

In this issue

Our fourth annual English edition, *Revolutionary Marxism 2020*, is coming out at a time of unprecedented, almost unique, crisis in modern history. For the first time in world history, a dire public health crisis has brought together close to 190 countries, that is to say almost the entire planet, in a desperate struggle against a pandemic of enormous proportions. This disaster is testimony to the fact that it is not only a world economy, a world politics, or a world literature that has been created by capitalism, as predicted through the analysis of the nature of capital by Marx (and Engels). Disasters have also been internationalized. How capitalism will overcome this challenge with the health care systems that have been systematically decimated all around the world for the last four decades is a mystery to all.

However, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic is not confined to the domain of public health alone. At least two more dimensions stand out for their immediate and decisive effect on people's lives around the globe. The first is the free fall of the world capitalist economy set off by the lockdown that has been imposed in the struggle against the pandemic. The collapse of the stock exchange internationally from early March on is now accompanied by a headlong plunge of world growth. This will, in all likelihood, become the most profound economic crisis modern world history has witnessed, surpassing even the mammoth crisis of the 1930s. This is but a new avatar in the history of what many of our authors have called the Third Great Depression. After the "Great Recession" of the post-2008 scene, the IMF has once again found a term that will absolve capitalism of all blame regarding this profound crisis: the "Great Lockdown". The ideological battle is continuing in and through the pandemic.

The other aspect has to do with the self-exposition of capitalism in its most naked and brute image as a class society based on exploitation. The sheer hypocrisy of the "stay home" recommendation of the establishment to the upper and middle strata of society is clear for all to see when capital is driving millions and tens of millions of workers in each country out of their homes via crowded transportation into huddled work conditions in factories, warehouses, and retail stores of all sizes to make them prey to the virus. Capital no longer contents itself with sucking the surplus labour

of workers but poses their death as a precondition to its accumulation of surplus value. Hidden at other times beneath a veil of freedom and equality, capitalism is now proving to be no different from precapitalistic societies, slaveholding, feudal or otherwise.

There is not a shred of doubt that a new stage has opened up in the unfolding of the Third Great Depression and its accompanying consequences such as the rise of proto-fascism, of an approaching world war, and the outbreak of revolutionary struggles on different continents. History is calling out to socialism as the solution and to Marxist forces as the standard-bearer of that new society, much more adequate to the productive forces that have outgrown their capitalist straitjacket, much more adapted to the age-long aspirations of the masses culminating in a classless society, much more humane.

Our first dossier in this issue deals precisely with the pandemic. Sungur Savran characterizes the coronavirus pandemic crisis as “historic” in nature. He takes up the different facets of the question (health care, economic, and class) in order to reach a synthesis that brings out the historic significance of the situation we are going through. This he calls a crisis of civilization, which points to the fact that by sending the working class to possible death for the extraction of surplus-value, the capitalist system is at the same time cutting the ground from under its own feet and, obversely, seen from the point of view of the worker, capital now appears as an alien force that not only exploits labour, but sends the owner of the labour power to her death. This is the outward expression of the exhaustion of the possibilities capitalism can sustain and develop.

Levent Dölek argues that we are currently witnessing the COVID-19 pandemic not only as a fatal health problem but also as a deepening of the capitalist crisis with the pandemic. The class struggle is sharpening. On the world scale and in the context of the Turkish experience, the choice between planning and the market, profit and need, private property and public property is on the agenda of humanity in a bare and irreconcilable contrast. Society is fighting a double war against both the pandemic and capitalism.

In the context of the ongoing Third Great Depression that is getting deeper as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, there are proposals for a new “welfare state”. The main reference of such proposals is the so-called “golden age of capitalism” that lasted from the end of World War II to the mid-1970s. In his paper titled “The welfare state nostalgia”, Özgür Öztürk analyses the background of the welfare state institutions of that period, within the general framework of the formation dynamics of social policy, and in terms of class struggles, the process of capital accumulation and the activities of the capitalist state. His basic thesis is that the achievements of laborers can become permanent, not by means of any “welfare state”, but only through the political rule of laborers.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought to the fore the special place Cuba occupies as a workers’ state with respect to its healthcare system. Cuban doctors and nurses were flown into Milan in late March to help one of the richest regions of Europe, Lombardia, cope with the virus, which was later complemented by the expedition of other groups of Cuban medics to other countries suffering from COVID-19. This

obviously raises a question: how does Cuba approach the Coronavirus pandemic at home? An American living in Cuba, Merriam Ansara, published a lovely piece on this aspect of the question on the web site of the American left-wing magazine *Counterpunch*. We as *Revolutionary Marxism* discovered this piece only as we were going to press and without even finding the opportunity to consult either the author or *Counterpunch*, for lack of time, we decided to publish it for the benefit of our readers.

The rise of fascism at this beginning of the 21st century has been a constant theme in the previous issues of *Revolutionary Marxism*. The 2017 issue devoted its top dossier to the rise of reactionary and repressive political movements, with articles on the election of Trump and the regimes in Hungary and Poland. The 2019 issue, in its main dossier, directly turned to the fascist phenomenon in its classical form. In between the 2018 issue also included an article on the discussion of “populism”. Now, our current issue revisits the question of fascism with two articles.

The first article in this dossier is the sequel to Sungur Savran’s article published in our last issue on classical fascism. In that article with the overall title “The return of barbarism”, Savran had tried to bring out the distinctive characteristics of fascism that set it apart from other reactionary repressive regimes on the basis of a close scrutiny of Nazism and Italian fascism as the paradigmatic instances of the overall movement. In the sequel to that article, the author studies a constellation of movements and personalities that range from the so-called “populist” right in Europe to Trump in the United States, Bolsonaro in Brazil and Modi in India, in order to come to grips with the nature of the new threat on the horizon. Sensitive to the specificities of each of these different instances, Savran nonetheless attacks the concept “populism” and develops the category of proto-fascism as an overarching characterization, thus sounding a warning to the entire international left.

In the second article of the dossier, Burak Gürel shows that India has a special place in the global rise of the far-right today because the fascist movement there significantly resembles the “classical fascism” of the interwar period in terms of its social basis, ideology, and methods. The core of the Indian fascist movement has been the upper-caste small and medium bourgeoisie. The movement probably has the oldest and best-organized fascist paramilitary organization of the world. It also has an irredentist program based on the dream of “Greater India.” On the other hand, Gürel also stresses that although the fascist BJP has stayed in power since 2014, the fascistization of the current political regime is still incomplete due to (first and foremost) the absence of a revolutionary or radical reformist threat coming from the left. Moreover, India’s highly complex social structure and the existence of many political parties organized on the basis of different castes, ethnicities, and regional interests pose a severe obstacle to the Hindutva movement in its long-term endeavor to turn India into a fascist dictatorship. The opposition of the mainstream parties and the radical left have not weakened enough to allow such a radical transformation. Therefore, there is still a steep road in front of the fascist movement in India to reach its ultimate goal. However, since the ongoing great depression aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic may intensify class struggles as well as inter-capitalist and inter-state competition, there is no insurmountable

barrier between proto-fascism and fascism in India or elsewhere.

2020 is a special year for Marxists. After the bicentenary of Marx that was celebrated in 2018, this year is the bicentenary of that other giant of the 19th century, Friedrich Engels. The mother of *Revolutionary Marxism*, the Turkish journal *Devrimci Marksizm* organized in May 2018 a Conference in Istanbul in honor of the bicentenary of Marx where different aspects of his revolutionary theory and practice (dialectics, critique of capitalism, women's oppression and liberation, class struggle, the national question and his entire oeuvre read as a revolutionary project) were discussed. This year *Devrimci Marksizm* is planning a dossier for its Fall issue on different facets of Engels' contribution to Marxism. Unfortunately, our annual English issue is coming out too early to include any of that material.

However, this year is also special in terms of the anniversaries of the second generation of great Marxists, especially the two towering figures of that generation, Lenin and Trotsky. 2020 happens to be the 150th anniversary of Lenin's birth in April and the 80th anniversary of the assassination of Trotsky in August. This explains our third dossier of this issue on the twin figures of Lenin and Trotsky.

The first article in the dossier looks into the relationship between these two historic figures under the title "Lenin and Trotsky: The anatomy of a relationship". Sungur Savran considers the relationship from different angles: the differences between the two Russian revolutionaries before 1917, the way those differences were resolved in the heat of the October revolution, how Trotsky's conversion to Bolshevism changed his entire orientation and made him, in an ironic turn of history, the defender of the traditions of Bolshevism in the face of the bureaucratic Thermidor the revolution experienced from the second half of the 1920s on, with a discussion of the many-sided causality of why Trotsky was defeated in his fight against the Stalinist onslaught of total revision of the Marxist programme. Savran's conclusion on the relationship is summed up by a quotation from Trotsky himself of late 1918: "I realized only too well what Lenin meant to the revolution, to history, and to me. He was my master." In a sequel to this article to be published in the next issue of *Revolutionary Marxism*, Savran will attempt to show how the international Trotskyist movement in most of its variants veered away from this conception so clearly expressed by Trotsky and how all this is related to the political problems that have beset this movement throughout the decades.

The second piece of the dossier is by Trotsky on Lenin. In a much-neglected short piece of a gem, Trotsky wrote, on the occasion of Lenin's 50th birthday, on the relationship of the leader of the revolution to Russian history and to the exploited and oppressed classes of Russia, the proletariat and the peasantry. This is a most startling piece coming from one of the most intransigent internationalists in the history of Marxism because it casts a look at the profound local roots and characteristics of Lenin as a revolutionary. That is why *Revolutionary Marxism* attributes great importance to this short article: it shows through the pen of Trotsky the importance of local tradition and of revolutionary parties and leaders being a part and parcel of the peculiar universe of the nation they are to lead even when proletarian internationalism precludes all fetishism of the nation as such. To be able to cope with this dialectically contradictory predicament is the hallmark

of successful revolutionary leadership. This man, Lenin, who lived the life of a cosmopolitan in exile for around half of his adult life and spoke fluently and read copiously in three foreign languages, was also a living embodiment, according to that sharp observer of people that was Trotsky, of the Russian worker and peasant.

Our fourth dossier surveys the current state of class conflict in Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Coşkun provides a detailed empirical assessment of the situation of the working class in Turkey during the AKP era since November 2002. Coşkun's article shows that violation of the workers' right to unionize, privatization of state-owned enterprises, informalization of labor, and proletarianization have been the main trends of this era. Coşkun then addresses the question of why the majority of the working class voted for the AKP in subsequent elections, although the government has acted against their interests. He explains the important role of in-cash and in-kind social assistance to the poor in the AKP's project of hegemony. Coşkun also stresses that the mainstream opposition parties represent the interests of other fractions of the Turkish bourgeoisie and, therefore, a strictly labor-oriented socialist strategy can help the working class to reorganize, reclaim its previously lost rights, and move towards an anti-capitalist direction.

Levent Dölek addresses the rousing strike by metal workers, shedding light on its different dimensions such as the importance of the metal industry within the Turkish economy; the traditional leading role of metal workers in class struggles; how the military regime of 1980-83 attacked the militant trade-unionism in the industry to undermine the metal workers' power; how the metal workers' struggles spanning from 1998 to 2015 challenged the post-coup yellow trade-unionism; and the place of the current struggle within those historical developments. We believe that the strike, which is full of lessons for workers, and marks a turning point in the class struggles in recent years, deserves close attention.

The fifth dossier dwells upon diverse problems of socialism in the 20th century. The first article of the dossier focuses on the Hungarian experience. 2019 was the 100th anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, one of the most valuable victories and experiences of the international proletariat, although it was swiftly crushed by the counterrevolution after 133 days. We published Tamás Krausz's article on this event of world-historical importance in our 2019 edition. We are publishing Savas Michael-Matsas's article on the same subject in the current issue. Michael-Matsas provides a brief but fairly comprehensive account of the world-historical context that the Hungarian Revolution of 1919 was born into. The article presents the victory of the October Revolution of 1917 as the main strength and enabling factor behind the Hungarian Socialist Republic. It also stresses the vacillation of the leadership of the republic between reformism and revolution as one of the primary weaknesses of the revolution. Michael-Matsas also emphasizes the necessity of seeing the Hungarian Revolution as a "strategic experience" that provides vital lessons for the communists of today fighting for the world socialist revolution, rather than a case of lost cause.

In his essay titled "Mao redux?", Burak Gürel reviews Minqi Li's 2016 book titled *China and the Twenty-First Century Crisis*, which examines China's transition to capitalism since the late 1970s, and class-struggles during and after

that transition. Gürel's review shows that by linking this transition with the crisis of the capitalist world economy in the second half of the 1970s, Li provides a solid analysis of China's transformation as the main provider of a "spatial fix" to global capitalism since the early 1980s. The analysis of the forthcoming end of the China-centered spatial fix and the resulting intensification of the crisis tendencies of global capitalism is an important contribution of the book. Gürel also points to several shortcomings of the book, among which the absence of deeper reflection on the problems of the theory of "socialism in one country", an uncritical reading of the Maoist legacy, and failure to distinguish socialism from the rejection of neoliberalism appear the most important ones.

Our last dossier explores the links between capitalism, science, technology, and exploitation. It opens with Savas Michael-Matsas's introductory note on the life of Iosif G. Abramson as a revolutionary intellectual. Matsas brings out the best in this nonagenarian Russian communist from the city of the October revolution, still Leningrad to us communists, who lived through almost the entire Soviet period and although was disillusioned by and himself suffered the consequences of the bureaucracy's repression, has, nonetheless remained a communist up until today, even militantly working for his current party, the Russian Party of Communists.

Iosif G. Abramson, an invaluable comrade to us all, had already contributed to our journal's Turkish edition. *Devrimci Marksizm* published his correspondence with the world-renowned Turkish communist poet Nâzım Hikmet, who was living in exile in the Soviet Union in the 1950s. In his short piece in this issue of *Revolutionary Marxism*, Abramson contends that Marx's forecast has come true and that science now *has become* the leading productive force under the capitalist mode of production. However, Abramson indicates that since science requires a very different type of labor power, this new development in the productive forces of society will necessarily lead to a break with capitalism.

The rise of digital technologies has led to the idea that the labor theory of value is no longer valid because of the complications, among others, created by so-called "immaterial labor" peculiar to our period. In a study prepared collectively, the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research leans on the production of the iPhone, a signature product of the digital era, through the lens of the labor theory of value. We publish here the calculation the study makes of the rate of surplus-value in the production of the iPhone by one of the foremost experts in this area, our comrade E. Ahmet Tonak. For considerations of space, we have shortened the study by Tricontinental, to which we present our gratitude for graciously accepting the republication of a shortened version thereof.

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