thousands of) their followers had secret relations with the ruling classes of the pre-revolutionary era, specifically with the Guomindang regime in Taiwan with the purpose of restoring capitalism in China. Mao called the masses to mobilize against this reactionary bloc. For Mao, masses should stop obeying orders from

²¹ State Statistical Bureau, p. 105, 108.

the party center and start a new revolution that would complement the 1949 revolution and enable China's complete transition to socialism. Masses should purge the capitalist roaders from the party-state and seize power. In order to govern the state better than the capitalist roaders, masses had to raise their consciousness (through studying the so-called "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought") and develop their cultural, scientific, and technical capacities. Educated cadres, high school and university students had to go to factories and farms to participate in production, whereas ordinary workers and peasants should receive scientific and technical training. Following the purge of the reactionary elements, party and state organs should take all necessary measures to transform culture, science, and technology from being elites' exclusive realm to the common property of working masses. Hence, Mao dubbed his campaign the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." Maoist leadership expected that three great contradictions (between the mental and manual labor, city and the countryside, and the worker and peasant) would vanish and socialism would win a decisive victory at the end of the revolution.

Considering the developments after his death, it is clear that certain aspects of Mao's view were proven correct. Deng Xiaoping returned to the party, seized its leadership only two years after Mao's death, and led the process of capitalist restoration until the mid-1990s. In this process, all the previous initiatives to solve the contradiction between the manual and mental labor were suspended, elitist character of the education system was strengthened, expertise was glorified more than ever, and technocratic approach in economic and political affairs was adopted completely.²²

Nevertheless, later confirmation of Mao's predictions does not change the fact that his theory of bureaucracy suffers from serious shortcomings. The Maoist critique was stillborn and never had a chance to succeed due to three main reasons. First, unlike Trotsky, who predicted that as long as the world revolution was unable to include the advanced countries and confined to underdeveloped countries, the first bureaucratic degeneration and then capitalist restoration would be inevitable consequences, Mao and his supporters embraced the goal of world revolution only on paper and as a distant ideal, not as an immediate, practical task. They never criticized the Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country" and never identified the isolation of the PRC and the USSR as the fundamental material cause of their bureaucratic degeneration. For this reason, the vicious cycle of bureaucratic degeneration can be broken not by a cultural revolution but

22 For a good account of this process see Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 213-259.

the world socialist revolution. Only if the advanced countries share their cultural, scientific, and material privileges with the backward countries without national selfishness, it will be possible to overcome poverty, achieve abundance, reduce work hours, and thereby increase the control of the working masses in the realms of economics, politics, science, and technology. In short, if there is a great cultural revolution, it can happen only as part of an advancing world socialist revolution. Mao and his followers never had such a theoretical perspective and therefore failed to provide a realistic alternative against bureaucratic degeneration and capitalist roaders.

The second major flaw of Mao's theory of bureaucracy is its failure to recognize the process of bureaucratization of the Soviet Union. Mao denied Stalin's major responsibility in the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR and insisted that Stalin had been a great revolutionary leader who had made fundamental mistakes. Moreover, Mao repeated all of Stalinist lies about Trotsky and his followers. According to Mao,

After Lenin's death Stalin as the chief leader of the Party and the state creatively applied and developed Marxism-Leninism. In the struggle to defend the legacy of Leninism against its enemies – the Trotskyites, Zinovievites and other bourgeois agents– Stalin expressed the will and wishes of the people and proved himself to be an outstanding Marxist-Leninist fighter. The reason Stalin won the support of the Soviet people and played an important role in history was primarily that he, together with the other leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, brought about the triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union and created the conditions for the victory of the Soviet Union in the war against Hitler; these victories of the Soviet people conformed to the interests of the working class of the world and all progressive mankind. It was therefore quite natural for the name of Stalin to be greatly honored throughout the world. But having won such high honor among the people both at home and abroad by his correct application of the Leninist line, Stalin erroneously exaggerated his own role and counterposed his individual authority to the collective leadership, and as a result certain of his actions were opposed to certain fundamental Marxist-Leninist concepts he himself had propagated.²³

His failure to acknowledge the process of bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR in the Stalin era and retelling Stalin's lies to legitimize that process demonstrate that Mao did not have the degree of theoretical sophistication and revolutionary honesty required to provide a serious analysis of bureaucracy in the PRC and a genuine strategy to fight against it. We should also keep in mind

23 Mao Zedong, "Stalin's Place in History", 5 April 1956, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-7/mswv7_467.htm.

that Mao did not criticize Stalin's policies with regard to the USSR when Stalin was alive and made the limited critique quoted above three years after Stalin's death, following the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union where Stalin's "personality cult" was criticized. Moreover, following the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s (which came after a brief honeymoon of Mao and Nikita Khrushchev, the new leader of the USSR), Mao condemned Khrushchev for betraying Stalin's revolutionary heritage.

Finally, as a natural result of these two problems, Mao failed to identify the material foundation of the Chinese bureaucracy. Rather than viewing it as a tendency stemming from the isolation of the PRC that had been born and grown inside the party-state, Mao tended to explain it with reference to the conspiracies of the dominant classes of the pre-revolutionary period. The unscientific definition of the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era as a capitalist, imperialist, and fascist state fed Mao's theoretical blindness further with regard to the material foundations of the Chinese bureaucracy:

Class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment are the three great revolutionary movements for building a mighty socialist country. These movements are a sure guarantee that communists will be free from bureaucracy and immune against revisionism and dogmatism, and will forever remain invincible. They are a reliable guarantee that the proletariat will be able to unite with the broad working masses and realize a democratic dictatorship. If in the absence of these movements, the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and monsters of all kinds were allowed to crawl out, while our cadres were to shut their eyes to all this and in many cases fail even to differentiate between the enemy and ourselves but were to collaborate with the enemy and were corrupted, divided and demoralized by him, if our cadres were thus pulled out or the enemy were able to sneak in, and if many of our workers, peasants and intellectuals were left defenseless against both the soft and the hard tactics of the enemy, then it would not take long, perhaps only several years or a decade, or several decades at most, before a counter-revolutionary restoration on a national scale inevitably occurred, the Marxist-Leninist party would undoubtedly become a revisionist party or fascist party, and the whole of China would change its colour.²⁴

In short, Mao was right to acknowledge the trends of bureaucratic degeneration and capitalist restoration, but failed to develop a theory about them and a political strategy against them.

24 Mao Zedong, "We Must Prevent China from Changing Colour", 14 July 1964, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_24.htm.

Mass movements against the bureaucracy (1949-1965)

The most important feature of the anti-bureaucratic mass movements of the Mao era is that they were initially encouraged by the party-state, but as soon as they became independent political actors and trespassed the boundaries of the system, they were repressed by the same party-state (with the approval of Mao, who always claimed to be anti-bureaucratic). Chinese leadership started the “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend” campaign in 1956. The main logic behind it was that the expansion of the freedom of thought and expression would create a significant mass pressure over the cadres, save the regime from bureaucratic ossification, and thereby increase its prestige in the eyes of the ordinary people. The “Hundred Flowers” campaign soon created a significant atmosphere of freedom. Many newspapers, journals, and books were published and many protests, demonstrations, debates, and art events were organized. Thoughts expressed in this atmosphere of relative freedom soon trespassed the limits that could be tolerated by the regime. Students and intellectuals directed bold (rightist and leftist) critiques against the regime. More importantly, a big strike wave shook big industrial centers (centered in Shanghai) in 1956 and 1957. Permanent workers demanded wage raise and greater freedom of expression in the factory management. There were significant disparities between permanent workers and other type of workers (including apprentices, interns, and temporary workers) in terms of wage and social rights. Chinese state extended the duration of apprenticeships and internships in order to keep wages at a low level and increase investment. For this reason, apprentices and interns were the leaders of the strike movement. Temporary workers demanded job guarantee. The workers sent to the countryside demanded to be returned to the cities. During the first half of the 1950s, industrial capitalists were not expropriated. In order to get along well with the workers’ state, they raised wages and improved working conditions significantly. In the second half of the 1950s, these factories were first transformed into mixed public-private enterprises and then were completely nationalized. In order to increase the investable surplus for rapid industrialization, the state cut back much of these concessions. Angered by these austerity measures, workers organized about ten thousand strikes. 1300 actions (strikes and demonstrations) happened just in Shanghai between March and June of 1957. In order to defend their strikes, the workers armed themselves and set up militias in the factories. Despite the tension between Mao Zedong and Deng-Liu duo, the entire party-state leadership was dissatisfied with these developments. Uprisings in Hungary and Poland, which coincided with the developments in China, fueled the leadership’s fear. As a result, the party-state leadership decided to suppress the movement. During the “Anti-rightist Campaign” between 1957 and 1959, thousands of workers, students, intellectuals, and artists were arrested.

Strikes were banned and workers' militias were abolished.²⁵

Cultural Revolution: struggle inside the bureaucracy, potential for political revolution, and bureaucratic consolidation

During the first (and most important) episode of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69), a similar process of initial support and subsequent repression took place in a more lively and dramatic manner. As noted above, Mao was unhappy about the growing power of Deng-Liu duo and the concessions towards private farming and market economy after 1961. He started the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," the last radical campaign of his life, in summer 1966. The harsh attack of Yao Wen yuan, who later on became one of the top leaders of the Cultural Revolution known as the "Gang of Four", against the Beijing opera titled *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* written by the famous historian Wu Han, who was also the vice mayor of Beijing at the time, was published in November 1965 and was the first signal of the coming storm. According to Yao, the cocky emperor in the play symbolized Mao Zedong and the dismissed official Hay Rui symbolized Peng Dehuai, who was dismissed by Mao due to his bold criticism of the Great Leap Forward campaign in 1959. Yao claimed that Wu's play was a hidden counter-revolutionary propaganda.²⁶

After the publication of Yao's article, a violent struggle started between the leftist (Maoist) and rightist (Dengist-Liuist) factions of the party-state bureaucracy. On 25 May 1966, Nie Yuanzi, a female academic at the Peking University, hung on a campus wall a "big character poster" (which became the main propaganda tool of the CR period) titled "Ignite the Cultural Revolution!" The poster accused the university administration to be counterrevolutionary and called for a struggle against it:

At present the people of the whole nation, in a soaring revolutionary spirit that manifests boundless love for the Party and Chairman Mao, and their inveterate hatred for the sinister anti-Party anti-socialist gang, are making a vigorous and great Cultural Revolution. They are struggling thoroughly to smash the attacks of the reactionary sinister gang, in defence of the Party's Central Committee and Chairman Mao.

25 Elizabeth J. Perry, "Shanghai's Strike Wave of 1957", *The China Quarterly*, no: 137, 1994, pp. 1-27; Marc Blecher, "Working Class Re-formation and De-formation in the PRC", in *Handbook on Class and Social Stratification in China*, ed. Yingjie Guo, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016, pp. 337-343.

26 Yao Wen yuan, "On the New Historical Play 'Dismissal of Hai Rui'", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/yao-wenyuan/1965/november/10.htm>.

But here in Beida [Beijing University] the masses are being kept immobilised. The atmosphere is one of indifference and deadness, whereas the strong revolutionary desire of the vast number of the faculty members and students has been suppressed. What is the matter? What is the reason? Something fishy is going on...

The revolutionary people must be fully aroused to vigorously and angrily denounce [enemies of the party]. To hold big meetings and put up big character posters is one of the best ways for the masses to do battle. By 'guiding' the masses not to hold big meetings, not to put up big character posters, and by creating all kinds of taboos, aren't you suppressing the masses' revolution, not allowing them to make revolution and opposing their revolution? We will never permit you to do this!...

All revolutionary intellectuals, now is the time to go into battle! Let us unite, holding high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought. Unite round the Party's Central Committee and Chairman Mao, and break down all the various controls and plots of the revisionists. Resolutely, thoroughly, totally and completely wipe out all ghosts and monsters and all Khrushchevian counter-revolutionary revisionists – and carry the socialist revolution through to the end. Defend the Party's Central Committee! Defend Mao Zedong's Thought! Defend the dictatorship of the proletariat!²⁷

In his short piece titled "Bombard the Headquarters," Mao supported Nie and attacked the right wing faction of the party:

'China's first Marxist-Leninist big character poster and Commentator's article on it in *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) are indeed superbly written! Comrades, please read them again. But in the last fifty days or so some leading comrades from the central down to the local levels have acted in a diametrically opposite way. Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie, they have enforced a bourgeois dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the great cultural revolution of the proletariat. They have stood facts on their head and juggled black and white, encircled and suppressed revolutionaries, stifled opinions differing from their own, imposed a white terror, and felt very pleased with themselves. They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the proletariat. How poisonous! Viewed in connection with the Right deviation in 1962 and the wrong tendency of 1964 which was 'Left' in form but Right in essence, shouldn't this make one wide awake?²⁸

27 Nie Yuanzi, "Ignite the Cultural Revolution," 25 May 1966, <http://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/ignite-cultural-revolution-1966/>.

28 Mao Zedong, "Bombard the Headquarters: My First Big Character Poster", 5 August 1966, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_63.htm.

The publication of this text was a turning point. Afterwards, Mao and his protégés called the masses to establish their own organizations to struggle against the capitalist roader bureaucrats and reconstruct the party and state on firmer socialist foundations. Three days after the publication of Mao's essay, the Central Committee of the CCP published the famous "16 Points" document which defined the CR with the following terms:

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do the exact opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. At present, our objective is to struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic "authorities" and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.²⁹

The document promised the masses freedoms of discussion and organization:

In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the only method is for the masses to liberate themselves, and any method of doing things in their stead must not be used.

Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative. Cast out fear. Don't be afraid of disturbances. Chairman Mao has often told us that revolution cannot be so very refined, so gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement and learn to distinguish between right and wrong and between correct and incorrect ways of doing things.

[...] The method to be used in debates is to present the facts, reason things out, and persuade through reasoning. Any method of forcing a minority holding different views to submit is impermissible. The minority should be protected, because sometimes the truth is with the minority. Even if the minority is wrong, they should still be allowed to argue their case and reserve their views. When there is a debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force.³⁰

29 Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", 8 August 1966, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-33g.htm>.

30 Ibid.

Streets, factories, and campuses were soon covered with slogans, big-character posters, and wallpapers. A vast volume of books, journals, and brochures were published. Street demonstrations, debate meetings, new artistic experiments became a part of daily life. Students of junior and senior middle schools and colleges formed many organizations generally labelled as the “Red Guards.”

For many people and organizations, the Cultural Revolution did not mean anything more than Mao’s manipulations, personality cult, destruction and chaos. This is normal given the fact that numerous organizations fought against each other, claiming to represent the correct version of Maoism against others who were usually condemned as counter-revolutionaries. Numerous crimes (torture, lynch, executions, plunder, vandalism, etc.) were committed in the name of the revolution, as Mao’s personality cult reached its zenith. Nevertheless, historical materialist analysis cannot stop there. Within this chaos, a serious showdown took place both within the bureaucracy and between the bureaucracy and the left opposition.

The struggle within the bureaucracy was complex and multi-dimensional. It had two main sides. Mao and his closest followers (who were later on branded as the “Gang of Four”) comprised the left-wing, anti-restorationist faction of the bureaucracy. The main goal of the Maoist bureaucracy was to liquidate the restorationist bureaucracy led by Liu-Deng duo. Maoist bureaucracy forced the intellectuals, scientists, and state officials to engage with manual labor alongside workers and peasants. It also tried to prevent the concentration of educational and healthcare services and economic investment in relatively advanced coastal regions, broadened the basis of development by investing in the central and western provinces, and emphasized rural development. It aimed at accomplishing four main goals through these policies. The first goal of the Maoist faction was to raise a new generation of bureaucrats who would be more disciplined, selfless, and modest. Secondly, it wanted to reduce the three contradictions and thereby establish hegemony over the ordinary people. Thirdly, by achieving these two goals, Maoists intended to prevent the capitalist restoration in the PRC. Finally, Maoist leadership wanted to increase China’s power on a global scale not simply through economic and military means but also by providing an alternative political and ideological project. Maoists desired to make the PRC the leader of the Third World through a politics of the “third path” that was alternative to both the US-led imperialist and the USSR-led “social imperialist” camps. Maoist bureaucracy successfully liquidated the Deng-Liu duo in the first phase of the Cultural Revolution. Liu died in custody in 1969 and Deng was placed under house arrest. Many bureaucrats, experts, and intellectuals close to them shared a similar fate.

However, in a populous and highly complex country such as China, organizing

purges within the bureaucracy was extremely difficult. Many bureaucrats, their families and personal networks quickly conformed to the new standards set by the Cultural Revolution and reorganized themselves under various organizations. One of the most effective theoretical weapons of their organization was the so-called “bloodline theory”, from which the Maoists could not break apart even in their most radical times. According to the bloodline theory, the children of those who had been party members before 1949 and especially of those who had played leading roles during the fight against Japan and the Guomindang constituted the most revolutionary generation. Hence, fearing the dismissal from office and physical repression during the new campaign, thousands of bureaucrats, their families, and personal networks claimed that they were the best Maoists due to their superior bloodline and soon founded various organizations, including their own versions of Red Guard organizations, and joined the bandwagon of the Cultural Revolution. Many bloody conflicts took place between these two bureaucratic factions, including the street fights in Beijing in 1966.³¹ When those conflicts got out of control and a fully-fledged civil war became a real possibility, Mao hit the brakes and ordered the People’s Liberation Army to restore order. The military finally ended the street fights in 1968 and punished many members on both sides. Those punished were not just the bureaucrats who rebranded themselves as radical Maoists based partly on the bloodline theory, but also those who seriously believed the original anti-bureaucratic stance of the early days of the CR. In fact, Mao viewed the Red Guards as a serious threat of the new status quo that was being established and therefore sent them to the villages accompanied by a heavy dose of agitation-propaganda celebrating the youth’s contribution to the revolutionary transformation of the countryside. Some of the sent-down youth returned home after a few months or one or two years, but many could not return until Mao’s death in 1976.

Struggle within the bureaucracy was not the main reason behind Mao’s intervention to stop the CR abruptly. As a genuinely socialist and anti-bureaucratic line started to emerge, real limits of the CR were tested. Mass workers’ struggles (demonstrations and strikes) took place in Shanghai, the largest industrial city, in late 1966 and early 1967. Workers’ committees and militias took control of the factories. At the same, contract workers with rural residency who were employed in urban factories started to struggle. Contract workers were receiving wages one-quarter lower than urban workers for the same job. They also lack the social rights and services enjoyed by urban workers. They could be sent back to their villages any time. In order to get equal rights to those of urban resident workers, the contract workers quickly organized and waged militant struggles.

31 For detailed information about the “bloodline theory” and its manifestations during the CR see Wu, pp. 53-94.

In November 1966, the Workers' General Headquarters (WGHQ) was founded under the leadership of Wang Hongwen, an ex-soldier and factory cadre and a member of the group of Maoist leaders later on labeled as the "Gang of Four." The WGHQ was a coalition of different workers' organizations. All China Red Laborer Rebels' Headquarters, an organization founded on 15 November, 1966, with 400 hundred thousand contract workers, was one of the largest organizations under the umbrella of the WGHQ. On November 22, 1966, Shanghai municipality announced that it would not fire any contract workers and rehire those that were fired before. This did not calm the movement in Shanghai. Mass strikes shook the city in the first two months of 1967.³²

On February 5, 1967, the Shanghai People's Commune was founded with a mass demonstration of one million workers. This was the peak-point of the radicalization process. In this case, workers clearly trespassed the boundaries set by the CCP Central Committee and used the model of the Paris Commune not merely for electing small-scale committees and congress elections but for governing the country's largest industrial city through direct democracy. Unsurprisingly, about ten days later Mao condemned the Shanghai Commune as "extreme anarchism" and proposed its liquidation and replacement by the "triple alliance" of the party, army, and workers. Wang Hongwen and other Maoist leaders intervened to comply with Mao's wish. They argued that rightists and counterrevolutionaries disguised as leftists were using the commune model to disorganize and weaken production. Despite its mass support, the recently founded Shanghai Commune was an immature/inexperienced political formation. It could not resist the top-down interventions of Mao and his closest aides. Therefore, the commune was quickly fractured. The people and organizations resisting the commune's liquidation were soon suppressed by the army. On February 24, 1967, the Shanghai People's Commune was formally dissolved and replaced by the Revolutionary Committee of the Municipality of Shanghai (representing the so-called "triple alliance" under the strict top-down control of Mao and his aides).³³ This was the turning point of the Cultural Revolution and a move from socialist democracy in the making towards the re-consolidation of bureaucratic control over the masses.

³² *ibid.*, p. 108.

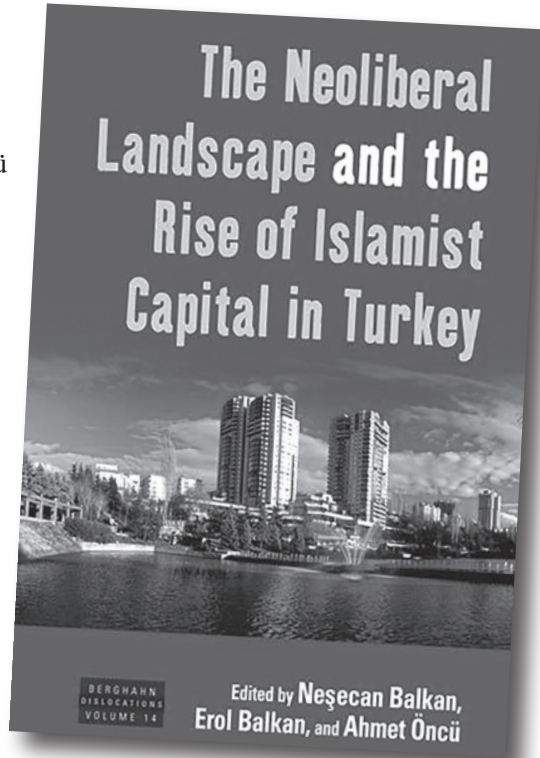
³³ Wu, pp. 95-141. Also see Maurice Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, pp. 176-180.

The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey

Berghahn Books,
New York, 2015

Edited by Neşecan Balkan,
Erol Balkan and Ahmet Öncü

Chapters by Burak Gürel,
Sungur Savran,
Kurtar Tanyılmaz,
Özgür Öztürk,
Evren Hoşgör and others



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey and the party he leads, the AKP, have been analyzed in many different ways. What was lacking was a materialist analysis using the methodology of Marxism. This is what this book does: it provides the reader the complex class dynamics that lie behind the rise and resilience of this leader and his party.

The hardback edition was published in February 2015 and the paperback edition is coming out now, in January 2017. The book has already been published in Turkish translation. It is also being prepared for a Farsi edition.

Introduction to Celia Hart

Celia Hart Santamaria, to use her full name, was a Cuban intellectual, a physicist by training, who wrote for different publications such as *Rebelión*, *Aporrea*, *Kaosenlared* and others between 2003 and 2008. She was a prominent Trotskyist of the island. She unfortunately died very early, at the age of 45, in a car accident, together with her brother Abel.

Hart was the daughter of a couple who were among the historic leaders of the Cuban revolution. Her mother Haydée Santamaria Cuadrado was part of the movement during the attack on the Moncada on 26 July 1953. After the attack, both her fiancé and her brother were killed under torture. She herself was submitted to heavy torture as well, which would mark her for the rest of her life. After her release from prison, she became one of the leaders of the urban leadership of the 26 July movement. After the revolution she established the Casa de las Américas, still today a prestigious cultural establishment for Latin America. In 1965, Haydée Santamaria was one of the five women to be elected to the 100-member Central Committee of the newly formed Communist Party of Cuba. In 1976 she was elected to the Council of State, which was the broad body that was formally charged with running the country. She committed suicide in 1980.

Armando Hart, father of Celia, was one of the founders of the 26 July movement and also a leader of the urban organisation. The contribution of these cadres to the revolution should not be dismissed because they never fought arm in hand. They assumed very heavy duties that ranged from recruiting fighters for the guerrilla to logistic preparations, from conducting relations with other parties to finances, and they ran great risks working in Havana under the nose of Batista. In effect,

Armando Hart was arrested twice before the revolution for aiding and abetting “terrorism”. The first time he was released, but his second prison term ended only when the guerrilla took Havana. After the revolution, Hart was first appointed Minister of Education. He mobilised 100 thousand students to raise the rate of literacy of the country from 75 per cent to 95 per cent within one year. He later served as Minister of Culture and member of the Council of State. When he died in 2017 at 87, he was still a member of the Asamblea Popular.

Hart’s political orientation changed after the revolution. Before the revolution, he was on the moderate wing of the movement that defended an alliance with the bourgeois opposition and even an agreement with the United States, which suspected that Batista was not exactly the best bet for ruling Cuba in the future. When the urban cadre visited the Sierra Madre, serious tension broke out immediately between Hart and Che, the radical Marxist leader of the revolution. This tension may be said to have continued until the taking of power on 1 January 1959. The fate of the Cuban revolution was sealed in 1961, when the revolution grew over into a socialist revolution. Hart himself swiftly radicalised after the revolution, became a figure on the left of the movement and made close friends with Che.

Celia Hart was thus the daughter of a close friend of Che, got to know him as a young child, and became a solid supporter of Che’s ideas as she grew up. She went to the Democratic Republic of Germany to study physics in the 1980s. She became disillusioned by what she saw and became a Trotskyist. Back in Cuba, she told her father (her mother was already dead) that she had become a Trotskyist. He did not react negatively. On the contrary, he gave her some Trotsky books that he had kept under lock!

As will be seen in the article published here, Celia Hart’s Trotskyism relies on a bridge between two heroic figures of world communism in the 20th century, Trotsky and Che. Celia Hart insists on the many similarities and common traits in the Marxism of the great Russian revolutionary who lived in the first half of the 20th century and the great Argentinian-Cuban internationalist of the second half.

We have many differences with Celia Hart. First and foremost among these is her boundless sympathy for Hugo Chávez, the historic leader of the so-called Bolivarian movement, who was also a close ally of Fidel Castro and Cuba. However, it is interesting to note that she makes a scathing attack on the concept of “21st century socialism”, a central concept for the chavistas, one that holds that revolution will be a different thing in this century from the last.

Celia Hart’s writings were brought together posthumously in a book in 2009. The article published here was selected from that book, titled *Escritos Políticos* (2003-2008). The English translation was published in the Marxists Internet Archive. Their source is www.walterlippmann.com. The translation is credited to CubaNews.

Welcome... Trotsky

Celia Hart

The German film, *Good Bye Lenin*, lacks depth. I know because I lived in the German Democratic Republic until shortly before the fall of the Wall. This Wall was knocked down before being built. The terrible tragedy that spread capitalism throughout Eastern Europe cannot be measured in the few years of the vulgar and decadent perestroika, until we saw the statues of Lenin torn down. You can't say good-bye to Lenin since he was never given a welcome. Only an image remains, setting him aside, like a submissive clown, of Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Lenin portrayed in the film was not, by any means, representative of the man who initiated socialism in the world. Those statues were lacking in content ... I suspect also in form.

Of course. We will not understand while Leon Trotsky's life and thoughts remain hidden. It may seem ironic but the only way we can bring Lenin back is to understand the reasons behind the exile of his contemporary. This will not be possible if we do not understand the dark mechanism by which soviet bureaucracy snatched socialism, betrayed the international and trod on the revolutionary spirit of the world.

Of course, we have an alternative. Discovering everything from the beginning; but that will take time and time is running out. We would also be rejecting firsthand information. It's as if a ship begins to sink and the machinist sends notes on the how and the why of its sinking. Then, with a high degree of irresponsibility, we intend to embark on the same seas and try to understand the causes of the catastrophe, burying the bottled message in the sand like the ostrich hiding its

head in the sand.

I agree with Hugo Chávez when he expresses our concerns, more or less using the words of Friedrich Engels, over the urgency to find a balance between socialism and the cockroaches. If it's to be the cockroaches, then barbarism would be an idyllic variance regarding today's world, after grossly estimating the number of times we can exterminate life on Earth.

The 20th century has not ended. The uncertainty that revolutionary practice went through is partially closeted. And if anyone can tell us about the 20th century, that someone is Leon Trotsky.

Ernest Mandel said it better: "Of all the most important socialists of the 20th century, Trotsky was the one who most clearly identified the main tendencies of development and the main contradictions of the times; and it was also Trotsky who clearly set down the proper emancipating strategy for the international workers movement".

Yes, we need Lenin, but he will not come to us if we don't listen to what Trotsky had to say. Both defended the same principle; only Trotsky survived Lenin and knew how to interpret his own life and at the cost of his life. He understood the powers that wanted to destroy socialism. He challenged any thinker who sincerely wanted to interpret history to refer to Trotsky's experiences even to attack them. Those who do not, those who ignore them, are not true Leninists.

They say that without Lenin there is no useful Karl Marx. I would say, on the other hand, that were it not for Trotsky there would be no Lenin. All Marxist thinkers, above all true revolutionary Marxists must understand that Karl Marx did not have a crystal ball to read the future. He only gave revolutionary ideas a direction, a philosophy and, for the first time in history, we would conscientiously pave the way towards our own well being ... globalized.

Let's take the following simile. Socialism is thought of as a tunnel, a true route through which we can pass. It is a world we have to conquer, only losing our chains. Well then: "The October Revolution was the first attempt to carve out that tunnel that Karl Marx pointed to". But Stalinism dynamited it from within. During its construction, dynamite charges were placed to destroy it. Trotsky then was the engineer who located the explosives. But no one listened to him and we already know the end. Devastated Earth.

Now the tunnel is referred to poetically, the one to be built would be socialism of the 21st century. Whether of the 21st or 31st the tunnel can be dynamited by the same insufficiencies and we will continue to cry waiting for socialism to come in the next century... Of course... this time converted into cockroaches.

The possibility of transit towards socialism is a scientific discovery. It is neither a poem nor a way of speaking. The only way we can achieve it is through class struggle. It's that simple. Socialism of the 21st century is simply because this is where we are, in the 21st century. It is almost an understatement. The

discovery of the origin of capitalist exploitation is a scientific truth as valuable as the discovery of the movement of the Earth around the Sun. We don't need Einstein to explain the Law of General Relativity and geodynamics, the reason why we go from summer to autumn. Newton is enough for us. The results are the same and infinite mathematics simpler. We do not have to understand black holes or Hawking's theories to place a satellite in orbit. It may be that communications, informatics, etc., have complicated somewhat the realities of modern capitalism but the essence (the chicken of the **rice and chicken**) continues to be the same as centuries ago. We don't need "quantum economists" or "tensile mathematics" to explain the origin of exploitation and the poverty stricken capitalist system of today.

The so-called socialism of the 21st century is the same as saying we should build a plane in the 21st century. But this plane has to overcome gravity the same way one had to during the 20th century. In this 21st century and for millions of years, the constant G of Universal Gravity continues to be the same one Newton calculated ($G = 6.7 \times 10^{-11} \text{m}^3/\text{Kg s}^2$). I agree that we have to build more comfortable and safer airplanes because the demands of the 21st differ from those of the 20th century but the requirements to overcome gravity are the same. Comparing we could say that our plane tried to overcome gravity in 1917, took flight and crashed against the surface of the earth. It would be better to seek the causes rather than this futuristic analysis, because, regardless of the century, G is still a constant. From the 19th to the 21st centuries the fundamental reasons of capitalist exploitation are the same: the expropriation of work. Then there is only one way to go "from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom". Enough running around because each instant of time is against us.

Our plane fell and now we think that because we have computers, cellular phones or INTERNET we can defy gravity ignoring the G constant. No sir! Gravity is still the same until the planet implodes. We should hurry up and not waste time on rhetoric and assume that once again, the enemy is the same. Perhaps more vulgar, warmongering and dangerous but the same. We should hurry up and learn who we are.

And then, why Leon Trotsky? It's not obstinacy for a historical figure as many accuse me of. It is just because this man has many routes in the black box of that plane that wanted to take off in history.

Sixty-five years ago Leon Trotsky was assassinated in the most grotesque manner. 65 years later we are still splattered by that blood. That assassination should have been enough to wipe out the right of the Kremlin to monopolize and stamp socialist thought; but it continues to do so and now it has become a salt statue. With the Red Star of Ramon Mercader and amidst secret and cowardly cheers the death of true socialism was signed. This assassination was one of the most perverse acts of State terrorism in history because the glorious October

Revolution of 1917 committed suicide that August 20.

After fulfilling his sentence in Mexico, Mercader was in Cuba. I still don't know whom he met, or where he walked, or even he could look directly at either the palms of Martí or the ashes of Mella. He died in Cuba, regardless of how difficult it is for me to accept it. He was the man who had in his hands, perhaps without realizing it, the mission to try to make the left of socialist ideas disappear...it was here during the 60s, during the glorious years of Che Guevara ... It seems almost impossible for me.

Of course, the route of ideological survival of the Cuban revolution has nothing to do with Mercader, the GPU and Stalinism. Quite the contrary; my revolution survives precisely because of the spirit of Leon Trotsky although, paradoxically, we may not know it because it has been hidden in the folds of historical memory.

The truth is stubborn and moves forward slowly, but constantly and unstoppable... There is a mysterious channel in the Cuban revolution that is born with the Cuban Revolutionary Party, fused with Mella; later with the most radical of the 26th of July movement sublimely peaked in Che Guevara. The channel of commitment regardless of class and internationalism. There, in silence, unknown and slandered is Leon Trotsky with a mischievous grin. Why hasn't Trotsky been allowed to relate to the Cuban revolution, for so many years? I've never found out because if there's been a radical and evolving revolution it has been ours. If someone called for radical and evolving revolutions it was, undoubtedly, Leon Trotsky. Perhaps Martí was not wrong when he said that in politics what is real is what is not seen.

We will have to talk quite a deal about Julio Antonio Mella and study his work in Mexico ... but another time. We also have the excellent work of Olivia Gall and Alejandro Gálvez Cancino who, in an absolutely clear, precise and well-documented manner, analyze the communist work of Mella during this period. Aside from the fact that Mella mentioned Trotsky when he returned from the USSR and learned of the Left Opposition through Andrés Nin (killed by the GPU during the Spanish Civil War) or that he wrote in the book, *The Platform of the Opposition*: "For Alberto Martínez to rearm communism, Julio Antonio Mella", his declared Trotskyism is not the most important facet. Much more important were his radical positions in Mexico. In fact and as a political result, "the Trotskyists considered Mella the initiator of a current that later was the Opposition of the Left in the Mexican Communist Party (PCM)" according the historian Olivia Gall.

And it was Julio Antonio Mella who introduced us to the road towards socialism in Cuba. Who built the beautiful bridge between Martí and Bolshevism, who founded our best recent past with the recent future in the world. And regardless of how they would want to wrap him in a pathetic patriotic flag and assign a limited position, it is this Mella, brave, vigorous, controversial ... None other than the

first Cuban communist!

The Stalinism that infected us later and had some relevance for a few years in the socialist revolution is no more than a contagious virus. The socialist ideal managed to survive in spite of it because they were the essence of the revolutionary process. The Stalinist parties did not contribute ideologically to our process, neither when they threw Mella out of the party nor when they made a pact with Machado, nor many other times. Thank God!

There are a lot of Trotskyist comrades around, faithful to the socialist revolution, who have much to tell us ... and grateful for having helped and listened to another committed Marxist who, with Mella is part of the logotype of the Cuban Young Communist Union: Che.

And it is precisely Che, with his star, who I invite to welcome Leon Trotsky on the 65th anniversary of his assassination.

Che Guevara, symbol of the most radical communism set down Trotskyist measures he did not know of. And it is because the true Trotsky theories have the same value of the G constant of Universal Gravitation. Che reached many theses of Trotsky thought on his own, without realizing it ... without being told.

I'll give a few examples when I began to discover a secret communion between them:

Che Guevara was the revolutionary who was most aware of the principles of permanent revolution ... to such an extent that he died defending those principles. But not by simply dying for putting these ideas in practice, but also for arriving intellectually at its essence.

Because it is the 65th anniversary of the assassination of Leon Trotsky I permit myself to refer to three points of permanent revolution.

First Point "The theory of Permanent Revolution revived in 1905 declared war on the democratic objectives of the nationalist and backward bourgeoisie, leading in our times to a dictatorship of the proletariat, putting order to socialist vindications".

Che was conclusive in this point. Let me quote Nestor Kohan: "He (Che) never accepted that, in Latin America (and I would say the world), the task was to build a "national revolution", "democratic", "progressive" or a capitalism with a human face leaving socialism for tomorrow. He strongly and controversially states that if a socialist revolution is not considered, it would be a caricature of a revolution that, in the long run, ends in failure or tragedy as has happened so often".

They are two identical statements. The underdeveloped countries do not have to wait for an Englishman or German to decide to organize to make the revolution. What's more it was Trotsky who mentioned in the Manifest of the Conference of Emergency of the Fourth International in May of 1940 "...the perspective of the permanent revolution does not mean that the backward countries have to wait for

a sign from the advanced countries nor must the colonial peoples wait patiently to be liberated by the proletariat of the metropolitan centers”. Help yourselves!

Second Point: theoretically specifies socialist revolution as such. During a period of indefinite time and constant internal struggles all social relations are transformed. Society suffers a metamorphosis (...) This process has a political characteristic (...) Revolutions of the economy, of technology, of science, of family (...) are unfurled in a complex reciprocal action that does not allow society to reach equilibrium.

And Che said in *Socialism and Man in Cuba*:

“During this period of construction of socialism we can see the new man being born. His image is still not complete and could never be while the process continues in parallel with the development of new economic forms”. According to Che “the only time to rest for revolutionaries is the tomb”.

The Third point: is the international. Trotsky said: “This aspect of the theory of permanent revolution is an inevitable result of the current state of the economy and the social structure of humanity, only a theoretical reflection. Internationalism is not an abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the world character of the economy (...) Socialist revolution begins inside national borders: but cannot keep within them. The enclosure of a proletarian revolution within a national regime can only be transitory, although it may take a long time, as seen in the experience of the Soviet Union. However, with the existence of a dictatorship of the proletariat, internal and external contradictions grow in parallel to its successes. If the proletarian State continues to be isolated it will collapse sooner or later, victim of those contradictions”.

Referring to revolutionaries, Che said: “If their revolutionary desires are dulled when the most important tasks are achieved locally and forget proletarian internationalism, the revolution they lead stops being a moving force reaching a comfortable laziness that is taken advantage of by our enemies; imperialism gains ground. Internationalism is a duty but also a revolutionary necessity”.

I am not going to dwell on this point too long. If anyone fought more to make the Cuban revolution more socialist, it was Che. Che launched the construction of socialism in a devastated land and deepened the socialist character ... and he gave it all up for the world revolution. I know of no other who did this. I believe there was no one more faithful to the thesis of permanent revolution. If the conditions in Bolivia were or were not propitious ... is the subject of another analysis and not of a permanent revolution. We can criticize him for being too much in favor of a permanent revolution or too consistent.

And another point taking into consideration a difference of circumstances, brings the thoughts of Trotsky to those of Che and is, undoubtedly, the decided option for a planned economy. It is true that, at the beginning, Trotsky favored the NEP in the young soviet state considering the terrible economic conditions of

what he referred to as the Communism of War.

But later, and since the beginning, Trotsky criticized the state of things. He maintained, as Isaac Deutscher said “the transition of the NEP, the need for planning had become urgent (...) since the country again began to live under a market economy it had to try to control that market and be prepared to control it. He again promoted the demand of One Plan whereby it was impossible to control production, concentrate resources of heavy industry and set up a balance between the different sectors of the economy”.

Che’s position in favor of planning and his aversion to NEP are well known. In fact Che insisted that if Lenin had had time he would have reconsidered this measure. And not only to planning: Che, in his last years, spoke of socialist democracy. Michael Lowy wrote in *Rebelión* about his last two years: “We know that during the last two years of the life of Ernesto Guevara he moved to separate himself from the Soviet paradigm (...) A radical criticism is found in these documents to the Manual of Political Economy of the Science Academy of the USSR issued in 1966 (...) One point is very interesting because it demonstrates that, in his last political analyses, Guevara approached the idea of a socialist democracy”.

And there was Che without having studied Leon Trotsky enough promoting Trotskyist theses more consistently. Perhaps he never knew it, but it doesn’t matter. This only proves that these theses are true and grants them, paradoxically, much more strength and vigor to the thoughts of Trotsky. In 1965 Che wrote to Armando Hart while he was in Tanzania of his convictions about the study of Marxist philosophy. In the 7th point he writes “And your friend Trotsky should be here who exited and wrote it seems.”

You can imagine how little he knew about the founder of the Red Army. However, it would seem that in his last year he could approach his writings. Juan León Ferrer a Trotskyist comrade who worked in the Ministry of Industry told me. Che also received the paper of his organization and it was Che who got him out of jail on his return from Africa. Roberto Acosta, deceased, had a great camaraderie with Guevara. According to Juan León Ferrer they debated those issues during the sugar cane harvest. This comrade maintains that Che had read *The Permanent Revolution* and everyone knows that he went to Bolivia with the *History of the Russian Revolution* in his backpack.

We could offer many more examples in which these two outstanding revolutionaries light the way in the same direction.

Both directed an army and a new socialist state brilliantly and successfully with Karl Marx in the lead; the two were revolutionary ideologues, who took power and tried to deepen the revolutionary process maintaining loyalty to Lenin and Fidel, respectively, both leaning to the left. For having represented the most complete ideal of internationalism and revolutionary commitment, they were

both brutally assassinated.

Ernesto Guevara made me a Trotskyist. When I had access to Trotsky, very light for my liking, I understood many things ... Che had told me when I was a child. Reading the first pages I confirmed what I had felt before: that revolution has no national idiosyncrasy and that, for this reason, socialism has no space for the pronoun “ours” or “yours”; that revolutionary theory, the same as the laws of physics, has a universal language. As Armando Hart said once: “Our struggle is not only Cuban but of all the workers and all the exploited peoples in the world. Our borders are moral. Our limits are class-based”.

What I recognize about Trotsky is... his manner of talking, the passion that his speeches awaken in me. In the same way Che Guevara won me over. That is why I am a militant in his force and in Che without betraying any one. Both promote the true light of the word, rifle and heart.

Comrades. Let us reach our majority of age. There are too many injustices of exploitation, too much evidence of only one solution; and we have too many deaths. Leon Trotsky calls us to the struggle again. We must welcome him without obstacles! His host is Che Guevara and the peoples of Latin America who call for socialism. Trotsky dramatically won the theoretic move. Let us arm our revolutionary movements without delay, with confidence. Trotsky and Che are on our side. Let us decide to shake the tree strongly, revealing the new reformists that try to hinder the Bolivarian revolution that has become the spearhead, the first step for an unprecedented continental revolution.

Let us remember once more that the Sun, the stars... and gravity are our allies. Workers of the world, unite!

Captive Bolshevik: Nâzım Hikmet and Stalinism

Sungur Savran

*I got back from Cuba this morning
in the space that is Cuba six million people whites blacks yellows mulattoes are planting a
bright seed the seed of seeds joyously*

*can you paint happiness Abidin
but without taking the easy way out
not the angel-faced mother nursing her rosy-cheeked baby
nor the apples on white cloth
nor the goldfish darting among aquarium bubbles
can you paint happiness Abidin
can you paint Cuba in midsummer 1961
master can you paint Praise be praise be I saw the day I could die now and not be sorry
can you paint What a pity what a pity I could have been born in Havana this morning¹*

“they strove to tear me away from my party/to no avail/nor was I crushed

¹ From the poem “Straw-Blond”, *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, Translated from the Turkish by Randy Blasing & Mutlu Konuk, New York: Persea Books, 2002, p. 253.

beneath the fallen idols”² These verses are from the famous poem of Nâzım Hikmet titled “Autobiography”. It ought to entice all who know him to stop and ask: Who was it that strove to tear Nâzım away from his party, that is the Communist Party of Turkey? Even more enigmatic is the last line: What fallen idols is Nâzım talking about and, above all, why has he not been crushed underneath those fallen idols? Perhaps also intriguingly, who was it that was crushed beneath those idols? And what exactly are the fallen idols themselves? This article is an attempt to search for the preliminary elements of an answer to those questions.

But let us address a warning to our foreign reader from the outset concerning the limitations of this English version of what in Turkish is an article close to 60 pages. Translating such a long article in full into English is an overwhelming task for a militant that has to divide his available time between writing about and fighting against the world as it exists. Even if we had all the time in the world, a word for word translation would not be meaningful, since many things about Nâzım Hikmet or the communist movement in Turkey that are common knowledge for Turkish readers would sound Greek to foreign readers, especially the youth, who are being politically and theoretically educated in a world where the Soviet Union, and together with it many of the so-called “communist” parties affiliated to it, are no more, including the Communist Party of Turkey.

Let us quickly clarify the objectives of the original article in Turkish and then move on to the real focus of this English version. Nâzım Hikmet, one of the best poets, in our humble opinion, not only of Turkey but worldwide in the 20th century, happened to be a political militant, a communist in the true sense of the term, all his life (1902-1963). Because he is such a powerful figure in Turkish political and cultural life and also because he lived a real martyr’s life, spending 14 years of his rather brief life in prison and 12 years in forced exile, all those who consider themselves progressives try to appropriate him to their cause. This has gone so far that, in the 1990s, even the historic leader of Turkish fascism, Alparslan Türkeş, quoted a single stanza of his poetry during one of his speeches (to which the author of these lines responded by challenging the said leader to continue reciting the same poem, where Nâzım makes perfectly clear his communism).

Leaving aside such extreme instances, it is the Kemalists that try to appropriate Nâzım. This is the intellectual, cultural and ideological current fashioned after the bourgeois revolutionary leader in the first quarter of the 20th century, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a current that still regurgitates endlessly the catechism of the early republican period (roughly the second quarter of the 20th century), without any attention paid to the relevance of those ideas for the new world and domestic situation and without any mention of the crimes committed, especially against the Kurds, during the construction of the modern Turkish economy and the state.

² Our translation.

The original of the present article is a fully-fledged rebuttal of the idea that Nâzım Hikmet was, in any sense of the term, a Kemalist or bore sympathy to the Kemalist movement. This is one aspect of the Turkish original of the article that will be left out from the much shorter English version you are reading. Let it be said in passing that, both as a young man, during the early 1920s, and at the end of his life in his autobiographical novel, titled *Living is So Beautiful, Brother* (in Turkish), Nâzım comes back ceaselessly to the assassination of the leaders of the young Communist Party of Turkey, with the historic leader Mustafa Suphi at their head, briefly after their arrival in Turkey from Soviet territory in order to shoulder the Turkish national liberation struggle being waged by a variety of forces. The responsibility of the Kemalist leadership in Ankara in this massacre has not been demonstrated, but it itself had not been acting kindly, to put it mildly, to the communist leadership and may be said to have, at least, prepared the political and psychological atmosphere that facilitated the tragic outcome. None of the Kemalists of course even mentions this episode, of immense importance to us Turkish communists.

But the more important discussion that we take up in the original article is the position of Nâzım in relation to Stalinism. Nâzım became a member of the Communist Party of Turkey (henceforth TKP, the initials of the party in Turkish) when he was 19 and died as a member of the party bearing the same name, but metamorphosed into a Stalinist party, as a man of 61. This gives ample opportunity to Stalinists of all persuasions to own Nâzım as one of theirs. It is (or rather was until recently) commonplace for Stalinists to heap praise on Nâzım's communism without any regard for the very clear evidence that the poet militant had very strong objections to many aspects of what Stalinists conceive as communism.

What we tried to do in the original version of this article was to show that at least in two phases of his life Nâzım was a powerful critic of the general line, first of his own party, and later of the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. We believe it is worth telling this story to all Marxists around the world, so in this English version of the article, we will focus on this aspect alone. The question of Stalinism is of universal importance, while the question of Kemalism has limited import for the international audience. Hence we will use our time resources towards what we think is the more judicious end, that of discussing Nâzım's position in the debate on Stalin and Stalinism.

So this article will be a partial summary of the original version focusing on the question of Stalinism. In order to keep it to manageable proportions, we will avoid some of the finer arguments in the original as well as some of the historical evidence and only put forward the general argument. For as opposed to writing for the Turkish audience, some of the discussion on evidence would have required ample explanation as to context, personalities etc. which would have taken us far afield. We will also have to omit some references (which are

exclusively to sources in Turkish) along with, unfortunately, some of the poetry cited. We nonetheless hope that the end result will not be as dry as it may sound at this stage, since we believe that even the barest outline of Nâzım's trajectory has some very intriguing aspects.

Before proceeding further let us warn the foreign reader of another serious limitation, concerning this time not the present article but our topic: the scarcity of documentation relevant to our subject matter. This is due to a variety of reasons. One is the fact that the communist movement was always persecuted by the Kemalists and their successors. In particular, after 1925 communism became an entirely underground movement in Turkey. This meant that written documents were difficult to store, that they were pillaged and destroyed by the police during raids, that some were taken abroad for purposes of archiving etc. On the other hand, the Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union meant that Soviet archives were also unreliable and whole dossiers inaccessible. Add to this the fact that, apart from a handful of pioneers to whom we are grateful for their research despite the methodological mistakes they have committed, academic historians have kept their distance from a movement that has been ostracised and pushed underground. A study of first-hand historical sources is still to be done. We are confident that many of the unorthodox views propounded in this article will be vindicated when these sources are brought to daylight.

It would be to the benefit of both the author and the reader to state from the outset the main novel points of the article in this area. First, we contend that Nâzım Hikmet was an **anti-Stalinist revolutionary communist**. This attitude finds its first expression in his practice of organising what has been called the "Opposition TKP" as opposed to the "Conformable TKP", which was the party that was officially recognised by the Comintern. But it was given even clearer form in his critical outlook on the Soviet regime after he took refuge in the Soviet Union in 1951.

Secondly, this attitude was, of course, a product of the worldview of Nâzım Hikmet that was revolutionary through and through. This worldview was deeply influenced by the historically specific way he came to communism. Let us put it more clearly: it was because Nâzım became a communist in Moscow in the glorious early days of the October revolution under Lenin and Trotsky that he was not fit for cutting to size according to the precepts of the bureaucracy and its Stalinist leadership.

Third, despite this, he composed with the Stalinist bureaucracy at different stages of his political life and carried on as its hostage, whether willingly or forced to do so. And finally, he made grave mistakes as a revolutionary communist with respect to both Stalinism and Kemalism (although we will not dwell on the latter in this English version).

We are of the opinion that political errors committed by poets, literary people,

or artists should be handled with much greater latitude than leaders of political parties or Marxist theoreticians. But we do not apply this yardstick to Nâzım, since he is not simply a poet, but a leader, in his time, of Turkish communism or, in other words, a representative of the historical programme of the proletariat. Hence, we have to be critical regarding his errors as well as praising his achievements. Respect for Nâzım's communism requires no less than this critical attitude.

Periodisation

Nâzım was born in Salonica under the Ottoman Empire, lived in Istanbul in the time remaining to him outside of prison (where he spent overall 14 years), but also resided for long periods of time in Moscow, both as a young man and in his latter days. We will now make an attempt toward a periodisation of this eventful life from the political standpoint.

The first period is the one when he received his political education in Moscow at the Communist University of Eastern Peoples, the KUTV in its Russian initials, between 1921 and 1924. This is followed by a long period between 1925 and 1936 that is characterised by his opposition to the political line of the officially recognised party. Nâzım then changes his attitude into one of willing submission to the official line, moves to the camp of the majority of the party, and hence of the leadership of the Comintern (1937-1951). The period he spends in the Soviet Union (1951-1963) is a period onto its own. During this period, he survives restlessly in the Soviet system, cooperating with it when need be, but also wages a struggle in opposition to Stalinism. One might distinguish a sub-period in this overall time span, that between 1961 and his death in 1963, when he regains confidence in the revolution, fired by his brief experience in Cuba.

These are the periods we will be taking up one by one in what follows.

A special kind of Marxism: apprenticeship under Lenin and Trotsky (1921-1924)

We will not dwell at length on the very important topic of which of the two revolutions that Nâzım witnessed in his youth, the Turkish and the Soviet revolutions, he bore the mark. Let us just say briefly that the literature in Turkish on Nâzım simply disregards this extremely interesting question. Trotsky somewhere said that the October revolution found its painter in a distant land, Mexico, in the person of Diego Rivera. We believe that had he known Nâzım's poetry, he would have said the same of Nâzım in the domain of poetry (not forgetting even for a moment the importance of the great Mayakovsky, who, unfortunately, left us tragically early).

Nâzım had left Istanbul, accompanied by his best friend Vâ-Nû, in order to participate in the war of liberation of Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, then

centred in Ankara. However, the two friends turned away in disgust at the crying class character of the entire movement. Having witnessed the poverty of the peasantry and the utter disregard for this among the bourgeois leadership of the movement, they decided to pass over to the land of the October revolution. In his autobiographic novel, Nâzım gives us a glimpse of how he became a communist in quite an emotional manner:

It was neither through books nor propaganda by word of mouth, nor even my social position that I came to where I am now... It was Anatolia that brought me where I am. Anatolia that I only fleetingly observed. It was my heart that brought me where I am... That's what it is...³

Just like thousands of youth from around the world, Nâzım learned Marxism not only intellectually, but by breathing the whole atmosphere of revolutionary Russia, by experiencing firsthand the new socio-economic relations that were being built, by becoming, so to speak, students of Lenin and Trotsky. Between 1921 and 1924, he attended the KUTV, where students from many countries were being educated. He also performed the practical tasks that the party, the Bolshevik Party of which he had become a member, assigned to him. In January 1924, he stood guard over Lenin's coffin at his funeral ceremony. Nâzım's communism is a product of this whole experience, which left an indelible influence on him throughout his life. Even when he drifted away from Leninism, especially on questions of strategy and tactics, he was going to conserve that Bolshevik kernel of Marxism to his last days.

Moscow in the early 1920s was a city full of revolutionary enthusiasm, probably to an extent never again equalled in later revolutionary periods. The will power that went into the construction of socialism, the tangible importance of workers' democracy in daily life, the impressive creativity and liveliness that marked cultural life, never again to be witnessed in future revolutions to the same extent, the effort of the Bolsheviks, in particular of Lenin and Trotsky, to apply Marxism creatively not only in politics but in every sphere of life—all these will inevitably leave traces very difficult to forget on the mind of a young student, especially for a genius like Nâzım.

One particular aspect of this Marxism, entirely incompatible with the later Stalinism, is its internationalism. The conception of "national communism" that Stalinism infused into Marxism both in the Soviet Union and, later, in other countries is entirely alien to Nâzım. He remained **an intransigent internationalist** throughout his life. This internationalism is so deeply ingrained in Nâzım's Marxism that the concepts of "world revolution" and "world communism",

³ Nâzım Hikmet, *Yaşamak Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim*, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2013, p. 32.

driven from Marxism and Leninism, but branded as “Trotskyist” concepts by the Stalinist bureaucracy, lived on in Nâzım’s thinking to the end.

Before concluding this section, it would be useful to say a few words on Nâzım’s relation to Trotsky in his period of Marxist formation. Nâzım had an extremely high esteem for this historic figure of the revolution in those days. A piece he wrote for a Turkish daily newspaper upon his return from the Soviet Union in 1924, reprinted in the Turkish version of this journal,⁴ shows unambiguously this assessment. In the memoirs of Vâ-Nû, his comrade and friend at the KUTV, the admiration that both friends had for Trotsky is explicitly mentioned.⁵ A poem he wrote upon his return to Istanbul, titled “Farewell”, has four historic figures mentioned: “We loved/and still love you/the way your bullet-wounded walls/love the picture of Marx...” “Russia/As we depart from you/ in our mind we keep/ immortal memories/ like Engels’ materialism!” “Russia/ Lenin’s country,/ we saw in you how/the power of rampant masses reached full maturity!” And finally: “We saw your May Days!/ We heard through hum and noise/ Trotsky bursting forth like a big bell!”⁶

To sum up, Nâzım became a Marxist in the fire and fury of the October revolution. He himself was infatuated with this transformation. His poem “My nineteenth year” is a striking account of this whole experience. This was written in 1930, after some of his comrades from the KUTV defected from communism to the Kemalist party in power and after Vâ-Nû, the closest friend of his youthful days, abandoned politics and withdrew to a routine life. In this poem he sees the year 1921, when he met communism, as his “mother”. Then he goes on to write: “My first child, first teacher, first comrade/ my 19th year/ I respect you as I respect my mother/ and I will do so/ I am following the road you first tread/ and I will do so. / My first child, first teacher, first comrade, my 19th year.”

This he wrote when he was 28. Then in 1961, at the age of 59, two years before his death, he described his 19th year in the following manner in a letter:

It was towards the end of 1921, I was amazed a thousand times. I felt an admiration and affection a hundred times stronger. Because I witnessed a fight waged against a world a hundred times stronger. And I saw an infinite hope and infinite joy of living and creating. I found a humanity that was entirely different.

4 Nâzım Hikmet, “Bolşevikler Arasında – Troçki ve Bolşevizm”, *Devrimci Marksizm*, No. 20, Spring 2014.

5 Vâ-Nû, *Bu Dünyadan Nâzım Geçti*, İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 2009, pp. 303-309.

6 Our translation. This version cited in Emin Karaca, “Sevdalınız Komünisttir”. *Nâzım Hikmet’in Siyasal Yaşamı*, İstanbul: Gendaş Kültür, p. 62-64 and Vâ-Nû, *ibid*, p. 304. In subsequent publications, Trotsky’s name was omitted for reasons that are easy to understand and the words “Kızıl Meydan” (Red Square) inserted instead.

And I started to write in another form.⁷

This is what made Nâzım a dedicated communist even at the threshold of his death.

A left opposition within Turkish communism (1925-1936)

The standard narrative on Nâzım involves no information that could make sense of the line “they strove to tear me away from my party” in his “Autobiography”. Authors who attribute some importance to questions pertaining to the history of the left in Turkey naturally pay some attention to the fact that Nâzım formed an opposition to the TKP at a certain stage, but never delve into the political bases of this opposition.

What is often mentioned is the following. In the summer of 1929, Nâzım and some of his comrades organized a meeting, which led to the emergence of two different poles in Turkish communism: the “Opposition TKP” and the “Conformable TKP”. The more enigmatic term, in its Turkish version as well, is “conformable”. Even to pose the question “conformable to what?” gives us the clue to the answer: to the Comintern leadership of the period and the political line it was pursuing. The Eastern Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (widely known as EKKİ) stigmatized Nâzım and the entire Opposition from the outset and stood by the leader of the official party, Şefik Hüsnü. The Opposition was attacked in terms that are simply astounding. In an “Open Letter”, for instance, penned in July 1930, the oppositionists were characterized as “defeatists, Trotskyists, ..., some undercover police agents, ..., Kemalism’s men, ..., serving the interests of the bourgeoisie and the feudal lords...” Later on, the characterization changes to “the party of police provocation” and the claim is made that this party is “directly linked to the police”. There are “turncoats such as Nâzım Hikmet” within this party of “renegades” and “undercover agents”.⁸ What were the bases of this rift, which provoked so much ire from the Comintern leadership? It should first be pointed out that there is a prehistory to this opposition by Nâzım to the TKP leadership, one that goes back all the way to the Third Congress of the Party in 1925.⁹ This is a watershed year in the history of the republic that had been founded only two years before. The congress convened days after a landmark Kurdish revolt broke out. This turned out to be the event that brought a change of tide in the nature of the new republican state, which turned into a repressive single-party regime that attacked and crushed not

⁷ Cited in Hikmet Akgül, *Nâzım Hikmet. Siyasi Biyografi*, İstanbul: Chiviyazıları, 2002, p. 320.

⁸ *Komintern Belgelerinde Nâzım Hikmet* [Nâzım Hikmet in Comintern Documents], Erden Akbulut (ed.), İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2002, pp. 164 ff.

⁹ See *Komintern Belgeleri*, *ibid*, pp. 30 and 37.

only the Kurdish revolt but the fledgling communist movement as well. Even at his early stage, Nâzım was of the opinion that Şefik Hüsnü and the rest of the leadership were too lenient on the bourgeois government of Mustafa Kemal. This meant that Nâzım was now defending a line that excluded any support to the bourgeoisie. The line of the more and more Stalinised TKP became, on the contrary, notorious for the full support it extended to the bourgeois government of Mustafa Kemal.

The real rift came to the surface during the 1926 Vienna Conference of the TKP. The repression had now been extended to the TKP, so that Nâzım adamantly defended the idea that the party needed to squarely oppose the government. According to him, having taken power the bourgeoisie had lost its democratic character and could not be supported any longer.¹⁰ Not only that, but the working class should now go beyond the objective of a democratic revolution and fight for proletarian revolution.¹¹ The majority of the leadership came up against this change of line and claimed that the government ought to be supported because of its anti-imperialist stance. This position was laid out in the new party programme adopted at the Vienna Conference. Nâzım and his co-thinkers criticized this programme and the political line that it represented precisely for this reason. However, on the technical side, it should be pointed out that the programme had not been ratified by the Comintern and, thus, from the legal point of view, had not yet come into effect according to the statutes of the Comintern.

The line defended by Şefik Hüsnü is totally adapted to the neo-Menshevik stance the Comintern had been developing since Lenin's death. The line pursued since 1925, particularly in China, led to the massacre of thousands of communists and workers during the Second Chinese Revolution of 1925-1927. This line was going to be consolidated later in 1928 at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern through the wholesale revision of the programme of the International founded by Lenin on the basis of abandoning the perspective of world revolution in the name of building socialism in a single country. This new perspective was complemented with a programme of **revolution by stages** in countries subordinated to imperialism, the colonies and the semi-colonies of the time, from China, India, and Turkey all the way to Latin America, geared towards supporting the bourgeoisie in the supposed accomplishment of the democratic revolution, whereas in fact the real purpose was to avoid the pursuit of a revolutionary line by the communist parties of these countries. (The parallel policy in European

10 Y. Doğan Çetinkaya/M. Görkem Doğan, "TKP'nin Sosyalizmi (1920-1990)", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce*, cilt 8: *Sol*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008, p. 299.

11 For the testimony of two prominent communists of the time regarding this see Karaca, "*Sevdalınız Komünisttir*", ibid, pp. 129 and 130-31. Furthermore, in a report that he presented years later Şefik Hüsnü also pointed out that the Opposition defended "proletarian revolution": see *Komintern Belgeleri*, ibid, p. 289.

countries will be the formation, in the mid-1930s, of Popular Fronts, i.e. fronts including bourgeois parties, rather than forming a United Workers' Front, the latter being a tactic developed in the time of Lenin.) In short, the priority given by the Stalinist bureaucracy to avoiding any risks regarding its own power in the Soviet Union found its counterpart in colonial and semi-colonial countries in the support extended to the forces of the bourgeoisie in the name supposedly of an anti-imperialist line.¹²

In Turkey, this line corresponded to the policy of Şefik Hüsnü and his co-thinkers while Nâzım's stance of working for proletarian revolution with the support of the peasantry is alien to it. To the extent that the historians of the Turkish left have not been able to discover this fundamental difference between the Opposition TKP and the Conformable TKP in good faith, this might be attributed to the fact that the Şefik Hüsnü faction was able to conceal its policy of class collaboration, that is to say its support for Kemalism, on the basis of a deliberate attempt at deception. The deception takes the form of revising the earlier programme in order to pretend that the party is for fighting against the Kemalist dictatorship so as to deprive the Opposition TKP of any basis for the criticism it kept levelling at the Conformable TKP.

In support of what we have said, in the Turkish version we cite several documents written by some of the leaders of the Conformable TKP. We will only translate the most important of those documents here.

Years later, Şefik Hüsnü, the major leader of the Conformable TKP, admits the real reason behind this more radical politics inserted in the new programme:

... the Central Committee, in agreement with the external bureau, **taking into consideration the fact that the unprincipled opposition has speculated on the previous action programme of the party**, which was written in a period when the Kemalist party was only taking its first steps of compromise with imperialism, and contained certain favourable assessments regarding the government that could be interpreted as opportunistic, **decided to prepare a new action programme**. A programme of action, together with theses on the national revolution and on Turkey's economic and political situation, was presented to the approval of the Communist International in early 1930 and after an in-depth examination and the necessary amelioration, was approved by the Communist International. The publication of these two documents, which indicate a turning point in the life of the TKP, has made **a great contribution to the victory of the struggle against the opposition** and all kinds of deviation and the attempt to

12 For the classical critique of the Draft Programme presented to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, see Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1996.

destroy the party from within.¹³

Everything is crystal clear here. The party changes its programme not because the objective situation requires it, not because of the necessity of identifying the needs of the revolution, not because it wishes to lead the working class in the right direction, but because “the unprincipled opposition has speculated on the previous action programme of the party”. The literature at hand has regarded this change in the programme as a turn to the left and as a more critical stance vis-à-vis Kemalism!

A report submitted by the Opposition TKP to the Comintern also stresses the difference in the political programme between the two parties. The following passage is particularly of great importance:

We do not regard the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry that the Comintern inserted in our programme as an illusion that can only be realized at an uncertain date. For us, this is a concrete principle. We conduct all our activities of publication and organization with the belief that this principle will be materialized in the shortest while possible. However, for the group of intellectuals, Doctor Şefik, Cevdet and Halim, this principle is an illusion.¹⁴

Whether the criticism levelled at the leadership of the Conformable TKP is correct or not is immaterial. As opposed to what many a historian of the Turkish left says, **the Opposition TKP claims that there is a difference of programme between the two parties.**

There are other bones of contention between Nâzım and Şefik Hüsnü. Nâzım claims that party democracy has been trampled upon for years. He also contends that the working class in Turkey is a living reality, as opposed to the leadership of the other party, who underestimate both the objective existence and the capacity for action of the proletariat. There is also a difference with respect to the importance of the Leninist conception of the party, a conception that Nâzım jealously defends.

Thus, as opposed to many sources that approach the question in terms of organisational competition, personal friction etc., we have shown, on the basis of the scarce sources that exist, that there are serious differences between the two parties in the spheres of programme, theory and method of organizing. These differences provide sufficient basis for understanding why the Comintern stood by the Conformable TKP, although the basis for its all-out attack on the Opposition TKP and on Nâzım personally in vulgar terms is rather flimsy and really requires

¹³ *Komintern Belgeleri*, ibid, pp. 292-93. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 158.

another explanation. Yet all this begs another question: the Opposition TKP is against the line of the Conformable TKP, which is in harmony with the political line adopted in the late 1920s by the Comintern, but it still wishes to receive the approval of the Comintern, even to become the recognized section of the International in Turkey. How to explain this?

There are several possibilities. First, the leadership of the Opposition TKP had perhaps not grasped the true meaning of the developments in the Soviet Union and the Comintern. What was happening was a first in history and very few Marxists really comprehended the process in depth. Here it might be important to remind ourselves that the late 1920s and the early 1930s were the so-called Third Period, when the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern (Molotov now having replaced Bukharin) asserted that because of the deep crisis of capitalism, a contest for power was on the order of the day. This line was to be abandoned gradually in 1934-35 for the Popular Front orientation, but this was precisely the time when Nâzım and his comrades were fighting for a more radical line for the TKP. Thus they may have been taken in by the temporarily radical discourse of the Comintern. The second possibility is that the party was a mixture of cadres who had differing opinions regarding the evolution of the Soviet Union and the Comintern. It might be that those who were more critical were unable or unwilling to take the further step of targeting the leadership of the Comintern as the real culprit. Finally, it may be that the leadership understood very well what was happening but played for time in order to educate the rank and file.

The specter of Trotsky

We have already seen that the EKKI (the Executive) attacked the Opposition TKP also for being Trotskyist. This characterization was also taken up by the Conformable TKP repeatedly.¹⁵ This of course in no sense proves that Nâzım or the Opposition TKP was in fact Trotskyist, since the label was regularly used by Stalinists to denigrate all kinds of opposition movements.

The major type of evidence that has been used against the prospect that Nâzım might have been a Trotskyist at least for a certain period has been his several writings in which he subscribes unconditionally to the views of Stalin on a host of matters, including the Soviet Constitution and the Spanish Civil War. All these were written around 1936, when the entire initiative of the Opposition TKP had already collapsed and Nâzım was keen to return to the officially recognised party, after seven years of bitter struggle. We think that his explicit subscription to Stalin's views is not evidence that shows that he was a Stalinist, but on the

¹⁵ For instance in an article he wrote in 1933 for *Rundschau*, one of the organs of the Comintern, Şefik Hüsnü talks about the "Trotskyist opposition group of Nâzım Hikmet". Cited in: Emin Karaca, *Nâzım Hikmet Şiirinde Gizli Tarih*, Istanbul: Destek Yayınevi, 2011, p. 113.

contrary, it attests to the fact that he was, or at least he was perceived to be, an anti-Stalinist throughout those seven years. Recantation was a very common form of readmission to the Stalinist movement and this, in a certain sense, was Nâzım's recantation, his method as an intellectual of proving to the Stalinist establishment that he had finally found salvation.

There are other, more credible pieces of evidence that imply that the Opposition TKP was **not** a Trotskyist organisation. But we would also like to touch briefly upon why Nâzım may at least have been influenced by Trotsky's thinking. The first point is the admiration he held for Trotsky in his formative years. Secondly, the leaders of the Conformable TKP went at times beyond alleging, without any foundation, that the Opposition TKP leadership was Trotskyist, to claim that they borrowed the concepts of the International Left Opposition, a movement Trotsky founded as soon as he was exiled to Turkey. Chief among these is Şefik Hüsnü's claim that leaders of the Opposition TKP resort to concepts such as "bureaucratic degeneration".¹⁶ Thirdly, the founding congress of the Opposition TKP was held in June 1929. Trotsky himself had arrived in his Turkish exile in February 1929. The coincidence may be spurious. But there is no reason why a causal link might not exist. Trotsky was a personality who had overpowering impact on intellectuals and political leaders of Marxist persuasion. A legion of American intellectuals, called the "New York intellectuals", came under his spell in the 1930s, although he never visited New York after departing from America when revolution broke out in February 1917 in Russia.

It was, of course, much more difficult for Turkish communists to get in touch with Trotsky under the repressive conditions of the Kemalist dictatorship. However, there is one fact that is ticklish in its very existence: The childhood friend of Nâzım, Vâ-Nû, who had accompanied him to Moscow and the KUTV, but who had later drifted away from communism and withdrawn to his private life, interviewed Trotsky as a journalist.¹⁷ One inevitably wonders whether other matters relating to the fate of the communist movement in Turkey may have crept into the conversation. It should not be forgotten that Trotsky was extremely careful in handling his hosts in exile, from Mustafa Kemal to Lázaro Cárdenas. That no trace of any relationship to Turkish communists has yet been found is no reason to think that none existed, but may be a sign of the craftiness of the commander of the Red Army in matters pertaining to security.

For the moment, these are all just possibilities. All this implies that we need deeper research. However, there is an incontrovertible verity and that is that **the Opposition TKP and Nâzım appeared as a serious threat to Stalinism**. How else would one explain the acrimonious polemic and the abusive language

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 100.

¹⁷ This he recounts in his memoirs. See Vâ-Nû, *ibid*, p. 307.

levelled at him and the party?

To sum up, on the basis of the evidence we have for the moment, the following conclusion seems to be standing on safe ground: the odds of Nâzım being a Trotskyist are low. But whether he is a Trotskyist or not is secondary in this context. **Nâzım is the first revolutionary Marxist of Turkey who stood up against Stalinism in power!**

The first period of captivity (1936-1951)

From the mid-1930s on Nâzım moved towards a compromise with Stalinism, the Comintern, which had by then clearly become an instrument of Soviet foreign policy, and their representative in Turkey, the Conformable TKP. We have no evidence on the reason why. However, we may advance certain hypotheses that can only be verified as research progresses.

The most probable alternative is that Nâzım gave in to the overwhelming power of the Comintern. Because of the severity of the attacks on the Opposition TKP, many cadres within the leadership of the opposition abandoned the party, especially in 1933. The Opposition TKP was a party with a heavy working class composition. We may assume that when the leading cadres of a party start to leave one by one, the factory cells will be very adversely affected by this. In short, Nâzım may have decided to come to terms with the Conformable TKP rather than falling totally outside of political activity. This is also the time when Turkish ruling circles were increasingly being brought under the influence of Nazi Germany. He may have calculated that standing together with his erstwhile opponents would be the right thing to do in the face of this mortal menace.

There may be other reasons we are not yet aware of. But we should frankly concede that at a certain stage Nâzım totally capitulated to the Comintern line. That this is a serious mistake is indubitable. But there is nothing to be shocked about. The 1930s is a period when even many a Bolshevik cadre, steeled in the school of Lenin and the revolution, after having fought in the ranks of the Left Opposition or the United Opposition, caved in to the rather primitive theory and programme of Stalinism. Trotsky was, in the end, left alone from among that generation to defend single-handedly the revolutionary internationalist heritage of Lenin. This includes people of immensely high caliber, such as Christian Rakovsky, Karl Radek, Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Yevgeny Preobrazhensky, and even intellectuals and leaders who allied with Stalin in the 1920s but then were thrown into opposition in the 1930s, the most prominent name being Nikolai Bukharin. Given the capitulation of these people well-versed in the theory and practice of communism, Nâzım's retreat should come as no surprise.

To this voluntary captivity to Stalinism will be added from 1937-38 on Nâzım's persecution at the hands of the Kemalist state. Nâzım, as well as other communists, were used to being imprisoned for short periods of time and to

being tortured at the hands of the police under custody. But this time, it was different. Tried for subversion within the Navy and later within the Army, Nâzım was convicted to 28 years and remained in prison for close to 13 years. So the period between his readmission to the Conformable TKP and his last exile in 1951 was a period of double captivity, one in the prisons of Kemalism and the other, voluntary this one, in the straitjacket of Stalinism.

The internationalisation of the captivity (1951-1963)

Nâzım was released from prison in 1950, after a two-round hunger strike and a worldwide campaign of solidarity (he was now internationally renowned as a poet and his poetry had been translated into many languages). He was close to 50 years of age, but the government insisted that he should be sent for compulsory military service. This was only one of many signs that there hovered above him the threat of an assassination. Nâzım made a choice and fled to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet system and his erstwhile opponents in the TKP (there was now only one party of course) accepted him with lots of caveats. He was not given a Soviet passport until Khrushchev took the reins and thus had to receive his first passport from Poland thanks to his partially Polish lineage. He was also put under the constant watch of the main leader of the TKP and of some others. He was reintegrated into the TKP, which at that time was mainly a party in exile, with its leadership living in the Soviet Union and some Warsaw Pact countries and with puny presence within the country itself. However, this man who had been elected a member of the Central Committee at 23 years of age was not given any seats in the ruling bodies of the party as a 50-odd-year old experienced cadre until very late in the day and this despite the fact that there was a serious dearth of cadres in the party. In a sense he was under quarantine.

He was provided with a good life, including a flat in Moscow, a car, a chauffeur and a dacha in Peredelkino, where many famous literary figures had second houses as well. He was sent as a good will ambassador around the world, at first only to the countries of the “socialist bloc”, but later to other countries of Asia and Africa as well and welcomed honourably in peace conferences and other such venues. In short, life in the Soviet Union was like a golden cage. This was a new form of captivity for Nâzım.

Lenin against Stalin

Nâzım was shocked by what he observed in the Soviet Union. This was a man who had last seen Moscow in the 1920s, when the city and the entire country was alive and kicking with revolutionary enthusiasm. This time around, he found a country that was stifled by years of terror and a sclerotic cultural life. He moaned and groaned for some time. It was only in 1955, two years after the death of Stalin

and a year before the famous 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) that he sent his first missile, an extremely powerful one, on the bureaucracy.

This was perhaps his most damning criticism of the Soviet system. His play *Did Ivan Ivanovitch Exist or Not?* is a scathing criticism levelled at the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and all other similar countries. In order to understand the significance of this play, let us put things in historical perspective. Three years after Stalin's death, at the 20th Congress, the new leader of the party, Khrushchev, presented a report that exposed the crimes committed against communists and started a new process which was widely labeled "destalinization". One point is of crucial importance in this picture. Khrushchev and his co-thinkers characterized Stalinism as the product of "the cult of personality". In other words, deference to the leader was the mother of all ills.

We cannot do full justice to Nâzım's play *Ivan Ivanovitch* in the context of this article.¹⁸ Let us only touch upon certain aspects. First, Nâzım did not wait for the party to change its official position in order to criticize the bureaucratic system, since the play was written and the text published in *Novy Mir* in 1955. Secondly, Nâzım's treatment of bureaucratization is much more radical and deep-going than the official position of the CPSU. Although Nâzım does refer to the fashionable concept of the "personality cult" elsewhere, *Ivan Ivanovitch* itself goes well beyond the limits of that concept.

The concept "personality cult" really assumes as given what it should seek to demonstrate. The real question is this: why was there a Stalin cult? Ivan Ivanovitch takes the question of bureaucratisation, personified in the case of a small town party official, as a **system**, by explaining the mechanism through which this bureaucratization is brought about not only at the level of the small town party apparatus, but at all levels. The problem is not Stalin, but **the system of social relations that makes Stalin and those of his ilk possible**. This is where the superiority of Nâzım's viewpoint lies in comparison to the theory of the "personality cult". In a very important letter that we have chosen to call "Letter to comrades", Nâzım puts forth another idea that he has not mentioned in the play since, he says, it would have sounded too didactic:

In my opinion, bureaucratism and alongside it the personality cult are the residue of previous social orders, not only of capitalism, but of pre-capitalist social orders as well. The bureaucratism and other residues of the backward Czarist

¹⁸ We have since written a whole article devoted to this play in Turkish and criticised the denial syndrome of the Turkish left regarding this immensely brave move by Nâzım while they seem to embrace all the other things Nâzım did or wrote in his lifetime. See our "İvan İvanoviç Önemli miydi, Değil miydi?" [Was *Ivan Ivanovitch* Important or Not?], *Devrimci Marksizm*, No. 35, Summer 2018.

Russia create an environment for the emergence of various disorders in the young socialist body.¹⁹

As a good Marxist, Nâzım is after a materialist explanation in response to the philosophically idealist and tautological approach that the Soviet bureaucracy has developed from within its own ranks. And why do we say tautological? Because explaining bureaucratism through the “personality cult” is like going in circles. Nâzım, on the contrary, accepts bureaucratism and the personality cult as interlinked phenomena that need a materialist explanation. The explanation provided by the bureaucracy reduces the question to an individual and calls for the abandonment of his personal methods. The members of the bureaucracy had a stake in this turnaround because everyone’s life was constantly under danger. But admitting the systemic nature of the question and explaining it through the legacy of previous social orders was anathema to the bureaucracy because that would have required a full-scale shakeup of the whole system. Thus, under Khrushchev only the more salient and extreme practices were fought, while the bureaucratic system as a whole remained intact.

Nâzım leaps light years ahead of the bureaucracy in trying to provide a systemic and materialist critique. However, a true Marxist explanation cannot rely on residues from earlier societies, but should grasp the rule of the bureaucracy as a modern phenomenon deriving from the contradictions that the dictatorship of the proletariat engenders from its own constitution. We do not know yet whether Nâzım was aware of the most advanced Marxist analysis of the Soviet Union provided by Leon Trotsky in his 1936 *The Revolution Betrayed*.

Nevertheless, Nâzım’s perspective converges with that of Trotsky on a crucial question. This has to do with the most revolutionary aspect of *Ivan Ivanovitch*. In the play, Nâzım paints a fresco of Soviet society using broad strokes of the brush. Two characters in particular bear special significance. “Straw-hat”, who lives in nostalgia for the *ancien regime*, and “Flatcap”, who represents the working class. It is this character, Flatcap, that deals the mortal blow to Ivan Ivanovitch the bureaucrat at the end of the play! With this ending, it is as if Nâzım is putting his seal of approval on the idea, advanced by Trotsky, of political revolution by the proletariat as the only possible means of overturning the Soviet bureaucracy!

This revolutionary character of the play explains what happened when it was put on stage for the first time. When the play was staged in Moscow in 1957, on the second night mounted policemen surrounded the theatre and dispelled the spectators waiting outside the building. The play was banned. The fact that these silly bureaucratic methods were used precisely in the wake of the 20th Congress, in a period ironically dubbed that of “destalinisation”, made the event look all

19 Cited by Akgül, *ibid*, p. 297.

the more grotesque! The desire for democratisation of the Soviet bureaucracy apparently went only as far as sending mounted police to drive away theatre-goers. However, the contradictory nature of the Soviet system allowed for the play being staged in other Soviet republics and in the countries of Eastern Europe for months or even years and winning great acclaim.

Another matter that was a great source of agony for Nâzım was the treatment meted out to Turkish communists in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s. Many Turkish communists were sent on exile to Siberia. One of these was Salih Hacıoğlu, who was among the founders of the TKP in 1920. This dedicated communist was exiled to Siberia together with his wife, who was nonetheless to remain a communist till the end of her days. Salih Hacıoğlu himself never returned from his Siberian exile.

Nâzım wrote a poem on this episode in 1956, a poem that is full of anguish and is politically extremely meaningful. Let us cite the last stanza:

Tonight we rejoiced in Moscow
celebrating the anniversary of the revolution:
There wandered around the squares singing folk songs Marx
Engels
Lenin
Along with the document that rehabilitated Salih...²⁰

The irony will not escape the reader. That series of names usually went, at that time, as Marx, Engels, Lenin... and Stalin. By inserting the name Salih, with an obvious morphological resemblance to the name Stalin, Nâzım presents to us the reason why Stalin's name is not appropriate in that chain. That the last verse ends, in line with the grammatical forms of the agglutinative Turkish language, with a suffix at the end of the name as "Salihin" makes it even more forceful in Turkish, since Salihin rhymes perfectly with the name Stalin.

The next revolutionary Marxist move by Nâzım against Stalinism came in 1961, in the form of a poem that castigates Stalin and his system. This is such an important poem in relation to the major theme of this article that it is worth quoting in full:

From stone, bronze, plaster, paper
from two centimetres to seven metres
in all the city squares we were under his boots
of stone, bronze, plaster, paper
and his shadow of stone, bronze, plaster, paper
hung over our park trees

20 Our translation.

His moustache of stone, bronze, plaster, paper
was in our soups in the restaurants
In our rooms we were under his eyes
of stone, bronze, plaster, paper
Then one morning they disappeared
His boots disappeared from the squares
His shadow no longer hung over our trees
His moustache was no longer in our soup
His eyes departed from our rooms
and the pressure of thousands of tons
of stone, bronze, plaster, paper
was lifted off our chests.²¹

Many people see a contradiction between this and the eulogy that Nâzım purportedly wrote in memoriam of Stalin upon his death. We say “purportedly”, since there are serious questions as to whether that requiem belongs authentically to Nâzım. Even if that is the case, it was probably commissioned and Nâzım may have found it impossible not to deliver. In any case, even the suggestion that the supposed requiem and the very real chastisement are of the same standing in representing the thinking of Nâzım seems to us an absurdity.

The 20th Congress of course made a great impact on Nâzım, as it did for communists of all persuasions around the world. For many, the effect was to push them relatively to the right. This in the following sense: this monstrous system created by Stalinism was now seen as a product of Bolshevism and created a tendency for increasing alienation not only from Stalinism, but from Leninism as well. The end result was the advocacy of a certain brand of socialism feasible, so these people opined, within the boundaries of parliamentary democracy, a road to be taken fully by the so-called “Euro-communist” current some time later. This naturally implied coming to terms with capitalism, resulting in a process of conversion to social democracy. Nâzım reacted to the situation in a manner few socialists adopted at the time: against the scourge of Stalinist bureaucratisation, he defended taking the path of Leninism once again. Two poems he wrote on the 20th Congress are crystal clear on this.

To the Twentieth Congress came Lenin,
his blue, almond eyes laughing.
He entered before the opening.
On the steps beneath the rostrum
he sat and started to take notes.

21 Nâzım Hikmet, *Beyond the Walls. Selected Poems*, translated by Ruth Christie, Richard McKane & Talât Sait Halman, London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002, p. 234.

He did not even notice his statue.

To be under the same roof with Lenin,
to feel within our hand, with relief,
the humanity of his wise hand.

To the Twentieth Congress came Lenin.
Over the Soviet Union he was
like white clouds at dawn
the mass of fertile hopes.²²

This is perhaps an over optimistic account of the 20th Congress, where dream has replaced mundane reality or perhaps it is a warning on the part of Nâzım, a warning regarding the necessity of turning to Lenin. If this second interpretation is not obvious for this first poem, it surely is for this second one we will quote, titled “A few words for communists”.

I have a couple of words for you, communists:
whether you are at the head of the state or in a dungeon,
whether you are a foot soldier or party secretary,
Lenin should be able to enter at all times and in all spaces
your work, your home, your entire life
as if it were his own work, his own home, his own life.²³

It is evident that here it is not a matter of optimism, but a stark principle that Nâzım posits as necessary to comply with. Nâzım has gone back to his 19 years. He was an apprentice of Lenin during his education in communism. He is now inviting everyone back to Lenin. The captive Bolshevik is revealing his inner self, becoming the real Nâzım.

This orientation expressed in poetic aesthetics let us now read in Marxist intellectual terms from Nâzım’s pen. Again from the “Letter to Comrades” that we have already had occasion to quote:

Until the complete victory of communism over the entire world, in other words, until there remains no money, no state, nor armed forces, nor parties, there is always the threat of the emergence of the personality cult, small or big. The only weapon for struggling against this is the correct grasp of Lenin’s principles and their materialisation in all the spheres of political and social life, in all socialist countries.²⁴

22 Our translation.

23 Our translation.

24 Akgül, *ibid*, p. 298.

Here we see that Nâzım's conception of communism relies on the world revolution and the complete victory of communism on the world scale, just as it was in the classical period of Bolshevism. The year is 1956. Nâzım has defended the views of Stalinism at the tactical level, or even at the theoretical level at times. He has advocated the very right-wing views of the TKP on the radio time he was given on the station of the TKP. But all this is a product of captivity. First, captivity to the TKP buttressed by the EKKI, the Executive of the Comintern, and later, captivity to the Soviet bureaucracy. But as soon as Nâzım turns to the world-historic problems that socialism is suffering from, as soon as he proceeds to explain bureaucratic degeneration, he says that these problems can be irreversibly solved under the "complete victory of communism at the world scale". Here you have the revolutionary Marxist conception of socialism in a nutshell!

This internationalism has so infused Nâzım's thinking that in a diametrically opposite manner to the conception of national communism emanating from the bureaucracy, he characterises the Soviet state, that is a single state on its own, as "the international state Lenin created".²⁵ Look how he is dreaming of the future:

The child on whose face reflects
The shimmering light of the Christmas tree,
Obviously, don't know why, but obviously
Will live twice as long as I will.
Will go out to the cosmos and return, but that's not it.
Will see the mother of miracles on earth:
A single human nation shining forth.
I am optimistic, friends, like a stream...²⁶

Havana: revolution again!

There are certain verses written by Nâzım that almost every educated Turk knows by heart, whether they approve of him or not. Or rather these have become expressions in the Turkish language with a heavy load of connotations. Perhaps the most famous of these are those quoted at the beginning of this article, verses that address a very close painter friend of Nâzım's, Abidin Dino, who himself was a great communist artist in his own right:

can you paint happiness Abidin
but without taking the easy way out
not the angel-faced mother nursing her rosy-cheeked baby
nor the apples on white cloth
nor the goldfish darting among aquarium bubbles

²⁵ This is from the memoirs of his last wife Vera Tulyakova. Cited in Akgül, *ibid*, p. 231.

²⁶ Our translation.

can you paint happiness Abidin
can you paint Cuba in midsummer 1961

Most people, though, are not aware what occasion prompted Nâzım to ask Abidin Dino this question. Yet this was another turning point in Nâzım's eventful life. When he visited Havana in the summer of 1961, the poet was going through a period of quasi-depression in his life. The petrified world of the Soviet Union (what Che called the "pigsty"), the stagnation in his own life, his position of "a tree that cannot receive water from its root", in other words his separation from his own people, all had a part to play. For ten years now, outside of the excitement of international meetings, he has been breathing this suffocating monotonous atmosphere. Because he is a born optimist, a lively and inquisitive soul, it cannot really be said that he is totally broken down. But he is at the ebb of his politicisation. His faith in revolution and communism is untouched, but this is a dream that has been postponed indefinitely, so to speak.

Havana fills Nâzım with revolutionary zeal once again.

in the space that is Cuba six million people whites blacks yellows mulattoes are
planting a bright seed the seed of seeds joyously

This is a single verse! Havana has opened up a new revolution in Nâzım's poetry as well. What enthusiasm, what dazzlement! The poet asks Abidin another question:

master can you paint *Praise be praise be I saw the day I could die now and not be sorry*
can you paint *What a pity what a pity I could have been born in Havana this morning*

Several testimonies, among them that of his last wife (Russian) and that of a very close friend, a confidant, journalist Zekeriya Sertel, offer us a clear picture. Nâzım is now feeling remorse for having fled to the Soviet Union. Instead, he thinks, he should have remained in Turkey and taken up arms to fight a guerrilla war just like Fidel and Che.²⁷

After having become spellbound on the Plaza de la Revolución, Nâzım also writes the following verse in the same poem:

My nineteenth year crosses Beyazit Square comes out on Red Square and goes
down to Concorde I meet Abidin and we talk squares²⁸

²⁷ Sertel, a.g.y., p. 93-94. Cited from Tulyakova by Akgül, a.g.y., p. 310-312.

²⁸ All translations from the poem "Straw-Blond" in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, Translated from the Turkish by Randy Blasing & Mutlu Konuk, New York: Persea Books, 2002, p. 253.

Lost in the upheaval of revolutionary zeal at 59, he goes back to his unforgettable 19th year, when he was an apprentice near Lenin and Trotsky.

The year is 1961. Only ten years left to the taking up of arms of the 1971 generation in Turkey, a new generation of Marxists, Mahir Çayan, Deniz Gezmiş, Sinan Cemgil and İbrahim Kaypakkaya, as well as many other heroic figures, who adopted a different road from the sclerotic TKP. We do not find their strategy correct, but their revolutionary zeal is entirely different from the petrified TKP. Only ten years separate the revolutionary ardour that Nâzım felt in Havana in 1961 and the rise of the generation of 1971. The tradition is almost touching the future, but not quite.

Nâzım on the Plaza de la Revolución in the summer of 1961. The Cuban revolution, which has started as a democratic revolution, whose only Marxists within the leadership are Che and Raúl, whose *jefe máximo*, Fidel, is not a Marxist yet, has to turn socialist in order to survive, has to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat or lose the battle, has to become permanent revolution! Nâzım is there to witness the declaration that Cuba is henceforth a socialist country. The second process of permanent revolution he is experiencing, the first at 19, the second at 59. Revolution again!

Conclusion

Let us now summarise what we have been able to bring to light in this article and what still remains in the dark. What we have been able to uncover is clear: Nâzım, that giant of a man, did not fit into the Procrustean bed of the Stalinist EKKİ, the Executive of the Comintern, and had to be expelled from the International, no longer the revolutionary world party that Lenin had established but an instrument of the foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy. An event this important cannot simply be dismissed by saying, “well, we know that Nâzım was not a Trotskyist”. This would be dismissing the real course of the history of the communist movement in Turkey. It is true that one of the things that still remain in the dark is whether or to what extent Nâzım had been influenced by Trotsky. But **this is not the sole question**. Anyone who takes the history of communism in Turkey should enquire **the preliminary question** of why Nâzım and his party comrades came into conflict with the Comintern and its preferred section in Turkey. Only a handful of historians and Marxist intellectuals have looked into this question and not in a satisfactory manner.

From the limited evidence supplied by the documents and testimonies so far unearthed we reached the conclusion above that Nâzım and his party were at loggerheads with the Comintern on at least four crucial questions: **political programme, the Leninist organisational methods of work, inner party democracy, and confidence in the working class of Turkey as a political**

actor. The first three are among the bones of contention between the Comintern now brought under the straitjacket of Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism, the successor to the Bolshevik traditions of the October revolution. Hence, according to the evidence extant, **Nâzım and his comrades stood up against the Comintern line (though not the Comintern itself *per se*) on revolutionary Marxist bases.**

Secondly, Nâzım returned to the Comintern and thus capitulated before Stalinism after 1936. In what sense is still waiting to be researched. What we have contended in this article is that despite caving in to the dominant trend, Nâzım never abandoned the Bolshevik theoretical kernel in his grasp of Marxism and communism.

Thirdly what was a temporary hypothesis, i.e. that Nâzım never departed from the Bolshevik kernel, was corroborated by the events of his time of exile in the 1950s and early 1960s in the Soviet Union. Nâzım was critical vis-à-vis the new Soviet society brought under the stranglehold of bureaucratic rule from the very beginning and, from 1955 on, that is to say from the point at which he wrote *Ivan Ivanovitch*, he adopted **an explicit and straightforward anti-Stalinist position.**

Even more important perhaps, he did not go with the crowd of the “personality cult” and move right towards what was later to become Euro-communism, throwing the Leninist baby out together with the Stalinist bathwater, but pursued, from day one, a revolutionary line that was **based on Leninist principles and confidence in the working class.** One should never forget that it was the stick in the hands of “Flatcap” that sent Ivan Ivanovitch the bureaucrat tumbling down.

This is the plain picture. It is on this basis that we propose the image of the “captive Bolshevik” in order to describe Nâzım, rather than that of the “romantic communist” that a popular recent biography has spread. This latter image implies that Nâzım was strongly attached to the “ideals” of Marxism, which look quite impeccable in theory. However, the practice of the doctrine left Nâzım disillusioned. And yet, he remained faithful to his “ideals” romantically, even as he was bitterly aware that these “ideals” would never materialize. This is the “romantic communist”. Our image of the “captive Bolshevik”, on the other hand, implies that Nâzım was confident that the problems engendered by the practical development of Marxism could be comprehended by Marxism itself and resolved if one remains true to Marxist (and even Leninist!) principles in practice. The picture depicted in this article surely confirms this latter explanation.

It would be in order to explain briefly this concept of “captive”. At whose hands was Nâzım captive? Several forces. For one, at a certain stage, he was literally the prisoner of Kemalism. Having been convicted overall to 28 years, he spent close to half of this time in its prisons. In an entirely different sense, Nâzım fell captive to the Comintern. From 1936 on, Nâzım came to an agreement with his erstwhile opponents in the communist movement and willingly accepted its

straitjacket of “socialism in one country” and all that flowed therefrom. Some may act rashly and conclude that the picture we draw is flawed by this period of willing captivity. They had better think twice and remember that powerful Marxist intellectuals and leaders of the Bolshevik Party itself capitulated before Stalinism in the same period, which does not imply that they were not captive in the hands of the bureaucracy. Witness the very material dénouement of the whole episode in the Moscow Trials!

The third captivity is that of the captivity to the country that hosted him in exile, the Soviet Union. Here he confronted two different methods: close supervision and the golden cage of the easy life of the celebrity. It was only after his experience in Havana in 1961 that Nâzım fully consciously grasps the condition he has lived in for the last decade of his life. Despite this captivity, though, he is sufficiently bold and independent-minded to come out, as a captive exile, with thunderous criticism against the bureaucratic system where many Soviet citizens of much more protected civil status and cultural stature kept silent.

This complex picture leaves us with two important reminders. The question of method in looking at history is crucial. Whoever neglects the dialectical method, ignores the contradictory nature of things and the mediations that create a distance between different facets of the same phenomenon will pay the price by ending up with a reductionist picture of history. Secondly, there is immense work to be done for the younger generation of Marxists in order to unearth the truth about the early history of Turkish communism and in particular the episode of the Opposition TKP.

This brings us to our most important conclusion. As early as the 1920s, a sizeable minority in almost every communist party affiliated to the Comintern came up against the criminal drift that Stalinism imposed on the world communist movement. Many of these joined the International Left Opposition formed by Trotsky and ended up establishing the Fourth International in 1938. Turkey seemed to be an exception. There was no Trotskyist opposition within Turkish communism in the 1920s and 1930s, it was said. The birth of Turkish Trotskyism had to wait for the 1960s and the 1970s. Well, yes, there was an Opposition TKP. Yes, the leaders of this party had been treated as outcasts by the Comintern under Stalinism, much as the Trotskyists had. But this was a road accident, a glitch so to speak. Everything was solved amicably. Even Nâzım returned to his party and the Comintern. All is well that ends well.

He did return, but as a bomb ready to explode! And this bomb went off in 1955. To divide history into unrelated slices divorced from each other, to eradicate the links between phenomena, to avoid taking the flow of things as a process whose parts make up the whole, this is not the method of Marxism or that of the dialectic. One ought to call a spade a spade: in the second half of the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, **a revolt occurred within Turkish communism**

against the Stalinist stranglehold being established over the Comintern. And at the head of this revolt was the greatest poet of Turkey ever, Nâzım Hikmet. No wonder he says, in his poem “Autobiography”, “nor was I crushed beneath the fallen idols”.

The first revolutionary Marxist movement countering the bureaucracy, then, emerged in Turkey in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. That movement was defeated. But today’s revolutionary Marxist movement will do all that is possible to win. And it will also dip into the movement of yesteryear to draw lessons, so that it can struggle all the better.

How did the Iranian revolution transmute?

Communist Collective Praxis (Praxies.org)

Forty years on, considering the backgrounds and causes of the 1979 Revolution in Iran, it would be worthy to regard the most significant reasons acknowledged as the roots of the revolution. Among all other reasons, the Land Reform Program (1962-4) is the major element in a variety of the economic and social reforms labeled as the “White Revolution”, “The Shah and People Revolution” and glorified as “Mohammad Reza Shah’s greatest service to the people” and the eve of formation of a “modern society”. Demagogic advertisements, started during the reign of Pahlavi II and have been especially echoed in Pahlavi monarchy sympathizers and other monarchist media propaganda in recent years, are only incomplete and distorted cuts of socioeconomic background and transformation which have been addressed to the target audiences about that certain period, so they obscure the historical reality. In this article, we will explore the origins of the land reform, its noticeable direct effects, contradictions and crises which are caused by its top-down implementation which provided a basis for the emerging capitalism in Iran, dependent on the imperial powers. However, in some ways it prepared the material conditions to achieve an anti-monarchical revolution in 1979.

Decades earlier, The Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) shook the pillars

of Iran's feudal society and especially its political sovereignty. Yet because of the domination of liberal ideas and moderate intellectuals in revolutionary movements, it could not go into the depth of Iranian peasantry; ultimately, this had become one of the main reasons of its eventual failure. For many centuries, peasants and villagers, who constituted around eighty percent of total Persian population, were living in extreme poverty and misery which was due to the feudal sovereignty, domination of lords and noble landlords, the clergy and Shahs as the pyramid head. Since the rule of Naser al-Din Shah, imperial powers and at the top of them Great Britain, got involved and improved the feudal relations towards their interests. Iranian revolutionaries and communists, since the constitutional revolution, the Social Democratic Party (Ferqa'ye Ejtemā'īyūn-e 'āmmīyūn) and Communist party of Iran until 1960s, were the only forces who considered the radical reform and revolution in land relations and peasant's freedom pivotal to the democratic reforms in Iran and they were fighting for it.

Although during the rule of Reza Shah the influence of imperialism and foreign capital in Iran developed, it did not affect the hierarchy of the Iranian feudal society. At the time of Reza Shah's dethronement in 1941, large landlord families owned one-half of the land while 95 to 98 percent of Iranian peasantry did not own anything, even a small piece of their "Arian homeland" (Keddie 1981: 103), 23 percent less than a hectare, 10 percent between 1 to 3 hectares and only seven percent owned more than three hectares of a land plot. On the other hand, Reza Shah left more than 1.2 million hectares of land beside many assets and possessions for his children and family, while thousands of peasants were living there in an extremely difficult situation, severe poverty and with no rights (Abrahamian, 378: 1982). In fact, by large scale expropriation of fertile lands, Reza Shah became the richest Iranian landlord and positioned himself at the top of the feudal hierarchy. His confrontation with feudal landlords was also to establish central government authority all over Iran. Therefore, it is not surprising that during his reign, there was no change or improvement in living conditions of most Iranians, namely peasants. Reza Shah did not seek to change the social relations in order to transform the mass of peasants into "free" workers and citizens; instead he was trying to "modernize" his subjects' appearance. He obliged all adult males to wear Western-styled dress and "Pahlavi cap" and forbade women to wear veil.

After the coup d'état of 1953 and return of Mohammad Reza Shah by U.S. and British intelligence services, capitalist relations in industry and finance, depending on imperialism, developed further and reached the top levels of government. But feudal relations in the outskirts of large cities were the major obstacle to capitalist development. The contradiction between the comprador bourgeoisie (middlemen and tradesmen of imperialist capitalism) and feudalism, was one of the domestic reasons for land reform. In the same period, John F. Kennedy,

the US president of that time, was insisting on political, economic and social reforms in dominated countries in order to prevent popular uprisings and block communist activities. He called his doctrine "Rescue of Freedom" and based on that he put pressure on those countries to reform. Accordingly, he supported Ali Amini in the election of the prime minister who intended to carry out the land reforms program (Abrahamian 2008: 131). Although Mohammad Reza Shah was afraid of Amini's threat to his power and his support from U.S., he accepted this program. Thus, the land reforms were implemented during Pahlavi's Monarchy, which followed various important goals. The first stage of "White Revolution" program was commenced with the announcement of the Six-point Reforms Program in the National Peasants Congress by Mohammad Reza Shah on 11 January 1963. Since then, this program was executed in different stages, and there was government propaganda in favor of Shah and shameful depictions of poor peasants bowing the Shah in order to receive land documents. In this regard, Shah utilized these reforms to sell himself as a modern leader who is serving his subjects; "White Revolution" and "The Revolution of Shah and People" are obviously expressing this advertisement.

Based on propaganda machine of Pahlavi regime, Shah distributed feudal aristocrats' lands among most of peasants and made them owner of the lands to farm in. However, this was merely a partial and twisted façade of its truth. In fact, large tracts of lands were distributed again among small groups of elites. Though, this time, the owners were not feudal lords, but rich courtiers and new capitalists and only part of these lands were owned by peasants. Owning small land plots by peasants resulted in smaller amount of agricultural production, not even adequate for their subsistence. Therefore, their living conditions deteriorated and many of them migrated to large cities looking for a job. In fact, the land reform was one of the most significant policies of turning a mass population of peasants into "free" people. On the one hand, they got free from landlord domination relations, but on the other hand, they had no choice other than selling their labor-power in order to survive. Thus, "white revolution" could be named as the primitive accumulation of the genesis of capitalist production relations in Iran. Consequently, with these reforms, bourgeois-landlord socio-economic structures were virtually replaced by the relations based on the hegemony of dependent bourgeoisie. In this regard, it can be said that the capitalist production relations were expanded and to some extent established in Iran. At the time, this course of events was analyzed deeply and critically reviewed by Iranian Marxists. Clerics and religious figures were among the critics as well. While the Marxists were criticizing the land reforms program and other Pahlavi's policies from a progressive perspective, critics from religious forces like Khomeini opposed the program from a reactionary standpoint and based on their interests. In the following lines, through five points, inspired by Bijan Jazani's *The Thirty-Year History of Iran*, we will review the effects

of the implementation of the land reforms and the sovereignty of dependent bourgeoisie.

1. Full-scale growth of comprador or dependent bourgeoisie allying with Western imperialism is the first characteristic of the genesis of capitalism in Iran. Comprador-bourgeoisie in Iran which was born on the ground of state bureaucracy and commerce, found its way into industry, finance and agriculture, and in allying with the state, which is the court, capital and international banks, formed a new oligarchy. This new oligarchy is the famous “thousand families” who had all privileges and concessions and exploiting the resources of the country with their extraordinary affluence. In the right-wing terminology this oligarchy is called “political and economic elite”. Fred Halliday, in his famous book, *Iran Dictatorship and Development*, notes that in 1974, 85 percent of companies whose gross profit was exceeding 100 million US dollars were controlled by only 45 families (Halliday 1979: 141).

The usage of “comprador” for Iran’s capitalism in Marxist analysis and terminology is less about nationalism but mainly aims to describe the characteristics of capitalism in the age of imperialism in a dominated country which is aligned with the requirements of foreign monopoly capitalism. It should be mentioned that the special role of the royal system and courtiers is the base of the formation of part of comprador-bourgeoisie which is bureaucratic bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie has the central and dominant position in politics and it does not let other parts of bourgeoisie to take part in major decision makings. In Mohammad Reza Shah’s time, the Ministry of Courtier and other various dependent organs such as Organization of Royal Houses, Royal Organization of Social services, Farah Pahlavi’s Charity Population, Ashraf Pahlavi’s Charity Population, Taj Sport Club, etc. were formed by courtiers and with the help of Organization of National Intelligence and Security of the Nation (SAVAK), everything in the country was under their control.

2. The second characteristic of capitalism in Iran was excessive exploitation by global capitalism under the neo-colonial relations. This process took place due to the increase of foreign investments in Iran and the rise of production and export of crude oil which was at the highest figure in the middle of 1970s. This helped the creation of a larger state bureaucracy. Economic dependency was the root of political and military dependency. Iran under Pahlavi was the “island of stability and equanimity” and imperialists’ main political, military and economy ally in the Middle East which was playing the role of a gendarme and repressing the liberation movements such as “Dhofar Liberation Front” in Oman. Both Reza and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi owed their thrones to the coups supported by imperial powers in 1921 and 1953. During the period of quadrupling of oil price which led to the increase in Iran’s total budget, Shah showed an unquenchable thirst for buying arms and became the largest client of international arms companies. As

Halliday states, the costs of Pahlavi's military budget increased from 67 million USD to 9.4 billion USD between 1954 and 1977, constituting 32 percent of the country's total budget. The United States sold arms in value of 17 billion USD to Iran between 1950 and 1977 (Halliday 1979:87). To compare, although there were more military threats towards China and its troops were ten times more than Iran, these two countries had the same military budget. In 1978, the number of Iran's aircraft was way more than number of Iran's trained pilots. At the time of revolution, about 50 thousand U.S. citizens used to work in Iran, while 80 percent of them were military and security forces. Iran's army, despite Pahlavi's propaganda which sold it as a symbol of national power and dignity of Iranian monarchy in the Middle East, was a repression tool for domestic security first and foremost. The main mission of Reza Shah's army was to repress nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, as these tribes had more or less authority on the margins of Iran. However, this very army formed by Reza Shah could not stop the alliance forces in 1921 even for two days. The most important military operations during the reign of Mohammed Reza Shah were the repression of Azerbaijan Democratic Party in 1946 and notorious coup in 1953. There is a noticeable point in the symbolic action of the royal regime which called the date of the capture of Tabriz by military forces in 1946 the "Army Day".

3. Peasants' specific subordinate situation is the third characteristic of capitalism in Iran. After implementing the land reforms, and through the forces of gendarmes, feudal relations of domination were replaced by political and economic domination of agricultural and bureaucratic branches of comprador bourgeoisie, in the form of Land Reform Ministry, cooperative companies, various banks, agricultural corporations, agro-industrial complexes, etc. Subsequently, a large number of peasants had no land, the majority of fertile lands were controlled by large Agro-industrial companies linked to comprador bourgeoisie, and thousands of peasants had to migrate to cities in order to provide cheap labor force for Iran's developing capitalism. Overpopulation in cities and peri-urbanization can be mentioned as its impacts. Despite the claim of the regime, implementation of land reforms could not noticeably increase the areas under cultivation, neither raise the rate of growth of agricultural production, or improve the quality of life for peasants especially the poor ones, and it could not even eradicate the old feudal relations of domination in all aspects. Based on the reports, in 1975, 60 percent of peasant men and 90 percent of peasant women were illiterate. 90 percent of villages did not have any healthcare facilities. Out of ten thousand doctors, five thousand were in Tehran, three thousand were in other cities and only 1500 were in the countryside, where approximately half of the country's population lived. In other words, 18 millions of Iranians did not have access to any advanced medical services. Based on the statistics given by the Statistical Center of Iran published in 1979, only 11.5 percent of villages had access to

water pipeline, 6.8 percent had electricity and only 3,120 villages had access to telecommunications in 1977. Only 8 thousand kilometers connection roads for villages were built, while 300 thousand kilometers were planned (Halliday 1979: 110-111). For Iranian peasants, this was the outcome of top-down land reforms.

4. The fourth characteristic of capitalism in Iran, in Jazani's words, was the formation of the "minority of consumers" which were against the middle class and the poor majority. This minority was only three percent of the population and it consisted of bourgeoisie and wealthy petty-bourgeoisie. However, they consumed most of society's facilities and services such as tourism, healthcare and communication services, culture and art products, airports, beach resorts, luxury cars, villas, ski resorts, hotels, casinos, etc. According to a report by International Labor Organization in 1973, 55 percent of all expenditures was for top 20 percent of the richest, 3.7 percent was for 20 percent of the poorest, and 26 percent was for the 40 percent of population. Fred Halliday says despite the huge income from selling oil and injecting it to the country's economy, in the beginning of 1970s, health condition in Iran was not quite different from other Asian countries. Life expectancy was 50 years, which was a year less than that of India. Infant mortality rate was 139 in 1000, the same as India. Ervand Abrahamian states "Iran still had one of the worst infant mortality and doctor-patient rate in the Middle East. It also had one of the lowest percentages of population in higher education. Moreover, 68 percent of adults remained illiterate, 60 percent of children did not complete primary school, and only 30 percent of applicants found university places within the country" (Abrahamian 2008:141-142). On the eve of 1979 revolution, 42 percent of the population of Tehran did not have proper housing conditions. Tehran, with a population of more than 4 million, did not have drainage system, metro or public transportation. Oil income did not end the mass poverty, it merely transformed it to a modern poverty.

5. The formation of royal dictatorship is the fifth characteristic of capitalism in Iran. This point is visible in two aspects: First, special concentration of state power in Shah, making him a god-like figure, and his absolute control over all political and military sectors and various parts of bourgeoisie, which resulted in narrowing their objection and expression of dissatisfaction. In this form of state, Shah and courtiers took control of all parts of the ruling classes and demanded their blind obedience. The right of political activity was taken away from all classes. In 1974, the Resurgence Party (Hezb-e Rastāqiz) was founded and introduced as the only legal party by royal regime. Shah officially stated that all legal political activities should be done under the umbrella of this party. Intellectuals, youths and educated people were not allowed to express their views at all and by just carrying a forbidden book, e.g. *The Little Black Fish* a children story by Samad Behrangi, they might spend months in the regime's dungeon-like prisons. Universities and other higher education centers were bureaucratic

institutions under the supervision of SAVAK and they were under control of a branch of Royal Guard called University Guard. Instead of independent teachers, sycophantic bureaucrats were getting university positions. Even a minor criticism of courtiers or country's situation was punished with whipping and torture. Political prisoners were tried in military courts.

Second aspect of royal dictatorship is the intensification of a brutal police state and establishment of the dreadful Information and Security Organization called SAVAK. SAVAK, which is the predecessor of The Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was set up in 1957 and with the help and training of U.S. and Israeli intelligence services, CIA and Mossad, was the forefront of domestic repression. SAVAK's budget, based on the official reports, was 255 million USD in 1973 and 310 million USD in 1974. Similar to the Islamic Republic's Al Quds Force, SAVAK had some operations outside of the country, liaison with foreign espionage services and spying on Iranians who lived abroad. Since 1973 Tehran had been the headquarters of the CIA in the Middle East (previously in Cyprus). In the words of the Secretary General of Amnesty International in 1975, "No country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran". Using reports by Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists in 1976, alleged methods of torture include whipping and beating, electric shocks, the extraction of nails and teeth, boiling water pumped into the rectum, heavy weights hung on the testicles, tying the prisoner to a metal table heated to a white heat, inserting a broken bottle into the anus, and rape were different ways of pressures on prisoners and political activists (Halliday 1979: 80).

Over all of these political, social and economic contradictions and crises arising from the capitalist regime in 1970s under the reign of a royal dictatorship, the waves of 1979 revolution appeared.

Pahlavi regime was using various tools of repression against the political opposition with the help of western intelligence services, the army and SAVAK in order to safeguard its own existence. After the coup 1953, Shah and imperial powers could achieve one of their main goals which was extirpating of Tudeh party. Party's leader was expatriated, and the coup regime focused its extreme invasion on loyal members of the party. The most brilliant organ of the party, the Military Organization, has been detected and repressed just a year after the coup and its communist officers were executed in firing squad. While Dr. Mosaddegh was imprisoned for three years and except Dr. Fatemi, the foreign minister of Mosaddegh's cabinet who was executed, other National Front leaders were released after short time. Tudeh party lost the great and unique twelve-year opportunity and was unable to respond to the strategic necessities of the Iranian revolutionary movement, so they were erased from political and social struggles of Iran and they only got back after the 1979 revolution as a residue of Soviet Union's diplomacy system. The Middle years of 1970s were a period of stagnation

in political protests and struggles. Nationalist-Religious activists formed a council which had a grandiloquent title called National Resistance Movement of Iran which was a gathering of a few academics, Bazaar merchants and clerics and they considered it as an alternative to Tudeh party in Iran's politics.

The short period of political opening between 1960 and 1962 which finally led to the so-called White Revolution (a sort of economic and social reforms including land reforms program launched in by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) was the last chance for traditional opposition forces to present themselves. By losing this opportunity, they showed that they are incapable of making any changes in the society. In 1961, an anti-communist group called "Freedom Movement of Iran" (*Nahzat-e āzādi-e Irān*) branched from National Front out, which was led by the Iranian figure of liberalism, Mehdi Bazargan. The Freedom Movement and Bazargan sought to synthesize Islam and politics, and to present a political interpretation of Islam and the necessity of establishing an Islamic state, for the first time in Iran.

In the aftermath of the 1963 crisis caused by the defeat of the so-called White Revolution, royal regime could consolidate its power and political position in a new level. Traditional oppositions such as National Front and Tudeh members with their conservative strategies and parliamentary methods were completely isolated. But Regime strangled even the slightest oppositions or thinking of opposition and did not let any political forces to breathe, even the obedient and innocuous ones. Terror, brutal repression and the ineffectiveness of the policies of the Freedom Movement of Iran, as well as the Tudeh Party, meant a political dead end in Iran.

It was in this situation that the guerrilla warfare became one of the most effective ways to fight against the Shah's autocratic regime, a warfare which officially started with the sound of Feda'i Guerrillas' bullets on February 8, 1971 in Siahkal. The event of Siahkal was the beginning of a new communist movement and opened a new path in Iran's political scene which changed the rhythm of upheavals toward the 1979 revolution. International atmosphere was inspiring for them to devise and implement their action as well. The foundations of this armed revolutionary struggle were mostly theorized by militant Marxists like Masoud Ahmad Zadeh, Amirparviz Pouyan and Bijan Jazani. The struggle atmosphere in Iran was radicalized because of guerrilla movement and most parts of the society were involved. One can claim that the revolutionary leftists in Iran experienced one of the most successful periods in those dark years.

Armed struggle and guerrilla methods among Marxists led them to establish the Organization of Iranian People's Guerrillas Feda'i Fighters. Besides, religious forces diverged from Freedom Movement formed People's Mujahedin of Iran. In a society which capitalism was developing rapidly and imperialist domination was fully developed, the political bankruptcy of religious movements

such as clergy and Freedom Movement and the transformation of Marxism into a hegemonic force, intellectual and political core, religious youths from modern-middle-class background had to use Marxism in order to express their ideas and opinions. Ideological foundations of People's Mujahedin were a mixture of Marxist tradition and religious convictions. They defined themselves against imperialism, class oppression and royal autocracy, and they used Islamic texts and scriptures to express their thoughts. By joining the armed struggle, People's Mujahedin of Iran moved towards the front line of Islamic movement and all other Islamic forces such as academics, opposition clergies and even those who were close to Khomeini like Rafsanjani, Motahhari and Beheshti were pushed to the background.

After the establishment of People's Mujahedin, the impact and reflection of Marxism became an important issue among the religious forces. Many religious political activists inevitably distanced themselves from the visible parts of the reactionary religious tradition such as its feudal and medieval context, anti-feminism, supporting the ruling class, clericalism, etc. In fact, over the period of 1960s through the middle of 1970s, the intellectual, ideological and political polarization of the society was around Islamist and Marxism camps. Imperialism and bourgeoisie frightened by communism which was becoming more popular, did not have any choice other than investing in the Islamic movement. After ideological turn to Marxism, some fractions of the People's Mujahedin who had power in organization leadership, expressed the issue of organization's eclectic ideology as one of the hurdles in the genesis of revolutionary struggles' direction. They emphasized on the contradictions between the religious tradition as well as its reactionary beliefs and requirements of a revolutionary struggle in that period of time. After long ideological struggles and changes (which included violent actions in a few cases), they released a detailed statement and officially declared an ideological turn towards Marxism. Taghi Shahram was the leader and the theorist of this deep ideological turn, which was unprecedented in the Islamic world and history. Mujahedin's turn to Marxism caused some defections among Islamic forces. In that period, the rivalry between Marxist and Islamist camps to become hegemonic ended up in Marxists' predominance.

Revival of Islamic forces and their return to the political struggle in order to take the leadership role, took place after January 1977, led by clergymen and at the top of them, Khomeini. This was the result of severe repression of leftist organizations. In the period of the decline of Islamic forces during 1974-1976, Marxists lost this valuable opportunity, because of the destructive attacks of SAVAK, assassination of organizational and ideological leaders and war against guerrilla movement. The survivors of the communist movement who were criticizing guerrilla method, could not find an alternative to the very strategy of convergence and progress in the past years. This resulted in sowing discord

between them which continued until the revolutionary changes in 1979.

The most frequent argument given by researchers explaining the leadership of protests by Islamic forces is the power of clergy network and their ability to organize. Although this factor is not far from the reality, we believe that the focus should not be on the existence of the organizational network power of clerics. We should look for an answer to the question of how they took such power? Shall we say, as the liberal and Islamic figures claim, that this power was rooted in people's religious beliefs or in their devotion to the clerics? Or was it rooted in chains of specific and long-term changes based on the interests and aspirations of ruling class and imperialism? According to the historical narratives and documents, it can be said that the support of clerics by imperialism and the state was not limited to the second half of 1970s, but existed during the reign of Mohammad Reza as a strategic orientation. This was the main factor of clerics' organizational capability on the eve of 1979 revolution. As John Foran says, "the path for a political culture and Islamic discourse was made [prior to the 1979 revolution]... [the] resistant Islam of Khomeini, the fundamentalist Islam of Shariati, and liberal Islam of Bazargan, and the Liberation Movement were among the nationalist constitutional culture" (Foran 1999: 122), however, it would be considered as a discursive feature of the multi-dimensional phenomenon of political Islam.

The revival of Shi'i clerics' power was simultaneous to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's path to the throne in 1941. Strengthening of Shi'i clerics' establishment against the danger of communism and Tudeh party expansion was the approach of British imperialism and courtiers. This was among the first steps of imperialist strategy called "The Green Belt" in order to form an Islamic reactionary region surrounding Soviet Union, which reached its culmination in the late 1970s by military support of Mujahedin in Afghanistan and propaganda campaigns against the leftist state in Afghanistan. The similar pattern could be found in Iran. British imperialism and courtiers supported clerics to rebuild their power and helped them to increase their influence against Tudeh party. They paved the path for the return of an extremely reactionary marja' (the highest level Shia authority to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law) named Ayatollah Qomi from Najaf to Qom in 1943. After his death, their attention turned to Ayatollah Borujerdi, so they provided the necessary facilities for his migration from Borujerdi to Qom and made him the leading marja' in Shi'ite world. In response to the imperialists' favors, Borujerdi supported their interests and royal dictatorship in crucial times such as the coup in 1953. In return, he was permitted to spread the roots of Seminary of Qom to all parts of the society. Seminary of Qom was a medium size organization in 1941, in the late years of the reign of Reza Shah there were only 500 theology students. In late 1940s, with the Borujerdi arrangements and the support of British and courtiers, over three thousand theology students were studying there. In the beginning of 1940s, with the wave of Islamism among

courtiers, many Islamic policies were implemented such as allowance for holding religious processions, gender segregation in schools, introducing scripture classes into school curriculum, permission to form religious organizations and issuing religious publications and various financial supports as well.

Imperialist and courtier support in order to strengthen Islamic forces was not limited to Seminary of Qom and clerics. In the 1940s, small circles of Islamic academics including students and teachers, and at the center of them Mehdi Bazargan, formed the Islamic Association of Students in order to oppose Tudeh party. It was during this time that Iranian mixture of liberalism and Islamism was rising with captivating titles: “Religious Intellectuals” or “Religious Modernism”. In the 1950s and 1960s, when communists were being executed, tortured or exiled and even small gatherings or protests were not tolerated, Bazargan and his like-minded formed a movement called “Islamization Association”. The association opened public offices for various meetings among pupils, students, engineers and other social groups under the support of the royal regime.

In the late 1960s, the darkest years of autocracy and dictatorship, Islamic academics were receiving unprecedented facilities from royal regime for their lesson, discussions and lectures in Hosseinieh Ershad, the key base for religious people of Tehran. SAVAK closed Hosseinieh Ershad, only when there was the possibility of attracting new members by People’s Mujahedin. In fact, with the formation of People’s Mujahedin and its progress, Hosseinieh Ershad became a useless project for SAVAK.

After the emergence of People’s Mujahedin of Iran in 1970s, Khomeini became less central even more. However, in the period of implementing human rights policies by Jimmy Carter, Khomeini jumped into the political arena yet again. In the context of repressed protests and social grievances which erupted in this period, imperialists were following the “Green Belt” strategy in this region and in order to break the communism grip in Iran, they provided step by step the requirements for Khomeini to take the power. The moderate Islamic figures played an important role to be a mediator between Khomeini and imperialists (Abrahamian 2008: 155).

After the massacre on September 8, 1978 Khomeini got assured of the deteriorating situation of royal regime, moved to Paris from Iraq on October 5, 1978 and in this way attracted the international media and public opinion. While he was going to Kuwait, he was deterred from entering in the country, but suddenly he decided to go to Paris. While in October 1979 he said this decision and action was the result of “helps from the unseen world”, later it was cleared that it was due to the intellectuals and religious academics’ advice. Khomeini’s excessive activities in France and French state’s tolerance under Valéry Giscard d’Estaing presidency, who was Shah’s ally, was odd and strange. Many years later, Giscard d’Estaing revealed that immediately after Khomeini’s entrance to Paris, he asked

for political asylum and Mohammad Reza Shah requested French state to provide comfortable facilities for him. French State was the pioneer of the policy which was later officially presented in Guadeloupe Conference in January 1979. As French state was expecting inevitable fall of Shah, it demanded all attentions to Khomeini as Shah's successor. Khomeini's main goal of settling in Paris was to be at the center of international attention. He did 113 interviews during his 4 months stay in France. He could possibly send peaceful and reassuring messages to the western countries' leaders. His messages were translated immediately by religious intellectuals and modern Islamic figures like Ghotbzadeh, Banisadr and Yazdi in order to notify other states. The most significant negotiations were during the Guadeloupe Conference, while in Iran people were organizing all innovative protests and demonstrations.

On January 4, 1979, the leaders of four imperial powers, the United States, France, Great Britain and West Germany, gathered in Caribbean Sea, Guadeloupe Island (Two Weeks in January, 2016) to hold a summit in order to determine their policy in regard to Iran's critical situation. Western states were anxious about a plausible civil war in Iran, as if Shah stayed longer in power. In that case, they assumed that communists would have a powerful influence which could lead to the interference of Soviet Unions. As Europe depended on Iran's oil and favored regional stability, Khomeini was not an irrational choice for them. The main output of Guadeloupe conference was an agreement between these four states on the departure of Shah and collaboration with Khomeini.

Islamic forces used 1978 Tasu'a and Ashura (9th and 10th of Moharram) demonstrations as a maneuver to practice the impact and display of their power. They tried their best to keep the demonstration peaceful by forbidding the non-religious banners and chants, even prohibiting "Death to Shah" chant and giving rough responses to those who violated this prohibition. Imperialists took Islamic forces into account after this maneuver and even Khomeini understood his impact level after looking at demonstration photos (Abrahamian 2008:16).

Khomeini formed a council called "the Revolution Council" in late January 1979 in order to pursue and coordinate his activities and reach some agreements with imperialist leaders. The most effective members of this council were moderate Islamic figures, who were renowned later as religious intellectuals or modernist and nationalist-religious figures. During its life time from January 1979 to July 1980, the Revolution Council played a significant role of coordination of negotiation and agreement between Islamic forces and imperialists, inducing Khomeini and the protest leaders. The Revolution Council also planned the future repression of the revolutionary forces and communists and consolidation of Islamic regime in the period of crisis. They should be held responsible for many catastrophic measures which were taken in the first couple of years of Islamic regime, such as Kurdistan armed invasion in summer 1979 and anti-cultural coup

(the so called “Iranian Cultural Revolution”) and the closure of universities.

For a few days the control of events was lost by generals as well as Khomeini and his followers. These events radicalized general rebellion and led to the victory of revolution in February 11th. Tehran was overwhelmed by armed struggle. Saturday night, February 10th, people defeated the martial law and it was the beginning of the end of Shah’s regime on February 11th. Secret negotiations between army officers and Islamic figures were continued. But, revolutionary people, disrespectful of these agreements, invaded royal regime’s repression centers, Evin prison, SAVAK’s main headquarter in Saltanat Abad, Senate and Council parliaments, Radio and TV center, Police, etc. and expressed a glance of their revolutionary potential, which was actualized in about a week and resulted in destroying the organs of Shah’s regime and disturbed all secret agreements.

Khomeini was absent from February 11th and appeared on media on February 15th by a public speech. He used his specific social base among parts of the modern middle and traditional classes, urban poor and villagers who were bounded around the Islamic ideology. However, it was the secret negotiations with imperialism and the agreement to bring Khomeini into power that increased the impact of his specific social base and increased his influence on following events. It was not possible for Khomeini to take power in this easy and straightforward way without the support of imperialism. This is so that the existence of imperialism all over the world is entangled with the (ultra)reactionary and oppressive policies. Therefore, a true revolutionary and liberation movement should necessarily orient itself against imperialism.

November 2018

Sources

Abrahamian, Ervand, *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Abrahamian, Ervand, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1982.

Fattahi, Kambiz, “Two weeks in January: America’s secret engagement with Khomeini”, BBC Persian Service, 3 June 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36431160>.

Foran, John, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*, Translated to Farsi by Ahmad Tadayyon, Tehran: Rasa Cultural Services, 1999.

Halliday, Fred, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, New York: Penguin Books, 1979, Translated to Farsi by Ali Tolou & Mohsen Yalfani, Tehran, Elm publishing, 1979.

Jazani, Bizhan, *A Thirty-Year History of Iran* (Târikh-e Si Sâleh-ye Iran), Vol. 1&2, Maziar Publishing. 1979.

Keddie, Nikki R., *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (with a section by Yann Richard), New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.

A revolution between two dictatorships

Araz Bağban

The last mass revolution of the twentieth century took place in Iran against Pahlavi's regime in 1979. Iran has an important position in the political balance of the Middle East because of its location in the region, rich oil resources and being one of the most important centers of Shia Islam. Naturally, the overthrowing of the Pahlavi dictatorship shook the world at that time. This dictatorship was established and rose with the direct support of the imperialist powers. The revolution destroyed the unshakable fortress of imperialism in the Middle East and broke down the imperialism-designed-order in the region.

The 1979 Revolution, on the other hand, is the story of a generation that followed hope like *The Little Black Fish*.¹ This generation was an important part of the revolution that spread a hope of establishing a very long awaited democratic society. However, from the first days of this new era, a new dictatorship began to rise. Those who established this dictatorship came out from inside the revolution and started their way by eliminating other revolutionaries, those who were hoping to establish a free democratic society. In a short time, a religious dictatorship replaced the Pahlavi dictatorship. The Islamist fundamentalists restored the state

¹ *The Little Black Fish* is a book written by Samad Behrangi (1939-1967). He was a school teacher with Marxist ideas.

of fear and oppression again. Little black fishes were captured by another hunter when they reached the sea. This time they didn't use their swords or they drew it very late. In a decade of brutal massacres, the religious dictatorship purged the revolutionaries from Iran's political arena.

The 1979 Revolution is both a tremendous success and a great disappointment. The successful part of it was quickly depleted, so the revolution is engraved as a failure on people's minds. This failure had very destructive results in Iranian society. For many Iranians, the word revolution only reminds the Islamic revolution, reactionism, death, torture, and oppression. Nevertheless, the 1979 Revolution was not an Islamic revolution. It was called the Islamic revolution after the rise of religious dictatorship. The historians of the Islamic Republic and other bourgeois historians usually try to reflect it as an outcome of the Islamic revival to hide the massive social and economic motivations behind it. This revolution was a result of a spontaneous mass movement. The driving force of the revolution was not Islamic revival or Shiite self-awareness. It was a product of a revolt, coming from a common will that suffered from deep social inequalities. Some mullahs (clerics) played a role in the emergence of the revolts; however, Khomeini, the so-called leader of the revolution, had no absolute dominance over the revolutionary movement until the last months of the mass demonstrations.

The 1979 Revolution reached a triumph at the end of an intense period of mass demonstrations that continued for a year, but the foundations of this victory were laid many years ago. In order to understand this revolution, which broke down a seemingly unshakable dictatorship, it is necessary to start a long journey like the people who made it. Observing how the Pahlavi dictatorship was born and how Iran's society changed along with it reveals the depth of the revolutionary movement, which turned into flames from sparks within a year.

The 1953 Coup: the rise of the Pahlavi dictatorship

Iran saluted the twentieth century with a revolution widely known as the Constitution Revolution. However, the rise of Reza Pahlavi with a British Empire-directed coup ended the Iranians' dream of constructing a democratic constitutional government. Reza Pahlavi established the Pahlavi Dynasty and gradually gained complete control over all organs of the government, until the Allies occupied Iran in 1941. The occupation put an end to his 16 year-old reign, which had caused widespread discontent among different social classes. Reza Pahlavi never gained serious social support although he led the reforms to build a modern bureaucracy, army and judiciary in Iran. The Allies made the young Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Reza Pahlavi's son) the new king after sending Reza Pahlavi to exile. Suddenly, the country became the domain of different social conflicts, due to a power vacuum after years of oppression. These conflicts resulted in deep political changes inside the society.

M. R. Pahlavi was faced with different opposition groups which were planted during his father's reign. The most organized opposition force was the Tudeh Party of Iran. This party was established right after the occupation with a public call against the dictatorship.² The party was calling itself a working class organization although it was mainly organized among well-educated employed in state-owned enterprises. The second opposition force was the liberal National Front. They also were targeting to organize people with a similar social background that the Tudeh Party was. The third most influential group was the Islamic movement, supported by the petty and middle bourgeoisie (with their main representative the Bazaar). The last group was composed of different ethnic movements, mainly organized in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces.

The army took the control in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan after suppressing two local democrat parties, soon after the end of the World War II. However, the government struggled to find a balance for a relatively long time. This period was an era of conflict among M. R. Pahlavi, the national assembly, government, the foreign consuls, and the public-support-relying opposition forces. And the oil was in the middle of all conflicts.

After the discovery of oil in Iran, foreign powers, especially the British imperialism, took advantage of the weakness of the state and exploited Iran's oil. They usually forced governments to accept concessions that allowed foreign companies to control the oil extraction. By the end of the first Pahlavi's dictatorship the struggle for the nationalization of oil started. The movement was led by Mohammad Mosaddegh, a member of parliament from the National Front. With a large public support, the legislation of the nationalization of oil was passed in 1951. The National Front emerged as a powerful political movement after this achievement. Despite its initial critics toward the National Front, after the nationalization of oil the Tudeh Party was on the streets and played an important role to enact the law. The party organized strikes in the oil-rich area of Khuzestan and carried out large solidarity demonstrations in Tehran and other big cities. Some of these demonstrations ended up with a brutal police attack. A big political crisis emerged in the country, and despite changes, governments were unable to control the situation. The only way out for M. R. Pahlavi was to appoint Mosaddegh as the prime minister.

It was obvious that this period was not going to end peacefully. There was a political war between the public-backed government on one side, and the Pahlavi along with big landlords on the other side. Whenever it was needed, the National Front was calling people to strikes and demonstrations through the Tudeh Party. The government also benefited from conservatives' support for a short time. The

2 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 281.

Bazaar, the leading representative of the conservatives participated in the strikes by closing shops.

The National Front, relying on its huge public support, started some big reforms. Most of the economic and political power owned by Pahlavi family was transferred to the government and the army's budget was lowered. Land reform and women's suffrage came accordingly. Dissatisfied with the National Front's reforms and scared from the Tudeh Party's public power, the army, Pahlavi, and the British and the US imperialism all united on a coup plan.³

The four allies' first coup attempt was exposed by Tudeh's wide network inside the army. Tudeh organized protests and invited people to join the demonstrations. Pahlavi escaped to Baghdad and the National Front assembled a committee to determine the fate of the royal reign. The US ambassador visited Mosaddegh and promised to support the government if he controls the streets. Mosaddegh called people to retreat to their homes. As soon as people left the streets the military coup took place.⁴ The Tudeh Party who accepted Mosaddegh's call for evacuating the streets passively watched the military coup.

The coup seemed to be carried out against Mosaddegh and the National Front, but it was rather against the Tudeh Party. Only one member of the National Front was sentenced to be executed and others received prison sentences, including Mosaddegh, while the Tudeh Party became a subject of a violent attack. It was obvious that the military coup targeted Tudeh in order to erase it from Iran's political arena. About 40 senior members of the party were executed within five years after the coup. Some of its members were killed under torture, and more than 3000 were sentenced to long term jail times.⁵ The military network of the party was discovered and the army was cleaned from Tudeh members. Pahlavi, didn't allow any organized opposition inside and could now reign like his father did by establishing a dictatorship. The 1953 military coup could have been a turning point in the history of modern Iran. The people's organized struggle for a democratic society could have toppled the Pahlavi reign but its failure provided a ground for a dark dictatorship.

After the coup, M. R. Pahlavi began to reinforce his power. He received a large amount of financial help from the US to grant a new life to the economy in crisis. Pahlavi also benefited from the oil nationalization. He signed new oil deals. Iran's

3 In the 60th anniversary of the 1953 Coup CIA published some confidential documents that show the intervention of the US and the British imperialism in the 1953 Coup. The documents are found in <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/>. For more information, see Wilber Donald, *Regime Change in Iran*, Nottingham: Spokesman, 2006, p. 13.

4 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 280-281.

5 *ibid.*, p. 280.

oil revenue increased exponentially in two years.⁶ On the other hand, he established a secret police organization, known as SAVAK (literally the Organization of National Intelligence and Security of the Nation), in order to monitor all political activities, increase pressure on the social opposition, prevent any attempt toward organizing the social forces and discover and eliminate the organized groups. In this period, Pahlavi had different approaches toward different social classes. He was harsh toward the working class and its intellectuals, while he was cautiously kind toward big landlords, the Bazaar-supported traditional conservatives (namely the mullahs) and the petty bourgeoisie. However, this political approach cost Pahlavi too much after declaring his so-called white revolution that raised a new and unexpected opposition in traditional conservatives.

The 1963 uprising and the reorganization of the opposition

After establishing his power over opposition, Pahlavi felt a pressure from his financial supporters, i.e. the IMF and the US to undertake certain reforms, such as land reforms, nationalization of forests, privatization of the state-owned factories, and women's suffrage. Iran's agriculture-dependent economy was in a very poor and inefficient condition. Strengthened by the coup, the alliance of the palace and the big landowners was not allowing any sort of reforms in the economy. However, faced with a serious pressure from the IMF and the US, Pahlavi announced the above-mentioned reforms under the name of the White Revolution.

In June 1963, thousands of workers and unemployed people went into streets to demonstrate against Pahlavi's White Revolution. The protests were mainly organized by the Bazaar's representatives, and led by a new name in opposition, Ruhollah Khomeini. Unlike other mullahs, in his speeches Khomeini was not only referring to religious issues but also to some social issues such as constitutional rights, the freedom of the press and the independence of the universities. Khomeini was able to influence a wide range of groups from the conservative petty bourgeoisie to the middle class or even radical Islamic circles. The demonstrations turned into a big uprising and spread out to other major cities apart from Tehran. This uprising awakened the society from its deep depression after the coup. The security forces attacked the demonstrations. Hundreds of people were killed and Khomeini was arrested and later sent to a long-term exile while revealing himself as an important opposition figure. Pahlavi brutally suppressed another wave of opposition. However, these demonstrations established the importance and power of the Islamic movement.

Pahlavi's oppressive policies, which began after the coup and rose even

6 F. Fesharaki, *Development of the Iranian Oil Industry: International and Domestic Aspects*, New York: Praeger, 1976, p. 133.

further with the events of 1963, led Iran to a deep dictatorship. A heavy political stagnation formed by the SAVAK and an oil-induced economic growth led Pahlavi to believe that there is no serious opposition around. Feeling confident in every way, M. R. Pahlavi performed his first coronation in 1967. However, under this steady state of oppression and political pressure, a new generation of social opposition grew up which had more radical approach with respect to those of the previous generation such as the National Front and the Tudeh Party.

The new opposition didn't expect a reform from the Pahlavi Dynasty. They firmly were against the dictatorship and determined to destroy it completely. This generation was developing in two different axes: a new leftist movement and of a radical Islamic movement. The main characteristic feature of the new opposition was its guerrilla tendency. Analyzing the 1953 coup, even the 1963 uprising, and the consequences of their failure, the new opposition raised severe criticism of the passive role of the former opposition during critical periods. For them the coup was a turning point from a reformist to a more radical line in the struggle to establish a democratic society in Iran. Thus, they were rejecting any sort of tolerance toward the Pahlavi Dynasty and imperialism. Moreover, the nationalist secularists and liberal Islamists were organizing under the umbrella of the National Front, and the reformist left was continuing its life with somehow more radical ideas than the past.

These opposition groups were not all in converging ideological lines, but all had a common goal, demolishing Pahlavi's dictatorship. All groups directly or indirectly contributed to the mass demonstrations which toppled Pahlavi's dictatorship in February 1979. However, in the very decisive few months before the revolution things were mainly controlled by the fundamentalist Islamists under the leadership of in-exile Khomeini. Khomeini came back to Iran to enjoy the power gifted to him by the revolutionaries.

Even though guerrilla organizations were still loved by people in 1978, when the popular uprisings emerged, the conservative Islamic movement took the upper hand in mobilizing the masses. Actually, the discourse of the guerrilla struggle had a hegemonic supremacy inside the opposition for years. However, they lost most of their senior members in the guerrilla war against dictatorship, and lots of their members were in Pahlavi's prisons. Because of organizational and political weakness of the guerrilla groups during the revolution, the fundamentalist Islamist movement and the conservative liberals established their hegemony over the masses. On the one hand, the brutal effort of Pahlavi's regime to destroy the progressive movements, on the other hand, the financial strengthening of the traditional conservatives facilitated this shift of hegemony.

The 1979 Revolution and its foundations

The first protest against Pahlavi's oppressive policies sparked in late 1977, when intellectuals called for meetings in which they demanded the freedom of expression and an end to censorship. After a series of other protests the first mass demonstration started in January 1978. Thousands of young religious school students went into streets, enraged by what they considered to be slanderous remarks made against Khomeini in a national newspaper. They were followed by thousands more youth mostly unemployed who began protesting the regime's excesses. Security forces attacked the protests killing many people. The police violence fueled the demonstrations. Growing in size and revolutionary fervor, even in the face of lethal military repression, the unemployed, workers, artisans, merchants, students, and middle-ranking officials of Iran participated in widespread demonstrations against Pahlavi's regime.

Until the Black Friday, 8 September 1978, in which around one hundred people were killed in the attack by security forces⁷ Khomeini didn't have full control over demonstrations. However, after that day he took the initiative in his hands. He gradually became the leader of the mass protests whereas he was living in exile in Iraq.

The day after the Black Friday, workers from the Tehran Refinery began a strike, demanding a wage increase and the abolition of the martial law. This strike also received support from the refineries in other cities. The strikes in the oil industry spread out to other sectors. The industrial workers, miners and bank workers also joined the strikes. Black Friday's fortieth day commemoration was bloody again. Within two months, the country was almost paralyzed as a result of the widespread strikes. The workers were demanding the return of Khomeini, the liquidation of SAVAK, the abolition of the martial law and the end of the dictatorship. It was the end of the road for Pahlavi. Even the opposition leaders were unable to control the demonstrations and strikes. The guerrilla groups, especially revived by the release of political prisoners, began to relaunch the armed struggle. People, especially the youth from Tehran's poor neighborhoods, set up barricades in many parts of the city and went into war with the army forces. The army soldiers no longer wanted to oppose people. They even took their weapons and joined the popular demonstrations. Eventually, on 16 January 1979 Pahlavi left Iran. On February 1, Khomeini went back to Iran and ten days later on 11 February 1979 Pahlavi's regime was completely overthrown.

The revolution happened after an extraordinary series of mass urban demonstrations and strikes. A year of a country-wide unrest starting gradually and erupting drastically, attracting people from different social positions cannot

⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 515-516.

be a result of a sudden discontent, it should have its roots in the existing social relations, and it indeed had. The revolution was the product of the contradictions that emerged after the 1953 Coup. The deep military dictatorship of M. R. Pahlavi and the oil-based economic developments cut all sort of connection between the state and different components of the society. The only way out was to topple the old regime and establish a new one. Based on this information the foundations of the success of the 1979 Revolution can be summarized under four headings.

1) The unequal economic development

In the 1960s, as a result of the economic reforms under the name of the White Revolution, Iran's society was rapidly industrialized. It experienced a transformation from an agriculture-dependent pre-capitalist economy to a capitalist one. These reforms were supported by the continuously increasing oil incomes. As a result, a relatively considerable number of industrial workers emerged. In addition, the institutions and organizations within the state structure such as education and healthcare expanded and a large number of public workers emerged. Private sector evolved and some big landowners were transformed into an industrial bourgeoisie. In spite of developments in modern industry, the traditional petty-bourgeoisie and the conservative Bazaar merchants remained important. The growing economy even revived the Bazaar, in which yet a large amount of national market was taking place. However, there was no sense of an economic planning in these reforms.

In the long term, industrialization largely destroyed agricultural production. The impoverished peasants had to emigrate to big cities, where there were not enough job opportunities for large masses. Unemployment increased and large slums emerged in big cities. The economic development was not uniformly distributed among different social classes. Thus, the distance between classes increased. Moreover, the state stopped many projects after the 1975 crisis. The inflation that was kept in low percentages for a long time increased drastically and made life difficult for the urban population. The crisis also affected the middle class and the conservative petty bourgeoisie, who were satisfied with the economic development. Everybody, especially those living in the cities, regardless of their social roots blamed the state and naturally Pahlavi for the difficult life conditions. Thus in 1978, when the revolutionary wave began, a widespread social discontent was reflected into streets. The industrial and public workers, the poor, and even the middle class, hand in hand fought against the dictatorship on the streets.

2) Political weakness of imperialist-backed dictatorship

Pahlavi maintained his reign with the direct support and intervention of the US and the British imperialism in the form of a military coup in 1953. The coup drove the country into a dictatorship. Although the reflections of a strong dictatorship were prominent in every aspect of social life in Iran, in people's mind Pahlavi was a foreign power- and imperialism-dependent king. Furthermore, the political structure in Iran did not strengthen in the modern sense as the dictatorship grew deeper. Pahlavi was not a symbolic ruler like the constitutional monarchies in the West. He had all the state power in his hands and was responsible for everything alone. Moreover, due to the increasing revenue of the oil industry, the state income became completely dependent on the oil exports employing a small percentage of the domestic labor force. Yet the state's relationship with its citizens was reduced to its expenditure on consumption subsidies.

In 1978 when the country-wide mass demonstrations and workers' strikes erupted, the dictatorship found itself alone in the middle of a storm. The bourgeoisie didn't have an actual organization and the means to protect the state against any attack coming from other classes. The atmosphere of oppression and fear, the censorship and the restrictions of the individual freedoms had already led the urban middle class to a great discontent. When the revolutionary wave was battering the dictatorship, the army had no ally to rely on and carry out a military coup to protect the state, even at the expense of sacrificing Pahlavi. And unlike 1953, this time imperialism was in a big uncertainty⁸ and when it did not support Pahlavi publicly, the army and the bourgeoisie understood that the end of their king's reign has come.

3) The opposition was organized on a large scale

There were various forms of organized struggle against the Pahlavi regime. Beside political organizations, workers' organizations, neighborhood committees and craftsman's associations also played important roles in this struggle. The Islamic movement was also involved in the mass demonstrations. The movement was strengthened by the financial support of the petty-bourgeoisie and merchant capital during the economic development. With the support of the Bazaar, big places were built for sermons and religious ceremonies. Most of them were built in villages and poor neighborhoods in the big cities. Mosques and religious ceremonies created a broad network for Islamists. As a result, the social power of the traditional conservatives increased and they became able to reach people who they had never contacted before. Moreover, the Bazaar was not only a structure that provided financial sources for the Islamic movement, but also had a power

⁸ Elena Reynolds, "A New Era in American Foreign Policy: Jimmy Carter, Human Rights and Iran", *The Forum: Journal of History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2012.

to mobilize masses they could reach.⁹ In 1978, the merchants and artisans of the Bazaar organized the first mass protests of the upcoming revolutionary wave along with the seculars. Eventually, the Islamic movement took the control of the revolutionary wave at the final stage of the revolution.

In addition, when the rebellion took over the country, the struggle of the working class hit the dictatorship deeply. The oil industry workers were perhaps the most organized workers of that period. Throughout 1978, large strikes in the oil industry put the state in a difficult position. Finally, the release of the political prisoners months before the revolution revived the guerrilla organizations, as the hottest days of the revolution were coming. A strong network of struggle was created against the dictatorship. Khomeini had already established his leadership over masses. So, these organizations could only act alongside the masses, despite the fact that their armed struggle against Pahlavi's loyalists on the last days of the revolts was decisive.

4) The myth of Pahlavi's invincible dictatorship was damaged

During the era of deep dictatorship in Iran when Pahlavi believed that there was no serious opposition against his reign, a series of guerrilla actions occurred in the early 1970s. These guerrilla operations continued intensively until the mid 1970s. These operations and actions were mostly organized and performed by two major anti-capitalist groups, one from the Marxist movement and another from the radical Islamic movement. Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas (or People's Fedai), the Marxist organization, started the first guerrilla action and the radical Islamist People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (or People's Mojahedin) joined the guerrilla struggle right after Fedai Guerrillas. These two groups had a massive influence in destroying the myth of Pahlavi's invincibility.

Actually the war between guerrilla groups and Pahlavi's security forces came to a deadlock in the mid-1970s. On the one hand, the regime forces didn't achieve a massive success in controlling or destroying these organizations. On the other hand, the guerrilla groups were not able to trigger a mass movement inside the society against the dictatorship. But this was not a complete failure for the opposition. As a result of these struggles, the fear and oppression policy of

⁹ In fact, the bazaar, albeit weak but as an ally of Pahlavi, could not have taken a role in the revolution. The children coming from the families of craftsmen and tradesmen were constituting a large proportion of the university students and graduates. These young people were gradually finding a place in the bureaucracy and in the new professions that required expertise. Moreover, the rich merchants of the Bazaar were involved in industrial projects supported by the state. But Pahlavi's regime tried to bring the self-governing merchants, craftsmen, artisans and their organizations under state control. In the mid-1970s, Pahlavi began to attack the traditional mechanism of the Bazaar under the name of anti-corruption policies. Pahlavi by his own hands pushed the Bazaar away and strengthened his opponents.

Pahlavi's regime became ineffective. The guerrilla struggle characterizes the last decade of the Pahlavi era. People were telling the stories of this struggle as they were talking of the ancient epics. The struggle was a source of inspiration for many poems, stories, songs, and even movies. It brought back the most needed self-confidence to the masses against the Pahlavi dictatorship. The guerrilla struggle could not organize the masses directly against Pahlavi's regime, but it destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the dictatorship in the eyes of people.

The rise of the religious dictatorship

However hopeful the 1979 Revolution was, its results were reactionary enough to even surprise those who had a big role in realizing it. The revolution overthrew an imperialism-backed dictatorship and destroyed its seemingly powerful fortress. However, after the revolution Khomeini and his followers established another dictatorship on the ruins of the previous one. The name of the new dictatorship with even more reactionary ideas was called the Islamic Republic. This dictatorship was established step by step. It started with attacking on every progressive aspect of the revolution such as demands for social and democratic rights. They used their widespread mosque network, in most of the districts and neighborhoods, to organize attacks. The fundamentalists quickly established their own brand of revolutionary committees and parallel organization such as Islamic revolutionary security forces, Islamic revolutionary courts etc. In each step, surely there were opportunities to stop or at least challenge the foundation of the new dictatorship. However, the political and organizational weakness of the opposition paved the way for the fundamentalists. In each step the Islamic Republic became much more powerful and eventually the state of dictatorship was restored after suppressing all political and social oppositions.

A few days after the revolution Khomeini ordered to cancel the law protecting the family. According to this law men were not allowed to choose a second wife until they have permission from their first wife and also a woman had the right to divorce in case her husband was marrying a second wife. This law was canceled only two weeks after the 11th of February. On March 9, the women's right to judge was removed and on March 11 the Hijab (the head and body covering in Islamic fashion) became compulsory. Women organized the largest protest by women in the history of Iran on March 8 against the orders of Khomeini. Tehran hosted a week of rallies and protests, regarding which the progressive forces and the intellectuals largely remained silent.

Only two months after the revolution a referendum took place asking people to choose between the new system and the old, but without defining the new system or giving any details. In a two-choice referendum of accepting the new regime of the Islamic Republic or the old regime of the Shah, having already overthrown the old regime, the people naturally were obliged to accept the new

form of the state. A major feature of this referendum was the lack of transparency about the details of the new form of the state, i.e. the Islamic Republic. Khomeini defined the Islamic republic as a state in which all would enjoy their rights. In response to a question of a journalist asking “what is the Islamic Republic?” the prime minister of the provisional government responsible for organizing the referendum said, “it is a nice thing.” People voted in the referendum in favor of the Islamic Republic whereas they didn’t know what it really was. According to the official records, 98 percent of the electorate participated in the referendum and 99 percent of them approved the Islamic Republic.

The dictatorship was built step by step but there was no serious objection to it. Leftist organizations, which called the March 8 movement a petty-bourgeois demand, boycotted the referendum because of the Islamic Republic’s undefined character. The boycott was not supported by all leftist organizations and the Tudeh Party supported the new form of the state. The People’s Mojahedin, conditionally accepted the Islamic Republic and declared that if the people’s interests are secured they will support the new regime unconditionally, otherwise they will cut their support completely.

The provisional government led by Islamist liberals defended the idea of a republic without any qualifications, but gave support to the Islamic Republic after Khomeini’s rigid reaction of “only Islamic Republic, no more, no less.” The referendum didn’t face any mass opposition and because of that the new regime’s supporters called the opposition “the 2 percent.” It is true that organizing the masses against Khomeini the charismatic leader of the revolution would not be easy, but the only chance to move the people had already been lost during the March 8 incident.

To restore the state of dictatorship there was another step to be taken and it was going to be done through the new constitution. The Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists (Velayat-e Faghih) was the last signal for the emerging dictatorship. The constitution, giving all the political power to the religious leader of the Islamic Republic, was submitted to the referendum on November 1979. There were important developments before the referendum.

At the beginning of August, *Ayandegan*, an opposition newspaper, was closed down by the so-called revolutionary court. The newspaper was a frequent target of assaults by the fundamentalists. Within a few days, a large march was organized by the leftist and secular groups in Tehran. The march was attacked by the fundamentalists and hundreds of people were injured. In the wake of this march, more than twenty newspapers and journals were closed down by the revolutionary prosecutor. When this attack on the opposition media caused reactions, Khomeini made his unforgettable speech about the democratic rights and freedoms. He said that if they had already acted in a revolutionary way, and had broken the pens of the press, closed down the parties, punished the rulers of

these parties and executed them everywhere, they would not face these troubles. After the speech, a large attack against the press began and dozens of journalists were arrested or executed over time.

Furthermore, before the referendum on the new constitution a war started in Kurdistan region of Iran. Having found their hopes crushed in the new state, ethnic minorities put up resistance.¹⁰ The Kurdish people rose with a demand for autonomy in Kurdistan. The centralist government in Tehran interpreted it as an attack on Iran's unity and attacked Kurdistan using the new army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution. A long war started in Kurdistan during which some of the leftist organizations gave their support to the struggle of the Kurdish people. Beside the March 8 women's rallies against regime's reactionary decisions, the *Ayandegan* events and the Kurdish uprising were two important developments in the early stages of the restoration of the dictatorship in Iran. The country was preparing for a new constitutional referendum, accompanied by these important developments that should awaken the masses and political organizations.

With such a background people voted in the constitutional referendum. For the second time the people accepted the new changes with a huge percentage. Most of the leftist organizations again boycotted the referendum and found it anti-democratic, but the Tudeh Party and the majority wing of the People's Fedai gave their full support to the constitution. The People's Mojahedin this time cut their support.¹¹

This so-called revolutionary constitution imposed Khomeini on the masses as the religious leader during his lifetime. In addition, it provided the ground for the construction of the state organs needed to ensure the monopoly of the power in the hands of the fundamentalists. The next step toward the reconstruction of the dictatorship was the elimination of the opposition. Naturally, the relationship between the Islamic Republic and the opposition after the referendum became increasingly tense. Meanwhile, the Iraqi army attacked Iran in August 1980, and a long war began. Khomeini described the war as God's mercy and grace.

10 After the revolution beside the Kurds' demand for autonomy other ethnic groups also struggled for their social and democratic rights. One of the main struggles took place in Turkmen Sahra in the North East of Iran. Right after the revolution Turkmans established the Turkmen People's Councils. These councils distributed the big landlords' lands among villagers. The People's Fedai acted alongside the councils in this region. Within two months after the revolution the Islamic revolutionary guards started a war in Turkmen Sahra. The Islamic republic with two different attacks on the democratic resistance of Turkmens imposed its control in this region within a year. Along with Turkmens and Kurds, Baluchis and Arabs also raised their voice for their ethnic rights. Unsurprisingly these demands also were suppressed by the Islamic Republic.

11 The only meaningful objection came from another ethnic region, Azerbaijan, and mainly from its largest city Tabriz. Surprisingly a conservative party called the Muslim People's Party, followers of a prominent religious leader, rose against the Velayet-e Faghih, but the uprising was harshly suppressed by the so-called revolutionary army.

Khomeini's followers used this extraordinary situation created by the war to suppress the opposition. They eliminated the opposition from the state's power mechanism, wiped out the social opposition from Iran's political arena and did not allow any voices to be heard, just within three years.

In the light of this information, the post-revolutionary process can be divided into two stages with their own characteristic features. The first stage includes the years 1979-1981, which is a transition period. This phase is characterized by a confrontation between the founders of the Islamic Republic (Khomeini and his fundamentalist followers) and their opponents. Right after Pahlavi was overthrown by mass demonstrations, Khomeini and his followers started to establish their own power. Some of the groups and organizations showed their opposition from the early days of the revolution, and some of them later cut their support for the founding wing and joined the opposition. At this stage, the masses and the opposition benefited from a relative freedom. The opposition newspapers and journals were widely circulated during this period and large political rallies, demonstrations and marches were organized. In this phase, the form of the opposition to the Islamic Republic was generally political.

In the first stage, Khomeini's fundamentalist allies were organized under the umbrella of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), and the opposition was broadly organized under organizations of the People's Mojahedin, the People's Fedai, Tudeh, Peykar, and other anti-capitalist organizations, especially those which had participated in the anti-Pahlavi struggle. This period was a historical opportunity for these organizations. These organizations, which were unable to directly contact with the masses for years during the Pahlavi despotism, were able to organize mass rallies and quantitatively reach significant numbers. For example, the meetings and rallies organized by the People's Fedai were several times larger than those organized by the IRP. There also appeared numerous new Marxist or anti-capitalist organizations beside the existing ones. By 1981, many of these freedoms were increasingly restricted.

The second stage includes the years 1981-83. It begins in June 1981 with a major crisis between the People's Mojahedin and the Islamic Republic, and eventually ends in 1983 when the last anti-capitalist organization was eliminated. Khomeini and his followers threw the liberals away from state power and did not allow any opposition voice to be heard. In this phase, the form of opposition to the Islamic Republic was the armed struggle, especially carried out by the People's Mojahedin. A number of Marxist groups also participated in the armed struggle, but the main force of the opposition was the People's Mojahedin. At this stage, the progressive forces were subjected to great massacres, and the Islamic Republic seized all the gains of the revolution one after another. The post-constitution period witnesses the elimination of the opposition from Iran's society. The elimination took place step by step, first by exterminating the opposition

that publicly declared its defiance against the new dictatorship, then by erasing the post-revolutionary society from the new regime's supporters but potential opposition organization, such as the Tudeh Party. The organized actions of some political parties and organizations, even relatively intensive armed struggle, couldn't find mass support and were suppressed in the brutal way possible.

The hijacked revolution

The 1979 Revolution is an example of defeating a political and military power of a bourgeois state ruled through a strict dictatorship with a social organization. The revolution was the product of a popular movement and struggle for a democratic society. These struggles form the distinctive feature of the revolutionary period. The social contradictions that emerged after the 1953 Coup triggered this mass movement. The revolution was not based on Islamic motives or was not started to establish an Islamic society. The masses went out into streets to determine their own destiny. However, most of their achievements and gains were taken back by the construction of the religious dictatorship.

With the revolutionary uprising, different types of social organizations appeared in the society. Workers, peasants and neighborhood committees were established. The women's movement, which opposed the patriarchal conservative order, the oppressed nations' movements against the racist policies of the chauvinist state and many other organizations all emerged in this period. These organizations and movements were all attacked by the newly formed dictatorship which was led by Khomeini.

The large participation of the poor in the revolutionary uprising played an important role in conquering the revolution and demolishing the Pahlavi dictatorship. This participation was naturally based on certain material foundations, and it later raised concrete demands after the revolution. The wide poverty, a product of unequal development, created a great discontent toward Pahlavi's regime. This dissatisfaction became a great wrath against the bourgeoisie which was struggling with the economic crisis. After the revolution this wrath showed its results. Most of the large state or private enterprises went into workers' control. In some regions the peasants seized the lands of the big landlords and divided them among themselves. In large cities, neighborhood committees established social aid networks for the elderly and orphans. The poor struggled for the recognition of their social rights and occupied empty villas and luxury houses which belonged to the rich who fled Iran after the revolution. The intensity and determination of the demands for social justice, forced the fundamentalist Islamists into the direction of nationalization in the private sector. Unfortunately, these gains were also attacked later by religious dictatorship. Beside the remaining bourgeoisie from the old order, a new bourgeoisie was born too, and eventually Iran became a country ruled with severe neoliberal policies.

Another important achievement of the revolution was the acquisition of democratic rights. Iranians, who lived under repressive dictatorships in a long period of their modern history, were enjoying freedom after the revolution. The publication of many newspapers and books, organization of meetings, rallies and similar activities around social issues, immediately after pulling down the Pahlavi dictatorship show how they missed freedom. The masses, for the first time, felt the meaning of the fundamental social and individual rights, such as the freedom of expression and association. The rights to participation in political activities, demonstrations and strikes, and the right to elect and to be elected were gained as a result of their struggle. Although the oppressed nations couldn't achieve their rights, at least they ensured the recognition of their very basic rights in the new constitution. Like other achievements, the democratic rights were also targeted by the religious dictatorship. Only a few years after the revolution, society faced a new regime of oppression, fear, death and injustice. In a short time people lost the justice, freedom and democracy they gained through rebellion and resistance. The fundamentalist Islamists established a new regime of dictatorship under the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran on a more reactionary basis than the one people demolished.

Some of those who played a role in the realization of the 1979 Revolution and then were eliminated by the fundamentalist Islamist group led by Khomeini, believe that the revolution was hijacked. Some Marxists argue that a counter revolutionary process took place in that period. The post-revolution phase may be regarded as a kind of a counter-revolution. However, the force that seized the power by purging other groups actually emerged from inside the revolution and had popular support. Therefore, it may not be right to define this process as a counter-revolution. This process can be explained by the hijacking of the popular revolution and the betrayal of its gains by the fundamentalist Islamists.

The fact that the revolution was hijacked can be discussed around two themes: the demand for the social rights that the revolution formed around and the demand for the political power. After the revolution the main demands of the revolutionaries, freedom, independence and social justice, were never realized literally. The people's demand for freedom was met with a new mechanism of oppression. A despotic regime was established instead of a democratic republic that the people struggled for. The independence was reduced to some practices and anti-US slogans. And the social justice never exceeded some populist discourses. Neither the poor (Mostazafin) became the owner of the revolution (as Khomeini claimed), nor other segments of the society benefited from the gains of the revolution. Women became the first victim of the new regime and lost their limited rights with the religious laws. The religious minorities were in no better situation than before; Bahais and Sunni Muslims even faced greater pressure. The demands of ethnic groups were reduced to a constitutional recognition of

their mother tongue education, the article that was never implemented in practice. And almost no independent organization of the working class survived the brutal attack of the religious dictatorship. Moreover, after the revolution, within a bloody period, the fundamentalists led by Khomeini eliminated or brutally purged all segments of the revolution from the political power. They limited or even nearly prevented the direct or indirect participation of the masses in the mechanism of the power. With this aspect, they replaced the Pahlavi dictatorship with a religious dictatorship.

Khomeini returned to Iran with a program to seize the political power. When the revolutionary uprising was battering the foundations of the Pahlavi dictatorship, Khomeini hid his reactionary identity behind his populist rhetoric. Later, the fundamentalist Islamist group, using the influence of Khomeini's charisma on the masses, gradually destroyed the gains of the revolution. However, there is a reason to describe the post-revolutionary process as a kind of a counter-revolution. It is known that Khomeini negotiated with the US representatives before returning to Iran and gave some assurance to the United States on certain issues.

Khomeini's negotiations with the USA

In 1978, when there was a mass uprising shaking the foundations of the Pahlavi dynasty, M.R. Pahlavi turned to the powers he trusted, especially the United States. However, he did not receive the support he expected. The US ambassador to Tehran reported to the US President that a more serious operation than the 1953 coup is needed to protect Pahlavi and he believed that such a reaction to the mass uprising would not be appropriate. Realizing that the Pahlavi regime is about to fall, the US officials decided to establish relations with Khomeini and negotiate with the leader of the new era. Khomeini had been recently forced to leave Iraq and was spending the last few months of his exile in Paris. In fact, Khomeini and his followers benefited from this seemingly compulsory choice.

In Paris Khomeini as the leader of the mass movement had an opportunity to closely communicate with the world. During his short stay (about 4 months), Khomeini tried to introduce himself and his Islamist movement to the world. According to Ahmad Khomeini,¹² who was with him in Paris, Khomeini was working intensively in Paris, and he was making about five interviews with the international press every day. He did not only speak to the press, he also had meetings with some official representatives from countries such as the United States. These meetings were usually carried out by the liberal wing of the Islamist movement that surrounded Khomeini in Paris. These persons later had important positions inside the provisional government. According to the documents

¹² Ahmad Khomeini's memories: امام را گدای تارطاح ، امامت سسوم: نارهت ، امام را گدای تارطاح ، ۱۳۷۵، ص. ۷۲-۹۵

released by the CIA in 2016,¹³ there is an intense communication traffic between the US and Khomeini in January, just before the revolution. Concerns and mutual expectations of two sides were discussed in this period. The most important concerns of the US were the division or dissolution of the army, possible rise of communists, the form of the power transfer, the security of the US citizens in Iran, the security of the US capital in Iran, the oil and the military and the political relations with the US. The concerns expressed by Khomeini and the Islamist movement (fundamentalists and conservative liberals) were the possible coup by the army, the rebellions within the army, the security of the airplane carrying Khomeini when entered Iran's airspace, and the possible interference of the US in Iran's internal affairs.

As a result of those negotiations, based on its influence in the Iranian army, the US assured Khomeini that it would not organize a coup against him. In return, Khomeini convinces the US that they are not a fundamentalist movement. From this perspective, it is no surprise that the provisional government is generally composed of liberals. This agreement, even if for a short time, also reveals itself in mutual tolerance between fundamentalist Islamists and the United States.

In the early days of the revolution, some members of the People's Fedai occupied the US embassy in Tehran. The US ambassador then contacted the foreign minister of the provisional government and asked for help. When Khomeini disapproved of the occupation, the foreign minister convinced the People's Fedai to end the occupation. The foreign minister apologized the US ambassador and told him that the occupation had been done by the uncontrolled forces of the revolution and assured him that the safety of the embassy would be provided. Khomeini was aware of, and actually ordered, that assurance. This is evidence that the Islamic Republic had no anti-imperialist or anti-US tendencies at the beginning. What we know now as anti-imperialism is a populist rhetoric. It only has an anti-American nature, which later emerged from their opportunism.

The theoretical and political weakness of the left

Khomeini and his followers revealed their reactionary nature in March 1979. They clarified the exact form of the regime they desired to establish in the referendum of the Islamic Republic. And eventually, they declared their absolute demand for the power in the constitutional process. Meanwhile, the opposition, struggling with dilemmas and contradictions, or living in dreams, left their fate in the hands of the new regime.

The emergence of the new Marxist movement and organizations (especially) in the 1960s was based on the fact that the Tudeh Party did not exhibit any

¹³ Two Weeks in January: America's secret engagement with Khomeini, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36431160>.

meaningful resistance against the 1953 Coup. With this analysis, the political struggle remained in the shadow of the practical struggle in the war against the Pahlavi dictatorship. The armed struggle characterizes the pre-revolutionary period, although it didn't trigger a mass movement against the dictatorship. The Pahlavi Dynasty was overthrown by a spontaneous uprising of the masses and the Marxist left welcomed the revolution with mixed thoughts. They started revising their strategies. However, except the Tudeh Party, most of the organizations had lost their major and senior theorists in the armed struggle or found them executed in Pahlavi's prisons. Therefore, some of the Marxists followed the reconciliatory policies of the Tudeh Party toward the Islamic Republic. The remaining part was hesitantly waiting for their fate. Eventually, the Marxist movement like the People's Mojahedin became subjected to a brutal destruction on a large scale and was never able to recover.

The collapse of the Marxist organizations in Iran took place before the collapse of the Soviets. Thus, the collapse of the socialist left in Iran was a result of internal dynamics on a large scale. These internal dynamics include the theoretical and political weakness of the organizations, as well the brutal efforts of two oppressive states to cruelly destroy the progressive forces.

The Iranian Marxists did not have enough theoretical skills to analyze the Iranian society and its developments. The Tudeh Party was blindly following the theses of the Soviet Union. Being aware of a widespread discontent in masses toward the Tudeh's allegiance to the Soviets, the People's Fedai preferred to remain independent from the Soviets, but they did not have enough theoretical background to conduct analysis on their own. They lost their potential theoretical leaders in the struggle against the Pahlavi dictatorship. As the guerrilla struggle before the revolution did not achieve a great gain, and when they saw the overwhelming power of the working class in the process of the revolution, they turned to Bolshevism. But they could not establish the necessary connection with the working class. They lacked a concrete knowledge of Iran's modern history and the state of its society. After the revolution, none of the Marxist groups had any research on Iran's working class. They also had no concrete analysis toward determining the class position of the political actors in the society, their place in the national struggle against dictatorship and in the international struggle against imperialism. As a matter of fact, after the revolution, Marxists did not know how to contact the working class, and even worse, they had difficulty in determining the nature of the Islamic Republic that would end their lives. They could not realize the difference between the Islamic Republic's desire to establish a religious dictatorship and their rhetoric of independence from foreign powers.

Marxists did not have any program to seize the political power, even didn't have such a desire. They saw the destructive power of the masses, but could not believe that they may have this power behind them. They accepted their fate

and surrendered to Khomeini. The struggle against imperialism and to expel it became their sole goal. When Khomeini and his followers monopolized the propaganda of anti-imperialism by anti-American rhetoric, Marxists became completely unarmed. They missed all the opportunities that had the potential to pave the way for the struggle against the Islamic Republic because of their sole anti-imperialism, or sometimes their latent nationalism. They even did not prepare for a possible attack from the Islamic Republic and eventually lost the war very easily.

People's Mojahedin, on the other hand delayed all the opportunities for the sake of opportunism. They were very late in realizing the fact that Islamic Republic will not tolerate any opposition. By then, Khomeini and his followers had created all the mechanisms to preserve the power they had gained. The fundamentalist group amassed the whole power in their hand, pushed the opposition and the masses away from the state structure and strengthened its foundations and replaced the Pahlavi dictatorship with a religious dictatorship.

The Hungarian Soviet Republic from a century-long perspective

Tamás Krausz

The politics of memory and the falsification of history

In Hungary today the memory of the Hungarian Soviet Republic has been systematically and consistently dishonored in the past thirty years. The once “glorious 133 days of the Soviet Republic” has been reinterpreted as the “red tyranny of a grim memory”, which serves as the starting point of the new politics of memory.

The revolutionaries of 1919 became scapegoats, whose statues and memorials have been removed or destroyed, regardless of whether we speak of the “red count”, Mihály Károlyi, the famous communist, Marxist philosopher György Lukács or the Hungarian Red Army, which fought for the national cause. Horthy, who was responsible for the white terror as the leader of the counter-revolution from August of 1919, appears today as the embodiment of the national interest, which is also shown by the fact that the statue of Imre Nagy, the Prime Minister of the 1956 uprising has been replaced with a memorial of the “red terror’s victims” in 1934.

The legitimating ideology of the new, oligarchic capitalist regime silences and denounces the essence of the council (soviet) republic. It remains untold that in 1918-19, under the circumstances of the decline and collapse of the old regime, wide masses of the people became independent political actors. They created

their own organizations, the councils, and they became capable of dismantling the several century old structures of the old world of feudalism and the order of the privileged, the world, which measured the value of people exclusively against the possessed property, the passion for (more) wealth. In 1918-19 the lower social classes, the “unknown” workers and peasants became the forgers of history, who defended both their class interests and the national cause during the battles in Upper Hungary (contemporary Slovakia) or against the Romanian army supported by the Allied forces. The Hungarian revolutionary development inspired great thinkers and artists such as the worldwide famous Marxist philosopher, György Lukács or Lajos Kassák, who was a great figure of the revolutionary art. The contemporary successors of the Horthy-cult of the interwar era “naturally” ignore also this tradition when they describe the short history of the Council Republic as the barbarous rampage of the masses driven by the misery and destruction experienced during the First World War, who were deluded by the “Bolshevik illusions” and the “Communist demagoguery”. The intellectual-cultural apparatuses of the new ruling classes are only driven by the ideologies of fierce (class) hatred. The purpose is the same: to deny any positive legacy from the short-lived Council Republic, which points beyond the capitalist organization of labor, and which could set a positive example to a democratic, progressive left and mass movement today.

The fall of the Council Republic at the beginning of August 1919 gave rise to a counter-revolutionary era, which referred to the nation, but in reality, it represented only the gentle classes and part of the middle class – precisely the strata, who bore responsibility for the First World War and the Trianon Treaty, which was catastrophic for Hungary. The old ruling classes could only re-establish their leading position thanks to the support of the Allied powers and the Romanian armed forces.

The experiences of the Council Republic

“The earth shall rise on new foundations, We have been nought, we shall be all” – this mood was the best expression of the thinking and feelings of the revolutionaries, the exultant masses, and this fundamental striving set out the direction of their actions. While it is true that these feelings were not prevailing in the whole Hungarian society, this mood affected the industrial working class, and it captivated the best of the Hungarian intellectuals and the representatives of the Hungarian culture, who in a certain historical moment became the real spokesmen of the workers and the peasantry, who came to represent the nation. We have to explore all contradictions of the 133 days of the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to establish conclusions, from which we can learn even today.

In the light of the historical experiences the capitalist order can only be destroyed through mass movements and the action of millions. Capital is only

scared of the socialist mass movements. The Hungarian history also gives evidence to this observation.

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was established on 21 March 1919, as part of the European and global revolutionary upswing, which followed from the bloody imperialist world war and the dissolution of the Habsburg, the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, which documented the partial collapse of capitalism. It is not accidental that there were many connections between the Russian proletarian revolution of 1917 and the Hungarian Soviet Republic, but what interests us here is the difference. In the general postwar revolutionary situation – as Lenin observed but the political leaders of the Allied forces also understood this in their own way — Hungary’s specificity lay in the fact that the “Russian virus”, the “virus” of a socialist revolution, the “ghost of Communism” was manifest in Eastern Europe and also globally. A symbolic act in this direction was the establishment of the Communist International, the global Communist party in Moscow at the beginning of 1919.

On the other hand, however, the first international martyrs of the cause showed the limitations of the revolutionary wave and its narrow horizon. The brutal murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, for which the social democrats were also tragically responsible, was the “forerunner” of the white terror in Hungary under Horthy and the rise of Nazism.

The triumph of the Hungarian Soviet Republic triggered a euphoria in many places also outside of Hungary. Lenin contemplated that thanks to the more “civilized” nature of the Hungarian development as compared to Russia, the revolution will trigger less violence in Hungary, and the Hungarians would reach the same Soviet power through a more human way. Albeit Lenin thought that the Hungarian example would be decisive precisely because of this civilizational advantage,¹ in reality, this “more civilization” failed to impact on the revolutionary development. The external conditions were also not very favourable since the Allied powers and the internal counter-revolutionary forces sought to destroy the new regime since the first day of its establishment.

The internationalist tradition

In another famous document (*Greetings to the Hungarian workers*) Lenin also considered it as a very positive development that in the case of Hungary – contrary to Russia – the various socialist formations were “immediately” united (he referred to the union of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties). Later, in July 1920, at the Second Congress of the Comintern Lenin examined the experiences and lessons of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and its fall, and

¹ Lenin Magyarországáról. Kossuth, 1965. Előadói beszéd a Moszkvai Szovjet ülésén 1919. április 3. 87-88.

he analysed the relationship of the Hungarian economic and political measures from the perspective of the so called “alliance policy”. Lenin referred to the book of Jenő Varga, who emigrated from Hungary and became the commissar of the Soviet council of people’s economy, and he stressed the significance of the division of the great estates (*latifundium*) because without the distribution of land nothing changed in the Hungarian villages, “the day-labourers noticed nothing and the small peasantry did not receive anything”.² The alliance with the peasantry was easier in the history of the Russian revolution: in 1917 the peasants simply took the land. However, the connection between the national question and the social question was decisive in the whole region, from Budapest to Moscow as an all-national, all-regional and all-European problem. The counter-revolution everywhere organized restoration under the banner of nationalism.

In the aforementioned document Lenin spoke of the intertwining and contradiction of the national and social questions. He assumed that if nationalism and socialism (meaning: the endeavours to solve the social problems) are intertwined during the fundamentally progressive national wars, which followed the dissolution of the empires, the chances of the triumph of the revolution will be multiplied. This triggered a severe contradiction in Russia because the newly established Soviet power had to defend itself precisely from “patriotism” and sacrifice almost whole of the Ukraine in order to stop the German military advance, while the Hungarian Soviet Republic was engaged in a patriotic war in Upper Hungary and along the river of Tisza. However, this national self-defence did not violate the interests of other peoples, the propagated internationalism.³ It is a different type of contradiction but it also refers to the complicated development of the internal conditions of the Hungarian Soviet Republic: while it was a very progressive step to radically divide the state from the church, the restrictions on the practicing of the religion were counter-productive and had negative effects.

It was not only the history of the Russian revolution that showed that the prewar regimes had no real liberal democratic alternatives. The victory and defeat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic well reflected this development. The empires, which fought against each other in the First World War, could not adapt to the existing international system thanks to their outdated social-political structures. As Lenin observed, “Junius R. (Rosa Luxemburg – T. K.) rightly evaluates Austria because she considers not only its economic characteristics but also its political specificities, stating that Austria is internally inviable and that the Habsburg Monarchy is not the political organization of a bourgeois state but a

2 Ibid. 133-134.

3 Krausz Tamás: Lenin és a Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság. In: 1919 – A Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság és a kelet-európai forradalmak. Bp., ELTE Kelet-Európa Története Tanszék-L’Harmattan, 2019., Kelet-Európa-Tanulmányok 5. (Szerk.: Krausz T. Vértess J.) 35-45.o.

loose syndicate of some cliques, who parasite on society and that the dissolution of Austria-Hungary is historically only the continuation of the disintegration of Turkey and also a consequence of historical development. The situation is not much better in many Balkan states and Russia. And if the great powers would exhaust their resources in this war, or the revolution would triumph in Russia, national wars, further, victorious national wars would be a real possibility.”⁴ Thus, the national wars of colonies, semi-colonies and dependent countries can be linked with the revolutionary social democratic working-class movement, the revolutions of the **center**. This fundamental assumption of Lenin followed from the theoretical framework that the global development of capitalism worldwide creates a demand for liberal democracy while it demonstrates that the capitalist system cannot satisfy this demand since it cannot even sustain democracy globally in a legal sense since liberal democracy – in spite of its historical embeddedness in the core countries – **in reality** becomes a power technical instrument of the maintenance of the hierarchical relations of the existing world order. Thus, according to Lenin’s argument, in order to liberate itself, the working class should make an alliance with the resistance movements of the “more backward” countries, which refuse to adopt a pre-capitalist orientation.⁵

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was a very “modern” phenomenon also in this field, it saw itself as part of the “socialist world revolution” in the spirit of the international cooperation of the peoples. The realistic alternative to this socialist development was, however, a capitalism, which was burdened with feudal elements and structures and outdated social and economic privileges. The real significance of this retreat became clear when after the defeat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic the old gentle world was restored, which eventually led Hungary to the Second World War – as an ally of Nazi Germany.

The achievements of the Council Republic

What was the essence and legacy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, what were the main goals of the postwar, left-wing, revolutionary movements? The demand for social justice, collective ownership, free education and health care, the abolition of class oppression and exploitation – these were the most important “catchwords” of the councils. It is also worth mentioning some of the concrete social measures – eight-hour workday, the reduction of flat rents, the moving of proletarian families to the large bourgeois flats, the increase of wages by 10-80%, the expansion of social security, the defence of children and trainees and the declaration of female emancipation. The Hungarian Soviet Republic also abolished all forms of the oppression of minorities, it recognized the rights of

4 Junius brosúrjáról. 1916. július Lenin ÖM 30. köt. Bp., Kossuth, 1971. 28.o.

5 Krausz, id.

ethnic minorities, it banned prostitution, it established the first sanatorium for lung diseases, it introduced free entrance to Margitsziget, and the list can be long continued.

It is therefore our duty to preserve and continue the positive, humanist legacy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which was the first Hungarian experiment of a socialist revolution and a social self-governance. Marx said at one place after the defeat of the Paris Commune that the socialist experiments of the working class would fail many times, thanks to the resistance of capital and bureaucracy but if they are capable of learning from their successes and mistakes, they will achieve more results with less sacrifices.

The cause of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Lenin and Trotsky, Bela Kun and Tibor Szamuely, György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci has not failed, no matter what the bourgeois ideological apparatuses say. What really failed was the first great experiment of socialism since it had deformed and become state socialism; and the upper layers of bureaucracy had betrayed the cause. But we can clearly understand it, comrades, that is why we return to the initial stages because we want to learn from them. The social revolution as Marx meant it, dear comrades, friends, is not behind us, it is in front of us!

The Hungarian Soviet republic in March 1919 can as well be considered as an initial stage of this great cause.

October 1917 and the everyday life of the Soviet masses

Katerina Matsa

The October Revolution is a break in world history, a cardinal moment of world socialist revolution, which radically changed the shape of the whole globe and the lives of millions of people.

It is thus of utmost importance today, when capitalism plunges in the worst crisis of its history, to draw the necessary lessons not just from the political October, but also from the **cultural October** of the early 1920s. In particular, to study the changes in the everyday life of people, in their attitudes, in their way of life.

The October Revolution acted as a condition of the possibility to bring about the **social creation of the masses** through the development of all kinds of initiatives.

According to Victor Serge, after rising to power, Lenin said to the members of the Bolshevik party: “Initiative, initiative, initiative. Only those who will throw themselves to the boilers of the living creativity of the masses will hold on to power”.¹

Indeed, this process of social creation in the aftermath of October took vast dimensions in every sector of economy, society and culture.

Despite the tragic conditions of life produced by the four years of civil war, hardships, diseases, deprivations, hunger, thousands of people, mostly young

¹ Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, Marxistiko Vivliopolio, Athens 2017, pp. 152 and 159 [our translation].

ones, took on an everyday basis the initiative to participate in an amazing process of **collective artistic creation** – painting, music, theatre, etc.

It is telling that from 1918 to 1920, 186 workshops opened in Petersburg alone, where thousands of people inspired by the Revolution were painting, doing theatre, writing and reciting poetry, in a collective creation. The same was true for other parts of the country too.²

As soon as a region was taken from the Whites, theatre, dance and visual arts workshops opened, as well as discussion clubs focusing on the emancipation of women, family violence, divorce, prostitution, etc.

It is no accident that the biggest participation was in theatre, in its most avant-garde forms, where thousands of young people rushed in to express themselves, to put questions, to give their own answers, to put forth new considerations. Moreover, theatre put together all forms of art, dance, music and visual arts alike.

The revolutionary outburst and the dynamic of the revolutionary events broke down the barriers that separated the masses from the political arena, and brought about a violent irruption of the masses in the field where their own destinies were determined.

To quote Trotsky: “the rapid changes in the opinions and dispositions of the masses in revolutionary times are not produced by the flexibility and mobility of the human soul; on the contrary, they are produced by its deep conservatism. The ideas and social relations lag constantly behind the new objective conditions, until they break down as in a cataclysm, and this, in revolutionary times, brings about outbursts of ideas and passions, which are thought by policing minds as the simple products of ‘demagogues’”.³

These outbursts of ideas and passions caused by the violent inspiration of History, these breaches in the political psychology of the masses, created the conditions for the “Russian Avant-Garde”, giving the post-revolutionary period in Russia the character of an unprecedented era in the history of global culture.

Collectivist avant-garde creation in every sector opened new paths not just for Art, but also for the thinking and the emotional disposition of the masses. It became a centre of attraction for great and already renown artists who aligned themselves with the Revolution and the changes that were taking place.

A telling example is the great poet Alexander Blok. His alignment with the Revolution made his contemporary scholars turn their backs on him, while at the same time his work was being embraced by the masses as an inspiration and an impetus to their own energy and creativity. As Leon Trotsky wrote: “Blok was a

2 Ludmila Bulavka, “The dialectics of a course: From the cultural revolution of 1917 to the counter-revolution of 1997”, *Epanastatiki Marxistiki Epitheorisi*, No 3, July 1998.

3 L. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. L. Michael, Promitheas Publications, Athens 1961, p. 10 [our translation].

part of the pre-October literature, but he crossed this gap and entered the sphere of October, writing *The Twelve*, the most important work of our age, which will live forever”.⁴

The wind of the October Revolution drew to its path all the great poets of Russia.

In this atmosphere, the museums opened their gates, granting free entrance in order for everyone to enjoy their artistic treasures, which had already been enriched through the confiscations of numerous private collections by the Soviet government.

The same was true for theatres and music halls, that were full every night with proletarians. The squares were occupied by the famous **conductorless orchestras**.

Through their cultural activities, the masses created for themselves the conditions of their practical emancipation, since cultural creation was experienced not just as a social need, but as their very desire. This desire had to do with autonomy, parity and collectivity. To quote L. Bulavka: “the social self-revelation of culture happened not just because culture was turning into a tool for the revolutionary masses to work towards the creation of new life, but because the maelstrom of the revolutionary events produced in the revolutionary masses the need to understand what was going on, to find their own interest in the events and to correlate them. In this process, they were discovering new meanings in the notion of culture, which was liberated now from the alienated social relations of yore and was becoming a product of their own collective creation in the forge fire of Revolution”.⁵ That is, culture as a working tool went out of the salons where it was held until then, out to the streets. In this way, all the necessary conditions for annulling the alienation of the masses were taking shape. This was a breathtaking process, in which great artists (such as Meyerhold, Malevich, Blok and others) participated actively in the creativity favoured by the **cultural politics of the Bolshevik party**. As Lenin said: “our focus now would be the **cultural** work, if we didn’t have to cope with the international relations, if we were not obliged to struggle for our positions in the international scene”.⁶

This is why we talk about the **cultural October** of the 1920s.

The historical importance of the proletarian revolution was that it laid the foundations for a truly human culture, shaping the conditions for the creation of the **universal human being** in world communism.

It was then in the social conditions of these revolutionary changes that

4 L. Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, trans. L. Michael, Allagi Publications, Athens 1984, p. 102 [our translation].

5 L. Bulavka, op. cit. [our translation]

6 Lenin, *Collected Works* [in Greek], vol. 18, part 2, p. 144 [our translation].

breaches were taking place in the consciousness of the masses, making them embrace the socialist ideology. Because the demand and the condition of social creation was an ideal, the ideal of justice, fraternity, equality. And this ideal was being materialized, in flesh and bone, in the revolutionary conditions of the age. It was becoming, as Ilienkov was to say, “a historically created ideal”.⁷ “Social creation became a ‘yeast’ that included the very essence of the socialist ideal and the socialist ideology. And each took its essence within the movement that brought both of them together”.⁸

In other words, social creation was the centripetal force that connected everything, the revolutionary masses, the socialist ideal and the socialist ideology, in a whole, namely, the new **cultural universality of Soviet culture**.

In this context of epochal changes on every level, everyday life was changing too. “Despite the rise of bureaucratic reaction, despite the shortages and the cultural underdevelopment, the revolutionary urge remains palpable through the 1920s, thanks to the groundbreaking efforts to **transform daily life**: reforms in schooling and education, family laws, utopias centered on the city, creativity in writing and cinema”.⁹

Indeed, in times of social eruption, daily life loses its previous negative qualities of routine, repetition and conventionality. Each day becomes a new day, and the unforeseen, the unrepeatability as a quality of social action emerges from every pore of the social body, investing everydayness with a new meaning.

According to H. Lefebvre: “everydayness is not just prosaic things, a leveled ground: it is the main instrument of the state and the mode of production for retaining and perpetuating the social relations of production in the field of the everyday and the urban, in the city, in space”.¹⁰

In capitalism, everyday life becomes a generalized condition of universal alienation from the human essence.

Great Marxist thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci and Henri Lefebvre have analyzed the notion of everyday life, bringing to light its contradictory essence in which the prospect of change is founded. Within the conditions of alienation, the very conditions of a negation of alienation are born. In the prosaic, there is also the place of utopia, of the not-yet-existent, as Ernst Bloch, the philosopher of hope, would put it: the element that can be revealed

7 E. Ilienkov, *Technocracy and human ideals [Ideals and Idols]*, Odysseas Publications, Athens 1977.

8 L. Bulavka, op. cit. [our translation].

9 Daniel Bensaid, “The questions of October”, *Outopia*, No 77, September-October 2007, pp. 33-48 [our translation].

10 H. Lefebvre, *Nihilism and Dissent*, Ypsilon Publications, Athens 1990, p. 56 [our translation].

through the action of the masses.

For H. Lefebvre and the Situationists, everydayness takes on different forms, as the subject expresses in a variety of ways his or her resistance to routine, as a part of a collectivity formed through anti-hegemonic coalitions on multiple levels.

In the very places of the dominant cultural industry, the conditions of its critique are being shaped, through new cultural creation, which criticizes conventionality and becomes a focus of resistance to everydayness, a focus of cultural confrontation with the establishment and of its subversion, a condition of human emancipation.

By introducing a utopian surplus in all pores of society, the October Revolution made revolution itself a component of everyday life. According to Trotsky: “for an indefinitely long period, and through constant internal struggles, all social relations undergo a transformation. Society keeps changing its skin. Each phase of the transformation emanates from the previous one... Revolutions in economy, technology, science, family, morality and everyday life are developed in a complex interaction, making it impossible for society to strike any balance whatsoever...”¹¹

Revolution produces a kind of sympathy even in the minds of those who do not take part in it, a sympathy that can reach the heights of enthusiasm. According to Kant,¹² this sympathy can only have as its cause a “moral disposition of the human species”, what revolutionaries call a “sentiment of humanity” (*sentiment d’humanité*).¹³ This sentiment may take the form of an enthusiasm for Revolution itself, which represents the notion of the “sublime”. This is the “sublime” represented by the French Revolution, which filled even Kant himself with enthusiasm, making him, for once in his life, five minutes late in his traditional daily walk. This is also the “sublime” represented by the October Revolution, which produced torrents of enthusiasm not just among the Soviets peoples, but among all peoples worldwide.

It is thus in these conditions of revolutionary upheaval that the ideas of psychoanalysis also flourished in the land of the Soviets. To be sure, psychoanalysis had already been introduced in Russia by young physicians since 1908.¹⁴ But it was only after the October Revolution that the theory and the practice of

11 L. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, trans. Th. Thomadaki, Allagi Publications, Athens 1982, p. 16 [our translation].

12 See E. Kant, *Le conflit des facultés* [1798], Vrin, Paris 1977.

13 See Sophie Wahnich, *La Révolution française n’est pas un mythe*, Klincksieck, Paris 2017.

14 See Martin Miller, *Freud au pays des Soviets*, Les empêcheurs de penser en rond - Le Seuil, Paris 2001.

psychoanalysis was disseminated by politically active psychoanalysts. In 1919, Tatiana Rosenthal gave the first post-revolutionary lecture on psychoanalysis. In the autumn of 1920, she created in Petersburg a school for children with learning difficulties, where psychoanalytic psychotherapy was practiced. In 1922, the psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Ermakoff created in Moscow another school for children with behavioral disorders, the so-called “orphans of the civil war”. These children that had lost their parents, workers, farmers, intellectuals, during the civil war were estimated to 4.5 million.

In this particular school, directed by the psychoanalyst Vera Schmidt, the teachers had been trained in a new way of teaching based on the principles of psychoanalysis; without violence or punishments, with love and constant effort to enhance the children’s critical thinking and understanding, their trust in their educators and their self-respect.

The school was financially supported by the Commissar of Education Lunacharsky; it belonged to the Moscow Institute of Neuropsychology; its original pupils were 30 children from 1 to 5 years-old; and it’s name was “International Solidarity”. Vera Schmidt herself used to call it the “home of the children”. However, from the spring of 1923, negative rumors started to spread about the school, and although the special research committee that was set up for this purpose concluded that the school should continue its work, the political pressures eventually became too strong, and towards the end of that year this model school, which had been hailed by Freud and other psychoanalysts as a pioneering one, closed down following a government decision.

In 1922, the Russian Psychoanalytic Association was founded, with 3 branches. The first one continued the work on the psychopathological issues of creativity in art and literature; the second one focused on clinical analysis; and the third one had as its object issues of education.

That same year saw the creation, in Moscow, of the first Psychoanalytic Institute in the country, which carried out programs of psychoanalytic training and was the third centre of psychoanalytic training in Europe, after the ones in Vienna and Berlin. This institute operated also a hospital with a psychiatric polyclinic specialized in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. At the same time, it announced a series of publications, with translations of works by Freud, Jung and Melanie Klein. Its first publication was Freud’s *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, in 2 volumes.

Meanwhile, many leading Bolsheviks were speaking publicly in favor of psychoanalysis. Its advocates included, among others, Radek, Joffe, Bukharin, Trotsky and Reisner, who first expounded the Soviet constitution. Their interest in psychoanalysis was a result of their general theoretical considerations about the shape of the new, communist way of life.

Trotsky in particular¹⁵ thought that literature and psychoanalysis can reveal the hidden face of man. They can contribute to shaping the new, free human being in the transition towards the communist society. An important part of this process is creation, which is rooted in and fueled by the unconscious.

In 1921-1923, which is considered to be the “golden era of psychoanalysis in Russia”, the whole Soviet society, doctors, law specialists and other scholars, along with the Soviet government, had a vivid interest in psychoanalysis. The clinical activities and the seminars of the Moscow Psychoanalytic Institute were going strong, and more translations of Freud’s works were funded and published by the Party. The Party had a strong interest in the contributions of psychoanalysis towards the development of a Marxist psychology. It was also interested in the radical reformation of the educational system as a foundation for the character formation of the new Soviet human being, and not simply in view of an eventual change in his or her behavior. Towards this kind of formation, a psychoanalysis and a psychology engaged in an active dialogue with the discoveries of Marxism would have much to offer.

It is no accident that the ranks of the serious advocates of psychoanalysis in the post-revolutionary period include two great Soviet psychologists, Luria and Vygotsky, who had translated into Russian and forwarded Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Vygotsky in particular insisted that Freud’s theory of the unconscious was to be seriously taken into account. His faith in psychoanalysis is demonstrated by his phrase in the foreword of Freud’s aforementioned work: “The obstacles that block the success of psychoanalysis in Soviet Russia will fall upon the first critical reflection”.¹⁶ Let us remember that the cultural-historical psychology later developed by Vygotsky was also a product of the socio-historical processes that were taking place, with the active participation of Vygotsky himself, in the Soviet Union during the 1920s.¹⁷

In 1925, the Soviet state authorities published the work *Psychology and Marxism*, which included an article by Luria entitled “Psychoanalysis as a system of monist psychology” where the author defended Freud’s theory. The discussion was also joined by Vygotsky, with his article “Consciousness as a problem in behavioural psychology”, where he stressed that Freud’s work on the unconscious was to be taken seriously into account.

In 1927, Vygotsky gave a lecture on “The psychology of art in Freud’s work”.

15 See Jacquy Chemouni, *Trotsky and Psychoanalysis*, trans. N. Papachristopoulos & K. Samartzi, Opportuna Publications, Patras 2004.

16 See Jacquy Chemouni, *Trotsky and Psychoanalysis*, trans. N. Papachristopoulos & K. Samartzi, Opportuna Publications, Patras 2004 [our translation].

17 See Manolis Dafermos, “Cultural-Historical Psychology and Drama”, *Tetradia Psychiatrikis*, No 112, 2010.

In later years, the attack against psychoanalysis by the official journals of the Party was so ruthless that many well-known psychologists who had expressed publicly views in favor of psychoanalysis found themselves obliged to reconsider in order to avoid persecution. Even Luria, in 1932, accepted the line of the party, in his article “The crisis of bourgeois psychology”.

Clara Zetkin argued that psychoanalysis had no place in the Party, and attributed this thesis to Lenin himself. However, Lenin had in his library 3 volumes of Freud’s works edited by Ermakov. In one of them (*Introduction to Psychoanalysis*), one could see on the side of the pages notes written by Krupskaya. The doctor that attended him had worked with Freud in Paris and Vienna in the 1880s. Vera Schmidt and her husband Otto were also close with Lenin.

In March 1927, Vygotsky wrote “The psychology of art in Freud’s work”. Yet at the same time the book *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique* by Voloshinov (who belonged in Bakhtin’s Circle) was published. Thus, in April 1927, the government decided to stop funding the Psychoanalytic Institute. Luria resigned from his position of Secretary of the Russian Psychoanalytic Association.

Nonetheless, psychoanalysts continued to publish, as was the case with “anti-Freudians” too. In August 1929, Wilhelm Reich visited Moscow and was warmly welcomed by the Party milieu. Of course, Reich had publicly renounced basic Freudian principles, and had declared himself as a loyalist of the communist cause. After his departure, the psychoanalytic movement was silenced for good. In the same year, the Party officially distinguished between the (accepted) practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy and Freud’s (unacceptable) theory.

However, the attack against psychoanalysis escalated. It was Stalin that crushed its last strongholds within the Party.

The last translation of one of Freud’s works in Ermakov’s collection was published in 1930. The rest was silence... The general climate of the 1930s was suffocating; laws against homosexuality were passed, and Gorky argued publicly that homosexuals are to be punished. On the contrary, let us remind that one of the first decrees of the revolutionary government, in December 1917, ordered the abolishment of all discrimination against homosexuals.

The Stalinist bureaucracy imposed itself through the containment of the process of social creation and the enthusiasm of the masses. The danger of bureaucracy as a hindrance of revolutionary processes had been visible from very early on. A slogan that appeared in the *Red Newspaper* in late 1918 was eloquent: “The bureaucrats up against the wall!”. And, as we know, this danger became gradually a tremendous threat.

In 1923, Trotsky wrote: “The regime that gradually establishes itself within the Party is unbearable. It kills every initiative in the Party, it reduces it to an

instrument of appointed public servants”.¹⁸

It is true that four years of civil war had deprived the masses of their avant-garde. The best proletarian elements joined the Red Army in the war against the Whites and the Reactionaries, and perished in battle.

According to V. Serge, “the workers’ state had to form in a hurry a corpus of servants, managers and commanders that could not have been recruited from the working class alone”.¹⁹

As long as the Stalinist bureaucracy gained power, exploiting the isolation of the Soviet republic by imperialism, the process of development of a new Soviet culture was being halted. As a result, the cultural movements gradually lost their autonomy and became institutionalized. The sphere of material production was given absolute priority. Bureaucratic planning prevailed, Stakhanovism was propounded. Social creation started to become alienated from the masses. All decisions were now taken by the administrative (syndicalist, managerial, party) leadership, and the workers were simply called to bring these decisions into effect. They could not participate in the decision-making process, along with everybody else, from the beginning to the end.

In this way, the very logic of social creation was undermined from within. The intervention of the Stalinist bureaucracy in itself, let alone as a mediator between the subject and the object of artistic and social creation in general, annulled this process, annulling at the same time its relation with socialist ideology, which gradually took religious qualities.

In the first revolutionary period, culture gave meaning to every social relation and was considered to be identical with Life in its multifarious universality. When the Stalinist bureaucracy prevailed, the individual was reduced to a simple **consumer** of cultural products.

The bureaucracy prevailed feeding off the wounds of the young Soviet society: hunger, diseases (with about 3 million dead only in 1921-1922), millions of civil-war victims, defeats of the proletarian revolution in the West. In these conditions, “Stalin rose to power with the support of the bureaucracy against the people, with the support of the Thermidorians against the revolutionaries”.²⁰

Lenin was ill, his health had deteriorated since 1921, and in 1922 he suffered his first stroke.

Stalin, in his capacity as general secretary, started from 1921 on to grant the first serious privileges to the bureaucratic cast (salary increases, food supplies,

18 L. Trotsky, *Problems of everyday life*, trans. L. Theodorakopoulos, Marxistiko Vivliopolio, Athens 2007, p. 15 [our translation].

19 V. Serge, op. cit., p. 561 [our translation].

20 L. Trotsky, *Stalin's crimes*, trans. L. Michael, Allagi Publications, Athens 1984, p. 311 [our translation].

etc.) according to their ranking.

Meanwhile, the new petty-bourgeoisie produced by the New Economic Policy started to gain power; the Bolshevik Party had been obliged to adopt this Policy in 1921 to save the country from disaster. Soon, the new orders of the kulaks started to bribe and buy off starving state officials.

Already in 1922, Lenin wrote: “My worst enemy is the bureaucrat, the communist who sits in a responsible (and then irresponsible) Soviet position. This is the enemy that our lines must be purged from”.²¹

The rapid bureaucratization of the party mechanism led Trotsky to form a working group of 25 workers, men and women, all members of the Bolshevik party, in order to gain a deeper insight into the problems of everyday life in post-revolutionary Russia.

These discussions were then published in Trotsky’s book *The problems of everyday life*, and focused on gender relations, masculine violence against women, the entertainment of workers in holidays, alcoholism, suicides, illiteracy, superstitions that survived from the past and generally the problems experienced by the workers in their daily lives.

Trotsky’s conclusion was that “only the collective creation of the vast masses, supported by the inventions, the creative imagination and the initiatives of the artists, can lead us gradually to the future, to the path of new life-forms that will be intellectually superior, subtler, governed by a collective theatricality. However, without codifying this creative process, we do have to help it grow from now, by all means necessary. And to do this, we have first to open our eyes to what is called a **way of life**”.²²

According to Trotsky, “in cooperatives, clubs, local councils and in every form of collective action, with the participation of men and women alike, we have to put forth the importance of revolutionary symbolism, by inaugurating new symbolic themes, new rituals, new celebrations, new habits and behaviors. The Revolution will not be genuine if it fails to practically liberate women and take a vivid interest in children. All Soviet citizens, men and women, have to engage in this direction, and develop a ‘cultural militantism’”. The writers, poets and artists who participate in the Left Front of the Arts define **the way of life as their new front**.

The Party had to be educated in this spirit in order to be able to educate the proletariat on the basis of proletarian pride, revolutionary initiative, revolutionary morality. The reorganization of everyday life on new bases was also the concern of Alexandra Kollontai, the great Marxist who swept the whole country throughout the post-revolutionary period, giving lectures about the new gender relations on

21 Lenin, *Collected Works* [in Greek], vol. 45, p. 15 [our translation].

22 Trotsky, *Problems of everyday life*, op. cit., p. 95 [our translation].

the basis of the “new morality”, that is, of absolute freedom, mutual respect, parity and companionship. Women and men have to express their feelings to one another not just through kisses and love-making, but in a **common creative activity**. “The sexual crisis is unsolvable without a fundamental reform of human psychology, without an increase in the ‘erotic potential’. But this reform is totally dependent upon the elementary reorganization of our social and economic relations on communist bases”.²³ Yet such a reorganization required constant clashes with the Stalinist bureaucracy that kept blocking this process. This blocking of the changes that had to be made in the way of life of the masses had a disastrous effect.

As the great Bolshevik leader Christian Rakovsky remarked in 1928, in a period when the proletariat had already secured power, one could note a decay in the proletarian zeal, passivity, indifference, pessimism and a lack of revolutionary spirit. He too concluded that “changes had to be made in the composition and psychology of the Party and the proletariat”.²⁴

Against conservatism and the policing spirit of the bureaucracy, Trotsky, who expressed the spirit of the October Revolution, envisaged the new communist way of life, where men and women would be educated in conditions of freedom, with all the possibilities of the future open to them. “Master of his economy, man will stir his stagnated daily life. The burdensome duty to feed and raise one’s children will pass from the family to social initiative. Women, finally, will throw off the yoke of their semi-slavery. Along with technology, pedagogy will form psychologically new generations, directing the public opinion. Experiments of social education will develop, and their momentum will be unimaginable with today’s standards. The communist way of life will not be developed blindly, like a coral reef in the sea. It will be built consciously, governed by rational thought. No, life in the future will not be monotonous”.²⁵

These changes were forever blocked by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which imposed a regime of terror and persecution of every independent initiative, every dissenting voice. Because Stalinists knew all too well that “the reform of the way of life, had it not been blocked almost from the beginning, could have become a decisive weapon in the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy”.²⁶

23 A. Kollontai, *Gender relations and Marxism*, Govostis Publications – Synchroni Epohi, Athens (n. d.), p. 28 [our translation].

24 Ch. Rakovsky, *The professional risks of power*, Paraskinio Publications, Athens 1990, p. 14 [our translation].

25 Trotsky, *Problems of everyday life*, op. cit., p. 201 [our translation].

26 Anatole Kopp, Introduction in the French edition of Trotsky’s *Problems of everyday life*, translated as *Les questions du mode de vie*, 10-18, Paris 1976, p. 20 [our translation].

The great October Revolution showed to all mankind that the human being can **transform itself** and reach the greatest heights, when she fights to abolish the relations of domination among humans, when she is inspired by the Revolution, and when she creates in a collective way, opening new horizons in her life, looking up, higher and higher. As the great futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov said: “All power to the starry sky”.²⁷

5 October 2017

²⁷ See Savvas Michael, *Musica ex nihilo*, Agra Publications, Athens 2013.

Marx and human rights

Jock Palfreeman

Jock Palfreeman was born in Sydney, Australia, he joined a Socialist youth organisation - Resistance at age 15 whilst at a military boarding school, where he had time to read and learn about Marxism. At age 19 he went traveling around Europe, including Turkey, where he was present at Taksim Square for May Day 2006. At age 21 in 2007, whilst on Christmas holidays in Sofia, Bulgaria, he saw 16 neo-Nazis attacking a man because of the color of his skin. Jock defended the man successfully and the neo Nazis continued their attack against him. After 12 minutes throwing stones at Jock and knocking him out one of the Nazis was fatally wounded. The father of the nazi was a politician for the Bulgarian Socialist Party and with this influence, Jock was given 20 years for premeditated murder without motivation. Facing repression from the Bulgarian prison system, Jock with other prisoners formed the Bulgarian Prisoners' Association (BPRA) in 2012 for self-defence and promoting the rights of prisoners. Jock writes about the exploitative prison system and against racism in Bulgarian society.

The following text is an answer to a manuscript sent to Jock by the Bulgarian liberal human rights activist Krassimir Kanev (Chairman of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee). In his text, Jock counters the rather superficial reading of Marx demonstrated by Kanev and shows step-by-step how Marx is not against human rights, but finds their liberal-bourgeois version very limiting and protecting the rights of capital, not of people. However, even though they have profound

political differences, Jock and Kanev are in good personal relations. Jock's text was first published in the Bulgarian leftist journal Dversia and may be found on www.dversia.net.

The idea that human rights are contradictory to Marxism is problematic from the perspective that Marx proposes an improvement of life in a post capitalist society. It would not be fair to judge Marx by the actions of those who tried or claimed to put his ideas into practice and as Marx said himself "All I know is that I am not a Marxist", despite the violation of human rights that occurred in self-proclaimed Marxist states it is not correct to claim that Marxists cannot "believe in human rights", on the contrary, it was the bourgeois so called "human rights" that Marx was claiming were not human rights and the real question should be the converse, can Liberalists believe in human rights? As Emmeline Pankhurst said:

Property has assumed a value in the eyes of men, and the eyes of the law, that it ought never to claim. It is placed above all human values. The lives and health and happiness, and even the virtue of women and children – that is to say, the race itself—are being ruthlessly sacrificed to the god of property every day of the world.

The first question one has to ask when analysing Marx's work is "what exactly is he trying to say" and only then is it possible to judge if one agrees with his arguments and conclusions. It is a mistake to take the words of Marx as given for three reasons; the first is that he created a lot of words and redefined meanings of words so as to fit his style of philosophy. The second is that there is a historical context to many if not most of the words and phrases he is using. Thirdly there can be and are translation problems with some of the texts going through several translations, furthermore some texts have been translated following the ideological schism of the translators which is common in most of the translations within the former Warsaw Pact states.

When the definition of a single word can change the entire meaning of a sentence or paragraph or the entire text, it is a mistake to presume that the contemporary or popular understanding of the word is the correct one. Even the Communists of Marx and Engels's time made these mistakes with historically catastrophic consequences outside of their comprehension, and over 140 years later all Socialists (including Bakuninists) still quarrel over the meanings of these words today. A good example is the term "peoples' state" which Marx didn't actually write, and he and Engels had to write a letter and tell them that the term "peoples' state" should be replaced by the French word "commune" or the German word "Gemeinwesen" which was then later translated as "community" into English and so too the word "citizen" does not take on the characteristics

commonly attributed to it.

Marx makes himself clear that he doesn't see citizenship as a realization of freedom for 2 reasons. The first and easiest to explain is that the concept of the "citizen" as it was in Marx's time was a capitalist understanding of the term and it is in this context that Marx refers to repeatedly.

"Citizen, Citoyen, Bürger"

The word "citizen" in English lumps together a number of distinct meanings, which can only be represented by using French and/or German words.

The French word *citoyen* means the participant in the political life of the community, the individual who is a carrier of political rights, the enjoyer of "positive freedom." During the French Revolution, when people addressed one another as "Citizen Marat" ... the word was *citoyen*.

On the other hand, the German word *Bürger* most graphically expresses the person as an individual participant in the economic life of the community, the bearer of social rights, the right not to be interfered with and to carry on any activity that does no harm to others, the enjoyer of "negative freedom."

The French translation of *Bürger* is *bourgeois*, and thus the bourgeoisie is the class of "individuals." *Bürger* is sometimes translated as "individual." The German *Bürgerlicher Gesellschaft*, literally "bourgeois society," is usually translated into English as Civil Society, itself a term whose meaning has now changed considerably. *Bürger* can be translated into English as "Burgher" conjuring up the image of a respectable businessperson, in the days when those who did not own property enjoyed few rights ...

When this understanding of Marx's terminology is calculated into his essay "On the Jewish Question" only then does his essay make any sense at all, irrelevant if the reader agrees or not with the conclusions. Marx makes himself clear that the primary characteristic of his "citizen" is that of the right to private property, which then Marx argues is contradictory to the social goals of the organisation that the "citizen" is a member of the society, Marx says:

The contradiction in which the religious man finds himself with the political man, is the same contradiction in which the bourgeois finds himself with the citizen, and the member of civil society with his political lion's skin.

And furthermore he claims that the bourgeois only participate as "citizens" in order to further their own selfish goals:

It is true that the bourgeois, like the Jew, participates in political life only in a sophistical way, just as the *citoyen* [in French] is a Jew or a bourgeois only in a sophistical way.

So here we can see that Marx is specifically referring to the “citoyen” in French language as a “bourgeois”, furthermore he calls the bourgeois’s relation to “political life” as being “sophistical” i.e. that of a selfish relationship between himself/herself and everyone else, and as he more often says the “egotistical man”.

The idea that Kanev proposes that, Marx separated “the rights of man” from the “rights of the citizen” is not a comprehensive explanation of what Marx was saying. It is not Marx who separates the “rights of man” from the “rights of the citizen”, it is Marx’s criticism that Bauer’s argument, means the two are somehow mutually exclusive of one another. “Marx’s” separation of the two are Marx’s observations of Bauer’s arguments that the “rights of man” as according to the French and the North Americans don’t exclude the need to renounce one or another religions in order to gain said political rights. This isn’t specifically the opinion of Marx himself, rather it would appear that Marx is opposed to the separation. As Bauer argued that “man has to sacrifice the ‘privilege of faith’ in order to acquire the general rights of man.” Marx’s contrasts this with the so called “rights of man” as according to the French and North Americans where Marx states:

The incompatibility between religion and the rights of man is so little manifest in the concept of the rights of man that the right to be religious, in one’s own fashion, and to practise one’s own particular religion, is expressly included among the rights of man. The privilege of faith is a universal right of man.

And so Marx proves that contrary to Bauer’s argument that a “man’s” faith must be “sacrificed” in order to gain the “rights of the citizen” is not only unnecessary, but on the contrary it is in direct conflict with the “rights of man” as according to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, 1791, Article 10: “No one is to be disturbed on account of his opinions, even religious opinions.” There is guaranteed, as one of the rights of man, “the liberty of every man to practise the religion to which he adheres.”

Following this logic (which isn’t presented as Marx’s but rather Marx’s critique of the racist Bauer) Marx then concludes that Bauer has made “A distinction... between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen.” As it is the right of man to choose his own religion, but not if (as according to Bauer) a person wants to gain the “rights of the citizen” for as previously mentioned Bauer argues that a Jew must renounce his/her religion to gain citizenship which Marx summarizes thus:

They fall in the category of political liberty, of civil rights, which as we have seen do not at all presuppose the consistent and positive abolition of religion; nor consequently, of Judaism.

So if according to the “rights of man” according to the French and the North Americans religion is a right of man established according to “political liberty” and “civil rights” i.e. the “rights of the citizen” then Marx attempts to understand Bauer and the “so called rights of man” according to their arguments and he says “It remains to consider the other part, namely the rights of man as distinct from the rights of the citizen.” Marx doesn’t say that he is making the distinction between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen, he is saying that:

A distinction is made between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen.

This single line is significant as it dispels the concept that Marx “isolated the rights of man (*droits de l’homme*) from the rights of the citizen (*droits du citoyen*)”. As Kanev has misinterpreted. The separation is not made by Marx, rather it is his observation of an already made separation and he continues:

Who is this man distinct from the citizen? No one but the member of civil society. Why is the member of civil society called “man,” simply man, and why are his rights called the “rights of man”? How is this fact to be explained?

Marx argues that the bourgeois concept of “liberty” is the right to individualism and specifically a selfish and egotistical form of individualism and so if this is the so called “liberty” as pertained to by the bourgeoisie then there can be no contradiction as Bauer claims between the Jew and the “rights of the citizen” because if the bourgeoisie is allowed to be isolated from society by his/her privileged place through private property then why shouldn’t the Jew also be allowed to be different and isolated by practicing a different religion:

It is a question of the liberty of man regarded as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself. Why, according to Bauer, is the Jew not fitted to acquire the rights of man? “As long as he remains Jewish the limited nature which makes him a Jew must prevail over the human nature which should associate him, as a man, with other men; and it will isolate him from everyone who is not a Jew.” But liberty as a right of man is not founded upon the relations between man and man, but rather upon the separation of man from man. It is the right of such separation. The right of the circumscribed individual, withdrawn into himself.

What is important and what we have to keep reminding ourselves is that Marx is constantly referring to two assertions, that of Bauer and that of the bourgeoisie. It is Marx’s attempt to follow their logic and as he points out a contradiction, that acts as a dead end in the thought train, he then attempts to explain around their contradiction following their logic. Furthermore, Marx states categorically that “The practical application of the right of liberty is the right of private property.”

Here we see Marx's foundational criticism of the bourgeois concept of human rights; later Marx starts to establish his concept of human rights where he states:

Thus man was not liberated from religion; he received religious liberty. He was not liberated from property; he received the liberty to own property. He was not liberated from the egoism of business; he received the liberty to engage in business.

So here we have a basis for what Marx would consider emancipation, for people to be liberated from religion, to be liberated from property and to be liberated from business. With this small paragraph we can start to build the foundation for human rights according to Marx.

The formation of the political state, and the dissolution of civil society into independent individuals whose relations are regulated by law, as the relations between men in the corporations and guilds were regulated by privilege, are accomplished by one and the same act.

Here Marx argues that these so called rights are "regulated by privilege" that define interpersonal relations within society and as such the "Egoistic man is the... given result of the dissolution of society". This single line is important as it establishes what Marx means when he uses the term "egotistic man". It is an anti-social person who is only out for his/her own interest and what is most important in this context is that this person is detrimental to others within society. As Margaret Thatcher said:

I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society.

and this is a reoccurring theme with Liberalists, albeit usually the more extreme amongst them. This concept is not even uniquely Marx's for Adam Smith said "by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain". Of course then Marx then puts the bourgeoisie in conflict with everyone else and in Marx's other works he expands on this concept where he states that the bourgeoisie is not only in conflict with the workers but also that the bourgeoisie is in conflict with other bourgeoisie as they compete for market dominance.

So when Kanev says "however in the French Constitutional law from the time of the revolution it is considered a requirement of the state to protect everyone as

well as his/her rights. For Marx that is “the concept of the police”. Through this the civil society doesn’t reject its egoism “Security is, rather, the assurance of its egoism.” However, what does this mean in the light of what Marx said about bourgeois liberty? “The practical application of the right of liberty is the right of private property.” So then too should we not presume that when considering bourgeois “security”, Marx had in mind the security of private property as he did when critiquing bourgeois liberty? And if not then it should be asked why we shouldn’t? Marx says that the concept of security is not “enough” to raise civil society above its selfishness, so there is a possibility Marx was implying that security was part of “raising” society above its egoism and creating equality but instead it is used to assure the bourgeoisie of their private property rights and to continue their established hegemony over wealth.

Krassimir Kanev said “Political emancipation in that society, which according to Marx was incomplete”. Kanev then goes on to argue against Marx, however if Marx was wrong in 1843 then why have human rights activists been attempting to reconcile human rights with society ever since. Even in the United Nations it has now been added “Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining” and so although I am sure Marx would still not be happy with the “human rights” according to the UN Declaration, especially with the continuation for the right to private property, but it would be interesting if we could ask Marx today what he thought of this right which would appear to be an attempt at reconciling the society with the egoism of the capitalists.

Kanev very quickly glosses over Marx’s comments about “equality” and there is very little said at all, Krassi says “according to Marx equality is (equality is that) of the *liberté* described above – namely: each man is to the same extent regarded as such a self-sufficient monad.” In reality, in article 3 of the Declaration (as well as in the French Constitution from 1795, which is quoted by Marx) equality is defined more widely as in equality under the law, not only as equality in exercising basic freedoms. And again Krassi is taking what Marx said out of context; Marx said “The term ‘equality’ used here in its non-political sense, is nothing but the *liberté* described above and has here no political significance. It is only the equal right to liberty as defined above”. So Marx says “Equality” is “liberty” and “liberty” is “property”. Marx equated “equality” as “previously defined” which is “The... right of liberty is the right of private property.” And it is private property that is separating man from man. This statement by Marx is important for two reasons, the first is that it can’t be said that Marx was against equality, on the contrary it seems that Marx is constantly attacking ideas and practices that divide people and create inequality, so Marx is not opposed to “equality”, he is opposed to this form of “equality” which he doesn’t consider to be equality at all. The second reason this line is important is that it shows a reoccurring theme where Marx continues to relate everything back to private property and so it also goes

to show that most likely Marx is referring to “security” according to the same principle, in that bourgeois “security” is merely the security of private property. Later in correspondence Engels wrote:

The idea of socialist society as the realm of equality is a one-sided French idea resting upon the old “liberty, equality, fraternity,” an idea which was justified as a stage of development in its own time and place but which, like all the one-sided ideas of the earlier socialist schools, should now be overcome, for they only produce confusion in people’s heads.

How can there be “equality under the law” when the presumption of the law is that private property is more sacred than human life and dignity? Equality under the law presumes that all come from equal environments and so can be judged equal to one another. The Director of Sofia Central Prison made the same argument when they refused me access to a computer to do my university work, which of course Kanev opposed. The argument made to court was that it was discrimination to allow me access to a computer to do my university work as then the prison would have to allow everyone access to a computer. The lawyer and judge in turn then asked the representative of the Prison “give me a list of all the other prisoners who are doing university degrees and who want access to computers but have been denied” and the Prison representative stared blankly at the judge and replied “but there are no others”. “Equality” is not equal if people have different needs yet are all offered the same solution. “Equality” under the then bourgeois law meant that a person stealing to eat was punished equally as a person stealing for greed. “Equality” under the law can only be presupposed under an equality of circumstance. Otherwise what we are really asking of the law is to discriminate based on individual circumstance and to bring it back to Marx, this would mean lack of property and access to resources within the society.

Besides the term “equality” being again addressed later in his work there is another point that is reoccurring that is almost always overlooked by Liberalist critics of Marx and Marxism and that is that he sees the Liberalist politics as a good thing, but only a stepping stone to a better thing, as Engels said the bourgeois concepts were “justified”.

Kanev says “it isn’t clear in what way these and other such rights (the right not to be deprived of freedom unless in the case of violation of the law) are the rights of the egoistic man like the member of the civil society and if or how it is extended from the right to private property”. But Marx wouldn’t have bothered to have paid attention to such an issue for 3 reasons, the first is that those who fulfil the law are the bourgeoisie and so will be biased in their fulfilment for the benefit of their selfish whims. The second is that the law itself is biased towards private property and the third is that these 2 points would have been obvious to his contemporaries

and within the context that Marx was writing his reply in. In answer to Kanev's statement the question should be asked "does wealth/money influence if and how someone is deprived of freedom?" the answer is glaringly clear and the statistics don't lie that the majority of prisoners come from (materialistically) deprived environments and are more often than not themselves (materialistically) deprived at the time of either the crime or the arrest/incarceration. This "phenomena" is undeniable and I come from a country that is founded on this principle around the time of Marx, whereby the poor were sentenced to transportation to Australia as a punishment for stealing food. Not to mention all the trade unionists who were also transported to penal work camps and prisons in Australia simply for being in or trying to start a workers' union. For example, "the Tolpuddle Martyrs were six men from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset who were transported to Australia on the Surrey in 1834. They were sentenced for unlawfully administering oaths of loyalty to the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers they had established to fight the continuing reduction of their wages. This was the beginning of Trade Unionism in England. It only took the jury five minutes to convict James Hammett, James Brine, brothers George and James Loveless, and father and son Thomas and John Standfield. Interestingly, the local magistrate was a factory owner who stood to lose if they got their way."

In this context where workers were severely punished when they made attempts to increase their own standard of life the "right to Liberty" is the "freedom" to repress workers who are in fact fighting for their rights, but unlike the bourgeois "rights" the workers were not fighting for their rights to dominate another but instead they were fighting for their right to live. Interestingly, Kanev almost completely ignores Article 16 of the Constitution, and except for passing references Krassimir makes no direct mention of it within his text. Article 16 of the Constitution declares:

The right of property is that which belongs to every citizen of enjoying and disposing as he will of his goods and revenues, of the fruits of his work and industry.

And then Marx's comment is as such:

The right of property is, therefore, the right to enjoy one's fortune and to dispose of it as one will; without regard for other men and independently of society. It is the right of self-interest. This individual liberty, and its application, form the basis of civil society. It leads every man to see in other men, not the realization, but rather the limitation of his own liberty. It declares above all the right "to enjoy and to dispose as one will, one's goods and revenues, the fruits of one's work and industry".

It is not by chance that this was ignored by Kanev as here Marx says specifically that “the right of property... and its application... form the basis of civil society” therefore according to Marx “civil society” is formed on this basis and therefore it would stand that as an extension of this argument that any defence or promotion of the “civil society” is a defence and promotion of property, a defence such as the police or a promotion such as the so called “human rights”. Primarily if someone wishes to discredit Marx there is only one point that should be considered and that is “if a person has the right to do what s/he wishes with his/her property?” If a person believes that this is the case, then all arguments of Marx unravel as also likewise discredited and as such there is no point on discussing Marx at all. If, however, a person does not believe that people should have the absolute freedom to do what they will with their property then we can begin the discussion about Marx.

Kanev says “nowhere later in his works did Marx focus so much on the details of human rights as he did in ‘On the Jewish Question’” but this can only be claimed from a capitalist perspective where by it could be claimed that the entirety of Marx’s work for example *The Manifesto* or *Capital* have nothing to do with human rights. It is absolutely a human right not to be exploited, except according to the capitalists and their acolytes. Not only is the entirety of Marx’s later works fundamentally about human rights Marx says in *Capital*:

freedom because both buyer and seller of a commodity... are determined only by their free will... equality because each enters into relations with the other as with a simple owner of commodities and they exchange equivalent with equivalent. Property because each disposes only what is his own. And Bentham because each looks only to his own advantage. The only force bringing them together is selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each.

Again in a later critique Marx wrote “It is, therefore, a right to inequality, in its content, like every right.” The only way that Kanev can claim that *Capital* has nothing to do with human rights is by making many “social” human rights “non-political”. Van Harpen put it “He also justly stated that behind legal liberty and equality of citizens the greatest un-liberty and inequality can be hidden, namely in the socio-economic area. He strongly emphasized this aspect in his later work.” Marx directly links the laws (“human rights”) in *Capital* as a fundamental basis for his argument for socialism when he said:

At first the **rights of property** seemed to us to be based on a man’s own labour. At least, some such assumption was necessary since only commodity owners with **equal rights** confronted each other, and the sole means by which a man

could become possessed of the commodities of others, was by alienating his own commodities; and these could be replaced by labour alone. **Now, however, property turns out to be the right**, on the part of the capitalist, to appropriate the unpaid labour of others or its product, and to be the impossibility, on the part of the labourer, of appropriating his own product. The separation of property from labour has become the necessary consequence of a **law** that apparently originated in their identity. Therefore, however much the capitalist mode of appropriation may seem to fly in the face of the original laws of commodity production, it nevertheless arises, not from a violation, but, on the contrary, **from the application of these laws**.

Ironically the idea that workers have rights is contrary to Liberalist understandings of human rights and contrary to the accusation by Steven Lukes that “the Marxist canon provides no reasons for protecting human rights”. Then where are the human rights of a person not to die of starvation, as did a million (conservative estimate) in Ireland between 1846 to 1852 in the name of bourgeois “liberty” and “equality”? It is well known that it was a direct cause of the “liberty” of the “free” market that murdered so many Irish. Donnelly conservatively writes “Laissez-faire, the reigning economic orthodoxy of the day, held that there should be as little government interference with the economy as possible. Under this doctrine, stopping the export of Irish grain was an unacceptable policy alternative, and it was therefore firmly rejected in London” on top of a million odd deaths, 2.1 million Irish were forced to emigrate simply so they could find food with an estimated 80 000 Irish dying on the way. Where are the human rights guaranteeing people access to water, education, healthcare, employment or a minimum wage? It is true that most if not all of these issues have become part of the present day understanding of human rights, but even the European Convention of Human Rights doesn’t guarantee people access to education for example. But even if we take the right to education as according to the laws of the individual states, it was not by following the human rights of that which Marx was referencing to, that rights of those without wealth (property) started to take root in the form of the “welfare state”. On the contrary it was years of conflict and millions of deaths and instability that resulted in the welfare state whereby the Liberalists were wrestled to the negotiating table and blackmailed into compromising with the working class.

Are we supposed to believe that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights by chance originated in 1948, only 3 years after the most devastating war in the earth’s history - WWII? It was not through the respect of property that poor/working class people increased their rights, on the contrary it was exactly the threat they posed to the bourgeoisie that the bourgeoisie conceded their right of property which “belongs to every citizen of enjoying and disposing as he will of his goods

and revenues, of the fruits of his work and industry". It wasn't even through the respecting of their own "human rights" that the bourgeoisie established their own "human rights" anyway, it was through the guillotine that the bourgeoisie established the beloved Liberalist "human rights". Through the guillotine and the destruction and confiscation of property that the bourgeoisie rewrote social structures. A major concession the bourgeoisie made was recognized by Marx when he said:

The state as a state abolishes private property (i.e. man decrees by political means the abolition of private property) when it abolishes the property qualification for electors and representatives, as has been done in many of the North American States. Hamilton interprets this phenomenon quite correctly from the political standpoint: The masses have gained a victory over property owners and financial wealth. Is not private property ideally abolished when the non-owner comes to legislate for the owner of property? The property qualification is the last political form in which private property is recognized. But the political suppression of private property not only does not abolish private property; it actually presupposes its existence. The state abolishes, after its fashion, the distinctions established by birth, social rank, education, occupation, when it decrees that birth, social rank, education, occupation are non-political distinctions; when it proclaims, without regard to these distinctions, that every member of society is an equal partner in popular sovereignty, and treats all the elements which compose the real life of the nation from the standpoint of the state. But the state, none the less, allows private property, education, occupation, to, act after their own fashion, namely as private property, education, occupation, and to manifest their particular nature.

Marx recognizes the "victory" that is signified when the property qualification is ended, where political "emancipation" is no longer reliant on official differences in wealth between citizens. With this recognition he both recognizes human rights again as progressive but continues in his fashion demanding that it is not enough.

And so with the rise of the modern welfare state actually we have recognition from the states that actually birth, social rank, education and occupations ARE in fact political as they enter the realm of legislation which directly violates the so called "human right" of Article 16, the right to do that which he will with his property. The violation comes in the form of taxation and redistribution of wealth through social programs such as social welfare, public housing, public education. Even a state funded highway could be considered a redistribution of wealth as previously main roads were private and controlled by those who built them and through whose property the roads were found in.

Kanev says "even today the most prolific international agreements on a global and regional level that the right to private property, is in the best of cases takes (only) a marginal place". But the irony of this statement is that this was not the

case according to Article 16 of the *Constitution* from which Marx was referring to and now we see that actually Kanev is highlighting the fact that actually Marx was absolutely right at the time of his text and so in contrast to the Constitution of 1793 the absolute right to do what one will with his/her private property has been abolished. Which, as already previously mentioned, Marx himself referred to when non-landed people could become “electors and representatives” within the “politics”. Or is Kanev one of the romantics who believes that the aristocracy and royalty voluntarily gave up their hegemony over political power to the bourgeoisie and in turn the landed bourgeoisie surrendered their hegemony of power over to non-landed citizens? Or is it simply luck that property has taken a “marginal” place in human rights? Krassi continues arguing against the Liberalist agenda when he says the social aspect “of law is an instrument for balancing all types of individual human or institutional behaviour in situations where they conflict with rights and interests of other people or the social interest”. What is Kanev trying to say with this statement? It is unclear if he is continuing to criticise Marx or if he has started taking his side.

Kanev quotes Rawls and says “the principle of rights which is justice is applied always when individuals have various conflicts caused by conditions of limited access to resources”, but would Marx have disagreed with this statement? Of course he wouldn’t have, as the very foundation of Marxism is the limitation that the working class has to the resources within a society. It appears Marx’s point has been lost when Kanev says “the original Marxism however goes further than that and states that private property and class struggle is the root of social conflict.” The two points Kanev has linked together contradict themselves. If a limitation of resources is a cause of conflict, then why then naturally wouldn’t the same apply to class differences of “haves” and “have nots”?

Generalized assertions that Marx was against human rights are simply not correct and don’t reflect either how Marx was criticising the bourgeois so called “human rights” or by that which is proposed as a society of equals. Kanev in his text “Marxism and Human Rights” is presuming that Marx would continue to be opposed to regulations preventing physical harm or arrest to the person in a Communist society. The idea that Marx was arguing for some type of Mad Max dystopia is completely contradictory to all of Marx’s arguments against the bourgeois “human rights” which was that their “human rights” allowed the wealthy to do as they pleased irrelevant of others in the society. So then how could Marx be arguing that a Communist society would be reproducing this characteristic of dominance and oppression? On the contrary Marx wrote “In spite of this advance, this equal right is still perpetually burdened with a bourgeois limitation.” Clearly Marx thought that human rights even though they were bourgeois, were an “advance” and a “victory”. Marx doesn’t spend so much time complementing the bourgeois human rights but this doesn’t mean he was opposed to their having

occurred and the fact that he considered them an advancement delegitimizes the hysterical accusations by Liberalists that Marx was opposed to human rights even in their Liberalist early form.

Kanev then wanders out of the realm of Marx and into the realm of Stalinism when he starts comparing Stalinist states to human rights and he says “this method of Marx gives a founding reason for some commentators to conclude that ‘the socialistic individualism is pure nonsense, not logical, not practical in the conditions of the totalitarian socialism and collectivisation’ . But as Adam Smith predicted, the “invisible hand” has played its role and Kanev has apparently unknowingly made an argument for Marx and human rights as according to “On the Jewish Question” Marx is specifically against totalitarianism and in fact Marx starts defending the principle that the state should not force people to renounce their religion much less force them to follow another one against their will. Marx is clearly reversing the racist and totalitarian standpoint of Bauer, even though both oppose religion, Marx doesn’t propose blackmailing Jews to renounce Judaism in order to gain political emancipation and says:

We ask the converse question: from the standpoint of political emancipation can the Jew be required to abolish Judaism, or man be asked to abolish religion?

Krassimir continues comparing Marxism to Bolshevism and states that “human rights didn’t take a central theme in the Bolsheviks” political... doctrine”, but rather than contrast Marxism to Bolshevism, Kanev has made the mistake of referring to Bolshevism as Marxism. Starting from this presupposed conclusion makes understanding Marx impossible, because yes, as Kanev quoted “this method of Marx gives a founding reason for some commentators to conclude that ‘the socialistic individualism is pure nonsense, not logical, not practical in the conditions of the totalitarian socialism and collectivisation’ because Kanev has unknowingly established that Marxism doesn’t fit into Bolshevism and even less so under Stalinism and his legacy. Maybe this is symptomatic of someone coming from a state that proclaimed itself “Marxist”, and for the observant Marxists reading this the irony of calling a state “Marxist” was intentional.

Although Marx is clearly opposed to all religions actually he makes the point that by forcing someone to give up their religion to gain “emancipation” through “citizenship” would not be emancipation at all. Marx then goes on to say:

Religion no longer appears as the basis, but as the manifestation of secular narrowness. That is why we explain the religious constraints upon the free citizens by the secular constraints upon them. We do not claim that they must transcend their religious narrowness in order to get rid of their secular limitations. We claim that they will transcend their religious narrowness once they have

overcome their secular limitations.

Here Marx makes a very significant point that has acted as the basis for contemporary sociological studies and that is that official divisions (for example discriminatory state laws) that then create social divisions. Here Marx is arguing against legislation based on race and or religion and he proposes that to erode social barriers between Jew and non-Jew is to treat them both equally by overcoming “secular limitations”. As we understand human rights today, is not the right “to not be discriminated against due to religious or ethnic reasons” a human right as we understand the concept of “human rights” in the 21st century?

Contrary to the Liberalists who wish to discredit Marx’s work by taking it completely out of context we now see the following human rights in the UN declaration of Human Rights:

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and **association**.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to **public service** in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to **social security** and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, **social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality**.

Article 23

1. **Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.**
2. **Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.**
3. **Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.**
4. **Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.**

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

- 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.**
- 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.**

Article 26

- 1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.**
- 2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.**
- 3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.**

Although Kanev gives praise to the human rights work and achievements of so called “Euro – Communists” which Kanev presents as not actually being normal Marxists compared to the Stalinists, Van Herpen said “it is certainly not in the last place thanks to Marx that the classical human rights catalogue in the 20th century has been extended... such as, amongst other, those which can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nation articles 22 to 26” and the UN declaration adopted its social rights section many years before the so called emergence of “Euro – Communists” in the 70’s.

These basic tenants of the modern welfare state are now taken for granted and there are two ways to interpret them. The first is that the Liberalists had to concede their property rights as revolutions and wars over resources reached such a disastrous level that for the first time in history the ruling elite lived in almost constant instability. The threats came both from the poor and destitute within their own societies but also from rival states that had failed. The biggest

threat didn't come in the way of riots that burnt the property of the capitalists, the biggest threat was the spectre haunting Europe threatening to fundamentally change the interpersonal relations within society to such a degree that the entire Liberalist model of economy and life would cease to exist. If the threat was clear, the solution was not so much so, but the Liberalists knew they had to counter the threat that Communism posed to their domination of the economy and therefore society. The immediate response of the bourgeoisie/Liberalists was an attempt at suppressing the Communists. Those who grew up in the Warsaw Pact states often forget that the Communists themselves were first persecuted before they themselves persecuted and it was the capitalist states and the Liberals who taught the Communists their tactics of torture, incarceration and suppression. Marx himself was constantly persecuted without ever having committed a single act of violence either against an individual or property. In most capitalist states the Communist parties were outlawed, their members summarily incarcerated and in many cases executed. The overwhelming poverty and despair of Europeans at the time meant that there was no stopping the wave of the Communist phenomena. It was as inevitable as a hungry person wants food.

In states where the capitalists were losing control fascist dictatorships were encouraged by the capitalist classes both within the said state and from abroad and fascists such as Franco, Hitler and Mussolini were seen as necessary evils. The entire League of Nations embargoed Republican Spain and gave material, moral and diplomatic support to the Spanish fascists. The ruling elites of Germany, Italy and Spain sponsored their fascist dictators as a way of dealing with workers who were demanding increased social rights and almost immediately Franco, Mussolini and Hitler banned workers' unions and any semblance of organized labour or social movements. Lenin has a lot to be criticised about but can it be said he was wrong when he said "fascism is capitalism in decay"? The second way to interpret the adoption of the welfare state into what should be called neo-liberal model is that the Liberalists have all become Marxists, of course in part. But the second perspective of how Liberalists grudgingly accepted the welfare state would mean to presume that capitalists suddenly grew a conscience which is much less likely.

Kanev claims that the roots of Bolshevism were in Marx's texts; however nothing further from the truth could be said, especially if we consider the primary source for Kanev's essay which is "On the Jewish Question", where Marx defends human rights violated by the "human rights" as proposed by the ruling elite of the time. Marx's text "On the Jewish Question" can be summarized as such:

Human rights are not humane.

Marx was staunchly anti-censorship of the press as censorship was practiced

in most if not all of the states protected by the so called “human rights” and Marx said “censorship asks ‘The instruction demands unlimited trust in the estate of officials, and it proceeds from unlimited distrust in the estate of non-officials. Why should we not pay tit for tat? Why should we not look with suspicion on precisely this estate of officials?’ this sentiment is also significant as it shows that Marx never could have justified a totalitarian state. He was opposed to the legal separation of people based on their religion or race even though he himself was anti-religion. At the same time, he was arguing in favour of equal treatment for racial/religious minorities. He was also under no illusion that people didn’t need protection from the state, in the form of rights.

Contrary to Kanev’s assertion that there is such a thing as “Western Marxism” a more correct interpretation should be “Marxism” and Bolshevism. There can’t be such a thing as “Western Marxism” as there is either “Marxism” or “non-Marxism”. When describing something that isn’t exactly Marxist but Marxist inspired I often use the term “Marxwelian”. A second reason why there can be no such thing as “Western Marxism” is because Marx himself was “Western” and as is well known he was born in Germany and subsequently lived in only Western European states. Mostly the concept of “Western Marxism” isn’t correct as it presumes the position of the Bolsheviks is Marxist and furthermore that it is the true Marxism or else “Western” Marxism wouldn’t need differentiation when talking about Marxist analysis in Western Europe.

Kanev interestingly differentiates between the Marxist parties of the capitalist “Western” states and those of the Warsaw Pact states. Kanev recognizes that human rights play an important role in both the policies and practices of the “Social Democratic traditions” and Kanev states that said parties never kept to “Marxist orthodoxy”, but of course this is again a Bolshevik orientated perspective. It can be and I say it should be argued that it was the Bolsheviks and the Warsaw Pact states that didn’t ever use Marxist orthodoxy and it is a completely different theme but the mega totalitarian state structures of the Warsaw Pact states would have horrified Marx who demanded direct workers’ democracy and a “withering” away of the state and its recognizable structures. The Bolsheviks did the complete opposite and created states that the bourgeoisie could only be jealous of. What is also interesting about Kanev’s distinction between the Marxists in the “West” and those of the Bolsheviks and it goes back to a fundamental misconception anti-Marxists base their diatribe on, that is, that Marx saw capitalism as a progress and necessary. Not only this but he based his proletariat communist society as coming out of a bourgeois society having already established said human rights. The Marxist idea of communism was to take root in the industrialized societies and furthermore societies where there was established a surplus of production. None of the basic building blocks by which Marx based his critiques were present within the Russian Empire at the time of the revolution there, including the

bourgeois human rights. Engels even stated “Since, however, the Communists cannot count on the decisive struggle between themselves and the bourgeoisie until the bourgeoisie rules”.

Debatably it is exactly due to the respect of Marxist principles against coercion that the non-totalitarian Social Democratic tendencies around the world have not been able to achieve political power and have suffered dreadfully at the hand of bourgeois “human rights” for example in Indonesia where Australia, the USA and other Liberalist states funded, armed, supported and encouraged the Liberalist dictator to genocide the Communists of Indonesia. The bourgeoisie enforced their “human rights” on other places to, for example what is now known as the “Iran – Contra Affair” where the Liberalists funded, armed and directly managed the enforcement of bourgeois “human rights” in Nicaragua in what is known as a “dirty war”. The list of Liberalist interventions in the name of bourgeois Liberal “human rights” is well known. The cancelling of elections in Vietnam in the name of “democracy”, the sabotaging of elections in Italy and all committed by the bourgeois security – “Police”. Marx himself addressed this issue by sarcastically saying “if one grows impoverished and the other grows wealthier then this is of their own free will....(under these conditions workers may have to be) forced to be free” and we see this as a reoccurring theme in the practice of Liberalism, which of course contradicts the romantic Liberalist ideology that the Liberalist economy is natural and sought and yearned for by everyone, when the Liberalists have to kill and incarcerate people back into the “free” market.

Kanev refers to the idea of “Euro-Communism” which of course isn’t his concept, however again it is an attempt to claim that the Marxists outside of the Warsaw Pact – Stalinist states are some sort of oddity of Marxism. Kanev then correctly continues by stating “these parties are at the forefront of some of the most important reforms, connected with human rights and on the personal, national and international level. The Euro-Communists are more receptive to human rights, especially after some of the largest Western European Communist Parties accepted the theory and policies of Euro-Communism from the mid 70’s and onwards”. But Marx and Engels were never so totalitarian in their means as the Stalinists were/are, Engels said:

Question 25: What is the attitude of the Communists towards the other political parties of our day?

Answer: This attitude differs from country to country — In England, France, and Belgium, where the bourgeoisie rules, the Communists still have for the time being a common interest with the various democratic parties, which is all the greater the more in the socialist measures they are now everywhere advocating the democrats approach the aims of the Communists, that is, the more clearly and definitely they uphold the interests of the proletariat and the more they rely on

the proletariat. In England, for instance, the Chartists, who are all workers, are incalculably nearer to the Communists than are the democratic petty bourgeois or so-called radicals.

In America, where a democratic constitution has been introduced, the Communists must make common cause with the party that will turn this constitution against the bourgeoisie and use it in the interest of the proletariat, that is, with the national agrarian reformers.

In Switzerland the radicals, although still a very mixed party, are yet the only people with whom the Communists can have anything to do, and, further, among these radicals those in the cantons of Vaud and of Geneva are the most advanced. Finally, in Germany the decisive struggle between the bourgeoisie and the absolute monarchy is still to come. Since, however, the Communists cannot count on the decisive struggle between themselves and the bourgeoisie until the bourgeoisie rules, it is in the interests of the Communists to help bring the bourgeoisie to power as soon as possible in order as soon as possible to overthrow them again. The Communists must therefore always take the side of the liberal bourgeois against the governments but they must ever be on their guard against sharing the self-deceptions of the bourgeois or believing their false assurances about the benefits which the victory of the bourgeoisie will bring to the proletariat. The only advantages which the victory of the bourgeoisie will provide for the Communists will be:

1. Various concessions which make easier for the Communists the defence, discussion and spreading of their principles and thus the unification of the proletariat into a closely knit, militant and organised class, and
2. The certainty that from the day when the absolute governments fall, comes the turn for the fight between bourgeois and proletarians. From that day onwards the party policy of the Communists will be the same as in the countries where the bourgeoisie already rules.

Again not only do we see the reoccurring idea that bourgeois democracy is an “advance” but we even see Engels directly telling Communists to work with Liberals against “absolute governments”. Not only that but Engels even bases Communism in the USA on the same Constitution that Kanev argues that Marx was opposed to.

More accurately the Communist parties outside of the Warsaw Pact states returned to orthodox Marxism during the mid-70’s in what is referred to as “Euro-Communism” as more and more Communists broke away from the Stalinist policies of the Warsaw Pact states, and despite the claim that Stalinism ended after Stalin, Stalinism continued in varying degrees in the Warsaw Pact states until they ended as states. The so called “de-Stalinization” of the Warsaw Pact states was merely a change of guard from one group of Stalinists to another.

Kanev concludes well listing many rights that he is claiming that Marx “neglected” and to some degree Kanev is correct that Marx paid little to no

attention to things such as domestic violence, but this is an irrelevant point that implies Marx neglected such issues meaning either he was opposed to the human rights protecting people from domestic violence or that he underestimated the importance of Liberalist human rights in regards to such issues. Both implications are incorrect as firstly as has been shown several times, Marx believed that the bourgeois human rights were a good thing compared to what pre-existed and it wasn't Marx who underestimated the established human rights, it is exactly the underestimated flaws of the bourgeois human rights that Marx is focusing on. The historical context is also significant as both the bourgeois and Marx were reacting to a "Hobbesian" perspective of society and the state's role and the reasons for it.

In a roundabout way Marx has made his position clear when he opposed the forcing of people to renounce or take up one or another religion and so from here we have the concept of individual rights outside of that of the antisocial capitalist rights. Marx opposed the egoism of the bourgeoisie and their right of one person to abuse another through the exploitation of his/her labour and so then what would be the natural stance of Marx in regard to one person using physical force over another? Marx is opposed to the coercion of people through political force such as denial or application of the rights of a citizen. Marx was opposed to the psychological force over people through censorship of free speech.

Ironically most likely the overwhelming human rights that Kanev is himself defending are those that Marx pointed out were missing in the Liberalist version of human rights during his time, and so we enter into paradoxes that after living some time in Bulgaria start to seem normal, where anti – communists are actually promoting Marxism. Of course the reverse is also true whereby the "Communists" are opposing Marxism and they built a mega state that was even more disenfranchised from the proletariat than the bourgeois state it had displaced. So-called "Liberalists" demand that the state increase its social welfare for its citizens funded by taxes, the violation of property rights and "Communists" demand that workers from foreign states be shot at the border. It is not correct to blame Marx for the actions of the "Marxists". When holding up Marx to the policies of the Stalinists we can see glaring inconsistencies. The basic tenant of Marx is that human rights are human rights and not business rights.

Bibliography

Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (1914), The Verso Book Of Dissent (Verso, 2010).

Frederick Engels *on the Gotha Programme*, Engels to August Bebel pp. 43 (London, March 1875).

MIA: Encyclopedia of Marxism: *Glossary of Terms* <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/index.htm>.

Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (1843).

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Capital*, 1887 Progress Publishers, Moscow, USSR.

Karl Marx “Critique Of The Gotha Programme”, Foreign Language Press Peking 1972 – Marginal Notes To The Programme Of The German Workers’ Party.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party With an Appendix ENGELS Principles of Communism*, Progress Publishers Moscow First printing 1971.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party With an Appendix ENGELS Principles of Communism*, Progress Publishers Moscow First printing 1971 - Written at the end of October 1847 Marx and Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6, pp. 341-57.

Karl Marx, *Works of Karl Marx 1842*, Comments on The Latest Prussian Censorship, Written: between January 15 and February 10, 1842; first published: in Anekdotia zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publicistik, Bd. I, 1843.

Krassimir Kanev, *Марксизмът и правата на човека*, (published on my printer in the computer room 2017).

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Chapter 2, Book 4.

Steven Lukes, “Can a Marxist believe in human rights?”, Praxis International, 1(4), 1982, 334-45 (344).

(French) Constitution of 1793.

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Ролс, Д. 1998. Теория на справедливостта. София: София – С. А.

Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), Adopted on 1 July 1949 by the General Conference of the International Labour Organisation at its thirty-second session, Entry into force: 18 July 1951, in accordance with article 8, United Nations.

Jim Donnelly, *The Irish Famine*, BBC, 2011-02-17 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/fa>.

The Great Famine: Ireland’s Agony 1845 – 52 is published by Continuum and is available on Amazon (2013) <http://www.irishcentral.com/newsnew-facts-about-g>.

United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

Frederick Engels, Marx-Engels Correspondence 1890, Engels to C. Schmidt In Berlin <http://www.marxists.org/archivemarxworks1890l>.

Prime minister Margaret Thatcher, talking to Women’s Own magazine, October 31 1987 <http://www.briandeer.com/socialthatcher-society>.

Convicts to Australia - Political Prisoners A Guide to Researching Your Convict Ancestors <http://www.members.iinet.net.au/~perthdpsconvictsres>.

Marcel H. Van Herpen, ‘Marx and Human Rights – Analysis of Ambivalent Relationship’, The Cicero Foundation Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper

No. 12/07, Paris/Maastricht, 2012.

Text that I can't find the author of, *Marx on the Jewish Question*, https://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/robertfine/home/teachingmaterial/humanrights/lecturepodcast/marxs_critique_of_rights.pdf&ved=0ahUKEwiOgO7jhc3TAhUFXBoKHW6eAj0QFggvMAA&usg=AFQjCNGYbtiawPtoTs4V-RycX-CbOOG3xA.

Yenni Kwok, *Indonesia's Mass Killings of 1965 Were Crimes Against Humanity - International Judges Say*, Jul 20, 2016.

Margaret Scott, *The Indonesian Massacre: What Did the US Know?* November 2, 2015.

The Vietnam War: A Political and Military Mistake.

Roland Matthews and others, Iran-Contra Affair, American History, Encyclopaedia Britannica.

