

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 turmoils 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.