Mapping classes: How to distinguish between classes[1]

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One of the most important issues for revolutionary theory is to distinguish between classes, to determine the borders between them, and to grasp, on a realistic basis, the class belonging of groups and individuals that make up society. It is not sufficient to define classes in general, to posit the idea that capitalist society is divided into two main classes, and that certain middle or intermediary classes and strata also exist. To make do with the proposition that those who own the means of production under capitalist society and employ workers form the bourgeoisie and those who have to sell their labour power because they are devoid of any such means form the proletariat implies that lifeless abstractions would suffice for the purpose of revolutionary theory. This theory needs to understand, for the purposes of its daily struggles, where the bourgeoisie starts and where it mingles with the petty-bourgeoisie, what the distinctions are within the petty-bourgeoisie itself, and also what sections of the population are a part of the proletariat. What, for instance, is the class nature of the associations, sometimes semi-public bodies, of the professionals such as lawyers, medical doctors, engineers, architects or veterinarian doctors?

Another question: Is there a commonality between the class positions of public employees, say, on the one hand, of a cashier at a municipal administration or an

1 This article was originally written in Turkish some time ago. It has been translated into English by the author himself. Many details that were of interest specifically to a Turkish audience have been omitted and the article is thus shorter than the original. Some new ideas have been introduced, but overall, the entire structure and the argumentation have remained the same.

ordinary employee of a tax administration branch or a nurse working at a publicly run hospital and, on the other, the principal of a government-run school or the president of a university or is there, on the contrary, a class opposition? Revolutionary theory needs to answer that question as well. Are employees of banks, advertising companies, hotels members of the petty-bourgeoisie or proletarians or still another category? What is the class position of army officers? These questions may be multiplied ad infinitum. Revolutionary theory cannot make do with defining classes. It has to map them.

This article will try to clarify the questions of what elements classes comprise, where to draw the borders of different classes and what kind of diversity classes display within themselves, all in countries in which capitalist society is to be found either in an advanced stage or at a medium level of development. There is no empirical research involved. It is rather an essay that tries to fix the borders between the different classes on the basis of general observations made in the course of long years of study of Marxist theory coupled with revolutionary activity. A great majority of the observations to be made in what follows will turn out to be true, we believe, both for advanced capitalist societies as well as those that have advanced to a certain degree of medium-level development, such as, for instance, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, South Africa, and South Korea, as well as our native Turkey. Naturally, there are considerable differences in terms of classes both between and within these two categories of countries we have enumerated. The purpose of the article is to present the general lines of the class structure to be observed in these two groups of countries and not to dwell on their peculiarities.

When talking of classes, we should warn against certain common erroneous conceptions regarding class. Even among those people on the left and even among many who are under the influence of Marxism, a common mistake is to think class in terms of revenue. This a total misconception. Workers who receive high wages are not middle class, they are proletarians. Small shop-owners who can hardly survive and sometimes earn less than some workers are petty-bourgeois and regard themselves as socially superior to proletarians. Certain physicians running their own cabinet may be much richer than many a capitalist, but that does not alter the fact that they are petty-bourgeois. People's income certainly has an impact on the position they adopt in economic and political struggles. But a day will come when a worker paid the highest wage will take a much more radical stand than the poorest among the petty-bourgeois. What is decisive is the potential and actual behaviour of the different classes within class struggle, not their standard of living at a given moment in time.

Secondly, it is not what conception people have of themselves that determines their class, but the material position. A tradition that has its roots in American sociology has been carrying out research based on questionnaires for decades in order to determine the class structure of society, when, let it be added, it does not deny class totally. These are methods that are totally misguided.[2] These kinds of surveys provide us at most with information about how people perceive their position in society, but say nothing

2 In a society where there are pockets of severe poverty, urban or rural, it is common among proletarians who have job security and a decent wage level to consider themselves as "middle class".

as to their real material existence, on the size and distribution of class positions.

Let us, then, briefly turn to the method that we apply in this article for deciding different class positions. Classes are defined on the basis of their position within social production and social reproduction, in other words the reproduction of the social order. The fundamental determinant of the location of a person within social production is the level of control over the means of production, "control" corresponding to private property over these means of production at its highest level. We say "fundamental determinant" because there are also derivative class positions, which are not directly determined by ownership of means of production, but on the relations of such persons to others' relations to the means of production. What all this means will become clearer when we are dwelling on the different classes in what follows.

What is important for us at this stage is the following: Certain schools with roots within Marxism, to cite the Althusserian school as one instance, contend that class is not determined only by the economic instance, but that other instances, politics and ideology in particular need to be brought in. We are of the opinion that this method comes very near to the potential risk of cutting loose from the materialism of Marxism. Class positions, in our view, are determined by the relations between different groups of human beings within the ***sphere of production***. In whatever way may these groups behave in the political sphere, whatever fantastic ideologies may occupy their minds and hearts, their class position defined by production and reproduction is a fundamental given.

Here of course, one should distinguish between the material ***position*** of a class and the ***formation*** of that class. Let us take the worker as an example. The workers working within a capitalist factory are proletarians, even if they do not share any cultural affinity to the rest of the work force or even if no workers within the factory have unionised. For instance, the Chinese workers thrown by the caprice of the world market to the city of Mardin in southeastern Turkey have no common points culturally with the Kurdish and Arabic workers working at the same workplace, do not, indeed, even speak their language. But this is no reason why this would become an obstacle that would rule out their status qua workers in terms of class. However, because class formation, as opposed to class position, depends on the rapport between the individuals and groups of individuals that form that class, and thereby turn that class into a social force that struggles together, many aspects come into play here, from class culture and ideology all the way to politics.

What is of interest to us in this article is not the formation of classes as totalities on their own but the mapping of classes, or, in other words, the distribution of individuals into the different classes. Understanding production relations and the place of individuals within social reproduction is decisive for us. However, in certain cases we will also have recourse to (in the sense of a check on arithmetic operations) class formation dynamics as themselves indicative of class positions.

In the process of mapping classes, or what is the same in reverse order, in the distribution of individuals and groups into classes, one needs to take up with special attention the position of individuals who are not active within the sphere of social production or social reproduction. As a matter of fact, different groups are clustered together in this category. To begin with, there are the elderly who have lost their

capacity to work. As pensioners, these individuals should still be considered part of the class they used to belong to during their working life. For instance, retired workers make up a considerable part of the working class.

Another large category, home makers (most usually women) expend a labour that is indispensable for the reproduction of the human race, but because their labour remains within the family, it is not "recorded" by the categories of the market economy and they themselves are considered outside the active population of the country in question.

Children and the young who have not yet become a part of social production, as well as the chronically ill and the disabled who cannot participate in production activities are, in this sense, very different from women. But because class position is determined by social production and social reproduction, all of these categories, despite the dazzling diversity between them, are in a similar situation when it comes to the criterion for their class belonging. The class belonging of homemakers, of children and youth, of individuals who are unable to work is determined, at most general level, through the mediating environment of their families. Thus, when we are talking of the working class (the proletariat), we do not mean only those at the point of production, but also their family members as well.

If we intend to define classes on the basis of relations within social production and reproduction, the fundamental categories of these spheres ought to become a part of the analysis. The activities of production, circulation, division of the product, consumption, the differences between these, the definition of the category of labour itself, activities relating to the reproduction of the social order, the distinction between productive labour and unproductive labour—all these are cornerstones for the effort to grasp the question of classes in capitalist society at least minimally. This article will not attempt to define these in detail. Hence it would be useful to read it together with the article we have published with E. Ahmet Tonak in the British Marxist journal Capital and Class on productive and unproductive labour.[3] The reader will find there the requisite information for understanding the significance of categories such as production, circulation or division of the product for the fundamental distinctions for individuals participating in production and in activities that serve the reproduction of the social order.

One final point on the scope of the paper. This article limits itself to a perusal exclusively of urban-based classes. We will not discuss the class position of the population based on rural-agricultural socio-economic life. The reason is simple: our lifelong studies and political work have made us intimately familiar with the urban economy and the industrial working class in particular. The rural-agricultural economy and the classes that are shaped by that economy are, of course, not totally alien to us, but we prefer to be much more modest in that area and leave the task of doing something similar for the different relationships in the countryside and the diverse classes and strata within the peasantry to younger Marxists who would accomplish that task much more ably.

3 Sungur Savran & E. Ahmet Tonak, "Productive and Unproductive Labour: An Attempt at Clarification and Classification", *Capital & Class*, No. 23: 2, 1999.

1. The Bourgeoisie: The agents of capital

The ruling power of modern society is capital. As a concept, capital is the generalised form, under the money form, of the ownership of the means of production. The power brought to the owner of capital this way is used to constantly extract unpaid surplus value from the direct producer, the proletarian. Hence capital is a relationship between two classes. Its sole raison d'être is to expand, that is to say to work for the production of and appropriate surplus value and then convert this new value into new capital, thus accumulating capital. According to Marx, capitalists are the "bearers" of the capital relation. What this implies is not some kind of independence of capital from human beings. On the contrary, capital is a definite historically specific relationship between humans. The idea that the capitalist is the "bearer" ("träger" in the German original) of the capital relation implies that, whatever the personality, constitution, character or upbringing of the individual capitalist as a human being, s(he) has to conform to the logic of capital as if s(he) were a functionary of the capital relation and behave accordingly ***as long as s(he) acts as a capitalist.*** Thus, the endeavour to constantly increase the surplus value appropriated and accomplish the accumulation of capital in as swift a manner as possible becomes the subjective aim of the capitalist as well.

It is not impossible for a capitalist to be kind or gregarious or self-sacrificing in other areas of life. But as long as this person acts qua capitalist, s(he) acts according to the logic of capital, apart from certain exceptional situations. If this is not the case, this capitalist will crumble under the weight of competition, which is a mechanism that imposes the immanent laws of capital on the single agents of capital.

There are bearers of capital of differing orders. Those with an unmediated relationship to capital form the bourgeoisie. Naturally, at the centre of these bearers sits the owner of capital or the capitalist. The capitalist is the person who organises economic activity in the sphere of production and/or circulation with his or her own capital, employs wage labour for this purpose, and makes a profit and converts this into additional capital at the end of the process. In daily language, we use the word capital, which is a relation of production, and the word bourgeoisie, which denotes a social class, interchangeably and we will continue to do so in the rest of this article.

At the dawn of the capitalist era, despite the existence of a number of large companies established for the purposes of either long-distance trade and transportation or large-scale investment, the general rule was family businesses. However, toward the end of the 19th century, the corporation began its ascendancy, joint-stock companies proliferated and finally the giant corporation became the dominating factor of capitalism. This led to a situation where the companies were too large to be managed by a single family, with a new layer of managers becoming indispensable for the professional management of the companies. From the early 20th century on new theories were developed to explain this new phenomenon.

The focal point of these theories was the idea that no longer did the owners of capital really exercise control of these big corporations. It was the managers (the so-called "managerial class") that really took over control and thus a new type of capitalism could be said to have come into existence. There were also those who brought the role of the so-called technocracy to the foreground because of the high technological level of the new production processes and their complex nature.

Our opinion is that the top management of large corporations are the ***second-order agents*** of these units of capital. Their existence has diversified the ranks of the bourgeoisie. However, it would be a mistake to treat them as a class apart from the bourgeoisie. In effect, the managers of public companies, companies whose shares are freely traded on the stock market, are usually remunerated in part by turning a small share of the stock of the company to these top managers. In time, many of these people themselves become capitalists in their own right.

This is thus the first instance that shows the importance of avoiding a static mode of thinking with respect to the distribution of individuals into classes. A ***dialectical*** approach that embodies change and development is of the utmost importance in mapping classes. This methodological precept will come into play again and again in very different contexts in what follows. If all this is true, then one should not overlook the following point. The basic revenue of managers derives from their salary. In other words, managers are basically remunerated in the wage form. This brings another warning on our methodological agenda. The form of the revenue should not mislead us. The basic income of a CEO may take the wage form as well as those of an ordinary functionary or an unskilled worker. But in no way does this put them within the ranks of the same social class.

Thus, we have seen that the kernel of the bourgeoisie defined in the narrow sense consists of capitalists in the narrow sense of the term and of elements of the top management of large corporations. Naturally, when we say "capitalists", we mean not only those who conduct their activities in metropolises and large cities, but also those who deal in commercial and agricultural activities in small towns or even in the countryside. At this beginning of the 21st century, not only in imperialist countries but also in countries that came to capitalism much later, such as Turkey for instance, it is a well-established fact that the hegemonic fraction of the capitalist class is monopoly capital.

Those capitalist countries in which the capitalist mode of production became the dominant mode after the early comers had moved to the imperialist epoch, but did not themselves become imperialist countries have really taken over despite that the type of development Lenin depicted for imperialist countries. In other words, imperialism helped shape capitalist countries in its own image.

Two characteristics of monopoly capital deserve special mention here. First, the leading representatives of this fraction of the capitalist class also display the traits of finance capital. That is to say, the productive activity and in particular the industrial activity here is amalgamated with financial activity in the bosom of a single actor. Secondly, monopoly capital not only brings together industrial and financial activity but very many branches of activity such as industry, agriculture, trade, foreign trade, transportation, energy etc. That is why we prefer to call this kind of capital ***combined capital***. In Turkey, the most typical form of organisation of monopoly capital is the holding company.

Not only the main shareholders, but also the CEOs and their deputies, the CFOs, the marketing and sales directors, the human resources directors of holding companies as well as those of their affiliated companies should be considered as bourgeois with respect to their class belonging because their position within the sphere of production

cannot but push them to behave in line with the interests of capital. How narrow or how wide this entire set of officials should be selected can only be decided on a case-by-case approach, taking into consideration the powers of discretion, the duties, and the forms of revenue of the cadres in question. Borderline cases can always create difficulties in classification and categorisation in the social sciences and this is also true for class analysis. Yet these difficulties do not invalidate the accuracy of the categorisation itself.

Holding companies and affiliates have, alongside executives who run the business on a day-to-day basis, Boards of Directors. To these boards are elected, alongside the capitalist owners of the main shares and some top executives, people with the right kind of connection with the state and influential milieux. Among these are included former top-level bureaucrats, former executives of state-owned enterprises in countries where these are important actors, retired generals and more generally intellectuals of various stripes. These are elements that the bourgeoisie rallies to its own ranks from the bureaucratic and intellectual strata.

A professor or a general that is enlisted as member of the Board of Directors of a holding company or a large corporation naturally will not be characterised ipso facto as a bourgeois. But there may be cases in which the process proceeds in this direction. Here again it is the laws of the dialectic that have the last say. Any individual may change classes and undergo embourgeoisement even late in life. There may be frictions between the incumbents and the newcomer with respect to mores and etiquette. The newcomer may be despised by the vested, as nouveaux riches usually are. But this kind of friction also exists between the original members of the class, e.g. frictions between elements of the haute bourgeoisie and the up-and-coming, between the bourgeoisie of the metropolises and the "provincials" as they are called by the former etc.

At present, in all societies where capitalism has taken hold firmly, there are very large swathes of bourgeois layers outside of the hegemonic fraction of the monopoly capitalists. The great majority of these are grouped under the rubric Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), a term that has taken root in almost all countries. The SME bourgeoisie no doubt displays a lot of diversity within its ranks. There are startups that employ high tech means of production or even innovate in the field of technological change and provide inputs to the world market or large technology companies, as well as those that work with extremely backward technologies and business models to serve only the domestic or even the narrowest kind of local market. A third type of SME is one which is not completely independent and works as a supplier to domestic or foreign firms, sometimes the most famous brands, on the basis of long-term contracts. Finally, there are the so-called "sweatshops", some of which may be SMEs, but many others are of even of smaller scale and usually categorised as micro-enterprises.

Whichever category an SME fits, each individual or family that owns these firms should be considered as capitalists and members of the bourgeoisie as long as the firm employs a certain number of workers and appropriates the surplus value they produce, thus making it possible for the owner of the firm to live off the surplus labour of others. The difficulty here is the borderline between the small capitalist and the petty-bourgeois. It is too early to dwell on this distinction here for we have not yet defined

the concept petty-bourgeoisie.

A type of relationship that has flourished under present-day circumstances has led to the emergence of a new stratum with its peculiarities within the bourgeoisie. This is the layer of sub-contractors that is spreading like an ink spot. At first sight, outsourcing to sub-contractors appears to be no different from the third type of SME discussed above, the case in which the SME produces for a large company under a long-term contract. Indeed, the two share the same function for the capitalists since both fragment the working-class collective to weaken it. However, to start with, subcontracting is different from this type of SME in that it divides the work collective at a workplace that is indivisible from the point of view of technological and economic calculation in the heart of that same workplace. In other words, the fragmentation of the work collective is not carried out by dividing the workplace, as in the case of the type of SME discussed above, but is inserted like a wedge inside the heart of the workplace.

Secondly, form the vantage point of our discussion in this article, subcontractors as a special layer of the capitalist class exhibit certain intriguing characteristics that also separates them from the SME bourgeoisie. These are capitalists that employ a small work force, but display a deep-rooted difference with respect to their class origin vis-à-vis the majority of capitalists. The boss of the mother company will usually choose them from among former trade-unionists or from within former workers of the enterprise, help them equip themselves minimally in order to manage a business from the economic and administrative points of view, and then turn over to them a part of the business as a subcontractor. Hence what emerges is the symmetrical opposite of the appellation "bourgeois workers" Engels coins for the workers' aristocracy (to which we will later return), the subcontractor being a "worker bourgeois"! These are the turncoats of the working class, just as there exist turncoats of the left! In the same way as the intellectual turncoat of the left is thoroughly aware of what goes on in the mind of a leftist to a level no true intellectual of the bourgeoisie can detect, these worker turncoats, whether former unionists or former workers, know exactly how the mind of a worker faced with the pressure of capital works and, knowing from inside how workers will react, familiar with all the cultural-ideological forms through which the workers react, can manipulate them much more easily than an ordinary capitalist could.

The existence of these "worker bourgeois" also blurs class lines tremendously in certain working-class families. Some subcontractors have siblings or children who are plain workers! The same family finds itself on the side of both the exploiters and the exploited. This kind of "pluri-class" family may come to exist in other kinds of situations, but here it is the two major classes of the capitalist mode of production that confront each other not in an entire country but within the home!

2. The state bureaucracy

One of the greatest theoretical achievements, one of the most indispensable, is to have unambiguously brought out the class character of the state. This is a guiding star for the struggle of the revolutionary proletariat. No movement within a capitalist

country that does not aim to destroy the state can deliver the emancipation of the working class and, alongside that class, that of the labouring and oppressed majority of society. This theoretical proposition also shows us the way for properly situating certain social groups within capitalist society. Those groups that earn their living by fulfilling the duties of the state in various domains should be taken up under the rubric of the state bureaucracy as a distinct group from others. They are the guardians of the state that proletarian revolutionaries need to destroy.

Before briefly surveying the different components of the state bureaucracy let us make it clear that not all who work for a salary or a wage in a governmental service can be subsumed under the concept "state bureaucracy". This bureaucracy consists of administrators who, while using the powers handed down by the state, have ***a margin of discretion, a degree of freedom of decision on behalf of the state.***

There are, on the one hand, undersecretaries and directors general within ministries, judges and public prosecutors, provincial and district governors, the top brass of the army, police prefects and top-level municipal administrators. There are, on the other hand, workers of state-owned enterprises and tellers at government-owned banks, nurses and teachers, janitors in all governmental departments.

The public officials in the first category have discretionary powers on behalf of the state. Those in the second category are only practitioners within a predetermined division of labour. Only the first of these may be considered as part of the state bureaucracy. Of course, it is not easy to answer the question of where to draw the line between the two as one goes down the bureaucratic hierarchy. The question ought to be taken up in a differentiated manner for the different functional activities of the state. For instance, those who should be considered as part of the state bureaucracy reaches down to much lower levels of the hierarchy when it is a question of the employees of the repressive forces of the state (the army, the gendarmerie, the police, intelligence agencies, prisons etc.) On the other hand, the bureaucracy is confined to the upper echelons of the hierarchy when it comes to hospitals, schools, the tax administration, or municipalities. It has already been pointed out that in scientific enquiry the fuzziness of borders between different categories is an ever-recurring question which does not detract from the usefulness of the categorisation in question. When we come to discussing the proletariat as a class, we will see that both public workers at state-owned enterprises and a majority of public employees should be subsumed under the proletarian class.

British English provides a useful distinction for the two groups of functionaries that we are discussing here. A "public servant" is akin to the concept of the bureaucrat while the concept "public employee" directly brings to mind an ordinary functionary of the state and the so-called state sector.

Now we can pass on to a discussion of the various components of the state bureaucracy. The central nucleus of the state is composed, as Engels has squarely put it, of "armed men" (more and more "armed men and women" in an increasing number of countries.) The army, the police, intelligence agencies and the prison system together form the iron-clad nucleus of the state apparatus. The officers of the army, the ranked agents of the police, intelligence officers and the administrative cadres of prisons are all elements of the state bureaucracy.

Alongside the so-called "security forces", all functionaries who are in a position within the hierarchy that confers on them discretion on behalf of the state in the conduct of their duties are a part of the bureaucracy as well. Parallel to the central government agencies, the professional administrative cadres of municipalities (local councils) should also be considered as a part of the state bureaucracy. The fantasy world left-wing liberalism, which projects a dream world of democratic opportunities in the local councils, should not obliterate the fact that local government is well and truly an indispensable part of the bourgeois state apparatus. The officials of the judiciary, high court justices, ordinary judges and public prosecutors, as well as the bureaucracy of the ministry of justice in every country are fundamentally important components of the state bureaucracy. Finally, all those professors who assume administrative positions at public universities (university presidents, faculty or school deans and their retinue) become, even if passingly, important elements of the state bureaucracy.

The state bureaucracy under capitalism is a social layer having the central function of protecting the class domination of the bourgeoisie. It acts as the servant of the bourgeoisie, whatever the mediations that come in as it pretends to be above classes. Precisely in the same manner as the state to which it swears allegiance, the material interests of the state bureaucracy are conditional upon the stability, the smooth functioning and the survival of capitalist society. Naturally, because the state implements its function of the protection of the domination of the bourgeoisie over the rest of society with a method peculiar to itself, carrying out many activities in areas that are never the direct responsibility of the bourgeoisie itself, such as security policies, intelligence, diplomacy, war etc., at any given moment, the spokespeople and organisations of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy may inevitably find themselves at odds on a number of political, economic, cultural etc. issues, Despite these differences, the bureaucracy is always aware during the conduct of its business that its own survival and future are closely linked to the survival and future of capitalism itself.

As opposed to certain views, it must be asserted firmly that ***the state bureaucracy is not a class***. Classes are fundamentally characterised on the basis of their relation to the means of production in terms of ownership. This is not how the bureaucracy is defined. Its existence derives from the defence and maintenance of the power of the bourgeoisie, buttressed by the sanction of the use of arms in the last instance. In this sense, it has a mode of existence that is ***derivative*** of other relations. The members of this social group are forever face to face with the risk of losing their socio-economic position because they have no private property over the means of production. The sanctity of capitalist private property guards against all challenges to the socio-economic power of the bourgeois, save under very special circumstances. The bureaucrat is fallible each single moment. Moreover, the bourgeois has the right to bequeath their socio-economic power to their lineage. The right of succession is a fundamental corollary of the right to private property. However, not even the most powerful of bureaucrats can bequeath their post to their descendants.

The basic revenue form of the bureaucrat is a salary (the wage form). This certainly does not imply that the bureaucrat is a worker. One reason for this is that the bureaucrat, in his or her capacity of representative of the state, is a political

agent of the class domination of the bourgeoisie. Another reason lies in the fact that bureaucrats, especially those in the upper echelons of the state hierarchy, are not under the compulsion to sell their labour power, but have simply selected this predicament themselves. (There is a third point to which we will come back.) The fact that in many languages, including of course English and our native Turkish, the wage paid to the bureaucrat is labelled by a special word ("salary" vs. the wage paid to workers) may be read as an ideological effort to register the difference of the bureaucrat from the worker. Finally, it is a mistake to consider the members of this social group as "petty-bourgeois". The bureaucracy, as has already been stressed, may take different attitudes to many questions from the bourgeoisie in the course of the development of the class struggle. But this does not make it a variant of the petty-bourgeoisie. This kind of characterisation may hide from view the servility of the bureaucracy to the bourgeoisie and thus may even lead to conclusions that could paralyse the outlook of the proletariat.

It is not solely its objective position and the functions of the state that bind the bureaucracy to the bourgeoisie. To put it differently, it is not because the post that the bureaucrat occupies has been devised so as to ensure that the bureaucrat defend the interests of the bourgeoisie that the former voluntarily protects the latter. At the same time, the bureaucrat is ***bought*** in a variety of modes. One form is the possibilities provided to the bureaucrat to change classes through passageways established between the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. For instance, in those countries where state-owned enterprises played a rather significant part in the development of capitalism, these enterprises have always acted as incubators for future capitalists or corporate executives. Certain countries like Turkey or Egypt have an institutional nexus between the armed forces and certain publicly-owned companies that provides a wholesale corridor of transition between the military staff and the capitalist economy. Retired generals or other senior public administrators are offered seats on the boards of big corporations. A more recent phenomenon is for retired military officers, ranked police officials and intelligence gatherers to become executives or even partners at private security firms. The notorious institution of "revolving doors" also provides a constant to-and-fro for bourgeois cadres of the highest calibre.

Another form in which the bourgeoisie buys bureaucrats is through graft and bribery. All views that reduce this type of corruption to an act of immorality are alien to a scientific treatment of a very fundamental socio-economic phenomenon. Leaving aside the part it plays in competition within the ranks of the bourgeoisie because this lies outside the topic of this paper, ***corruption is the major mechanism through which the state bureaucracy is integrated with bourgeois society***. At every level and in every sphere of activity of the state bureaucracy, the ***systematic*** method through which the bureaucrat can enjoy the worldly fruits of bourgeois society is corruption. This is, at the same time, a mechanism through which the wage form, the basic form in which the bureaucrat is renumerated, is made secondary in importance. For a majority of bureaucrats, the salary is simply a kind of rock-bottom minimum wage. What really determines their standard of living, what makes it possible as they rise through the hierarchical ladder for them to afford a consumption pattern and a lifestyle worthy of the bourgeois and thus provides the opportunity of social cohesion

between the two socio-economic groups in question is this.

Corruption is also a fact of life that makes for a more precise drawing of border lines in the process of class mapping. We stressed earlier that not all who are part of the civil service can be considered bureaucrats, but also admitted that the borderlines between the bureaucracy and the army of ordinary public employees are fuzzy and porous. With the inclusion of graft and bribery, the second major source of income for the bureaucrat alongside the wage (salary) form, the possibility of reducing the indeterminacy between the categories of bureaucrat and public employee is strengthened. Now we can add the criterion of the ***corruption/salary ratio*** along with our earlier criterion of "discretion on behalf of the state". The higher this ratio is, the more plausibly may the functionary in question be considered a "bureaucrat"; the lower it is, the more likely is the prospect of considering the functionary in question an ordinary public employee.

Corruption as a systematic source of revenue for the bureaucrat sheds light on another question. Earlier, we took up the question of why the bureaucrat could not be subsumed under the proletariat despite the fact that the basic form of revenue of the bureaucrat is the same as the worker, the wage form. We talked of two different reasons there. And we briefly mentioned that there was a third reason. The higher the corruption/salary ratio is, the farther away from the mass of the proletariat the bureaucrat is removed by the nature of things. Thus, even if the basic revenue form for the bureaucracy remains the salary, it transpires that the bureaucrat does not subsist on the basis of the sale of his or her labour power. The bureaucrat gets richer not by selling labour power but himself or herself!

The police force as a special category

Now we come to a category that is explosive matter: the rank-and-file elements of the police force. The point of taking up the police separately from all other public employees should be clear. We distinguished above two main groups of employees on the payroll of the state, central and local. Those who wield a decision-making power we called the "state bureaucracy" and those who simply carry out the routine business of government departments without any power of discretion "public employees". We will see later on, when we study the proletariat, that throughout decades and centuries, as the state has expanded and become a sprawling organisation, the mass of "public employees" evolved towards a class position of merging into the proletariat. On the basis of this scheme the rank-and-file police officer is to be seen as a member of the proletariat as well. However, this would be a facile conclusion to draw. We have to look into the police force more closely.

The reason is that the police force is distinguished from the large masses of "public employees" by certain specific characteristics. The most important point is that the police force is the direct practitioner of the armed power of the state on the masses of the people. When they are exercising their profession, on many occasions they are faced with delicate situations in which a power of discretion is indispensable. The armed power of the police force gives it a high degree of deliberation and makes the police officer even more powerful than many a civilian top bureaucrat. Secondly,

there is a corollary to this: the police always have to confront the demands of the exploited and the oppressed, starting with the major contender, the proletariat. It is a duty for the police to contain and, frequently, to repress forcibly the collective action of the exploited and oppressed masses. This alienates the police from the proletariat and other fighting masses, independently of any subjective orientation and ideological bent, simply by the nature of their material condition of existence. However, this also makes the police officer susceptible to ideologies hostile to the proletariat, including fascism. Witness the recent revolt of the French police force against what they consider the unfair attitude of the judiciary and even the Macron government to their righteous struggle against the youth of Maghrebin and sub-Saharan origin of the *banlieues* in France. It is common knowledge that more than half the French police force is organised under leaderships that extend their allegiance to the proto-fascist *Rassemblement national* (RN-National Rally) of Marine Le Pen.

Thirdly, graft and bribery, a weighty part of the top and middle categories of the state bureaucracy as we saw above, is extremely commonplace for the police. Finally, extensive sections of the police force adopt a relationship of complicity with criminal organisations in return for a share of their illicit income, which obviously again brings the police force closer to state bureaucrats rather than the ordinary public employee. It is true that this kind of relationship between the mobster or the cartel, on the one hand, and the police, on the other, is established by the ranked officers of the police, but the requirements of secrecy will, in many cases, push some of the money to be diverted to the ordinary officer as hush money. Moreover, the rank-and-file officer always has the possibility of extortion from local petty criminals. This last point brings the police officer into contact with the lumpen proletariat and often instils in the officer a whiff of gang culture, which has its reflection in the fact that police officers use a foul language full of profanities, which they then employ (at least in our native Turkey) when fighting protest movements.

It is true that the rank-and-file police officers are plebeian elements. They sometimes come from families of public employees or the traditional petty-bourgeoisie, but they are mostly the children of proletarians and peasants. Their own position bears a certain resemblance to that of the proletariat. They are wage workers, although enjoying a lot of privileges so as to persuade them that their difficult job is worth doing. The fact that their class position is akin to that of the worker is confirmed by the fact that, at least in Europe, many countries allow the police officer to join unions of their own. Naturally, it would be a mistake to put these unions in the same place as the regular trade unions of the working class. They are more like corporations that defend the professional interests of a special body of men and (increasingly also) women. Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that they are the collective organisers of striving for better conditions for the ordinary police officer, regarding wages, hours, conditions of work etc. But again, this struggle is usually consciously isolated from the rest of the union movement.

The picture we have depicted shows that rank-and-file police officers are a reactionary force by their very nature under ordinary circumstances and, despite the similarity between their material conditions of existence and those of the proletariat at large, can by no means be considered to be a part of the latter. However, under

exceptional circumstances, in times of grave political crisis or civil war or revolution, their common material conditions with that of the proletariat pushes some of them towards the rank of the proletariat. The experience of Turkey is instructive in this context. In the late 1970s, when a civil war was pushing Turkey to the brink of a final settling of the accounts between the extremely rabid fascist movement of the time and the socialist-communist-revolutionary movement (consisting of a multitude of different parties and organisations), in a country where unionisation for the police force had never been a legal right, there came into being two "associations" in the bosom of the police force, both of them welcoming all ranks (including the ordinary police officer) as members. One was the organisation hegemonized by the fascist elements and also including Islamist and the more traditional right-wing elements, Pol-Bir. This was no surprise for the Turkish state security institutions had always had multiple channels through which organic links were established with the fascist movement.

What was astounding was that another part of the police force established Pol-Der, which was far from remaining a minority tendency and recruited both ranked and ordinary police officers all around the country and used explicit "revolutionary" and "socialist" language and took entirely combative positions vis-à-vis the fascist movement. This is an experience to be closely studied and any similar experience that have arisen in other countries in times of crisis should be brought to the attention of the international working-class movement.

3. The petty-bourgeoisie and the middle classes

In all capitalist societies, outside the major classes of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the third social group that can be identified on the basis of its relationship to the means of production is the petty-bourgeoisie. The name petty-bourgeoisie can sometimes be misleading as it is construed to stand for the small-scale bourgeoisie. This is not true for the petty-bourgeoisie is not a part of the bourgeoisie. The petty-bourgeoisie may be said to bring together in a single economic agent both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The petty-bourgeois both owns his or her means of production and engages in production with his or her labour. The small-scale bourgeoisie, on the other hand, or the small capitalist, as we have seen when discussing the category SMEs, is the name given to the capitalist who has placed the surplus value he or she extracts from however small a workforce at the centre of economic activity. Listing some typical petty-bourgeois categories will make the difference clear: small farmers who employ family labour; groceries, green groceries, or convenience stores; car repair garages; carpenter workshops; dry-cleaning stores; newspaper kiosks; barber shops; neighbourhood pizza or burger joints etc.

These should be distinguished from the small boss, who, even with a workforce of two dozen hands, even with a minimal level of fixed capital investment, organises the labour process, keeps it under tight control, establishes the commercial connections, does all the primitive accounting, but ***does not participate in the production process***. What distinguishes the small capitalist from the petty-bourgeois is not whether the former employs labour outside the family and the latter does not. As a matter of fact,

it is possible, indeed common, for the petty-bourgeois to employ workers for help in their small business. The barber or the garage owner or the carpenter each has their apprentices, sometimes several. Very small restaurants have their waiters and chefs of sorts. To draw the lines between the small capitalist and the petty artisan or trader is not easy (as in many other cases of borderlines, as we have already seen). Nonetheless, there are certain criteria that are useful to apply when looking at borderline cases. Perhaps the easiest and most practical of these criteria is the fact that the petty-bourgeois usually participates in the production process while the small boss organises that process, oversees the labour discipline and establishes commercial links.

The petty-bourgeoisie is basically divided into two sub-categories. The old or traditional petty-bourgeoisie is a class fraction that capitalism has taken over originally from precapitalist society or from the period of transition from precapitalist society to capitalism. The most salient components of this fraction are the small holder in the countryside and the petty trader and the artisan in the urban environment. A great many of these are doomed to proletarianization over time, although at differing tempos in different countries. As technology develops and as capital organises ever newer economic branches on new bases, the capacity of the petty-bourgeois to compete with capital on matters of scale of production, new techniques and the capacity in marketing will be diminished. Almost like a natural event, the small producer or trader cedes ground progressively to the larger enterprise. This is no doubt a law that operates tendentially, sometimes even being reversed for a while for concrete reasons. But in the long run, it is inevitable that the bulk of the small peasantry, the artisan and the small trader will have to join the ranks of the proletariat.

The liquidation of the small holder farmer is a law familiar in every country. As for the urban scene, the concentration and centralisation of capital and its combined nature, a concept defined earlier, extending its activities to a multitude of different economic sectors gives it the upper hand when confronted with petty production and trade. For instance, repair and maintenance, both for cars and in areas such as white goods, plumbing etc. in the home, used to be a very important activity for the petty artisan. However, over the decades, "after sales services" by the big brands have tended to take over. The repairmen who come to the home are no longer people who have a small business of their own but more and more wage-workers who work for big companies. It is true that the proletarianization of the petty-bourgeoisie is a very long-winded and complex process. Most emphatically, it is hardly ever a question of transformation within a single generation, but extends over many generations.

The new or modern fraction of the petty-bourgeoisie, on the other hand, is born on the basis of dynamics proper to capitalism and is constantly reproduced. The modern petty-bourgeoisie, as opposed to the traditional, is recruited from the educated strata of society, leading a modern lifestyle. The typical case is that of what is called the "professionals". Pharmacies, cabinets of physicians, dentists and veterinarian doctors, freelance lawyers' offices, small-scale engineering, architecture and interior design studios, freelance accountants and financial consultants' offices etc. are the mainstay of a labour force of graduates with particular skills who lead a petty-bourgeois mode of existence of working with their own means of production. These professions earn

much more than the typical traditional petty-bourgeois jobs of the traditional fraction of the same class. The liberalisation of the rules that regulate the work of many of these professions under the neoliberal restructuring of capitalist economies after the 1980s has increased the salience of this modern petty-bourgeoisie. Since these professions are, as a rule, organised within powerful professional organisations in almost all countries with a certain level of capitalist development in medical associations, bar associations, engineers and architects' chambers etc., a spirit of corporatism exists within each profession.

Besides these "professionals", who exercise their work on the basis of very special skills within the requirements of very strict regulations, there exist other components of the modern petty-bourgeoisie as well. In the tourism and catering business (small or boutique hotels, select restaurants, an entire sector of cafés, pubs, and bars), in the fashion and *prêt-ã-porter* business (high-end boutiques, perfumeries, special brand-name shops), in the accessories and gifts business, in the distribution of cars in many countries there exist a host of different strata who are part of the very presentation and service of the business and therefore are engaged in the production process but also own the means of production of the business in question. Depending on the size of the establishment, these may be the modern end of the SME sector or, alternatively, involve the work process of strata of the modern petty-bourgeoisie.

There is also another component of the petty-bourgeoisie that is a rapidly rising stratum of self-employed skilled workers, similar in this to the classical type of "professionals". These are the small-scale self-employed entrepreneurs of the computer and software production businesses. Although they are similar to the "professionals" in terms of the particularity of their skills, the industry is much less regulated than the medical or legal or engineering sectors and without a special deontology of its own.

We have already noted that the overriding peculiarity of the modern wing of the petty-bourgeoisie is that their professions are the child of capitalist development and technological advance. This, coupled with the fact of an overall high average educational level necessary for many of the occupations within this wing of the petty-bourgeoisie, creates an increasingly international labour market for these professions. In the past, it was a small number of countries such as Canada or Australia that systematically pursued a policy of importing MDs and engineers and computer scientists and software wizards from other countries with a lower income level. This policy is now beginning to spread like wildfire. No doubt, this growth in the brain-drain from less advanced countries to the imperialist ones or even from countries like the United Kingdom to the better off countries of continental Europe will create a host of problems socially speaking, but at the individual level strengthen the hands of the members of the modern petty-bourgeoisie even further.

Politically, the modern petty-bourgeoisie shares some common characteristics with the traditional wing of the same class. The most important is the fact that they feel both squeezed between the hammer of the bourgeoisie and the anvil of the proletariat and very often oscillate between the two, depending on their perception of who is stronger at the moment and has more to offer. However, there also exist vital differences between the two wings. The most important of these differences derives from the fact that the traditional wing bitterly feels the danger of liquidation

and proletarianization. Because the development of capitalism and the rise powerful corporations confronts traditional businesses with the threat of extinction, they tend to be susceptible to anti-capitalist rhetoric of a rather superficial kind. In all the historic instances of fascism, this kind of rhetoric turned out to be quite effective on the masses of the traditional petty-bourgeoisie.

Of course, this is skin-deep anti-capitalism for the real fear of the traditional petty-bourgeoisie is the prospect of falling into the ranks of the proletariat. Hence its instinct of protecting its deeply-cherished private property in the means of production. However, unlike the modern wing, many of whom may be considered to be "wealthy" by the average standards of the societies they live in, the traditional strata have a living standard much closer to the better-off strata of the working-class, mostly share the same neighbourhoods with them, and are culturally closer to the workers than the capitalists.

The modern wing of the petty-bourgeoisie, for its part, enjoys, on the average, a much higher standard of living, even at times higher than the SME echelons of the bourgeoisie, accordingly has a consumption pattern quite similar to many members of the bourgeoisie, and shares with them the same spaces (gated estates or lakeside communities, poche restaurants, second houses in high-end summer resort towns and villages etc.), and is therefore much more closely tied to the bourgeoisie. This wing also has a much more cosmopolitan outlook on life, having, as many a bourgeois, studied abroad or worked temporarily in foreign countries at length and taken trips to many different countries, indeed continents. Knowledge of foreign languages, first and foremost of English of course, is also, more and more, a common trait among the members of the modern petty-bourgeoisie in all countries.

Frequent readers of our journal will be aware that in the previous annual English edition, *Revolutionary Marxism 2022*, in an article titled "The Age of Egoism", we dwelled in minute detail on the modern petty-bourgeoisie both in terms of class formation, but more importantly its specific impact upon the ideological, cultural and political life of the advanced and medium level capitalist countries within the last half century. We refer the reader to that article for a much deeper study of this very important class fraction.

4. The proletariat

The main antagonist confronting the bourgeoisie under capitalism and its "grave digger", to use Marx's famous expression, is the proletariat or working class. Let us start out with a warning about terminology: although the proletariat and the working class are identical for the purposes of Marxism, several distinctions in some languages, for instance "worker vs. employee", "blue collar vs. white collar", "public worker vs. public employee" may be misleading by reducing the scope of "worker" and of "working class". Employees or public employees may very well be proletarians but the dualities mentioned may obstruct an understanding of this. For the purposes of this article, we will assume that the proletariat and the working class refer to a single, identically same entity. After all, we are in theoretical territory here and everyday usage is something to which we attribute only secondary importance. We may leave

aside the question of how to explain to the masses that an employee and a worker may both be workers. Those are very serious questions which should best be taken up in the context of practical party politics.

As we move to define the proletariat, we should make a second warning: the proletariat is by no means restricted to the industrial working class. It is true that the industrial worker has a central place within the proletariat, both because of the vital role played by industry in the capitalist countries, but also because of the prominent place of this layer of workers has within the working class struggles as a whole. But central importance does not imply that this central actor is the only one. Moreover, at the point which the world economy has reached at this beginning of the 21st century, workers working in industries such as telecommunications, transportation, finance and some other industries have assumed great importance as well, sometimes on a par with the industrial proletariat. Hence the definition ought to be much broader.

Every person who is compelled to sell his or her labour power and does not undertake the function of an agent of capital is a member of the working class. In a footnote added to the 1888 Edition of the *Communist Manifesto*, Engels provides a very plain definition: "By proletariat [is meant] the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live." We have added to this the further condition "who does not undertake the function of an agent of capital". This definition immediately excludes corporate executives who we have defined above as second-order agents of capital and yet receive their remuneration in the wage form. For even if their remuneration is made in the wage form, they are not proletarians for in most cases they are not compelled to sell their labour power but choose to do this and they are agents of capital. We will see below that there are other categories whose remuneration takes the wage form but who are not unambiguously a part of the proletariat.

This definition shows us the following: Wage workers who are not employed in industry but in a string of other sectors are also proletarians. If we were to provide a list that covers certain sectors not usually considered, workers in agriculture and animal husbandry, fisheries, transportation, telecommunications, the media, tourism, catering, construction, trade (and in particular large retail), finance, health and education, the culture industries (publishing, film, orchestras and concert halls, museums etc.) are, to a great extent, part of the proletariat. To this should be added branches that provide services to the corporate sector such as advertising and public relations and those that provide services to the consumer such as fitness centres, beauty salons, dance courses etc.

Alongside all of this, a great part of those who work for the public sector in the broad sense of the term are also a part of the proletariat. What sets state-owned enterprises apart from the rest of the public sector is that the goods and services that they produce are sold as commodities or, in other words, that they are economic enterprises under public ownership. Thus, the workers who are employed by these enterprises are *ipso facto* proletarians. To this should be added those who work both in the central government departments and local councils, ***except those who have the power of discretion on behalf of the state*** (see above under "The State Bureaucracy"). According to this distinction, the district governor is not a proletarian, but the cashier

at the tax office is. The director of the construction department of the local council who has authority for zoning and construction decisions is not a proletarian, but the garbage collector (sanitation worker) is.

It should be noted that the situation of a nurse who works for a public hospital is the same as the nurse who is employed profitably by a private hospital. The same goes for the education sector etc. Here we need to touch upon two points in order to clarify certain misunderstandings. The first point has to do with the distinction productive labour and unproductive labour. According to a conception that was dominant for a long time within Marxism, a conception held by an influential figure such as Nicos Poulantzas as well, those workers whose labour is productive are proletarians; those whose labour is unproductive, on the other hand, are petty-bourgeois. In order to grasp the meaning of this statement, let us first remind the reader what the two concepts of productive versus unproductive labour mean. Productive labour is labour that produces surplus value for capital; unproductive labour, on the other hand, is labour that does not produce surplus value even though it may be necessary for the completion of the overall circuit and reproduction of capital.

The first category involves the obvious instances of workers who work in industry, agriculture, mining etc. producing material goods, but also workers who work in services sectors, such as transportation, telecommunications, tourism, catering, health, and education. In other words, just as a metalworker produces surplus value for the capitalist who employs him or her, so does a flight attendant, the hotel bellboy, the teacher at a private language school or a nurse at a private clinic. As for the category unproductive labour, this covers, *grosso modo*, the labour of those workers who are employed by capital in circulation (trade, finance etc.) and those who work for the public sector whose products are not sold in the commodity form.

The distinction productive vs. unproductive labour carries great importance with respect to the dynamics of capital accumulation. Since capital accumulation is the conversion of surplus value into additional capital, it is of great importance to know which types of labour contribute to the production of surplus value as this will define the prospects for and the constraints facing capital accumulation. On the other hand, the distinction in question bears no importance on the class position of the workers who expend the two types of labour. We saw above that what defines a proletarian is the compulsion to sell one's labour power. It is of no relevance to the worker being a worker or not whether the labour that the worker expends as a result of this sale of labour power is productive or unproductive. Both of them are under the compulsion to sell this special commodity that is labour power because they are both devoid of means of production. This is precisely what makes both of them proletarians. In short, the young woman who bides her day away at the cash register at a large retail shop or a bank teller is as much a proletarian as a metal or textile worker or a driver of transfer coaches of a tourism company.

Secondly, there is a tendency on the left (at least this is the case for Turkey) to characterise public employees (from teachers to janitors) as petty-bourgeois. Let us first point out that "petty-bourgeois" is not a label that we should or could hang on anyone who is neither a bourgeois nor a proletarian. As we have already seen, the petty-bourgeoisie is a class with peculiarities of its own with respect to the control

of the means of production and participation in the labour process. To label everyone outside the two major classes "petty-bourgeois" would be a reductionist approach, making it impossible for Marxists to distinguish between the likely political attitudes of different classes, strata and categories in times of critical change. Going beyond this kind of problem, it makes no sense to deny that a labourer who is compelled to sell his or her labour power and is ***not*** an agent of capital is not a proletarian.

There are different ways in which this proposition can be tested. Let us look at two. For a great part of the functionaries of the state, it is now possible, after all the privatisation activity we have gone through in many countries in the last half-century, to do the same work in the private sector, i.e. by selling one's labour power to a capitalist. For instance, someone who is today a teacher at a state educational institution may very well start working at a private school or what is called a charter school tomorrow. The job he or she is doing remains pretty much the same, the person has sold his or her labour power in either case, but if public employees are characterised as "petty-bourgeois", then this person will have changed from being a "petty-bourgeois" into a proletarian overnight, all the while doing the same job for a different kind of boss.

On the other hand, people who do the same job in different governmental departments are legally classified under different categories. A person (say a driver or a janitor) may be classified as a worker working in the highway administration, but as a public employee doing exactly the same job in the tax administration. To call that person petty-bourgeois in one case and worker in the other is a caricature of class analysis.

To test the proposition that people employed by capital in unproductive sectors (trade and finance etc.) or ordinary wage workers of the public sector whose products are not sold as commodities are as much proletarian as industrial or transportation workers, we can use two different methods. One of these tests has to do with the work processes involved. Over time, the work processes of both banking and commercial workers and ordinary public employees are becoming similar to that of industrial workers. Both layers of workers are working more and more in an environment in which they have lost control of the work process and with a tempo that is typical of Taylorist labour processes in factories. Imagine a bank teller having to serve a new costumer every so many minutes and also having to respond to phone calls simultaneously. Imagine also the worker at the cash register point of a big retailer having to serve one after another customer without respite. This is no different than the excruciating rhythm of the Taylorist factory. Even worse, the workday is even longer than in the factory. In certain seasons and especially at year-end, bank branches open at 9 am and the tellers remain after they close at around 5 pm to finish business off as the year end operations press the entire organisation. We are thus talking of 12- or 13-hour workdays.

As for government departments, the mechanisation and uniformization of work here is only beginning and spreading to the manifold contingents of public employees at a varied pace. But the overall tendency observed in finance and trade is valid here as well.

The same goes for class formation. The two most typical forms of the participation

of the proletariat in social struggles have advanced in the ranks of both unproductive private sector workers and public employees: unionisation and strikes. Although, historically speaking, it was the industrial workforce that first created trade unions, this tendency later on penetrated the ranks of the workers of financial and commercial enterprises. At present, in almost all countries with a certain level of unionisation of the workforce, many different strata of the working class, including teachers, nurses and other public employees are organised in unions.

Having said all this, we should not forget that the proletarianization of large swathes of public employees has come about over a long period of time. In the earlier parts of the 20th century, and *a fortiori* in the 19th century, it was almost impossible to advance the idea that public employees such as teachers or nurses, let alone medical doctors, were a proletarian layer. They were rather like a caste with special skills that had the last word to say in their own domain. It took the entire education and health systems to become mass systems with a mass workforce wielding skills that were now extensively shared by thousands and tens of thousands of other workers for the corps of teachers and nurses to become a part of the proletariat. Before that these professions were much more akin to those proper to the state bureaucracy (but never the petty-bourgeoisie contrary to legend). The translation of this into the sphere of class formation was that teachers' unions was a more recent phenomenon.

After this bird's eye view of the proletariat, we will now turn our gaze to areas that are more problematic. Among these areas are the privileged layers of the class, such as the labour aristocracy and the labour bureaucracy, the medium- and lower-level managers, semi-proletarians of different types, the unemployed and the urban poor, the lumpen proletariat. We will then wind up by looking at some special non-class categories.

The labour aristocracy and the workers' bureaucracy

Even if we limit our view to a single country, there can be no doubt that there is an infinite number of divisions within the working class. Let us make a tentative list of these, without even trying to be exhaustive. There are first layers within the class that differ from each other in terms of the conditions of employment and work. Skilled and unskilled, permanent versus subcontracted workers, part-time workers, workers on temporary contract, on-call workers, workers of large corporations versus workers of sweatshops and small firms working unregistered, unionised versus non-unionised, workers of different legal status (worker versus public employee etc., private sector versus public sector)—and the list goes on.

Secondly, there are differences that derive from migration: workers from peoples long-established on the territory of that country ("native" workers) work under very different conditions from workers who have migrated to or received refugee status from the country, regular or irregular form the point of view of their legal status. The differences often lead to contradictions, sometimes even violent conflicts.

Thirdly, there may be very deep-going contradictions between races, nations, ethnic or religious groups, between those that are in a dominant position, the position of the oppressor, and those that are the oppressed. Fourthly, great differences arise between men and women in all countries, although to a varying degree from country

to country.

Each of these divisions, as well as others we have not touched upon, plays an important part in class struggles and at times turns in certain countries into a vital, decisive, even strategic problem that hinders the unification of the working class in its confrontation with the bourgeoisie. Assessing all of these problems that arise for class struggles and revolutionary activity, fighting to rally the class around the long-term and general interests of the working class (including here the international dimension as well) rather than the short-term interests of a more limited section of the class is a duty of immense importance for proletarian revolutionaries. But there is one among these topics that is of a decisive weight in class struggle. ***This is a contradiction that renders the class weakest where in fact it is the strongest***. Here, it is a question of the strongest forces of the class being incorporated into the social order through special interests. We are talking about the entire problem of the labour aristocracy and the workers' bureaucracy.

To begin with, let us define our terms as clearly as possible. The concept labour aristocracy was first used by Engels for certain layers of the British working class, the most advanced contingent of the international proletariat in his day, and was later attributed a very important place in Lenin's thinking. Engels named those layers of the proletariat that had great material advantages when compared with the rest and therefore considered themselves as socially superior and as a result came to terms with the capitalist social order the labour aristocracy and called them "bourgeois workers" because they had become assimilated by the system.

Lenin took up this concept of Engels and connected it with two phenomena of his day. First, Lenin regarded the privileged position of the labour aristocracy as a result of the "bribing" of these layers on the basis of the super profits made possible by imperialism, a part of which is used a hush money. Secondly, he traced the material social roots of the opportunistic, reformist, social-patriotic current within socialism that started its ascendancy at the end of the 19th century and moved to the side of the capitalist-imperialist order as soon as World War One erupted to these layers of the working classes of imperialist countries. In other words, with Lenin, the labour aristocracy became a theoretical concept that was to play a key part all throughout the imperialist epoch.

There is not a shred of doubt that the concept labour aristocracy still preserves its centrality and has shed light on many a development in imperialist countries throughout the 20th century and the most recent quarter of a century. However, today we need to extend the validity of the concept to countries outside the circle of imperialist countries and apply it to an understanding of countries which, despite having reached quite an advanced level of capitalist development, are nonetheless still subordinated to imperialism. In our day, a labour aristocracy has arisen in countries such as Brazil or India, Turkey or South Africa, alongside the large masses of workers that work unregistered for a miserable minimum wage or even lower pay or, giving up even looking for a decent job, subsist on the basis of whatever unstable employment they can lay their hand on and fall into the depths of what is called the urban poor for lack of a better name (of which more in the next section).

The labour aristocracy in question consist of workers who work in large

corporations, whether publicly owned or private, as members of a unionised workforce. This proposition immediately raises a question: if the material basis of the labour aristocracy is hush money given to the higher organised echelons of the class out of imperialist super profits, how can we talk of a labour aristocracy in countries that are not (yet) imperialist countries, that are in fact countries that are subordinated to imperialism? The answer to this question is as follows: imperialistic exploitation is not the only source of super profits. The latter may also flow from advanced technology and business models, scale economies and marketing power. The advantages that these bring to powerful individual units of capital make it possible for such units to appropriate an additional share of total surplus value, raising their profitability above the general rate of profit. Obviously, the super profits appropriated by imperialist corporations are much higher than the large corporations of these countries. But given these limits, some corporations and enterprises will obtain super profits way higher than the average rate of profit for that country. It is these that pay a part of these super profits to their work force in order to maintain "industrial peace" and also raise productivity further (a virtuous circle sets in here), if, that is, their work force is effectively unionised.

So, there is now a layer of workers in such non-imperialist industrialised countries that represents a labour aristocracy. It is possible to recognise these even from their lifestyle. Many live in petty-bourgeois neighbourhoods. They drive a recent model car. They have the possibility of taking a summer holiday trip. They strive to offer their children the same kind of opportunities enjoyed by the children of the higher classes. Some have unions which run their own hospital or health centre or if not, the unions provide private health insurance policies to their workers and their families. None of this is undeserved. In fact, apart from the private health insurance (healthcare obviously should be public, free and high-quality), these standards of living should be provided to all workers. However, the fact is that these are special privileges in a country where a majority of the working class lives from hand to mouth. They become a labour aristocracy.

As for the workers' bureaucracy, this is an entirely different layer of the working class. As opposed to the labour aristocracy, which, despite its economic privileges, is nonetheless, by the very fact of its conditions of existence ***a part of the proletariat***, the workers' bureaucracy, despite its origins within the class for the most part, is now a layer that has ***risen above the proletariat***. In societies in which capitalism has reached a certain level of development, the workers' bureaucracy finds its main source in the trade-union bureaucracy. In many countries, including our native Turkey, the workers' bureaucracy consists only of the union bureaucracy. Beyond the advantages in terms of pay provided by being a professional union leader, the union bureaucracy spirit is more relevantly formed by the provision of a car (as well as a driver) for personal use, special *per diem* possibilities, the payment of all kinds of expenses out of the accounts of the union etc. In other words, this is the direct product of the material benefits that accrue to the professional union leader. Not all unionists give in to the lure of such benefits to the same extent, but it must be remembered that the person who is now offered this very secure mode of existence has been a proletarian all his life before reaching this office.

Nonetheless, since the level of adaptation changes from union leader to union leader, it is not right nor fair to say that all professional union leaders are union bureaucrats. The true indicator of this mode of material existence is the quality of the relations established with the bosses' organisations and individual bosses, on the one hand, and the government authorities, on the other. If leaders that have been elected to lead the fighting organisations of the working class have created a web of relations with the bosses and the state that rather than facing the prospect of conflict is based on class collaboration, that implies a capitulation of the union leader in question to the material comfort of his or her position. This, in turn, carries the divorce of the mode of material existence of the bureaucrat form the rank and file even further. The income flow to the bureaucrat is now not confined to the salary and the perks that we have enumerated above. Receiving bribes during the collective bargaining process from the bosses or using EU funds or other sources that have been extended to the union by international donors for personal purposes tie the bureaucrat hand and feet to the interests of the capitalist social order.

It is, however, interesting to see that even the well-established bureaucracy of powerful but soulless unions sometimes start to fight the bosses fiercely under certain circumstances. This can happen not because the established bureaucracy is still composed of "honourable" individuals, but because the union is a purely working-class organisation and thus as an organism it can transmit all the strain and stress existing within the rank and file to the top leadership under circumstances favourable to a real fight. Hence one should avoid two contrasting but equally harmful mistakes. The union bureaucracy should not be identified with the bourgeoisie, but on the other hand there should be no illusions about it going all the way once it has picked up a fight.

Although the union bureaucracy forms the backbone of the workers' bureaucracy, in countries where one or more workers' parties have taken root on a mass basis, that is to say where a political workers' movement has developed, the workers' bureaucracy is also recruited from the ranks of that movement. Think of France or Italy. In these countries, mass workers' parties, whether "communist" or "social democratic", have had their members elected to positions in local councils, including as mayors, as well as to the legislative as members of parliament, senators etc. Even if these parties are constantly in opposition (which is far from being the case), their elected members, if very special measures of the type the Bolsheviks applied over their elected officials are not in place, will become, in the long run, functionaries that tend to the requirements of the reproduction of the capitalist order. The same is true for the top professional leadership of these parties. The intellectual elements of these same parties are also integrated into the bourgeois parliamentary system since they work as aides or councillors to the elected politicians. So many of the parties in question have been thoroughly bureaucratised when they finally come to power (think of the first term when Lula took office in 2003 in Brazil).

There exist two factors that set the party bureaucracy apart from the union bureaucracy in certain ways. One is that trade unions, by their very constitution, remain working-class organisations whatever happens to them while political parties may very well become bourgeois parties over an extended period of time of erosion.

The other is that the union bureaucracy is overwhelmingly recruited from within the working class while the bureaucrats that come forth from political parties may have their origins in very different classes. For instance, a professional politician with roots in the petty-bourgeoisie or an intellectual having been elected as an MP should be considered as a member of the workers' bureaucracy because they owe their position as MP or local councillor or advisor to a party that the workers have voted for on the basis of their belief, right or wrong, that this is "their" party. Hence, they are the representative, for good or bad, of the working class within parliament or the local council.

Before winding up this section, we need to touch upon a very important difference between the labour aristocracy and the workers' bureaucracy in terms of their future potentialities. Although the labour bureaucracy is a layer of the working class that feels itself privileged due to its material conditions and therefore has had its instinctive revolt against the social order pared down to a considerable extent, acts as a factor of moderation, or even of reaction (as in the case of racism in imperialist countries) its assimilation to the capitalist order is conditional: When its privileges are pruned or even squarely taken back, the labour aristocracy will have to fight back as other layers of the working class do. For its mode of existence, whatever its privileges, is still that of a proletarian. Moreover, this layer of the proletariat is usually one of the best-educated, highly skilled, and highly-unionised layers of the class. Its entry into the battlefield is of capital importance. ***The labour aristocracy is not a counter-revolutionary force***.

On the other hand, the workers' bureaucracy, and in particular the union bureaucracy, has risen above the class, thanks to its mode of material existence. It lives a non-proletarian life. It has established intimate links with the capitalist social order. As we have pointed out, it sometimes happens that in daily struggles it may seem bold enough to take a tough stand. But because it has completely been assimilated by the social order, it is a counter-revolutionary force.

We hope it has become clear why we have taken up these two layers in a separate section from the rest of the class. At the beginning of this section, we said these two strata render the working class weak where it is in fact the strongest. The section, we trust, has shed light on that proposition.

Mid-level and lower-level managers

We have seen that the distinctive characteristic of the proletariat is that of selling one's labour power due to a condition of total divorce from the means of production. As a result of this condition in which he or she finds herself, the proletarian is compelled to take a job in return for a wage in order to survive. We have also seen that not everyone who works for a wage is a proletarian. Individuals from other classes may also be receiving their basic revenue under the wage form. The most important groups that we have so far come across who receive their basic income under the wage form but are not proletarians are top executives of corporations and members of the state bureaucracy. Tracing the argument further in the case of the top executives,

we should now look at the class position of the middle and lower ranks of the leading cadres of capitalist companies.

We have already characterised the top executives of corporations as members of the bourgeois class. For instance, the director of the human resources department of a big company has been promoted, so to speak, into the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Turning to those who have shouldered a part of the management but are working as mid-level or lower-level managers working either directly at the point of production or in different positions within the human resources, planning, control, marketing, sales, supplies, accounting, and other divisions, how are we going to assess their class position?

Here a first distinction should be drawn between those who take part in the production process and can apply their knowledge and skills in the field of technology from those that work in other departments. The engineers and other technical staff who take part in the production process in a large capitalist enterprise are, in a very plain sense, highly skilled workers. The mystical halo accorded to the person for being a graduate and a member of a professional chamber, of belonging to a "respectable" profession should not obliterate this simple fact. The engineer and the technical staff are, no less than any productive worker within the labour process, skilled workers that are exploited as capital extracts the surplus value that is produced in the collective production process. The fact that the engineer has acquired his skills in a modern higher institution of education, that he or she lives in an entirely different cultural world, the differences between the milieux in which the two sides live, or the fact that society attributes a special value to the profession of engineering—none of these changes the plain facts of the production process.

However, this plain fact, true as it is, is not the whole truth. The engineer and the technical staff are at the same time given the task of controlling and directing the worker at the point of production on behalf of capital. In a certain sense, they are the conveyor belt, so to speak, and the watchdog for the despotism of capital over the working class. On the basis of this specific aspect, they should be considered to be ***third-order agents of capital***. Third-order agents that translate into practice the plans of the second-order agents who devise and orchestrate the production and circulation process in the interests of the first-order agents, who themselves are the true bearers of the capital relation. This shows that the class position of engineers and technical staff is a ***contradictory class position***. On the one hand, they share the class position of the productive workers, work together with them to produce surplus value, but, on the other hand, they function as the representative of capital in this collective. Of course, from the objective point of view, some engineers are closer to the workers and some to the capitalist. This kind of contradictory position makes the group in question an intermediary one. In revolutionary times, these strata will, in all probability, oscillate wildly between the revolutionary camp and the counter-revolutionary one.

As we move to determine the class position of the employees that work in departments and divisions outside production we need to remember an important aspect of Harry Braverman's analysis of Taylorism.[4] "Scientific management" takes

4 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital. The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Cen-*

away the knowledge and control of the work process from the worker and turns them over to the departments outside of the sphere of production in order to offer them to the use of the capitalist. If that is the case, then the function of at least some of these departments (planning, design, R&D, control etc.) is to improve the possibilities of the control of capital over the workers and thus increase the surplus value appropriated.

This fact makes the middle- and lower-level managers of these departments third-order agents of capital, just like the engineers. But at the same time these people themselves are exploited *qua* participants in a collective worker that together works to produce surplus value for the capitalist. Usually, this exploitation is of very high intensity. These workers, named "white-collar workers" in the bourgeois literature, are frequently compelled, especially in large corporations, that is in units of monopoly capital, to work up to 12 hours or more on a daily basis, whereas at least in unionised plants the core team of productive workers have fixed hours. Thus, just like the engineer, these workers also represent a contradictory class position.

It may surprise the reader that we should be talking about the proletarian side of a middle- or lower-level manager, say the head of the planning division or a researcher in R&D, who come to work wearing a business suit, driving a company car, and have lunch in the same dining room as top management. But we are not dwelling on the contradictory nature of this class position for nothing. These employees may really act as an agent of capital in normal times. They may mingle with the wealthier middle classes with respect to their consumption patterns and lifestyle. But trying to understand how certain strata will behave in times of extraordinary class and political struggles is perhaps the most important aim of class analysis.

These strata may start to oscillate between the proletarian and the bourgeois camps in times of revolutionary crisis. In other words, in contrast to the bourgeois and their acolytes, they may be open to being won over by the revolution, depending on a host of concrete circumstances and the tactical astuteness of the sides. Even more importantly, the knowledge and skills of these strata may be put to good use under the central planning system of the new workers' state if the revolution is victorious. Naturally, not all of them will serve the revolution. In fact, perhaps at first only a minority will go along with the proletarian camp. Others may join the fray after the dust has settled in and all hope of returning to the *status quo ante* is lost. But what will make these engineers, business administrators, planning experts, accountants and sundry professions move closer to the revolutionary camp is precisely this contradictory position they have in the class structure, that in spite of all they do to serve capital, they have themselves a proletarian streak, that their bond with the interests of capital has only a ***derivative*** nature in terms of their work as wage workers.

As we are winding up, let us recall that in the specific historical development of France, these strata have formed their own trade unions, bringing together what are called *cadres* in France. They have even brought the diverse unions of *cadres* organised in different industries together in a confederation, called the Confédération générale des cadres (CGC). During certain dire moments of the class struggle this confederation takes its place together with confederations of industrial and other

tury, 25th Anniversary Edition, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998, pp. 86-94.

workers such as the CGT, the CFDT, or the FO, along with the teachers' unions etc. This was the case, for instance, in the extended battle between the Macron government and the working masses on the question of the raising of the retirement age from 62 to 64 this past spring. In that ferocious battle, the CGC marched together with all other unions to the end. That the unions did not offer a winning strategy to the working class is tangential to our point here. This was not the making of the CGC, but of all the unions united in the same front. So even this participation goes to show that there is a proletarian streak in the middle- and lower-levels of management.

Semi-proletarians

We know that the root of the proletarian predicament lies in the selling of one's labour power in return for a wage payment. We saw above that there are significant exceptions to this nexus between wage work and the condition of being a proletarian. But as a general rule, we can say that all who sell their labour power for a wage, who do not execute the function of an agent for capital, and who is not a representative of state power are proletarians. It may not have escaped the careful reader that there is something missing in this kind of definition. This is the element of ***economic compulsion*** to sell one's labour. Let us recall Engels' definition in the footnote that he added to the *Communist Manifesto* in its 1888 edition, which we have already quoted once: "By proletariat [is meant] the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live." The concept "reduced to" is key here. So many have gone astray in discussing class structure in modern capitalism for having ignored this key condition. The proletarian does not sell her or his labour power out of choice but because she or he is ***reduced to*** doing this in order to survive. Obviously, this compulsion derives from the lack of means of production. However, in some cases the compulsion may be only ***partial***. In such situations we are talking of ***semi***-proletarians.

The traditional class position of semi-proletarian has to do with the fact that the labourer, whether a dweller in the countryside or in an urban setting, has not been separated completely from land as a means of production. This situation corresponds to a transitional stage in the process of proletarianization of the smallholder peasant. We in Turkey know from a prolonged process of complete proletarianization that lasted from the 1950s all the way to the end of the 1970s and even further that the Turkish working class in its majority had a small parcel of land to be worked on at harvesting time, which brought in some additional income and food supplements to the working-class family. Second and third-generation workers then saw their ties to the village slowly decline although even today many workers have a piece of family land that is in some cases put to economic use through share-cropping schemes.

One significant component of traditional semi-proletarians is seasonal migrant workers. A moment ago, we were talking about city-dwellers as semi-proletarians. With seasonal migrant workers, we are moving to the countryside. These are families that have a plot of land or other means of survival (say a small herd of sheep), but the scale of that economic activity is not sufficient to support the entire family throughout the year. So, they move to different parts of the country (and sometimes cross borders as Chicanos, for instance, did from Mexico to America) in order to help the harvesting

of agricultural produce, staying in tents, living under miserable conditions, travelling in broken down pickups that violate road regulations and often have road accidents that kill many members of families. Additionally, children of school age are unable to attend their school. But they need to do this because they are compelled to sell their labour power, albeit compelled only partially.

The other type of work that seasonal migrant labour can take is construction work, whether in urban surroundings or road construction anywhere in the countryside. Here seasonal workers, especially those in the road construction area, can even unionise, so it is a different kind of situation. Construction duties are different from harvesting in that only men can take jobs here.

Leaving aside seasonal migrant labour, which never seems to diminish in our native Turkey, probably because the economic conditions of the Kurdish region are so miserable that any additional income is welcome, the traditional kind of semi-proletarian is a transitional phenomenon that will diminish progressively with complete proletarianization to disappear all but in name sometime in the future. However, there is another layer of semi-proletarians generated and reproduced constantly through the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production itself. This layer bears no resemblance to the semi-peasant semi-proletarians of the past in any aspect, economic, cultural, ideological etc. This is a layer that is recruited from among the children of the lower echelons of the bourgeoisie, the state bureaucracy, and the middle classes, including the well-to-do modern petty-bourgeoisie.

These people are usually well-educated, almost all of them graduates, a growing number fluent in English at least, and cosmopolitan in outlook. They start their working life as wage-earners. As capitalism, in its process of development, socialises all activity and increases the scale of production and circulation in all areas of life, many professions can now be practiced only as part of a working collective. So being on the payroll of some company or government agency or private health or educational establishment is almost a normal place to start one's working life. This layer of people starts working in banks, insurance companies, advertisement and public relations companies, large hotel chains, in non-production departments of manufacturing companies, in the media, in private hospitals or private schools etc.

At this stage, if we abstract form the fact that their living standards and lifestyle are very different form the working class at large, their position in the production process of goods and services makes them a layer of the proletariat, albeit with marked peculiarities. But even at this stage there is a trait that shuns the tendency to regard them as proletarians. We know that the traditional semi-proletarians living in the urban setting received some supplement to their income either in cash or in kind because their family ties in the region from which they had migrated to the city through which they also had some partial access to means of production made this possible. In other words, what made the "semi-" what they specifically were was intra-family transfer of revenue. The same goes for the modern "semi-proletarian" we are now examining.

A young person who has graduated from college and started working for a bank from the lowest echelons up receives economic assistance from his or her family since the family is one of state bureaucrats or one that is a well-to-do bourgeois or modern

petty-bourgeois family and can afford this. This may take the form of chipping in for the rent or general cash assistance or even go further and result in the purchase of an apartment and/or a car for the youngster. As a result, the person has not only benefited from the advantages of being from a family with higher standards than proletarian families in early childhood and during their youth, but can afford a higher standard of living at this early stage in life. As a matter of fact, in many cases the person has not even been compelled to sell their labour power. Had there been a desire, opening a boutique or a café or some summer resort tourism or catering establishment would possibly have been feasible. But the youngster wishes to be a renowned journalist or a powerful banker or a creative advertiser. That is why he or she has opted to try their luck in a big organisation, slowly climbing the ladder to wealth and fame in the future.

The conclusion we reach is the following: These "office workers" are, even in the early stages of their working life, semi-proletarians rather than proletarians. But as we have stressed from the beginning of this article, we need to reason dialectically and look at processes rather than frozen moments, think not statically but dynamically, ponder on not solely what has happened to the class position of an actor so far but what potentialities that position hides in waiting for the future. If we think in these terms, then two alternative routes face the person in question for the future.

One is the possibility of promotion. Even the person who has started out as a teller at a bank branch views the prospect of becoming branch manager to be then promoted eventually to the top management of the bank. A well-educated correspondent of a daily newspaper or TV channel may imagine himself or herself in the shoes of the editor-in-chief in some distant future. The lower-level manager of a manufacturing company is now given by the "human resources department" a "career plan" in every "modern" corporation, adorning the dreams of the employee to rise successively to positions of division head, then department head, to eventually rise to the top management of that or some other corporation. And not to forget the by now well-established trend of job-hopping, passing form one company and post to another every so many years, one purpose being to fill one's CV with as many accomplishments as possible. All of these throw forth the semi-proletarian into a fantasy future of wealth and success and glamour and wrest her or him away from the drab proletarian reality of the present in which redundancies may leave the person out on the street in the wink of an eye. Such are the sly methods of capitalism.

The other possibility for the future is the prospect of a passage from the class status of semi-proletarian to that of modern petty-bourgeois. Whatever the importance of the helping hand of the family in the early stages of the youngster's "career", this pales into insignificance in mid-life when one or both parents pass away. And the fact that the number of offspring has secularly declined in the 20th century is of great help here. The inheritance of a rather high amount of wealth, starting with real estate, now opens the way to new possibilities in the professional life of the semi-proletarian. Even for the youngster, the decision to take a waged job was not exactly out of economic compulsion, but an early decision of "career planning", so to speak. In other words, the educated semi-proletarian took a waged job because that would prove beneficial for future purposes and not because there was no other possibility. But now there is every possibility for the person to quit working as a "wage-slave", as the relationship

looks to the eyes of every person who has to spend alienated labour day in and day out, and move on to a "business of my own". The possibility alone, even if the road is not taken, removes the educated semi-proletarian light years from the position of the real proletarian, one who remains "reduced to" doing wage work their entire life.

And, this is perhaps the most important thing about the predicament of the modern semi-proletarian, it moves them tangentially close to the modern petty-bourgeoisie. These two layers of two different classes are like twins who have been separated at birth but find themselves at home with each other as soon as they are reunited. Let us now finally name this modern-day stratum of semi-proletarians clearly. This is the ***educated semi-proletariat***.

A word of caution with respect to the naming. Sometimes the qualifying adjective "educated" leads people to think that ***all*** educated layers of the proletariat are part of this privileged social group. This far from the truth. The first very large group that comes to mind is of course the army of teachers. The typical high-school or lower degree school teacher in every country is perhaps a somewhat privileged layer of the proletariat since they are duly respected by the community and enjoy higher job security than many proletarian strata, at least if they are employed by the public school system. But no chasm separates them from the majority of proletarians because they can set up a "business of their own", as can do the educated semi-proletarian. No such chasm existis because they simply cannot. One should not forget that the condition of "semi-" is even more important than the adjective "educated". The educated means that we are not dealing with, for instance, the offspring of the mafiosi or mobsters in American parlance.

One more conclusion remains to draw about this class layer before we pass on to new topics. The modern educated semi-proletariat is politically closest to the proletarian cause when the individual is young and draws ever closer to the establishment and the high bourgeoisie as that individual grows older and gets settled. The reason must already have become clear. In the early years of their career, educated semi-proletarians face an objective situation much closer to the ordinary proletarian. First of all, not all of them have the possibility of setting up their own business at this early stage of their life, so the proletarian predicament is a real one and will remain so for some time to come. Secondly, if you wish to be a powerful (and rich) banker or a famous journalist, you need to carry on working for a bank or a media company according to the case. There is no alternative. One cannot set up one's own bank or one's own TV station out of the blue. For these reasons and others, the younger educated semi-proletarian sympathises with the woes and demands of the ordinary worker. At least much more when compared to his or her later stages in their career. But a mid-career educated semi-proletarian becomes more and more conservative in the class struggle sense of the term. (In the cultural-ideological sense of the word conservatism is not the ideological bent of either the educated semi-proletariat or its estranged twin the modern petty-bourgeoisie.)

The unemployed and the urban poor

In line with its laws of functioning, capitalism constantly breeds unemployment.

The "industrial reserve army", in Marx's words, exerts a tremendous pressure on the proletariat currently working through competition between workers and the unemployed. In non-unionised workplaces, workers (with the exception of those with very special skills, which would make them irreplaceable) are aware that as soon as they enter into struggle over wages or conditions of work, they may be replaced any moment by new workers from the army of the unemployed. For the same reason, in countries where in certain periods unemployment is very high, trade unions find themselves in a terrible bind. Beyond this, workers who remain jobless for a long span of time are both attracted towards the ranks of the lumpen proletariat (of which more below) and become easy prey for reactionary, even fascist ideologies. But on the other hand, as the experience of the Argentine *piquetero* movement has shown, the unemployed and downtrodden can play a very important part in class struggles if they can be organised. For all these reasons, from the point of view of class struggles, the mass of the unemployed is a delicate group that has to be handled very carefully.

Before all else we should make clear the following point: The unemployed are essentially part and parcel of the working class. Sometimes they are treated as a group apart, but that has no sense. The unemployed are compelled to sell their labour power in order to make a living, just like the main body of the working class. What sets them apart from the working sections of the proletariat is that they have not been successful in their search for a capitalist that is willing to hire them. However, the unemployed also display diversity between themselves. Revolutionary theory should be able to grasp those differences as well.

The industrial reserve army is of a magnitude that expands and shrinks according to the ups and downs of the process of capital accumulation. In countries where capitalism was established a long time ago, that is to say in imperialist countries, the main source of unemployment is these ups and downs of the capital accumulation process. Hence, an important part of the army of the unemployed will remain unemployed for a shorter or longer span of time depending on the length of the recession or slump that the economy is going through. Unless the crisis turns into a lengthy depression, that is to say if the economy recovers in six months or a year or at most two years, it becomes possible for that part of the working class who have lost their jobs to find new ones in a span of time that is not excessively long. Even that is a painful process of course, but some unemployment benefit might see a part of the jobless through this period if the crisis does not last longer. This mass of unemployed is the ***conjunctural*** component of the reserve army of labour. And its impact on class struggle is different from the other component.

Even within the imperialist countries, the industrial reserve army does not consist solely of that component. Unemployment even there is a much more ***structural*** problem within the immigrant groups and in the ranks of the oppressed nations or races and, in particular, among the younger generations of these groups. Among the young population of the ethnic groups in Europe whose origin is immigration, unemployment is endemic. In the US, among the black ad native populations the unemployment rate at times reaches 50 per cent or upward.

However, the problem is much more profound in countries that are subordinated to imperialism. In these countries, the population impoverished and dispossessed

by the expansion of capitalism to the countryside migrates to cities where sufficient employment to absorb this incoming population is lacking; so, a major part of the young population remains unemployed for the long haul in a structural manner.

This long-term and structural component of the army of the unemployed leads to the formation of a group of destitute people whose conditions of existence are more difficult even than the standard proletarian layers. By its very nature, because it is the product of the ever-present threat of unemployment, the "urban poor" are characterised by extreme instability and inconstancy in the life processes of its members. The urban poor will do any job that comes along and tolerate all kinds of work conditions. At times its road will intersect with that of the lumpen proletariat (of which more in a moment). Many of the men become alcoholics or drug addicts, and some turn into inveterate gamblers, while the women do laundry for others, work as cleaning ladies, knit or weave at home, all the while tolerating the excesses of the husband. This is hell on earth.

The urban poor do not really belong to any well-defined class although, originally, they are a part of the proletariat. These are the people who are the subject matter of what is now fashionably called "deep poverty".

The lumpen proletariat

The lumpen proletariat, at least outside the imperialist countries, is recruited from the layers of the urban poor. The almost inescapable predicament of these people suffering under conditions of abject poverty begets almost inevitably a desire to make money the easy way, which usually means recourse to exercising professions that have been outlawed such as, most notably, drug-pushing and human trafficking. The youth of the urban poor milieu is an easy prey for mobsters, for pimps, for human traffickers of immigrants and asylum-seekers and for drug pushers.

The lumpen proletariat is a layer that is the bearer of the filth that percolates in the cells of capitalist society. Alongside unorganised or amateurishly organised elements that have made robbery and theft a profession, the lumpen proletariat includes very different categories extending from the foot soldiers of the small- and large-scale mobster organisations and of the drug cartels, pushers of drugs at neighbourhood corners, the hitmen of bands organised for the collection of unpaid cheques and bills, hired professional killers, bouncers, employees of illegal casinos, all the way to those on the payroll of bordellos, streetwalkers (including trans people in many countries) and their pimps, call girls, escort services, women enslaved by international trafficking schemes, and parts of the pornography business, in particular those who work for the sub-sector of child pornography. There is also a kind of intersection of many of these professions with show business and the night club scene. A big part of the lives of many of these people is spent in prisons. Only a handful are intelligent, skilful, and brave enough to rise to leading positions in the organisations of which they are a part.

The lumpen proletariat is a hotbed of a miserable and dangerous life that might end very early on. On the other hand, it is a door to social mobility and wealth for the destitute and hopeless. The original land of the Mafia and the Camorra has a special term for this combination: "*Malavita*" or the bad life. But the bad life is not all that

bad if one is lucky and takes an immoralist's view of society and human life.

Finally, the impact of the lumpen proletariat on the class struggle is variable from country to country and from epoch to epoch. One point that is salient in many countries (starting with our native Turkey) should be emphatically noted: many mobster leaders are intimately connected to the fascist movement, which immediately should remind us that in times of crisis and confrontation, the fascist movement in those countries has battle-tested and skilful warriors ready to fight the organised working-class movement and the socialist and communist movements.

On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the lives of at least certain sections of the lumpen proletariat interpenetrate with those of the families of sundry groups of the poor and exploited. To regard a prostitute's or a drug pusher's life activity as ordinary, almost simply as "another profession" is very common within many working-class areas. However, this then infests the neighbourhood with inevitable violence and saps the morale of the working-class milieu in question through the spread of the use of alcohol and particularly drugs, which of course results in the weakening of the will to fight the ills of the social order. However, working-class militants need to tread a very fine line in their approach when confronting the presence of the lumpen proletariat. Although in many cases a pitched battle may become necessary against bands of pushers trying to establish their "business" in a working-class neighbourhood, and in such situations proletarian revolutionaries may even have to resort to violent methods since this is the only language these gangs will understand, at the level of the individual local youngster, a positive approach of offering alternatives, whenever possible, and educating is preferable to a moralising and excluding stance.

Bertolt Brecht's admonition in his *Three-Penny Opera* should never be forgotten: "Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral" or "Bread first, morals after".

The quasi-proletarians

Among those people who have to sell their labour power in order to make a living, there are certain categories of profession or employment relations that do not correspond to an unadulterated class position. There are quite a number of such cases and it is impossible to look into all of these. However, some are worth discussing briefly so as to understand their impact on class struggle.

Recent developments in bourgeois society have brought forth a new profession akin to the police force, but radically different from that force in many different ways. In the past, there used to be private security guards at factories and the mansions of the wealthy. Today this practice of using security has proliferated, from banks and shopping malls to gated estates of the upper and upper middle classes. Moreover, certain locations such as airports or train stations or the underground, which used to be guarded by the police, have now been turned over to private security. Figures suggest that the number of private security guards is competing with the national police force at least in Turkey.

Private security is an occupation that requires very challenging conditions of work (many shifts last 12 hours) and bears risks for the worker. Seen from this point of view,

this “army” of armed men and women is home to a very interesting contradiction in the bosom of capitalist society. The bourgeoisie is arming certain layers of the proletariat! These people are employed by private security companies, most often established and headed by retired intelligence personnel, police chiefs and army and gendarmerie officers, and subjected to heavy exploitation. Under ordinary conditions, it is nonetheless obvious that they will side enthusiastically with the interests of the bourgeoisie, to protect which they are hired. It is a well-known phenomenon that certain employees of five-star hotels or luxury restaurants and bars and sports clubs and fitness salons patroned by the upper layers of the bourgeoisie will often adopt the manners, the gestures and mimicry of their customers. Likewise, a part of the private security guards will probably abide willingly by the norms of the bourgeois community they are serving as a professional trick.

Since these people are accorded license to use police powers when faced with certain emergency situations, to that extent their status (and psychological bent) will resemble those of the security personnel of the state. But these people arrive at their workplace in gated communities, for instance, located in rich neighbourhoods from inside the thick web of relations of their home and family and working-class neighbourhoods and after their shift is over return there to share the fate of proletarians. Hence it is, for the moment, a mystery how they will behave in times when class struggle is on the ascendant. They may fall victim to the manipulation of the state or of fascist gangs or they may become “dangerous” elements that side with the revolutionary proletariat.

As a section of the body of private security guards works at the gates of housing estates, we can conveniently pass on to proletarians who work as domestic labourers in the same kind of environment. The “superintendents” of apartment buildings or housing estates, cleaning ladies, permanent servants in the home, private chauffeurs, gardeners, in-house handymen, nannies for young children, caregivers for the elderly and the sick are some of the categories that immediately come to mind. Whatever the differences between them, there is something that unites them. Unless they are working for grand bourgeois families who employ a small army of workers for their needs at home that could compete in numbers with small workplaces, all of them are condemned to isolated labour processes. In other words, these are not part of a work collective. There is even further irony for some of them: usually many proletarians face a single capitalist; but a superintendent of an apartment building is a proletarian who has to confront a host of bosses!

For this reason, they are not good at organising in unions. However, if we remember that cleaning ladies usually come from conservative families in which the women hardly ever participate in social life, the fact that these women get to know the lifestyle and the living standards of the upper classes may be considered a factor that may have an impact (whether positive or negative) on class consciousness. In a certain sense, these workers are intelligence officers that the proletariat sends into the private lives of the ruling classes.

Another group that shares the position of the lonely proletarian are the workers who work for the petty-bourgeoisie. Sales assistants that work in small boutiques or stationery stores, apprentices and footboys in carpenters’ workshops or auto repair

garages, secretaries employed in offices of lawyers or cabinets of MDs or dentists etc., are often isolated in their labour processes, are not part of a workers' collective, and cannot share their grievances concerning their boss' attitude towards them with other workers who experience the same thing. Moreover, they are not confronting a capitalist with a voracious appetite for surplus value. Some of them may be working for very wealthy bosses (for instance the MDs), but others' bosses may be simple people who are almost no different from the great mass of the population. These are proletarians that do not experience the confrontation with a capitalist. They participate in class struggle only on the basis of their experience at school or the neighbourhood in which they live.

Hence the smaller the average scale of workplaces in a country or a region, the less heady will be, in principle, class struggles when they break out.

5. Special social categories

There are certain categories which, although they have special weight in social and political struggles, are themselves not a class, nor do the members of these groups necessarily belong to one and the same class. Because their social position has always vexed people, it would be useful to dwell on two of these categories briefly.

Intellectual

Intellectuals are not a social class. But from the point of view of Marxism, like any other social groups, they also are to be defined on the basis of the position they hold within social production and social reproduction. Seen from this vantage point, an intellectual is someone who deals with and has become, within the social division of labour, an expert in the production and reproduction of ideas and of artworks. Scientists (of the natural or social type), philosophers, people who work in the area of social theory, political commentators, and artists and art critics form the backbone of the category intellectual.

Before going any further, let it be pointed out that the attribution of the label "intellectual" to some groups or individuals bears no implication of a positive evaluation in this context, but only an observation of their ***objective*** position within the social division of labour. For instance, many people who are active in an area that has nothing to do with the production of ideas or artworks within the social division of labour may be much more knowledgeable and intelligent or have a much broader horizon than intellectuals concerning many different areas. Some university teachers are extremely narrow-minded almost to the level of being "ignorant" about everything except their own field of research. Some artists may be unable to put together their ideas outside their own special field, be it literature, plastic arts, music or film. An intellectual need not necessarily be open-minded or progressive, either. Each class or each ideological current has its own intellectuals, including reactionary ones. The importance of the intellectual from the point of view of social and political life derives not from the intellectual being more intelligent than others nor necessarily from their being progressive. It simply derives from the intellectual becoming a specialist of ideas, for every ideological trend and every political movement needs ideas.

The definition of the intellectual given here implies that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat need to wage a constant struggle for hegemony over the world of the intellectuals. In this struggle, it is naturally the bourgeoisie that is at an advantage. Universities usually recognise a certain freedom for left-wing intellectuals, but are nonetheless institutions of the bourgeois established order. The press, the media, and publishing houses are to a great extent, and on an increasing scale as bourgeois society becomes better-established, subordinated to capital. Artists need money to survive and practise their art; however, this area is more and more closely controlled by the moneyed classes, through collectors, museums, galleries, biennials, and similar institutions. Universities of course have a special weight, but they implement a corporation-like rigid hierarchy and impose on the university faculty a lifestyle that will bring him or her a certain "dignity", which encourages conformism. The university is like a factory that manufactures professors siding with the established social orders out of a raw material of young leftist intellectuals.

Students

In many countries, students and in particular university students have had a big impact on political life, particularly in the formation of left-wing movements. The tendency to regard them as petty-bourgeois is patently a mistake. It was always a mistake, but nowadays, as the university is becoming more and more a mass organisation and concomitantly the diversity of class origins of the student body is rising rapidly, the characterisation "petty-bourgeois" is even more erroneous in grasping the truth.

For students as well as for other groups, the true criterion is their place within social production and social reproduction. Here there are two main aspects. One is the common condition that students all face. Here, there are three factors that determine the position of students. First, the fact that they are for the time being outside the process of production. Second, the fact that they are part of a mass organisation, that modern institution called the "school". And third, that they are still being acclimatised to the division of labour that exists in capitalist society, i.e. that they are still in the process of "learning" their prospective future position.

The first factor allows students to set aside ample time for politics since their time is mostly flexible. Also, they do not need to fear as much as proletarians or other poor layers of the population that they will be deprived of their livelihood (although depending on the country and the *zeitgeist*, there may eventually be other sanctions such as suspension or dismissal, but these act more loosely as deterrents). All these make it much more possible for them to develop their militantism and join radical political movements.

The second factor, that of being a part of an institution together with masses, provides them an environment where they can swiftly take up collective action and thus have an outsized impact as an actor in politics than would have been warranted otherwise. In a certain sense, students are like workers who can swiftly take collective action as opposed to peasants who are much more isolated and are therefore at a disadvantage. And they are like workers, but without the immediate threat of being

fired if the limits imposed by the law and the labour contract are trespassed.

As for the third factor, that is to say a relative freedom from the constraints of being sanctioned for anti-systemic policies defended, this gives them a freedom to question the fundamentals of the existing social order much more radically than others (which is also true for intellectuals, but for a different reason, i.e. because they can question many things radically limiting themselves to the world of ideas, in other words putting forth a critique without action, "the arm of critique" without "the critique of arms", in Marx's words).

Otherwise, attributing the level of radicality of student politics to their youth, to their excitable young spirits is rather abstract and excessively biologistic. Students come from different backgrounds and in the last half-century a university degree has become the most envied asset for finding a well-paid job in the labour market. It should be obvious that students who come from upper-class backgrounds are much more reluctant to engage in radical politics that can even turn violent, for they have so much more to lose. Only if the *zeitgeist* is exceptional, as it was in 1968 all around the world, would students from all backgrounds throw themselves into politics.

Conversely, youth who do not have the possibility of going to college are also young and easily excited, but do not organise or join in easily collective action on political matters except in very special cases. So collective activity in the environment in which one is working is much more effective than the characteristics of the age group.

These are the factors that are common to the entire student body, and especially university students, in a country. The other main element that determines the political behaviour of groups of students, and not the entire student body, is very obviously the class background of different subgroups of the student population. It will be remembered that at the beginning of this article we clearly stated that for those groups of the population such as pensioners, the disabled and the chronically ill or women who are homemakers or children or youth, groups who do not participate any longer or yet in activities of social production or social reproduction, the class belonging is fundamentally determined by the class of the major breadwinner(s) of their family. This means that background is also very important for students. That is why students sometimes disagree violently on the politics they adopt.

6. Conclusion

It would not be correct to deduce unmediated political conclusions from an article that has surveyed all the major classes of (urban) society under capitalism, as well as a string of non-class categories. Rather than that, let us wind up by stressing some of the fundamental points.

To begin with, the analysis carried out in this article has shown us that the class structure of modern capitalist societies is not so uniform and neatly stratified as to be analysed by taking up only two or three classes. We saw especially when discussing what for Marxism is the engine of the revolution, that is to say the proletariat, that many social strata, despite being part of the proletariat, simultaneously feel the pressure of the interests and political outlook of other class positions. This is probably one of the

keys to understanding the phenomenon of the infrequency of the rise of revolutionary waves in the class struggle of the proletariat. It is true that especially in the imperialist countries the proletariat forms the majority of society and that in countries of a later but full development of capitalism is expanding by the day, but the proletariat is far from being a monolithic class, with a potentiality of unity in struggle that is already given *a priori*. The foundations of the unity need to be constructed.

While working for this political objective, revolutionaries also need to take up the concrete and specific attributes of the various proletarian strata with great care and attention to detail. One of the benefits of this type of class analysis is to shed light on this politically important effort.

Secondly, this complexity of the class structure of modern capitalist society must also have taught us that the kind of omnipresence of the petty-bourgeoisie that many Marxists imagine to be true for all elements outside the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is a grave fallacy. We should stop labelling any group that does not fit the definition of bourgeois nor of proletarian "petty-bourgeois". The four-star general is a petty-bourgeois, the village teacher or the nurse in the local health clinic is petty-bourgeois, the engineer is petty-bourgeois, the intellectual is petty-bourgeois, and so is the student. There may be a psychological tendency here of despising all non-proletarian strata and categories in the name of putting the proletariat in the centre, but the result is exactly the opposite of what Marx himself tried to put forth. Whereas from the *Communist Manifesto* onwards, Marx insisted that capitalist society would become over time ever more polarised between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the ranks of the latter broadening with every passing day, this approach offers a view of capitalist society as one of an army of the petty-bourgeois.

Moreover, to the extent that this approach reduces social layers that are very different between themselves to each other, it is impoverishing in terms of the wealth and variety and nuance of the analysis Marxism has made of capitalist society. Only an analysis and a concomitant political stance that is sensitive to the relative differences between different social groups and strata can take us forward.

Finally, as opposed to the abstract analysis of social classes, the investigation of which concrete groups of people belong to which class will reveal that even the most advanced theory cannot correspond on a one-to-one basis to the complexity of the social structure. As Lenin, quoting Goethe, said, "theory is grey, but the tree of life is green". It is a pretty easy step to define classes on the basis of their location within social production and social reproduction. But then at the first step forward, complications and contradictions and uncertainties arise as we try to apply the initial definitions to large groups of the population. The real world does not simply consist of purely bourgeois, purely petty-bourgeois and purely proletarian elements. Just to take the proletariat as our example, the labour aristocracy, semi-proletarians, proletarians with contradictory class positions, the quasi-proletarians—all these render the class structure extremely complicated but extremely rich in variety.

At a second stage, then, come the contradictions between the family, kinship, neighbourly relations, and friendship, on the one hand, and class distribution into different classes, on the other. Take the family. In principle, it would not be incorrect to say that the family of a bourgeois is part of the bourgeoisie and the family of

a proletarian is a proletarian family. If there are more than one breadwinner in the family, it may become difficult to say which class even the nuclear family belongs to if the positions of those breadwinners within social production and social reproduction are different from each other. When kinship relations are brought in the complexity will probably rise even further. Further complexities arising from the neighbourhood, relations of friendship, locality etc. may, in certain cases, make things unfathomable.

Up until this point we have only talked about complexities that arise from class belonging itself. If one then brings in differences of region of origin, ethnic solidarity and conflict, religious animosity, gender-based diversification that arise from outside the class structure, the level of difficulty facing the analyst becomes even more daunting.

Should one conclude that class analysis is so ridden with formidable difficulties that it had better be abandoned in favour of a more empirical approach to social struggles? Or that the effectivity of class contradictions will lose its urgency in this maze of complexities? Neither. These point to totally different things. For one, nothing is pure in real life as in abstractions. They point to the reality that countering every socially operating law there exist countervailing forces. To the fact that contradictions do not surface at every moment and in an unmediated manner, and become explosive only when conditions become ripe.

Secondly, precisely this kind of complexity teaches us that a fundamental approach Marxism has developed to revolutionary politics maintains its validity despite all the fashionable variety of discourses one comes across frequently. The web of relations that is woven by an entire spectrum of factors such as family, kinship, neighbourly relations, friendship, locality, and many others is so complex that a truly effective class struggle strategy cannot be built upon geographic space and the sphere of consumption. A truly proletarian revolutionary politics, without in the least neglecting this web of relations, nonetheless needs to organise the class where it is strongest and most united: in other words, in the sphere of production, in the factory, in the shipyard, in the mine, in the workplace, on the land, on the sea, and in the air.