# Revolutionary Marxism 2026

## A JOURNAL OF THEORY AND POLITICS

In Brazil there now reigns a semifascist regime that every revolutionary can only view with hatred. Let us assume, however, that on the morrow England enters into a military conflict with Brazil. I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally—in this case I will be on the side of "fascist" Brazil against "democratic" Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat. Truly, one must have an empty head to reduce world antagonisms and military conflicts to the struggle between fascism and democracy. Under all masks one must know how to distinguish exploiters, slave-owners, and robbers!

Leon Trotsky, Interview with Mateo Fossa, 1938

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

# Revolutionary Marxism 2026

Special annual English edition

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***Cover Photo***

*An Iranian youth is lighting his cigarette with a burning Israeli flag in Tehran in 2024.*

# Revolutionary Marxism 2026

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# In this issue

This edition of the English-language version of our quarterly Turkish-language theoretical journal *Devrimci Marksizm* is somewhat special. For this year on May Day the journal will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of its launch with a special issue (number 62). Before the usual process of hand-to-hand distribution and bookshop sales, issue 62 will be distributed on May Day on the streets of Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Gebze (the city that we have named "the proletarian capital of Turkey"), Lüleburgaz (European Turkey) and wherever else our comrades may be marching for May Day. The first issue was first distributed during the May Day march and demonstration in Istanbul 20 years ago, to bring home to friend and foe that this is no “neutral” instrument of knowledge and discussion, but a militant journal that unambiguously takes the side of the working class in the struggle of the classes, working to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in unabashed manner and this not only in Turkey and our region but the world over.

Through a lucky coincidence, this year is also the 10th anniversary of this journal *Revolutionary Marxism*, the English-language annual edition of the same journal, for the first issue came out in 2017, which makes this issue, *Revolutionary Marxism* 2026 our issue number 10. We are very happy that through the tireless efforts of our Editorial Board and our Collective and the contribution of many well-equipped authors from Turkey and from around the world, we have established a sound and well-structured centre for Marxist discussion and intervention in Turkey and abroad and wish to share our consequent exuberance with you. Many happy returns!

The new issue of *Revolutionary Marxism* finds the world inching ever closer to a third nuclear world war, with one provocation after another by US-led imperialism. As this issue goes to print, in the wake of an unprovoked aggression by the US and Israel against Iran in the midst of negotiations – once again, following the same script

as June 2025 – the latter has been fighting a righteous defensive war. *Revolutionary Marxism* as a journal, and the true followers of revolutionary Marxism as a political tradition, stand unwaveringly by Iran in its war of survival against imperialism and its proxies in the Gulf.

Aggression against Iran comes on the heels of the imperialist aggression against Venezuela. While things still can take a different turn, at least at this first stage, the US imperialist strategy consisting of kidnapping the country's legitimate president, Nicolas Maduro, and counting on another faction of the Venezuelan government, led by Delcy Rodriguez, acting as Quislings, achieved notable success. The relative success of this imperialist aggression, against which we stand firmly by any resistance that might develop from within Venezuela, seems to also further encourage US President Donald Trump and his administration. Almost two weeks into the war on Iran, it should be painfully clear to those overly confident imperialist bigwigs that Iran is no Venezuela and the world is not their oyster.

But the impact of the outcome of one imperialist aggression in encouraging another one should also make another point clear for us, revolutionary Marxists, who are the jealous defenders of the workers' state in Cuba, that sacrosanct legacy of Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. The success of the resistance by Iran and its allies against imperialist encroachment will directly inform the following steps against Cuba, which has already been openly named as their next target by US officials. So, to paraphrase the Palestinian communist Najati Sidqi who, upon joining the Spanish republican forces during the civil war, once stated that he "came to defend Damascus in Guadalajara [*Wadi al-Hajara*], Jerusalem in Cordoba, Baghdad in Toledo, Cairo in Cadiz, and Tetouan in Burgos", it is also, in practical consequence, Havana being defended in Tehran.

Whereas the war in West Asia (the Middle East) is at the forefront of world politics, the dynamics of crisis and imperialist aggression progress on other fronts, too. In Ukraine, the war waged by NATO against Russia through its Ukrainian proxy continues unabated, with multiple rounds of negotiations yielding no results. Russia's slow but continuous advance grinds forward, with Ukraine finding it more and more difficult to convince its imperialist overlords, particularly the US, to provide it with arms while imperialist armies and munitions are bogged down on other fronts.

The bid of the Kurdish population, living under the rule of four different West Asian countries, for national liberation also faces a moment of steep challenges. Encouraged by the imprisoned historical leader of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) political tradition, which has been leading the Kurdish struggle in Turkey and Syria, in addition to being a considerable actor in the Kurdish political scene in Iran, the disarmament of the PKK in Turkey is still officially on the agenda, even if it has hardly advanced in a year. Yet the turning tides in the region for the Kurdish struggle were

laid particularly bare in Rojava, a semi-autonomous region in Syria that has been led by Kurdish forces. The Turkish-backed Syrian government, at present controlled by the Takfiris of Ahmad al-Sharaa, moved its forces on Rojava, now deprived of US protection, and quickly scored military victories that forced the Rojava leadership to accept the integration of the region into the new Syria, yielding to less-than-advantageous conditions.

Under these circumstances, it should come as no surprise that *Revolutionary Marxism* 2026 dedicates a sizeable space to political statements as well as Marxist analyses on the imperialist war against Iran, the Kurdish question, new developments in West Asia, as well as the trajectories of various imperialist actors from the US to the European Union.

First, in a statement that we are republishing, the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) of Turkey shows its full support for Iran against imperialist and Zionist aggression, emphasizing that there is no room for neutrality in this war. It urges all anti-imperialist forces to mobilize for the defeat of the U.S. and Israel, framing this as an essential quest for the freedom of all peoples in West Asia.

This declaration by the Revolutionary Workers' Party (DIP) intervenes sharply in the debate around the so-called "Turkey without terrorism" process by rejecting both the state's official narrative and the Kurdish movement's presentation of the initiative as a path to peace and democratization. Arguing that the process is neither a genuine peace initiative nor a democratic opening, the text characterizes it instead as an "oil opening" shaped by the expansionist interests of the colonial bourgeoisie under imperialist auspices. From this standpoint, it analyzes the dissolution of the PKK, the role of secret diplomacy, the function of authoritarian rule within the process, the debates on a new constitution, the question of the "right to hope," and the regional context defined by Syria, Iraq, Iran, NATO, and Israel. Against both colonialist bourgeois politics and opportunist adaptations on the left, the declaration defends an anti-imperialist and internationalist restructuring of Kurdish-Turkish relations on the basis of full equality among peoples, opposition to NATO and imperialist bases, and the revolutionary struggle for a Socialist Federation of West Asia and North Africa.

Then comes an appeal by the Editorial Board of *Devrimci Marksizm/Revolutionary Marxism* to Kurdish workers, labourers and intellectuals. Originally published in Turkish in 2025 in issue number 60 of the journal *Devrimci Marksizm*, our Turkish-language mother publication, the call takes objection to the postmodern line of argumentation that Abdullah Öcalan developed in his call in 2025. On the basis of concrete examples of the Kurdish struggle for liberation, this call serves as a timely reminder that newly-found postmodernism and the strategy that was developed on this basis brought nothing but unfortunate defeats for the Kurdish people.

Passing on to the articles in this issue, Alp Yücel Kaya, in his article titled "A cen-

tury of Kurdish rebellions and insurrections: the Sheikh Said Insurrection (1925)," examines the bourgeois fractions that set sail toward a new world on the road to 1923, the provincial bourgeoisie that remained in the minority and opposed them, and the struggle that emerged among bourgeois classes after 1923. In this context, he focuses on the development of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and the Sheikh Said Insurrection. First, this article analyzes the classes in the Eastern countryside from the Tanzimat period, 1839 onwards to the Republic, their transformations, and the class struggles that arose as a result. It then examines the relations between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies during the National Struggle period. Finally, while discussing the rupture between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies, it addresses the Sheikh Said Insurrection, where the struggle between bourgeois fractions reached its peak, and in this context debates, the so-called " revolutionary laws", the 1924 Constitution, the abolition of the tithe in 1925, the Law on the Maintenance of Order of 1925, the 1926 Civil Code, and their social impacts. While the insurrection is commonly associated with Sheikh Said, it is important to acknowledge the significant role played by the oppressed classes, despite their subordinate position. In the aftermath of World War II, the nature of Kurdish uprisings and revolts underwent a transformation, shifting towards movements rooted in the exploited classes. Consequently, the struggle evolved from a conflict between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies to increasingly embody the characteristics of an uprising by an oppressed nation.

Our rich dossier on world politics is kicked off by Sungur Savran's relatively brief article "What Is Trump's Final Goal: Ten Brief Theses". The author has been writing on the Donald Trump phenomenon for exactly a decade now, since before his first election victory of 2016, doggedly insisting, in the face of almost universal denial until the storming of the Capitol by MAGA hordes, that the man stood, even from that early stage, for a different kind of politics in the US and world contexts, which placed him in the same league as the so-called "right-wing populists" of Europe and elsewhere. According to Savran's own characterization, those European movements were proto-fascist in their overall make-up, meaning that although possessing all the other characteristics of the classical fascism of the 1930s, they nonetheless were not fully-fledged fascist parties because they lacked the violent paramilitary dimension. Trump was different from them only by his lack of a disciplined party. He now has overcome that disadvantage, thanks to the MAGA movement and his firm hold on the Republican party. In this piece, Savran takes another step and situates Trump's international strategy within the overall quagmire international capitalism finds itself in as a result of the Third Great Depression that is the result of its historic decline. The depression has shown that capitalism is not able to overcome this quagmire through its own regular methods of capitalist commodity production, i.e. the market mechanism, and that therefore the mightiest capitalist nation is now undertaking to bring all

nations under its political supremacy, by force and coercion every time this is needed, in order to save world capitalism from the inextricable quandary it has been thrown into. No part of Trump's strategy is independent of this overarching grand objective.

The dossier continues with Mehmet Tevfik's analysis of the new tendencies in the West Asian (Middle Eastern) political scene. Written before the start of the latest episode of imperialist-Zionist aggression against Iran and Lebanon, Tevfik's text underlines a range of new dynamics that will come into play in the upcoming years. First, Tevfik contends, without underestimating the military potentialities of Iran and its allies, that the 2024 defeats served as the beginning of a decline in the Axis of Resistance's role as the hegemonic force of anti-Zionist politics in the region, comparable to Nasserism's trajectory after 1967. He then observes the tendencies for rising competition among the allies of US imperialism in the region, mostly ranged as Israel-UAE on one side, and Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt on the other. Plus, he asserts that a Zionist strategy around the so-called Periphery Doctrine is making a comeback in the region under a different form and with the backing of the UAE. While soberly observing the combined effects of these dynamics in the region, Mehmet Tevfik posits that the only way out for our region is through anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist politics led by a coherent socialist leadership based on the laboring classes.

Burak Saygan's article deals with the European Union as an imperialist project. Saygan historicizes the development of the European Union and its precursors as a push for imperialist survival in a context where the US and Soviet Union were rapidly replacing the old continent as the center of world politics. Objecting to a range of myths about the EU as a project of democracy, Saygan illustrates that from the very beginning, the European Union was a colonial project that remained loyal to its origins. In addition, through the recent tendencies in European politics, Saygan shows that the European Union is inherently compatible with fascist politics, which could soon be the leading force of this imperialist body.

In his article, Ertuğrul Oruç, General Secretary of the Istanbul Medical Chamber, exposes the shameful silence of international medical institutions in the face of Israel's genocidal destruction of Gaza's healthcare system and its deliberate targeting of hospitals, ambulances, and healthcare workers. He argues that the World Medical Association's initial position of so-called neutrality, by equating oppressor and oppressed and rendering Israel's responsibility invisible, effectively functioned as a cover for a pro-Israeli line. Against this silence, the struggle initiated on the one hand the British Medical Chamber and, on the other by the Istanbul Medical Chamber Solidarity Working Group with Palestine and carried onto the international plane by the Turkish Medical Association, opened up a real breach through the unanimous adoption of the Porto resolution at the World Medical Association General Assembly. The article shows that this outcome was won through organised pressure, internation-

al solidarity, and anti-Zionist political intervention. It insists, finally, that solidarity with Palestine in the field of health must be sustained, organised, and expanded into a lasting line of struggle.

The next article in this issue is, in a certain sense, on how a communist life should be lived. There is an exceptional Russian communist, now living and struggling in the city where the Great October Revolution occurred, Petrograd by its name at that time, later to become Leningrad, and today officially St. Petersburg. Iosif Grigorievitch Abramson is on the verge of becoming 100 years old and has been a communist during his whole conscious life. In different periods in his life, he went through a lot of soul searching because of the Stalinist terror that shook both the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state to their roots, but he never confounded the gains of the revolution and the bureaucratic repression and always stayed faithful to the programmatic objective of communism and a classless society. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, he remained a solid communist, struggling as one of the prominent leaders of the Russian Party of Communists, one of the three Russian organisations now members of the International Socialist Center "Christian Rakovsky", to which we at the DIP (Revolutionary Workers Party) in Turkey, as well as our Greek sister party the EEK (Workers Revolutionary Party), also belong.

Comrade Iosif very early on corresponded with the world-famous Turkish communist poet Nazım Hikmet, who was then living, from 1951 on, in exile in Moscow. He wrote to Nazım Hikmet apropos his play *Did Ivan Ivanovitch Exist or Didn't He?*, which contained an honestly outspoken critique of the rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy, written even before the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, during which the new Secretary General of the party Nikita Khrushchev condemned Stalin's "excesses". The Turkish-language version of our journal, *Devrimci Marksizm*, a quarterly publication that has now reached its twentieth anniversary, published the correspondence between Iosif Grigorievitch Abramson and Nazım Hikmet in its issue No. 20, a special issue that was devoted to the great poet.

The English-language edition of our journal, *Revolutionary Marxism*, has also published several articles by Iosif Abramson in the past: "Marx's Forecast Has Come True, Science Has Become the Leading Productive Force" in the 2020 edition, "Systematization of the Reasons for the Failure of Most Socialist Projects" in the 2021 edition, and "The Dialectics of Proletarian Revolution and the Creation of the Union of Europe and Asia Soviet Republics" in 2024. There is also a brief introduction to Iosif G. Abramson by our comrade Savas Michael-Matsas in the 2020 edition.

We are publishing here, in celebration of his approaching centenary, his 100-year long life devoted to communism, an article from his own pen that surveys his life and times, together with his struggles as a communist. In this article, Abramson revisits the Soviet experience not as a closed chapter of the twentieth century, but through the

memories and reflections of a life shaped by its upheavals. He traces the contradiction between the revolutionary promise of October and the Stalinist terror and the bureaucratic degeneration behind that terror that led to its degeneration. Abramson argues that the Soviet Union's historic achievements were rooted in the emancipatory energies released in 1917, while its degeneration and eventual collapse were bound up with the destruction of workers' democracy and what he describes as unresolved Stalinism. What emerges is not only a memoir of a vanished world, but also a historical and political reckoning with the fate of the Soviet project.

As already mentioned, Abramson's party is a member of the Rakovsky Centre, where we are all together, Marxists and communists of many different countries, working towards the regeneration of the revolutionary International of Lenin and Trotsky. We wish our comrade Iosif a long, long life and hope to see him among us as we move closer and closer to that noble objective.

One of our *hors dossier* articles, that of our Romanian comrade Ana Bazac, is on a topic very relevant to today's world of rampant weaknesses on the left around the world: the question of how to pursue electoral day-to-day politics without falling into the traps of "parliamentary cretinism", to use a concept admirably coined by Friedrich Engels in the heat of the German and European revolutions of 1848, or, in other words, how to pursue a discourse and tactics through which we can wrest gains from the ruling classes while at the same time raising the consciousness of the workers rather than limiting that consciousness within the boundaries of the existing society, within the limits of what is possible at every given moment, as the inconsistent left does systematically. Bazac starts out with an exciting poem by Mihai Eminescu, the "greatest Romanian poet" (her words), a poem that was first composed in 1871, even before the Paris Commune, but bore the title of "Emperor and Proletarian", nakedly posing the question of class struggle, without a corresponding knowledge of Marxism. Drawing lessons from this, she then delves into the methodology of a realistic policy that resonates with the people but never lets itself be suctioned into the capitalist system, never permits assimilation into the mainstream maze of political life. Bazac's contribution is one that joins a long process of reflection on this difficult question in a philosophical and methodological fashion.

Since the disintegration of the USSR, it has become an almost sacrosanct tradition of Soviet Marxism to hold international conferences in Leningrad (nowadays officially St. Petersburg) on different aspects of Marxism and communism every year in November, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Great October Revolution. For a certain number of years the central part fell to Plekhanov House, National Library of Russia, Saint-Petersburg Branch, but over the years many different organisations joined in a collective effort to sustain this tradition. Last year's conference was organised, along with Plekhanov House, by three other organisations, i.e. the Institute of

the History of Natural Science and Technology Center for Modern Marxist Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University and the Association for Marxist Social Science, on the topic of "Socio-Philosophical Ideas of Historical Formation. Marxism Today: Condition, Problems, Contradictions, General Directions of Evolution, and Prospects". The four articles in this dossier were presented to that conference and are therefore necessarily concise and brief interventions with little to no reference to the literature.

In his article titled "Marxism in the Epoch of Capitalist Decline," Savas Mikhail-Matsas stresses that today's global turmoil reflects not just the decline of US hegemony but the deeper historical decay of world capitalism as a whole: the breakdown of the postwar order, repeated economic crises since the 1970s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the unstable aftermath, escalating conflict among major powers, climate disaster, pandemic shocks, and rising social polarization all signal that capitalism has entered an advanced stage of systemic decline. Rejecting surface-level analogies such as the "Thucydides trap" or simple comparisons to pre-World War I rivalries, the author insists that Lenin's view of imperialism as the epoch of capitalist decay remains the key framework, and that the decline of the United States, as the center of global capitalism, expresses the exhaustion of the entire system rather than the fall of one nation alone. Drawing on Marx, Hegel, and Lenin, the article presents capitalist decline as a contradictory, non-linear, dialectical process in which capital increasingly collides with its own limits, making global chaos the visible form of a self-dissolving system and of an emerging higher social possibility. For Michael-Matsas, the transition beyond capitalism will not happen automatically but requires conscious revolutionary struggle, led by the working class through independent mass organizations and an international revolutionary party, so that humanity can resolve the crisis through world socialism rather than sink further into barbarism.

In his paper published in the Leningrad dossier, Sungur Savran casts a brief glance at the possible question of how and to what extent different traditions of Marxist thinking of the twentieth century will have an impact on the formation of a more universal and internationalist Marxism in the twenty-first century. Savran's point of departure is that the end of the bipolar world of the twentieth century, despite all the negative consequences of the collapse and disintegration of the bureaucratized workers states, eliminated the almost insuperable barriers that existed between Marxist currents in the world system. This makes it possible to imagine a fruitful process of crossing, cross-pollination, hybridization and a possible synthesis, in the present century, of the different currents of Marxism of the previous century. Savran admits that the candidates to be considered are numerous, but selects four of them for scrutiny: Western Marxism, national liberation Marxism, Soviet Marxism (minus the "national communism" represented by Stalinism and its offshoots), and finally

revolutionary Marxism, which the author succinctly defines as the internationalist Marxism of second-generation figures such as Lenin, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Gramsci. In concluding, Savran makes a plea for a Marxism that never swerves away from the following principles: class struggle, the historic role of the proletariat, the necessity of revolution, unbending anti-imperialism, and proletarian internationalism.

In his article titled “Evolution of the Concept of Economic and Social Formation to World History,” Yuri Shakhin examines the development of the Marxist concept of economic and social formation, tracing its origins from the Enlightenment and the works of Marx and Engels to its contemporary state in post-Soviet scholarship. Shakhin contends that although Marx and Engels provided foundational outlines of historical stages, they did not establish a comprehensive, systematic "universal passport" for world history. He elaborates on how Soviet historical scholarship in the 1930s institutionalized a rigid "five-stage" linear framework (primitive, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and communism), which eventually evolved into a political dogma that struggled to accommodate empirical evidence, particularly concerning non-European "Oriental" societies. Shakhin investigates alternative frameworks proposed by Soviet and Russian scholars, such as Kobishchanov, Ilyushechkin, Krylov, and Semionov, who developed more complex models. The article concludes by addressing the current crisis of the concept of economic and social formation in the former USSR, noting that while the field has experienced stagnation for decades, the development of a global perspective on human progress remains an essential task for Marxist theory.

Michael Konashev explores the historical trajectory of Marxism under its different guises. Focusing on Marxism as an object, a subject, and an instrument of research – a combination that Konashev names the trinity of Marxism – he asserts that different Marxist traditions are the result not simply of misunderstandings but rather of different developments of these three aspects of Marxism in different contexts. Distinguishing between an authentic and deformed Marxism, Konashev contends that “the failures and defeats of Marxism are primarily and mainly related to the violation of the trinity of Marxism.”

Antonio Negri is no doubt one of the most influential left-wing thinkers of the last half century. As Volkan Sakarya makes clear in the next article in this dossier, his thinking evolved quite substantially over the years. His latest period has been marked by almost constant collaboration with Michael Hardt. The paradigmatic work of this pair is no doubt *Empire*, published in 2000. The year we have left behind, 2025, thus marked a life of a quarter of a century for the book. Sungur Savran presents a two-dimensional view of *Empire*, on the one hand refuting each and every major thesis put forward by its authors on contemporary capitalism on the basis of clear and systematic theoretical argument and, on the other, comparing the propositions put

forward in the book with respect to the fundamental traits of our world today, a quarter of a century later, and showing that this is a work that accomplishes a feat rarely possible to see in the history of ideas: in Savran's own words, "no book has been so thoroughly refuted by practical life as *Empire*."

Then, Volkan Sakarya reconstructs Antonio Negri's intellectual trajectory—from *operaismo/autonomia* through the Spinozist turn, biopolitical synthesis, and the globalist architecture of Empire–Multitude–Commonwealth to the late organizational writings—as a systematic liquidation of Marxist dialectics. Sakarya argues that Negri progressively dissolves four categorical dimensions indispensable to revolutionary praxis: stratification (collapsing Marx's differentiated levels into a flat plane of immanent productivity), negativity (replacing determinate negation with affirmative overflow), mediation (erasing the organizational and institutional articulations through which fragmented struggles acquire strategic coherence), and grounded agency (abstracting the revolutionary subject from its determinate position within exploitative relations). Deploying both immanent and transcendental critique, Sakarya demonstrates that Negri's flat ontology generates performative contradictions while removing the categorical preconditions for any coherent communist project. Against this dissolution, the article defends the irreplaceable necessity of dialectical materialism—stratification, determinate negation, institutional mediation, and grounded collective agency—as the condition through which revolutionary transformation becomes materially thinkable and strategically executable.

As we always place book reviews at the end of our issues, we reproduce the important piece by Charles Post, published originally in the *Spectre* Journal, as the final piece of this issue. The book he reviews, *In the Tracks of Marx's Capital: Debates in Marxian Political Economy and Lessons for 21st Century Capitalism*, is a collection of essays written by Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak. According to Post, *Capital*'s main arguments generally inspire continuing debates on the origins, dynamics and future of capitalism but especially in times of a world economy with longstanding depression and secular decline in profit rates, its inspiration for further theoretical and empirical research on capitalism becomes more important. Post emphasizes that this collection of essays, leaning on critical appropriation of Hegel's dialectical method as Marx did, not only presents an excellent and timely contribution to our understanding of Marx's work but also a forceful defense and elaboration of his method, theory, and ability to explain the concrete history of capitalism. Although in disagreement with the authors' reception of the formation of a revolutionary subject, the working class and the role of productive forces in human history, Post however insists on the importance of this book by highlighting the central argument of Savran and Tonak that *Capital* provides a firm theoretical basis for understanding and analyzing capitalism as a historically specific form of social labor.

# Fight against the terrorist attacks of the U.S. and Israel against Iran! Murderer U.S., take your hands off Iran! Get out of West Asia! The imperialist attack on Iran must be crushed! Time to mobilize!

## DIP (Revolutionary Workers Party)

On the morning of February 28, the Zionist entity and American imperialism launched a coordinated attack against Iran. It was already known that the U.S. was using the negotiation process as a cover to build up forces around Iran in preparation for a long-term assault. In his first statement after initiating the attacks, Donald Trump announced that they had embarked on “major combat operations” and openly declared that their goal was regime change in Iran.

Imperialism and Zionism have once again attacked the peoples and states of our region. So there is no room for neutrality as Iran wages a war of national defense against imperialist aggression. As revolutionaries of Turkey and West Asia (the Middle East), in this war, we stand with Iran against the terrorist attacks of the U.S. and Israel. The only progressive solution that serves the interests of our working class is the crushing of imperialist and Zionist banditry by force. Iran’s national defense, and every action it undertakes within that defense, is entirely legitimate. We never forget the legitimate struggle of the Iranian people for bread and freedom, and we will continue to stand with that struggle. However, whoever exploits that struggle as a pretext to endorse the aggression against Iran, or calls for neutrality, is

an enemy of the people of Iran and of West Asia.

A significant majority of the states in our region, fearing Iran's retaliation, had timidly expressed that they did not want an attack on Iran and declared that they would not allow their territories to be used for this attack. Some, such as Jordan, however, have committed the treachery by opening their territories to preparations for imperialist aggression.

All the states of West Asia have the obligation to unhesitatingly support Iran against imperialist and Zionist aggression. It must not be forgotten that this aggression is also part of an operation to disarm the Palestinian resistance and subdue Palestine. To remain neutral in this war means implicitly siding with Zionism against Palestine. Those who aid and abet imperialist aggression, or who watch the attack from the sidelines, will bear the shame of betraying the Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish people of our region! The only response to this is for the revolutionary waves that had shaken our region twice in the past 15 years to rise once more and, in order to rescue West Asia from this disgrace, overthrow the complicit governments.

The Turkish government has preferred to watch that imperialist banditry from the sidelines. Its preparations for the war have been not intended to assist Iran against American imperialism and Israeli Zionism, but to prevent people who might be forced to flee Iran from crossing the border. This brings a great shame upon the working people of Turkey. While Iran defends its dignity against imperialism, our working people must see the true face of those who, invoking sectarian differences and listing geopolitical justifications, say that we should remain neutral—thus serving imperialism and Zionism! The working people of this land, who have experienced the national liberation struggle, who know imperialist occupation and armed resistance against it very well, today have no greater interest than the defeat of imperialism and the victory of Iran. A West Asia that drives out the imperialists and Zionists will be one that imperialism and its collaborators cannot be able to intervene with the same ease. Iran's national defense must prevail! The government in Turkey must immediately shut down the İncirlik and Kürecik bases, and erase this black stain from the nation's honor.

As seen in Rojava, U.S. imperialism and Israeli Zionism are not friends of the Kurdish people. For years, the U.S. has changed sides when the decisive moments arrived in Syria, and turned its back on the Kurdish people. It is highly likely that imperialism may pursue a similar course in Iran. Kurdish people and their organizations must not allow imperialism to sow seeds of hostility between them, Iran, and the other peoples of the region. Imperialism has not been an ally, but an obstacle to the Kurdish people's quest for freedom, including their right to self-determination.

To present imperialist aggression as if it were support for the Iranian people's struggle for bread and freedom is the greatest of betrayals. As a result of imperialist

aggression, the bread of Iran's working people will shrink and their lives will be insecure. Moreover, imperialism, which aims at "regime change" in Iran, will seek to trigger a collapse within the country, driving the Iranian people into migration as in Syria. In other words, not only will the bread of the Iranian people shrink or their freedoms further diminish. But they, who have always walked with their heads held high, will also be subjected to national humiliation. No true friend of the Iranian people could desire this. The defeat of imperialism is not against, but in favor of, the Iranian people's struggle for bread and freedom.

In Turkey, in West Asia, and across the world, the task that falls to the working peoples is to rise up for the defeat of imperialism and Zionism and for the victory of Iran. As revolutionaries of the region, we are unhesitatingly determined to take sides against imperialist aggression and call on all anti-imperialist forces to join this struggle.

**Down with American imperialism!**

**Down with Israeli Zionism! Destroy the Zionist State of Israel! Long live Iran's national defense!**

**Turkey must immediately withdraw from NATO! Abandon NATO, demolish NATO!**

**The Incirlik and Kürecik bases must be closed immediately!**

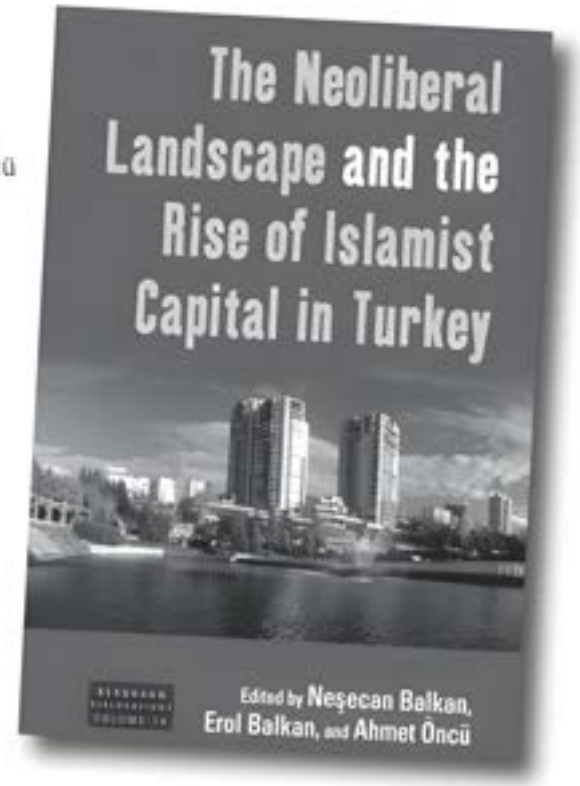
**Seize American financial assets in Turkey! American properties and investments must be expropriated without compensation under workers' control!**

# The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey

Berghahn Books,
New York, 2015

Edited by Neşecan Balkan,
Erol Balkan and Ahmet Öncü

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




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

The hardback edition was published in February 2015 and the paperback edition came out in January 2017. The book has already been published in Turkish translation. It has also been published in two different Farsi translations in Iran.

# The essence and class character of the "Opening": What do we oppose and why?

DIP (Revolutionary Workers' Party)

*This declaration of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) (Turkey) regarding what the despotic regime calls "Turkey without terrorism" process was published on the 25th of June, 2025. This so-called opening process was named by the Kurdish movement as the "Peace and Democratic Society" process, but DIP defines it as a colonialist "oil opening" under the auspices of colonial capital and imperialism. Since then, a group of PKK fighters burned their weapons in a symbolic ceremony, and a parliamentary commission aiming to varnish the process, part of a PR campaign run by the despotic regime, convened on August 5th. DIP painstakingly follows these developments, and will go on warning Turkish and Kurdish working classes and toiler masses.*

The process initiated by Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP (Nationalist Action Party), the foremost fascist party in Turkey and the president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ally, in his parliamentary speech and carried forward by Abdullah Öcalan's, i.e. the party's imprisoned historic leader's call for dissolution and disarma-

ment has entered a new phase with the PKK's Extraordinary 12th Congress decision to dissolve the party and end the armed struggle. This process is described by the state as a "Turkey without terrorism," and by the PKK and Öcalan as an initiative for "a peaceful and democratic society." Neither characterization reflects the true nature of the process. On the contrary, both serve to conceal and obscure its real essence. From the very beginning, the Revolutionary Workers' Party (DIP) in Turkey has stated that this process is neither about terrorism nor peace. At its core, it is driven by the colonialist bourgeoisie's interests and their expansionist policies/dreams under the protection of imperialism, opening the door to new wars. Behind the PKK's decision to dissolve its organizational structure and end its armed struggle lies an orientation toward aligning all components of the Kurdish movement with these interests and policies. It is these interests and policies that determine the entire process and will continue to do so in the future.

Therefore, it is incorrect to label the current developments as a "peace process" or a "Kurdish opening" implying that the aim is a resolution to the Kurdish question. It is far more accurate to interpret and characterize the initiatives stretching back to the 1990s, ultimately, as "oil openings." Throughout this article, we will try to explain why this designation is more appropriate. Hence, when we refer to the current political developments as a "process" or "opening," we understand the underlying content not as a "solution," but as a pursuit of "oil." Opposition to this process is not about advocating for military solutions to the Kurdish question or being against peace. Rather, it is about taking a stand against the interests and expansionist policies of the colonialist bourgeoisie. These policies are contrary to the interests of workers, laborers, and the poor from all nations and lands. The relationship of this process to peace and democracy is limited to using these concepts as masks to cover up reactionary, expansionist, and imperialist aims.

On one hand, the state side presents the "Turkey without terrorism" process as a state policy, bringing together the government and opposition fronts along with the entire bourgeois political actors into a unified position. On the other hand, the Kurdish movement assigns its allies, primarily leftist movements, the mission of supporting and advancing the process according to its own demands. Initially, an atmosphere was created as if, unlike previous opening processes, everything had been pre-arranged and settled, and unless there was resistance from within or external intervention, the completion of the process was virtually guaranteed. However, it quickly became apparent that the reality was anything but. The state, in its official statements, demands unconditional dissolution of the PKK. Although the PKK held its 12th Congress and decided on dissolution and ending the armed struggle, the resolution text includes conditions such as having Öcalan lead the process, and pragmatically, the only concrete decision was formulated in a way that leaves their

hands free: “We have ended the activities carried out under the name PKK.”

It is evident that Bahçeli has not been able to convince or engage Erdoğan and the AKP as well as the factions within the military establishment aligned with the semi-military regime with the same level of success. The Ministry of Defense declares that “operations continue without pause to reduce the PKK’s operational capacity to zero,” and there are assessments from the PKK that armed clashes are ongoing. While the state expects practical steps toward disarmament, PKK statements emphasize that this can only be achieved under Öcalan’s direct leadership. The judiciary package presented to parliament by the AKP came in a very limited form, prompting a sharp reaction from the DEM Party, which stated that “the mountain labored and failed to bring forth even a mouse.” Expected legal reforms that could ensure the release of numerous political prisoners, the removal of the state-assigned trustees from the municipalities initially ruled by the DEM Party, or placing Öcalan under house arrest (likely still on İmralı Island, where his current prison is located) have either not been implemented or are proceeding at a snail’s pace, while the despotic regime continues its oppressive and arbitrary practices unabated. The form of despotic regime is clearly pursuing a hostage negotiation strategy.

Statements by high-ranking PKK leaders such as Bese Hozat, Duran Kalkan, and Murat Karayılan appearing in the press demand that the state must take steps, especially regarding Öcalan’s freedom, for the dissolution and disarmament process to advance. These statements not only express demands but also emphasize that the PKK’s technological and combat capabilities have increased in recent times. In particular, Bese Hozat claims that “only leader Apo [an shorthand for the name Abdullah] can take the weapons away from the hands of the fighters”, while implying in the same statement that if the PKK continues the war, it could receive support from the U.S. and Israel. With the escalation of the Israel-Iran war, the tendency to delay the disarmament process and “evaluate options” depending on the course of the war is increasingly being voiced by various actors.

Shifting our gaze towards the socialist movement, the left that has long merged into the Kurdish movement has passively embedded itself into the process through the DEM Party. With a stagist understanding, those leftists who place solving the Kurdish problem and democratization above any class struggle have unconditionally supported the process by internalizing the illusion that it aims to solve the Kurdish issue and bring peace. Uncannily, even leftist factions with social-chauvinist tendencies converge with these groups in supporting the process. The left, having practically dissolved itself within the Kurdish movement, reaches this conclusion under the illusion that the process will solve the Kurdish question, while social-chauvinists hope that the Kurdish movement will be liquidated. They believe that the main obstacle to reaching the working class and laboring masses will be re-

moved in this way.

Both orientations are patently wrong. Above all, Turkish socialists bear internationalist responsibility toward the oppressed Kurdish people. Regardless of any secret or open negotiation processes, Kurdish rights must be defended unconditionally within the framework Lenin laid out: full equality of nations and languages. Even if the Kurdish movement, for whatever reason or as a result of certain bargains, gives up on its legitimate demands, Turkish socialists must embrace and unconditionally defend the demands of the oppressed Kurdish workers, laborers, and poor peasants. On the other hand, socialists can and should have their own conditions based on the interests of workers and laborers from all nations. In the context of an open war centered on U.S. and Israeli aggression in West Asia (the Middle East), discussing concepts like peace or disarmament without addressing Turkey's NATO membership and its hosting of imperialist/Zionist military bases such as İncirlik and Kürecik is either naive or a consciously opportunist stance.

None can ask or expect unconditional support from socialists, who have no interest other than those of the working class and the oppressed. They cannot be held responsible for obstructing or undermining the process. If the process, already hanging by a thread, is to be disrupted or collapsed, it will be due to conflicts and rivalries among the colonialist bourgeoisie, imperialism, and their local collaborators. There can be no realistic peace project that does not involve the removal of imperialist bases and soldiers from our region, including genocidal killing machines like Zionist Israel. Of course, Turkish socialists have as their primary duty to defend the rights of the Kurdish people while also prioritizing the uncompromising struggle for Turkey's withdrawal from NATO and the closure of imperialist bases. Of course, a consistent internationalism requires critiquing the Kurdish movement's positions accordingly, and clearly condemning any orientation that becomes a tool of imperialist or Zionist plans over the Kurdish people under the guise of "peace," "democratic society," and so on.

## Above all, secret diplomacy must be rejected!

The process is being carried out entirely through secret diplomacy. The state, using the rhetoric of "Turkey without terrorism," talks of unconditional dissolution and disarmament of the PKK without any negotiations. Öcalan's statements and the DEM Party delegations visiting İmralı, where Öcalan is kept, also align with this narrative. Even the PKK Congress resolution makes no reference to any negotiations or bargaining process. Yet, official and unofficial delegations are constantly shuttling between the parties. It is also a public secret that this traffic began long before Bahçeli initiated the opening in the fall. Despite this, the persistent denial of "any negotiations" has only one meaning: to conceal the content of the talks from

Turkish and Kurdish toilers. The results of secret diplomacy are being presented to us abruptly, as if independent of any bargaining. For example, although it falls far short of the Kurdish movement’s expectations, the new parole regulation in the 10th judicial package presented to the parliament clearly appears to be part of a hostage negotiation. Likewise, it is obvious that a bargain over municipality trustees is ongoing. Secret diplomacy creates such a mystical aura that people begin to expect democratic reforms and legal changes even in the absence of any promises from the state. However, such expectations are illusory and serve only to create inertia among the working people.

Any actor positioning itself in relation to this process, if it considers the interests of Turkish and Kurdish workers and poor people, must above all reject secret diplomacy. Not only the state but also various components of the Kurdish movement argue that, because conditions are delicate and previous initiatives were sabotaged, secret diplomacy is necessary to ensure a healthy process and to prevent manipulation. We see that some leftist/socialist organizations also consider secret diplomacy natural and necessary, and refrain from criticizing it. Yet, rejection of secret diplomacy is a historic principle of the socialist movement. Secret diplomacy is not a means of preventing manipulation of a political process. On the contrary, it is the very foundation for illegitimate and malevolent interventions and manipulations that must be hidden from the masses because they are contrary to their interests.

## The aim of the opening is neither the resolution of the Kurdish issue nor democratization

It is common to link the resolution of the Kurdish issue to Turkey’s democratization. Of course, if the Kurds are to lean towards a voluntary union as an equal and free people, concrete requirements have to be fulfilled. But the aim and objective of the current process is not to resolve the Kurdish question. Öcalan, in his first statement, declared that the Kurdish issue was largely resolved, citing vague concepts like “the end of identity denial and progress in freedom of expression.” Yet, at the time of this statement, made in February 2025, prisons were full of people jailed precisely for exercising freedom of expression. Moreover, following the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the main challenger of Erdoğan for presidency and the current mayor of Istanbul, on March 19, the despotic regime further stepped up repression, and prisons became ever more crowded. In this very period, the DEM Party delegation meeting with Erdoğan described the encounter as:

> “Extremely positive, constructive, productive, and hopeful for the future… As of today, we are more hopeful than we were yesterday, and we are honored to share this with our nation.”

No one knows what was discussed or what promises gave the delegation such hope. Clearly, there is a contradiction between the regime's repressive actions and these hopeful statements. "Secret diplomacy" is used to create the illusion that these contradictions will somehow be resolved over time in favor of democracy and freedoms.

It is extremely important to remember how the earlier opening process collapsed in 2015. The AKP side blamed the declaration of Selahattin Demirtaş, who was then the leader of the DEM Party's predecessor but is now imprisoned, that went as "we will not let you become president" for the process breaking down. Over time, the Kurdish movement implicitly accepted this thesis, and discussions emerged over whether that statement was a tactical mistake. At the heart of the matter is this question: Will the Kurdish movement conduct the opening with the current regime or with a prospective future government? At that time, minutes from meetings show that Öcalan had expressed willingness to support Erdoğan's presidency. Demirtaş's "we will not let you become president" meant choosing to conduct the opening with forces opposed to the AKP and likely to come to power. This stance resonated with the Kurdish movement's base and proved realistic, as seen in the June 2015 elections when Erdoğan's AKP lost its parliamentary majority. After Demirtaş's statement, the AKP aligned with factions in the military associated with those brought before the court as part of Ergenekon-Balyoz trials that once aimed to purge the state apparatus and the military from forces hostile to Erdoğan, and this rapprochement solidified into a political alliance with the MHP. The opening gave way to war, and the snap November 1 elections restored the AKP to single-party rule, fundamentally changing the balance of power. Following the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, the semi-military regime suffocated the political line represented by Demirtaş's declaration.

As the 2024 local elections approached, Demirtaş made several moves indicating his new stance more closely aligned with Öcalan. Nevertheless, the political position he abandoned continued to be held up by DEM under the guise of the "urban consensus", which came to be an unofficial alliance between the DEM Party and the CHP on municipal level. Demirtaş's introduction of his wife Başak Demirtaş as a strong candidate for Istanbul clearly represented a divergence from the "urban consensus," manifesting a third-way political line. However, during the local elections, the "urban consensus" policy dominated, resulting in the AKP experiencing the most significant electoral defeat in its history. The CHP managed to capture major metropolitan municipalities and emerged as the leading party. Throughout this period, the DEM Party secured significant positions in various municipalities, most notably in Esenyurt, as well as within the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

and other municipal councils and organizational structures. From the viewpoint of the front of the despotic regime, which clearly worked on the opening initiative well before 2024, the “urban consensus” policy appeared as an updated iteration of the previous “we will not let you become president” stance.

## An oppressive and arbitrary regime is not contradictory to the opening process, it is a part of it and integral to it

Certainly, there are some differences. Erdoğan is now “the president.” For Erdoğan and the AKP, this new status introduced opportunities to diversify their alliance strategies through a relaxation or normalization phase. However, Bahçeli and one wing of the semi-military regime have obstructed these strategies with their initiatives. Operations and trustee appointments to the municipalities controlled by the opposition, spanning from Esenyurt Municipality to Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality systematically destroyed the bridges formed around both the CHP-DEM Party “urban consensus” and the AKP-CHP relaxation/normalization axis. Despite oppressive and arbitrary methods that weaponized the judiciary and police, both CHP and the DEM party maintained separate positions of “support.” For instance, in his recent statements, Demirtaş explicitly adopted terms such as “strengthening the internal front” and “our surname is Turkey,” aligning with full support for the ruling party while simultaneously demanding an end to arbitrary practices. According to Demirtaş, oppressive practices do not serve the purpose of strengthening the internal front or enhancing the sense of justice. His statements implicitly reveal that democratization is not necessarily integral or required within the current process. Demirtaş’s “full support” stance primarily stems from geopolitical developments in West Asia and efforts toward defining a shared internal and external political trajectory. It became so clear that an alliance-based political approach had replaced the previous “peace negotiations” model that Demirtaş felt compelled to include a disclaimer at the end of his statement, asserting that none of his points are meant to obstruct polite, democratic opposition internally.

Thus, the deepening authoritarianism is not contradictory to Bahçeli initiated “opening”; rather, it is a necessary component and will continue accordingly. For example, within the framework of the 10th judicial reform package, the release of numerous prisoners convicted in PKK-related cases is being discussed. Concurrently, the AKP is attempting to include clauses in the same package that simplify the justification of arrests for participating in demonstrations, fundamentally a part of freedom of expression. This contradiction is consistent rather than anomalous. Similarly, the advancement of the “opening” could lead to situations where someone like İmamoğlu would face prolonged incarceration instead of gaining conditional release. Likewise, Kurdish movement members voicing skepticism and criticism,

or exploring alternative political avenues, are highly likely to confront oppressive measures rather than enjoy genuine freedom of expression.

A similar dynamic unfolded after the 2019 local elections when Erdoğan, having lost Istanbul to İmamoğlu, promoted concepts such as "cooling the hot iron" and a "Turkey alliance." This pursuit abruptly ended symbolically when Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the CHP leader at the time, was physically attacked during a military funeral in Çubuk, Ankara. Subsequently, Erdoğan refrained from employing the "Turkey alliance" rhetoric. Nationalist fervor, driven by the fascist party, further inflamed tensions. The current era's symbolic moment was the slap received by Özgür Özel, the current CHP leader, at the funeral of DEM party MP and İmralı negotiation committee member Sırrı Süreyya Önder. This assault clearly targeted the CHP-DEM party axis, represented through the "urban consensus," which had become a substantial alternative to the government after the recent local elections. Despite the front of the despotic regime's vocal praise for the late Önder, the CHP leader Özel was starkly excluded from this picture. A week later, Erdoğan underscored his message by asserting that the "CHP must normalize" and advising them to return to the national agenda. Until the CHP fully abandons the "urban consensus" and relinquishes the İmamoğlu case, aligning itself completely within the dictated framework, it will remain under pressure.

Following the 2023 and 2024 general and local elections, the MHP, whose central political position was significantly shaken and whose influence within police and judiciary had waned, seems to have regained initiative through the Öcalan "opening." Within this initiative, Bahçeli is now being portrayed as a democratic hero, with supporters lining up to express gratitude. Yet, following the attack on Özel, which could easily have proven fatal, Bahçeli showed a clearly hostile stance by referring vaguely to "the leader of a political institution subjected to a physical attack," without naming Özel directly, even while feigning sympathy. This hostility reflects Bahçeli's true political position. CHP and Özel have not become targets due to opposition to Bahçeli's initiated process; in fact, they have consistently supported it. İmamoğlu and the CHP have maintained similar stances. The CHP and its leadership are targeted not because they oppose the process, but because they present themselves as potential alternative partners for the Kurdish movement, instead of the front of the despotic regime. Therefore, as long as the CHP does not conform to Erdoğan's demand for "normalization," oppressive and arbitrary measures that employ the judiciary, police, and military, will persist. Again, the pressure of authoritarianism is not contradictory to the current process but integral to it.

## The trap of a new constitution

The trap of keeping the dreams of democratization alive through "New Constitution" debates once again stands before us. Naturally, the "New Constitution" agenda is suffering from a serious credibility crisis due to the despotic front's oppressive and arbitrary practices that completely disregard the current constitution. In order to overcome this problem, the MHP came forward with a proposal for a 100-member commission comprising representatives from all 16 political parties in parliament. It was only natural, and it happened as expected, that this proposal was met with suspicion by Erdoğan and the AKP wing, which wants to keep the initiative entirely in its own hands. On the other hand, it is clear that the 100-person commission will be nothing more than a masquerade meant to legitimize the "New Constitution" debate, and that in the end, the arithmetic of the parliament, and far more importantly, the clout of armed forces within the semi-military regime, will be decisive. To think otherwise would be naive. However, due to entrenched illusions about bourgeois democracy and the mirage of the "one-man regime" led simply through the whims of Erdoğan, the positive reactions coming from some socialists suggest that the MHP's masquerade will indeed find buyers. It is evident that we will witness the start of discussions even on the left concerning the "New Constitution" process, and we will hear proposals for alternative constitutions. Yet the correct policy is not to join the "New Constitution" discussion from the left, but to expose the class interests behind this agenda and to reject the imposition of the "New Constitution" as a political agenda altogether.

The notion that the "New Constitution" agenda is focused on re-electing Erdoğan for a third term and that everything else is subordinate to this goal is completely mistaken. On the very contrary. The "New Constitution" agenda is determined by the expansionist interests of the colonialist bourgeoisie and the requirements of the opening process conducted in line with these interests. The Revolutionary Workers' Party had already clearly identified this in its 7th Congress held in 2023:

> "The essential strategic direction in the constitutional debate lies in the expansionist interests of monopoly capital. These interests necessitate going beyond the policy of integration into the imperialist world system while remaining within national borders, a policy symbolized by the official ideology's slogan 'peace at home, peace in the world.' This new foreign policy tendency has gradually taken shape since the aftermath of the September 12 [1980] coup and has manifested itself in the debates about the Second Republic. In the AKP years, this debate has been marketed under the code name of the 'civil constitution.' This orientation requires the formulation of the Constitution in a way that allows for the official, not just de facto, expansion of Turkey's national borders." (*DIP 7th Congress resolution: The bourgeois republic is collapsing! Forward for the workers' republic!*)

It is known that for Erdoğan to be able to run again for a third term, a constitutional amendment is required. If no such amendment is made, a snap election decision must be passed by at least 360 of parliament's 600 deputies. It is not possible for opposition parties to gather 360 deputies. On the other hand, it appears that the AKP and MHP, which together hold 320 seats, would need to bring the DEM Party into the fold with 56 deputies. In a scenario without the DEM Party, the New Path group (the joint group of Future, DEVA, and Felicity parties) has 26, the New Welfare Party 4, HÜDA-PAR 4, and the DSP 1 deputies, leaving the total at 355. It is plainly clear that Erdoğan is not in favor of a real snap election scenario. A fake snap election formula, held close to the regular election date for the sole purpose of enabling Erdoğan to run again, would require securing the necessary number of deputies and motivating the parties that would provide them, which is a difficult task. Therefore, this option is also highly risky. If we also consider the fact that Bahçeli has, on several occasions, stated that holding elections on time is a consensus within the governing alliance, and that there has been no objection to this from the AKP side, it becomes apparent that the main scenario may be based on a constitutional amendment to be made before the elections.

Given the current parliamentary arithmetic, it can be seen that the governing alliance and the DEM Party would easily reach the 360 votes needed for a referendum on a constitutional amendment parallel to the opening process. If the New Path group joins, the issue could even be settled with over 400 votes, eliminating the need for a referendum altogether. Although it has often been stated in the past that even if 400 MPs were found for a new constitution, a referendum would still be held, it now appears that, given the risks of that path, the MHP is preparing an alternative platform for to give this move the required legitimacy through its proposal for a 100-member commission comprising representatives from the 16 parties in parliament. Although the MHP seems determined to maintain the initiative it has taken throughout the process, it is equally clear that no scenario to which Erdoğan and the AKP do not consent can become reality. On the other hand, apart from the "AKP-CHP grand coalition" option, Erdoğan appears unlikely to stray from the paths offered by the MHP in order to maintain his power. The "AKP-CHP grand coalition" is the dream of the big bourgeoisie in Turkey and might offer Erdoğan a way out, but Erdoğan knows better than anyone that taking that path requires more than parliamentary arithmetic, most importantly the fine-tuning of the internal balance between armed factions within the semi-military regime. Therefore, the New Constitution agenda is not subject to Erdoğan's re-election; rather, Erdoğan's continued rule is subject to the New Constitution agenda. Thus, despite all his doubts regarding the process initiated by Bahçeli, and despite being pressured in the opposite direction by centers within the semi-military regime that oppose this process,

Erdoğan is nonetheless moving forward in relative coordination. At some stage, the emergence of a concrete New Constitution text in parliament will depend not on the course of the debates, but on the practical progress of the opening process, chief among them the PKK’s concrete laying down of arms.

The only concrete draft text proposal regarding the New Constitution, which has been kept on the agenda to varying degrees for years (albeit not disclosed to the public), has been prepared by the MHP. Recently, the New Constitution debate has been warmed up through a preliminary discussion around the first four articles. After the initial turmoil caused by Binali Yıldırım’s (once Erdoğan’s Prime Minister before the switch from the parliamentary to the presidential rule) move to open the first four articles to discussion, a general consensus formed that those articles would remain unchanged and unamendable. However, this debate is also full of illusions. Because what matters in a constitution is not how something is written, but who uses which article for what purpose. This holds true not only for the government but also for the people. For instance, the right to unionize or the right to hold meetings and demonstration marches as written in the Constitution can be used by workers, laborers, and youth as sources of legitimacy in their struggles for rights. The government, however, focuses on the “except for” clauses of the same articles to restrict these rights. If the opening process initiated by Bahçeli is being linked to a constitutional debate, then there must be aspects of the current constitution that fall short in terms of the goals and objectives of this process. That shortcoming, of course, is not democracy!

## The bargain over the right to hope and the constitution of the semi-military regime

Since Bahçeli launched the Öcalan opening, we have frequently encountered statements in the Kurdish movement and on the left beginning with phrases like “even the MHP” or “even Bahçeli,” presenting the MHP/Bahçeli initiative as some kind of threshold within the framework of democratization. Alongside extreme interpretations attributing Bahçeli’s immense turnaround to his role as a wise statesman, there are also more cautious approaches suggesting that conditions and the struggle of the Kurdish people forced this transformation. Neither corresponds to the reality. Bahçeli began praising Öcalan as a political leader even though a short while ago the former symbollically throwing hangman’s noose at the end of his speech, calling for Öcalan’s execution, and he reached the point of almost inviting the DEM Party into the governing alliance when he used to issue ultimatums calling for the closure of the HDP. It is necessary to explain why, while making these turns, Bahçeli has not shifted even an inch in his position regarding the Constitutional Court, which is directly connected to these agendas.

It is known that the MHP has explicitly targeted the Constitutional Court for dragging its feet in the HDP closure case and for its rights violation rulings concerning Selahattin Demirtaş, Osman Kavala, and Can Atalay, all of whom currently imprisoned. In the context of the new constitution debates, the MHP brings the status of the Constitutional Court to the agenda with the framing of "it must either be shut down or restructured." The actual focus of the debate, which began with the high-pitched call to "shut it down," is to abolish the right of individual application and limit the Constitutional Court to the function of the High Court of Justice. If the current opening process were taking place in a framework of democratization, attempting to block the legal path opened by individual application to the Constitutional Court in countless cases of violations of fundamental rights and freedoms would represent an absolute contradiction. But there is no contradiction here either. The political content of the opening process and the MHP's negative stance toward the Constitutional Court are in full alignment. This alignment becomes clear when one considers the MHP and Bahçeli's key role within the semi-military regime. In the years when the AKP rose to single-party power with the approval of the military following the February 28, 1997 process when the military intervened to topple the government, the Constitutional Court became the symbol of "military tutelage" over civilian politics. The Court played a decisive role in blocking the AKP's political moves that touched on some of the army's red lines, thanks to its authority to oversee whether laws, presidential decrees, and the parliamentary rules of procedure conformed to the Constitution in form and substance. The "individual application," however, had the opposite effect in practice. This time, political decisions imposed on the judiciary by pressure and directives under the semi-military regime were being overturned by the Constitutional Court, which in the context of individual application had become, in effect, the Turkey branch of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and made rulings based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and ECtHR case law.

Bahçeli's sensational proposal in the speech where he launched the recent opening process, suggesting that Öcalan come to parliament and speak in the DEM Party group, is well known. This proposal instantly made Bahçeli the main actor of the process, and the primary counterpart to Öcalan recognized by the Kurdish movement as the chief negotiator. The "right to hope" that Bahçeli referred to in that speech also holds critical significance here. Bahçeli pratically said, that he held the key to the right to hope for Öcalan. The main basis of Bahçeli's claim that he holds the key lies in his and his party's close relationship with the wing of the semi-military regime expected to react to a potential opening. Because of this relationship, the idea that "if there is to be an opening, it can only happen through Bahçeli" came to the fore. This idea was also clearly expressed years ago by Sırrı Süreyya

Önder. However, the key is not only in Bahçeli’s hands. After Abdullah Öcalan completed 25 years in prison on February 15, 2024, the right to hope has already arisen under the ECHR and ECtHR case law. Öcalan’s lawyers have applied to the Constitutional Court to have this right recognized. The decision the Court will issue in response to this individual application is more or less predictable and, under normal conditions, must be in favor of granting Öcalan the right to hope. Indeed, in February 2024, Professor İzzet Özgenç, a criminal law scholar who played a role in drafting the Turkish Penal Code and is known for his closeness to Erdoğan despite his oppositional statements, issued warnings in this direction and emphasized that because the necessary legal regulations were not made in time, Öcalan’s right to hope had effectively become a matter of political bargaining.

Now the issue concerns bargaining power. Let us imagine for a moment that the Constitutional Court grants Öcalan the right to hope. In that case, it is clear that for the Kurdish movement, an alternative channel would open outside of Bahçeli’s mediation and influence. This would reduce Bahçeli’s bargaining power, weaken his key role, and cause him to lose the initiative he holds with great difficulty within the semi-military regime. For example, if the Kurdish movement held such a Constitutional Court decision in hand, it would very well have the opportunity to say, “First lift the trustee appointments,” or “Implement the right to hope.” That is not the case now. Because the MHP/Bahçeli and a wing of the semi-military regime have rendered the Constitutional Court passive through the Court of Cassation, which they have brought under their influence. The Constitutional Court’s ruling on the violation of rights concerning Can Atalay, who is imprisoned in the Gezi trial, is not being implemented “in practice” under the conditions of the semi-military regime. In this way, Bahçeli, relying on the semi-military regime, presents himself as the only realistic alternative for conducting the process that includes Öcalan benefiting from the right to hope. However, this position is still “de facto.” The fact that Bahçeli’s key position is de facto, i.e., not guaranteed, is a manifestation of the semi-military regime’s own “de facto” nature. For this de facto situation to be formalized, the individual application function of the Constitutional Court, which operates as a sort of EU tutelage mechanism over the semi-military regime, must be abolished in the new constitution. Mehmet Uçum, one of the key representatives of the semi-military regime and an advisor to Eroğan, has taken this tendency to its logical conclusion and advocates for the abolition of Article 90 of the Constitution, which makes international treaties legally binding above laws and the Constitution itself.

Far from us, the expectation of democracy from an imperialist center like the European Union. However, in this specific case, the aim is to eliminate the Constitutional Court’s power, grounded in the ECHR and ECtHR case law, to prevent the arbitrary violation of fundamental rights and freedoms. It is clear that this runs

contrary to the interests of the working people. The Constitutional Court not only issues rulings on Demirtaş, Kavala, or Atalay, but it has also ruled against strike bans, indicating that its current position functions as a kind of an acquisition for the working class as well. This acquisition did not come about through the so-called democratic sensitivity of European imperialist capital. It was built through the blood and sacrifice of the European working class. It was the Soviet Union, through the fear of socialism in the 20th century, that forced European imperialist capital to step back. Therefore, in the context of the Constitutional Court, it is clear that the Bahçeli-Uçum axis represents an entirely reactionary alternative. It is also clear that the opening process, far from democratizing, has been integrated with the goal of reinforcing and constitutionally securing the semi-military regime.

## Spilling Kurds' blood while praising them, spilling the Muslims' blood by saying "Allah"…

Constitutional debates are also heavily focused on the definition of citizenship. The constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity is on the agenda as an important topic. If the issue were to end the denial of Kurdish identity and to respond to the Kurdish people's demands for equality, there would be countless steps that could be taken even without any constitutional amendment or without mentioning the word "Kurd" in the Constitution. Not only we don't see such steps being taken, but we are also witnessing the reversal of steps taken in the past regarding the public use of Kurdish language. For instance, when DEM Party MP Gülistan Koçyiğit used the phrase "Cejna zimanê kurdî pîroz be" ("Happy Kurdish Language Day") from the parliamentary podium, her microphone was turned off by the MHP's deputy speaker. For now, everyone stays where they were. But the issue is this: the interests of the colonialist bourgeoisie require the constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity. This necessity stems from the perspective of expansion through the protection of Kurds beyond the border. The denialist Turkish nationalism rooted in the "kart kurt" narrative (a nationalist myth that denies the historic roots of the Kurdish people, alleging that the name "Kurd" is a relatively recent invention coming from the sound of walking on snow) now contradicts with the interests of the Turkish colonialist bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the idea of replacing "Turk" with "citizen of Turkey" (Türkiyeli) has been gradually abandoned over the years due to widespread resistance and backlash. The current version of the Second Republic project from the Özal era is searching for a redefinition of Turkish identity that includes Kurds.

This redefinition can very well be made by adding an expression to the preamble of the new Constitution, without changing the existing definition of citizenship. One example: "The identity of the Turkish nation, built and revived to a great extent through Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood, deserves being the symbol of

democratic dignity, honour, and liberty in the new century.” This quotation is from Devlet Bahçeli’s 2025 New Year’s message. A close reading of the same message also reveals an intense emphasis on a sectarian Sunni Islamic unity. Indeed, we know that in the MHP’s previous constitutional proposal, the preamble included the expression “We, the Turkish Nation, brought into being by the grace of Allah, by the spirit of brotherhood, and by love of the homeland.” The colonialist bourgeoisie’s expansionist ambitions also require a strong Sunni Islamic reference in order to justify protection over Kurds beyond the borders. Just as “kart kurt” nationalism is now seen as an obstacle, so too is “secularism” based on the principle of separating religion from the state. They see religion as the glue for a Turkish-Kurdish alliance. Secularism prevents that glue from holding. But we must also say this: the colonialist bourgeoisie may be giving up on denying Kurdish identity, but it is not giving up on the superiority of Turks over Kurds. Sunni Islamic brotherhood, in its intellectual and political background, does not mean the equality and fraternity of peoples; rather, it proclaims the superiority of the tribe that holds the right of the caliphate over the rest of the ummah.

The obstacle of secularism, too, must be overcome with a new definition of secularism that allows religion to thoroughly permeate the internal and foreign policies of the state. Therefore, in the coming period, we will see the concept of secularism also begin to be publicly debated. Those who defend Kemalist bourgeois secularism will be portrayed as heretics who oppose the inclusion of the word “Allah” in the Constitution. The expansionist interests of the colonialist bourgeoisie will be hidden behind the veil of religion, and consent and support will be extracted from the working masses for a constitutional move that is class-wise reactionary.

## How will the new constitution become a weapon in the hands of the colonialist bourgeoisie?

What concrete relationship might embarking on the making of a new constitution have with the expansionist interests of the colonialist bourgeoisie? Put differently, how can a constitutional article offer a political and diplomatic weapon to the colonialist bourgeoisie? The answers to these questions may lie in the independence referendum held by the Barzani administration on September 25, 2017. In this referendum, the Kurdish people voted 93% in favor of independence, but the central government of Iraq, with the support of Turkey and Iran and the backing of the United States, carried out a military intervention, shelving the declaration of independence. In the six years since, the conditions and alignments have shifted. The statement in the resolution of the 12th Congress of the PKK which reads “Recent developments in the Middle East as part of the Third World War make the reorganisation of Turkish-Kurdish relations inevitable” points to these changing conditions

and alignments. In this context, should the Kurdistan Regional Government declare independence based on that referendum, the likely response from the central Iraqi government and Iran would again be an opposition. However, a new Turkey that has redefined the Turkish identity in its constitution to include Kurdish identity may intervene in the opposite direction, not only as the protector of the Turkmen minority in the region but now also as the legitimate guardian of the Kurdish majority. And what about the Lausanne Treaty, which drew the borders between Turkey and Iraq? That's precisely why Lausanne has been turned into a subject of debate by the government, years before the references in the PKK congress to the 1924 Constitution and Lausanne! We are now facing a mechanism by which Kurdish integration into Turkey, a Turkey that has constitutionally recognised Kurdish identity, can be added to the independence decision of the Iraqi Kurds. Of course, with the support of the United States and the United Kingdom, who are sure to welcome such a development against Iran and its influence in Iraq, and with the approval of Israel as well!

Whether things develop in this direction or not will be seen in time. Conditions and alignments are changing, and nothing is settled. Everything can and likely will change again. But what we must never forget is that the entire process we are going through is marked by the expansionist interests of the colonialist bourgeoisie. Therefore, just as the "opening" does not require democratisation, steps toward recognising Kurdish identity do not necessarily serve Turkish-Kurdish equality. On the contrary, the mention of the word "Kurd" in the Constitution will not prevent the colonialist bourgeoisie from once again supporting the bloodiest methods to subjugate the Kurds, should its interests demand it. Writing "by the grace of Allah" in the Constitution will also not prevent those who will embark on expansionist adventures in West Asia under this Constitution from shedding Muslim blood hand-in-hand with Christian imperialists and Jewish Zionists. Never forget! The irrevocable provisions of the Constitution states that Turkey is a "democratic, secular, social state governed by the rule of law"! Of course, we stand for the full equality of Turks and Kurds, of Turkish and Kurdish languages, but we are entirely opposed to all intentions and initiatives that would lead to the fratricide of peoples.

## Alewite blood in the Opening

The idea of Turkish and Kurdish peoples' brotherhood and equality, grounded in the notion of the equality and fraternity of all peoples and finding its most consistent expression in internationalism, possesses a high moral power and legitimacy. The struggles waged in this direction are likewise legitimate. Precisely for this reason, this just cause can be abused to camouflage malicious initiatives, just as the U.S. imperialism defends its bloodiest acts in the name of democracy and human rights. Therefore, we must be extremely vigilant. When warning against a planned

Turkish-Kurdish alliance under imperialist protection meant to wage war against other peoples, we are not merely projecting for the future. What has happened in Syria serves as an indication, even a model, for the moves the Turkish bourgeoisie plans to make toward Mosul and Kirkuk. At a time when the Third World War is being talked about and Western Asia is ablaze in wars, it is, to put it mildly, naive to think that any armed formation, official or unofficial, will disarm through diplomatic processes.

We must not confuse scenarios prepared to placate and persuade the public with reality. The main issue in the current process is not disarmament but the redirection of the barrels. When evaluated from this angle, the frequent references to the disarmament of the YPG, alongside the PKK, in Syria are also unrealistic, especially given that the YPG is a force backed, protected, and armed by the United States, and relied upon for the success of the process. It does not appear that this issue can be resolved through the YPG’s disarmament in Syria. The agreement made between HTS and the SDF under the supervision of American helicopters and soldiers, and accepted by Turkey, defines not a disarmament process but an integration process. In this sense, arms have not been laid down in Syria; rather, the barrels have been redirected toward Iran and its allies. The timing of this agreement is also highly critical. At a moment when HTS and its affiliated gangs were engaged in massacres of Alewites, an American helicopter picked up Mazloum Abdi and brought him to Damascus. The agreement made between Mazloum Abdi and Ahmad al-Sharaa did not provide a practical solution to any problem. However, Article 6 of the agreement defined the massacre of Alewites by sectarian takfiri gangs as “a fight against remnants of the regime and elements threatening the country’s security and unity,” and formalised SDF’s pledge to support Damascus in this so-called struggle. In practice, then, the agreement served only to resolve the legitimacy crisis that al-Sharaa and HTS faced in the eyes of the imperialist West due to the Alewite massacre. Therefore, when we examine the process through the Syrian example, it does not rest, contrary to what is claimed, on a morally strong and legitimate foundation like the fraternity of peoples. On the contrary, it bears the blood and stain of a crime against humanity, the systematic covering up of the Alewite massacre by HTS in western Syria.

## American patronage in the process: The Mattis Plan and the NATO corridor

The main actor of the process, Devlet Bahçeli, has shown a notably relaxed and flexible attitude concerning the status of PYD/YPG in Syria. In one of his statements, Bahçeli said: “Whether and how the possible transfers and transitions from the dissolved PKK to the PYD/YPG will be monitored and coordinated in a simul-

taneous and synchronized manner… should be addressed separately." Alongside other items addressed as if they will be resolved with time, this statement reveals that a condition long declared as a red line by the state is being abandoned. Particularly among nationalist circles critical of the process, there were those who picked up on this statement and criticised it as bizarre. Some did not pay much attention to it or interpreted it as a sign of Bahçeli's sincerity in the opening process. For us, however, this statement is neither bizarre nor sincere…

We have long emphasized that the U.S. has been developing scenarios based on the contradiction between PYD and PKK, scenarios that aim to liquidate the PKK and bring forth the PYD, which is entirely under the protection of the U.S.. This scenario, which we refer to as the Mattis Plan, was publicly disclosed by Turkey's then-Minister of National Defense Nurettin Canikli in 2018. Canikli revealed that then-U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis had told him, "We can separate the YPG from the PKK and make it fight the PKK." The notion that the U.S. is fully opposed to Turkey's military interventions in Syria, that the Turkish Armed Forces carried out operations to disrupt the terror corridor despite the U.S., and that the U.S. unconditionally supported the PKK, and even the PYD, against NATO ally Turkey is a myth fabricated by nationalists to wrap their chauvinist politics in an anti-imperialist guise. Let's set aside everything else and just look at the facts. The central authority in Syria has passed into the hands of HTS, a takfiri-sectarian force backed by the U.S. and Britain and approved by Israel. Meanwhile, the country's northern border is controlled by a NATO army, Turkey, and the Syrian National Army under its protection, along with PYD/YPG forces under U.S. protection.

After years of "terror corridor" rhetoric, what we now face in Syria is in fact a NATO corridor stretching from the Mediterranean to the Iraqi border. The most recent opening plays a critical role in extending this corridor to the Iranian border. It is impossible to comprehend this process by buying into the nationalist myth that the Iraqi Kurds are entirely under U.S. control. The priority of U.S. policy in Iraq has been NATO ally Turkey. The U.S. has placed bounties on the heads of the PKK's top three leaders, $5 million for Murat Karayılan, $4 million for Cemil Bayık, and $3 million for Duran Kalkan. The fact that, when the NATO-Russia war began in Ukraine, critical, even accusatory statements toward NATO emerged from within the Kurdish movement, is also noteworthy. Of course, these occasional outbursts do not alter the fact that the PKK has long lacked a consistent anti-imperialist line. For years, the PKK has pursued a programmatic policy of compromise and cooperation with imperialism. However, in the eyes of the U.S., the PYD and PKK are distinct enough for the U.S. to pursue a policy of setting one against the other. Those within the Kurdish movement who have declared the dissolution of the organization and the end of armed struggle are precisely the wing that the U.S. has placed bounties

on, and are precisely those who Mattis planned to make the PYD destroy. If this wing is eliminated, the U.S.’s ability to extend the NATO corridor to Iran under Turkish protection will increase. When the “obstacle” to alignment in U.S.-Turkey Iraq policy is removed, the conditions that forced the U.S. to side with NATO ally Turkey over the Kurds it once protected, such as in Barzani’s 2017 independence referendum, and the conditions that bring Turkey, Iraq’s central government and Iran closer will also change.

## The Israel-Iran War as a testing ground

The war that began with Israel’s military aggression against Iran directly impacts the opening process. Statements from both the state and the Kurdish movement indicate that this war is seen as a testing ground for the Turkish-Kurdish alliance. Bahçeli says, “Israel’s political and strategic aim is to encircle the Anatolian geography and sabotage the goal of a terror-free Turkey on behalf of its masters,” while two key figures of the Kurdish movement, Öcalan and Demirtaş, have made parallel statements. It is known that Öcalan told the delegation visiting İmralı (the island in the Marmara Sea where he is kept as a prisoner), Sırrı Süreyya Önder and Pervin Buldan, that they could be killed by the U.S. and Israel. Most recently, Cengiz Çandar, DEM Party MP from Diyarbakır, declared in an interview: “Turkey’s greatest fortune is that Abdullah Öcalan is antiIsrael.” Selahattin Demirtaş’s latest remarks warning those within the Kurdish movement who consider aligning with the U.S./Israel by saying “imperialism gives nothing without taking a thousand” and his accusation of adventurousness regarding them, can be added to these.

Is the opening process truly anti-U.S. or antiIsrael in content? Regarding the U.S., no such opposition exists. As established earlier, the Second-Republic project, both in the Özal era and in its current version, is fundamentally U.S.driven. The Israel dimension, however, is nuanced. Israel’s contradiction with the opening is relative. Turkey’s colonial bourgeoisie’s expansionist ambitions in Syria and Iraq, and more broadly in West Asia and the Islamic world, are primarily in contest with Iran. Thus, the Turkish-Kurdish alliance based on the colonial bourgeoisie’s interests is oriented more against Iran than Israel. It is inconceivable that Israel, which is at war with Iran, would be absolutely opposed to such alignment. Indeed, despite much antiI-srael rhetoric, the political practices contradict a genuine anti-Israel stance. The Turkish state verbally condemns Israel’s attacks while providing logistical support through the Incirlik and Kürecik bases, trading military goods and oil with Israel, and the propaganda division of the despotic regime works overtime to portray Iran as defenseless against Israel while intensifying sectarian rhetoric to antagonise Iran. In the political stance and practical positions of the Turkish state, the balance clearly favours Israel.

A similar situation exists within the Kurdish movement. Although Demirtaş criticizes pro-Israel tendencies, these tendencies do exist and are strong. The contradictions and unilateral pressures of the opening process drive some to seek alternatives, and Israel regularly encourages this through patronage. Yet a coherent anti-Israel stance opposing this remains hard to find in the Kurdish movement. Öcalan, celebrated by Çandar as antiIsrael, praises Israel as a global hegemon and disparages those fighting it in Gaza, in the perspective text he sent to the PKK's 12th Congress. Demirtaş begins his so-called warnings against imperialism by criticizing Iran. The KCK Executive Council publishes a "Declaration Against the Assaults of Israel", but condemns the war, not Israel, in it. Most tellingly, PJAK, the Iranian wing of the KCK, refuses to take sides, accuses Iran of starting the war, and equates Israel and Iran for killing civilians, without mentioning Gaza. Its vow to "be ready for any intervention" against attacks on Kurds is framed as selfdefense. But there is no evidence PJAK won't repeat Barzani and Talabani's opportunism and collaborationism during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, this time in Iran.

Historically, Israel's Zionism sees all non-Arab West Asian nations as potential strategic allies. After the Nakba, Turkey was the first Muslim state to recognise Israel, followed by Iran under the Shah. Only after the 1979 revolution Iran became hostile to Israel. Despite occasional tensions, Turkey remains Israel's ally as a NATO member. Its struggle for influence in the Islamic world causes friction, but not conflict, with Israel. Meanwhile, Israel fears post-Iran regional vacuums being filled by Turkey and the emergence of a Sunni axis to challenge Israel after dismantling the Shiite resistance. This is the basis of Israel's opposition. Israel's stance toward Syria's HTS regime and its cooperation with Turkey is illustrative. HTS, has never fired a bullet on Israel, even while it was advancing on Damascus and was simultaneously occupying other parts of Syria. Al Sharaa pledges to protect Israeli strategic interests and praises Zionism's patron Trump, yet Israel bombs Syria to prevent HTS from restoring Assadera military capacity, and encourages Druze and Kurds to detach from Damascus.

Israel prefers NATO-member Turkey and Azerbaijan becoming a Zionist base in the Caucasus on one side, while U.S.-backed PYD, Northern Iraqi Kurdish parties, and PJAK do so on the other, to fight Iran. Israel's simultaneous support for Ümit Özdağ's Zafer Party in Turkey (which the 7th Congress of DIP defines as Israeli Turanism) and anti-opening Kurdish tendencies fits this logic. PJAK calls for self-rule not only for Kurds, but for all ethnic groups (Azeris, Baluchs, etc.). Despite PJAK referring to Öcalan, Iran's Azeris are expected to act under Turanist, not confederalist, motives. If a multiethnic selfrule mobilization in Iran arises, its ideological glue will likely be Zionism, not Öcalan's confederalism.

Therefore, if the opening process were truly anti-Israel, the Israel-Iran war would

reveal it. Genuine opponents of Israel, even if not pro-Iran, would work toward its defeat. In autumn 2024, Turkey’s parliament held a confidential session, not over Iran, but a possible Israel conflict. Imagine a state that claims a country is a threat, yet provides it with logistical, commercial, intelligence, and military support during war. Anyone would think that such rulers were either traitors or fools, or secretly cooperating with the state that they are doing a secret session about. That is Turkey’s situation. The anti-Israel rhetoric and talk of “Turkey is next following Iran” merely pack the reactionary, expansionist oil opening in a defensive wrapping. A sincere stance would mean withdrawal from NATO, closure of Incirlik and Kürecik bases, and halting military, trade, and intelligence support to Israel. Everything else is just propaganda.

Unfortunately, Demirtaş’s statement—“From Edirne to Hakkari, 86 million turning into a people’s army; we will defend our common homeland at all costs”, rings hollow without concrete antiimperialist and anti-Zionist demands. If it’s about defending the common homeland, it must be specified against whom: the U.S. and Israel. The enemy must be clearly named. As long as Turkey remains in NATO, as long as the colonial bourgeoisie pursues expansion under U.S. protection, and as long as Sunni Islamic fraternity replaces peoples’ brotherhood, the result won’t be a peoples’ army but, at best, Hamidiye Regiments (Cavalry regiments formed at the end of 19th century to suppress Armenian demands for self-determination and political rights, infamous for participating in several massacres).

## Anti-imperialism and internationalism are an indivisible whole! The solution has to be revolutionary!

We see that the theme of a Third World War, cited in the 12th Congress resolution of the PKK, is being frequently echoed by both Hakan Fidan and Devlet Bahçeli. Yet we recognized this long before them and convened an Extraordinary Congress of the Revolutionary Workers’ Party (DİP) in 2016 precisely on this basis. That Extraordinary Congress declared: “The Third World War has taken on the form of a danger that is immediate, concrete, and tangibly intense.” It then drew the line of struggle as follows: “Against war and barbarism: world revolution and socialism.” It concluded: “The only way to defeat the great wars, which are products of the historical decline of capitalism and the reactionization of the bourgeoisie, is revolution.” When the threat of the Third World War became even more concrete with the imperialist war instigated by NATO in Ukraine against Russia, revolutionary Marxism did not waver for a moment in asserting that the road to peace passes through anti-imperialism: “A lasting world peace is not possible without forcing imperialism to its knees through defeats on the military front and final blows via revolutions. World peace is a question of world revolution!” (DİP 7th Congress reso-

lution: World war will not be stopped by imperialism's goodwill, but by its defeat! Humanity will be saved by the International!) The reason we remind and repeat all this is that if you are talking about the possibility of a Third World War, it is imperative that you take a clear position, along with declaring whose side you are on. Any stance against war must be combined with being on the side against imperialism.

But, every time the despotic front speaks of a Third World War, it is followed by a threat analysis, and invariably, by a tendency to identify opportunities arising from that analysis. That is precisely why the despotic front is jubilant at the prospect of Trump returning to power in the U.S. They are euphoric for praying at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, by seizing on the contradictions between imperialism and Russia in Syria. Of course, they don't say they're embarking on a campaign under imperialist patronage. Instead, they speak of consolidating the "national front" and peddle fantasies of a "Century of Turkey." To add moral legitimacy to this marketing campaign, they also wrap it in the packaging of a "war with Israel." Through their policies, they are tearing the people apart. Even their preference for the translated English term "home front" instead of the Turkish "rear front" is indicative of this. Because while their claim of a war against imperialism and Zionism abroad is an empty boast, the despotism front is in fact waging a real war at home, against the working masses. That is why, when they speak of an "internal front," they are in fact accelerating Turkey's collapse, and far from fighting Israel, they meticulously avoid touching Zionism's strategic interests. They continue to ship goods and oil to Zionism's genocide. They align with British imperialism and position themselves under Trump's wing against Iran, playing out the imperialist-Zionist game. And the so-called "opening process" they have initiated is but a piece of this game.

The Kurdish movement, too, is keeping in step with this game. In their stance toward imperialism, they do not follow the example of Kemal Pir but that of Mazlum Abdi. The PKK's congress resolution invokes the words of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades at the gallows, assigning a supporting role to Turkey's socialist forces. Yet even in quoting these words, they omit the cry of "Down with imperialism!" In what they themselves call a historic statement, "The current developments in the Middle East within the context of the Third World War make it inevitable to restructure Kurdish-Turkish relations", not once is the concept of imperialism mentioned. In an environment where Öcalan expresses gratitude to Devlet Bahçeli at every turn, where this gratitude has become an integral part for every speech of any DEM Party representative, and where wishes for long life are extended to the leader of the historical party of fascism, Hüseyin's cry of "Down with fascism!" on the gallows is nowhere to be found. On May 6 of this year, not only the opposition but even elements of the government commemorated the three martyrs, yet no one stood up to shout, as Yusuf did from the gallows: "We serve our people, you serve America!"

We, on the other hand, analyse the current process with the Marxist method, determine our position through the concrete analysis of the concrete situation, and on the basis of class struggle. We take as our duty the words uttered by Deniz, Yusuf, and Hüseyin as they walked to their deaths. We oppose the dragging of poor, working-class Turkish and Kurdish youth into expansionist adventures under the guise of peace. We reject the mudslinging aimed at socialism to legitimize others’ political orientations. We do not accept the claim that the struggle of the working class and the oppressed for power is outdated. As revolutionaries of this land, we are committed to full equality between Kurds and Turks, between the Kurdish and Turkish languages, to the brotherhood of peoples, and to internationalism.

Consistent anti-imperialism and internationalism form an indivisible whole. When that unity is broken, the Kurdish movement’s approach, under the guise of criticising the nation-state or “real” socialism, to sever ties with both class struggle and anti-imperialism begins to align with the colonial Turkish bourgeoisie and its nationalism. Those seeking alliances with colonial bourgeoisies for a supposed “solution” meet with the regional plans of imperialism. The internationalist and anti-imperialist stance, however, has long been subjected to accusations of separatism by the ruling classes and to fierce ideological and political attacks from some tendencies within the Kurdish movement. Yet any politics that defends the equality of the Kurdish people, and reflects the shared social, economic, and political interests of Kurdish and Turkish workers and toilers, must be both internationalist and anti-imperialist. This is the foundation of our assessment and position toward the current process. The current developments in West Asia under the shadow of a potential Third World War demand that Kurdish-Turkish relations be restructured on an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, revolutionary, and internationalist basis, within the framework of fraternity among all the peoples of West Asia. While genocide continues in Gaza, while ethnic and sectarian cleansing persists in Syria, and while the entire region is being driven into fratricidal war through the united efforts of imperialists, colonialists, and Zionists, the solution lies in purging West Asia of imperialist bases and soldiers, eradicating the genocidal entity known as Israel, defeating the reactionary, colonial, and collaborationist regimes, and advancing with a revolutionary program toward a Socialist Federation of West Asia and North Africa.

*25 June 2025*




## RedMed and Christian Rakovsky Centre on the move!

RedMed (short for Red Mediterranean) was, until recently, a web site that published news, opinion, commentary and political declarations from around the Mediterranean Sea, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Black Sea region, Transcaucasia, and the broader Eurasian region. It has now been transformed, as of the beginning of 2020, into a centre for propagating socialist thinking, carrying commentary and political statements and publishing various journals from the Mediterranean region all the way to Russia and the former Soviet Union.

RedMed used to work hand in hand with the Balkan Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky to establish links between socialists and revolutionaries from these regions. However, parallel to the expansion of RedMed, the Christian Rakovsky Centre also broadened its remit. Over time three Russian organisations became members of the Christian Rakovsky Centre: the OKP (United Communist Party), the RPK (Russian Party of Communists), and the Association “Soviet Union”, in addition to the original members, two political parties of two Mediterranean countries, EEK (Workers Revolutionary Party) of Greece and DIP (Revolutionary Workers Party) of Turkey. Thereupon the centre changed its name to the International Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky.

RedMed is now publishing on a bimonthly basis both the Communist of Leningrad, journal brought out for quite some time in Russian by the RPK, and Soviet Renaissance, a new online journal in Russian prepared by the Association “Soviet Union”. This is in addition to its already established commentary and political statements on world affairs in many different languages, first and foremost in English, but also French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Russian, Farsi and Arabic.

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

Let us join hands to bring down the yoke of imperialism and capitalism in Europe, in Asia, in the Middle East and North Africa, and across the world.









# Call to Kurdish workers, labourers, and intellectuals: Postmodernism leads to surrender, revolutionary Marxism leads to victory!

*Revolutionary Marxism* Editorial Board

A page is closing in the Kurdish people's two-hundred-year struggle for freedom. Those who study Kurdish history will look back and be astonished to see how the struggle of an oppressed nation was attempted to be put in a form that would enable new colonialist adventures of the oppressor nation-state. But now we have urgent tasks: as revolutionary Marxists, we must warn all the working people of the region, especially the Kurdish workers and labourers who constitute the majority of the Kurdish people, about this process.

The real name of the process, so-called "peace and democratic society" or, in the words of the autocratic regime, "Turkey without terrorism" is the "oil opening." One of the prerequisites for a new colonialist policy, long dreamed of by the Turkish bourgeoisie and targeting wider areas of Kurdistan and perhaps beyond, is being fulfilled, under the heel of PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) leader Abdullah Öcalan,

MHP (Nationalist Action Party) chairman Devlet Bahçeli, and the public officials of the Republic of Turkey authorised by this task, in line with the common interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie and the Kurdish bourgeoisie, which has betrayed its own people by allying with the former. Within this project, Öcalan, who has abandoned proletarian internationalism long ago, is leading Kurds into a sectarian, imperialist and Zionist-friendly front in the region by steering the course of the PKK's 12th Congress with postmodern arguments. Today, every Kurd who wants freedom for their people must urgently detach from this line and prepare for new struggles along the lines of revolutionary Marxism as soon as possible.

## The question of method

The "oil opening" conceives of nothing beyond the PKK laying down its arms. If there is anything else, it is hidden behind the smokescreen created by secret diplomacy. Although it is claimed that there is no bargaining, all signs indicate that bargaining has been going on for a long time. Such secret diplomacy is defended on the grounds of the sensitivity of the process and the failure of similar processes in the past due to certain interventions. However, this secrecy, unfortunately accepted as normal by the majority of the Turkish socialist movement, does not prevent distortions. On the contrary, it guarantees a policy shaped by interventions against the interests of the masses. What needs to be done is to defend the rejection of secret diplomacy, a historical principle inherited from the October Revolution, in the Kurdish question today, and to abandon the approach of observing such a significant historical moment from the outside with the attitude of "they must know something." The peace would be reached by the end of two different processes, one includes no steps towards eliminating the oppression of the Kurdish nation, and the other guarantees serious changes in this direction. Although neither ultimately constitutes peace, is it possible to consider the two in the same way? Moreover, can we support a "peace" that, as all signs indicate today, will turn the oppressed nation into the military force of the oppressing nation's bourgeoisie? Therefore, we must reject secret diplomacy and advocate for the immediate disclosure of all details of the process to the public.

## From the dream of democracy and constitution to the reality of colonialism

A more serious issue than the question of method is that the parties involved in the process can put forward "facts" about its content that are clearly untrue. The autocratic front is once again repeating its long-standing lie that "the Kurdish problem has been solved." This shamelessness alone is enough to cause serious doubts about the policy proposed by the autocracy. But it does not end there. In his statement,

Öcalan, the long-imprisoned leader of the PKK, distorts the facts and mentions "the resolution of identity denial and developments in freedom of expression" in Turkey among the reasons for the dissolution of the PKK. "Identity denial" has been one of the generally accepted parameters of the Turkish Armed Forces' approach to the Kurdish issue. Although some claim that its intensity has diminished, it has not ended entirely. For example, more recently, when DEM Party (People's Equality and Democracy Party) MP Gülistan Koçyiğit said in Kurdish from the rostrum of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, "Cejna zimanê kurdî pîroz be" (Happy Kurdish Language Day), the microphone was turned off by the MHP deputy chair. Moreover, overcoming the denial of Kurdish identity cannot substitute for a solution to the Kurdish question. At best, it can be accepted as a first step if it is part of a project that will truly grant rights to the Kurdish nation. On the contrary, the AKP-MHP autocracy's project, which also aims to turn Kurds into soldiers in a sectarian war, has the potential to create fragmentation among the Kurdish people rather than alleviate their oppression. Indeed, a part of the Kurdish people are Alevis. Whilst the issue of freedom of expression, which forms the second part of Öcalan›s statement, can only be regarded as an unfortunate observation considering recent developments in Turkey.

Of course, within the limits of this issue, it could be argued that Öcalan's position as a prisoner to some extent justifies his use of such surreal expressions. Even if we accept this, what can be said about the rest of the Kurdish movement? Especially those who negotiate these issues with Öcalan? We must ask them: Is your responsibility to your people limited to accepting the views of a negotiator in captivity without question? Does it not seem odd that the reality of poverty and political oppression faced by the Kurdish people stands in contrast to the direction Öcalan wants to take the movement? Doesn't it make you suspicious that this is happening at a time when imperialism and Zionism are making moves in the region, and new, united fronts are forming against the Axis of Resistance and the Palestinians?

Wouldn't it be expected that the environment in which a solution to the Kurdish question is to be achieved at least include democratisation across the country, and that if this is to be a genuine peace process, it takes place in a conjuncture where rights and freedoms are generally expanding? Should not there at least be a roadmap, and some headings outlining which improvements are going to be made regarding the situation of Kurdish people? Should not it be clearly stated what will or will not be done regarding issues such as the equality of nations and languages, and the situation of political prisoners?

Undoubtedly, all of these should have been done. The reason for their absence must be sought in the consistency of the AKP's policy on the Kurdish issue since it came to power. Following its establishment, the AKP continued the denialist stance

of the preceding bourgeois parties on the Kurdish issue for a time, and only in Kurdish provinces did it attempt to win Kurds to its side through an Islamist policy and social aid to the Kurdish poor. The PKK's attack on Dağlıca in 2007 was a turning point in many ways, including the AKP's policy on Kurdistan. Until then, the AKP government, which had been experiencing tense relations with the US due to the 1 March 2003 resolution, gained US support against the PKK following the famous Erdoğan-Bush meeting on 5 November 2007. With this support, and with the backing of the pro-US administration in South Kurdistan, it turned to the destruction of the PKK by military force, but failed. Only after this moment, did the AKP turn to Plan B, namely the so-called "democratic opening processes" over time. In other words, the opening process was actually an integral part of the destruction policy and always remained true to its essence. That is why the closure of the DTP (Democratic Society Party), the arrests of BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) mayors, the attacks on Kurdish cities, and the appointment of trustees to municipalities all accompanied the opening processes in one way or another.

On the other hand, if the outcome of secret diplomacy is that whatever is to be given to the Kurdish people depends on the making of a new constitution, then woe betide us! Because the 'new constitution' today is merely a code name for the Turkish bourgeoisie's desire to get rid of the current constitution, which has become too restrictive for its purposes. The issue is that, in a manner agreed upon by different camps of the Turkish bourgeoisie and with the tacit or explicit approval of imperialism, Turkey aims to seize Kurdish regions in Iraq and Syria and, beyond that, several oil fields. The pursuit of this goal entails the abandoning the 'peace at home, peace in the world' approach which had, to some extent, shaped the spirit of the old constitution and limited the colonisation of Kurdistan to the north. This project has long adorned the bourgeoisie's dreams of a return to the *Misak-ı Milli* (the National Pact of 1920), and since the Iraq War, many companies have made significant investments in South Kurdistan. The despotic regime that threatened the Kurds when they sought independence in 2017 is now, with the approval of imperialism, pursuing a process aimed at claiming guardianship over those same Kurdish forces, along with the Turkmen, establishing a permanent presence in Iraq and Syria, and aspiring to Sunni leadership in the region. If a new constitution is made, it will be shaped to ensure the safety of this process. If the carrot of the "opening process" is offered to the Kurds, it will be only in exchange for lining them up in the trenches on behalf of the imperialists, Zionists, and the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies.

It is impossible for realpolitik analyses or Öcalan's references to history and theory to conceal this reality. Pointing to a Sunni Islamic alliance, as Öcalan has done, saying that Alparslan defeated Byzantium and Selim I (known as Yavuz) defeated the Mamluks with the support of the Kurds, means voluntarily enlisting the

Kurds in the bourgeoisie's adventures. This is not the first time Öcalan has done this. Previously, in his Newroz message in 2013, which was an important turning point in the "opening process" at the time, he mentioned Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood alongside the concept of 'living together under the thousand-year-old banner of Islam' and presented the perspective of a Turkish-Kurdish alliance in the context of Sunni Islamic brotherhood.

Supporting the new constitution agenda, and linking the gains of the Kurdish people, or more generally democratisation, to the drafting of a new constitution, is not for the benefit of the working class and labouring people within the country either. All the data indicates that Erdoğan, the enemy of the working class and labouring people, is not expecting an early election for his third term as president, but rather a constitutional amendment. However, it is evident that this would be more difficult without the DEM Party, whereas with the joint support of the DEM and *Yeni Yol* (New Path) groups, the constitutional amendment could be passed even without a referendum. Therefore, the new constitution is detrimental to Turkish and Kurdish workers and labourers, both at home and abroad. The long-term implications for the Kurds of the two or three articles added to the constitution must be assessed from this perspective. We can already feel the spirit of "Not enough, but yes," the slogan that symbolized the shameful support given by liberals and left-wing liberals to the constitutional amendment proposed by the AKP-Gülenist fraternity alliance in the 2010 referendum, especially in the politics of the DEM Party. It is clear that this policy will lead socialists, all workers and labourers to disaster.

On the other hand, the fact that the Turkish bourgeoisie has formed an alliance around a colonialist policy does not mean that all its political representatives can engage in this policy without friction. Although the CHP (Republican People's Party) has no objection to the process and both Özgür Özel and the recently-arrested mayor of Istanbul, and the party's declared candidate to run for the presidential election, Ekrem İmamoğlu have supported it, the issue should be considered in the context of the autocracy's broader internal balances. The dynamics of rapprochement between the AKP and the CHP, as well as the partnership between the CHP and DEM, expressed in the "urban compromise," have been attacked by the MHP, which represents a wing of the semi-military regime in the political arena. The assault on Özgür Özel in May 2025 and the operation against the CHP-run Esenyurt Municipality in October 2024 are part of this attack. Bahçeli is exerting pressure to maintain control over the process. This lends the process its repressive character. Therefore, from this perspective, the increase in the intensity of repression alongside the "opening process" is not contradictory but rather a logical unity.

## From postmodernism to surrender

As the *Revolutionary Marxism* Editorial Board, we presented our analyses on postmodernism in detail in the 50th issue of *Devrimci Marksizm* in Turkish and defined the postmodern offensive in social theory and its reflections as an ideological counter-revolution without hesitation. Öcalan's justifications for the liquidation of the PKK confirm this once again. Indeed, Öcalan's article titled "Perspective," published in the organisation's Europe-printed *Serxwebun* magazine and explaining why the dissolution of the PKK is necessary, constitutes an explicit postmodern manifesto and provides evidence in this direction. This is true not only in terms of its propositions but also in the sense that its fundamental opponent is Marxism.

Öcalan's statements are a continuation of the line he developed after his capture in 1999, which diverges from Marxism and sees the contradiction between the state and civil society as the fundamental social contradiction, replacing class struggles with the opposition between "oppressive modernity" and the "democratic modernity." This line shelves the PKK's early goal of an Independent United Kurdistan and the goal of a West Asian (Middle Eastern) revolution ignited by the Kurdish revolution, and moreover, it does not replace it with a coherent strategy. His latest statement addresses a wide range of issues, from the Neolithic revolution to prostitution and the Big Bang, yet fails to address the region's most pressing issues, namely imperialism and Zionism, especially as the region braces for new sectarian wars.

This text reads history with an obvious idealism, as we are accustomed in Öcalan's previous analyses, while not neglecting to mention materialism. Öcalan carelessly lists ideas mostly put forward by Murray Bookchin without mentioning his name, claiming that class struggle has been replaced by a definition of socialism based on the dilemma between the state and the "commune." His excessive insistence on presenting Marxism as the fundamental adversary gives the impression that he is trying, for a moment, to make the reader think that the oppression of the Kurdish nation might have something to do with Marxist ideology. He claims that modernity (the name given by him to the triad of capitalism, "industrialism," and the nation-state) ruins humanity. The hidden subject of this claim soon becomes clear to be Marxism itself, when he accuses Marxism of embracing the nation-state and "industrialism." In a world rapidly driven to barbarism by imperialism and Zionism, Öcalan's attacks on Marxism throughout the text are, in our view, incomprehensible.

Öcalan's postmodern analyses could be criticised at length. We recommend, to those who read Turkish, our aforementioned 50th issue as a source where our readers can find our criticisms of postmodernism in a concise form. Here, we will limit ourselves to mentioning only two conclusions. Firstly, these analyses paint a bleak picture for the future of the Kurdish movement. The idea of "communes

against the state," which replaced class struggle, for example, results in equating the communes that emerged during the dissolution of feudalism in Europe (and later evolved into local administrations) with the municipalities established in the Ottoman modernisation process to strengthen central power. It then argues that communal society can be organised through the municipalities, which have been not only been severed from their historical context but also detached from their current economic and financial duties. Thus, as we shall discuss shortly, the right of nations to self-determination is replaced by local government elections (these elections are, of course, important as part of larger strategies for oppressed nations, but here they form the main backbone of the strategy).

These postmodern analyses also paint a bleak picture for the future of the Kurdish movement's relations with its most likely regional allies. Öcalan pauses at a seemingly irrelevant point in the text. He strips the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the uprising of the Palestinian people who are facing genocide, of its historical context. According to him, the Palestinians first attacked and then "begged for help" from the "UN and some kind of human rights commission of the EU", institutions "on which Israel has stamped its mark." According to Öcalan, Palestinians must either submit to the hegemony or wage a real war (!). In doing so, Öcalan deliberately attacks all Palestinian organisations by lumping them together. He also ignores the fact that the international legal system of the bourgeoisie, like the national one, can be exploited when necessary, without any illusions. Moreover, he overlooks the legal struggle experiences of the Kurdish movement on this issue (which, unfortunately, has sometimes fallen prey to such delusions).

## Revolutionary Marxism for internationalist politics!

The Kurdish question, whose roots extend back to the Ottoman Empire, is rooted in the establishment and shaping of the Turkish nation-state as part of the development of capitalism in its current form. The Kurds, whose national identity was denied, have opposed this situation throughout the history of the republic. Struggles that were initially led by landowners and clerics progressed alongside the class struggles and Marxism in the 1960s and were greatly influenced by them. The PKK itself is (or was) a Marxist party founded on the basis of Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth).

Marxists view class struggles and resulting workers' seizure of power within individual nations as the key to freedom, while approaching the national question from the perspective expressed by Engels: "A nation cannot become free and at the same time continue to oppress other nations." Lenin concretised and implemented this policy by putting forward the right of nations to self-determination. This required the socialists of oppressor nation to openly defend the right of the oppressed

nation to secession, and the socialists of oppressed nation to take up the struggle for independence in their own lands. The right of nations to self-determination is not a simple political principle. On the contrary, it is the key to the joint struggle of the proletariat of the oppressor and oppressed nations against exploitation and the guarantee of trust between them. More importantly, it transformed the Soviet Union from a prison of nations into a country where nations lived freely, despite all its problems.

This principle also assigns the socialists of the oppressed nation the tasks of taking up the national independence struggle, seizing the leadership of the nation, protecting the working masses not only against the colonialists but also against their own bourgeoisie, and taking measures even during the national independence struggle. Today, this is the only programme that can protect the working Kurdish people from both colonialist powers and their own bourgeoisie.

We are not talking about defending military solutions to the Kurdish question or being against peace. We are drawing attention to the ambitions of the Turkish bourgeoisie and issuing a warning regarding the "constitution debates." More importantly, we argue that Öcalan's approach, which has also been accepted by the PKK, will serve no purpose other than drawing the Kurds into a sectarian struggle in favour of their own colonialists. It will not bring freedom to the Kurdish working people and could paralyse all the reflexes of this people in the face of imperialism and Zionism.

Öcalan's text dated 27 April 2025 ends with the statement: "Nation-state socialism leads to defeat, democratic society socialism leads to victory." However, we are certain that the exact opposite is true: postmodernism leads to defeat, revolutionary Marxism leads to victory! That is why we call on Kurdish intellectuals and youth to join the ranks of revolutionary Marxism. The Marxism that Öcalan attacks is not merely a caricature of a theory distorted by practices such as Stalinism and Maoism. As defenders of the theoretical-political line that Lenin called "revolutionary Marxism," we respond to Öcalan's criticisms of Marxism, inspired by Bookchin and others. We argue that postmodernism constitutes a significant theoretical obstacle that stands in the way of the success of the struggles of workers and oppressed nations such as the Kurdish nation. Come, let us discuss, we are ready to work to convince you.

# A century of Kurdish rebellions and insurrections: the Sheikh Said Insurrection (1925)

Alp Yücel Kaya

## Introduction

According to a report dated March 30, 1914, sent by the Muş Governorate to the Ministry of the Interior regarding land disputes in Sason, the Kurds, who had long been "effective and possessory" ("*müessir* and *mutasarrıf*") owners of these lands in the region, leased their land to the Armenians, whom they called "fellah," for cultivation in exchange for a rental fee ("*bedel-i icar*") called "*hafirlik*"; the Kurds claimed that the land had been inherited from their ancestors and had belonged to them since ancient times, while the Armenians asserted that they had the right of appropriation based on their labor and disposal rights over the land.[1] Faced with this situation, the Council of Ministers stated in its decision of June 24, 1914, that issues regarding the land in the villages of Sason were "complicated" ("*mesail-i müşevveş*"), that disputes would take a long time to be heard in court and would be

1 Presidency of the State Archives, Ottoman Archives (BOA), DH.ID 205/12 (October 19, 1914).

costly, and that the local population was impatient with this. It therefore proposed that a commission composed of representatives of the local population and competent officials be established to "resolve and settle administratively" ("*idareten hal ve fasl*") the disputes, that the disputes be resolved "peacefully," ("*sulhen*") and that if they could not be resolved, they be transferred to the justice of peace court.[2]

In making this decision, the Council of Ministers relied on two statutory laws of 1913 ("Statutory Law on the Disposal of Immovable Property" and "Statutory Law on Justices of Peace").[3] According to these two statutory and related supplementary legislation, which represent the culmination of the development of legislation concerning the increasing land disputes that arose as a result of the intensifying class struggle in the countryside at the end of the 19th century, in the event of any interference or encroachment on immovable property and land acquired by title deed, the administrative councils would issue a decision of "administrative prohibition" ("*idareten men'*) and expel the perpetrators of the interference or encroachment from the immovable property or land; the control of title deeds would be the basis for determining possession. If only one of the parties is the holder of the deed, that party is the possessor; if both parties have deeds, the holder of the older deed is the possessor.

This development in property legislation increased the power of administrative councils in the Ottoman provinces, placing them in a dominant position in disputes over real estate and land. The establishment of both the cadastral administration and, consequently, the jurisdiction over real property and land disposal in administrative councils rendered the courts ineffective in cases arising from real property and land disputes, granting absolute power to the large landowners who dominated the administrative councils. This codification, established by the large landowner class, led to a rapid process of dispossession, whereby peasants in rural areas, especially estate laborers, were completely excluded from the real property, land, and commons where their subsistence rights were defined, both before and after 1908.

In our article "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey 1908-1923"[4], we highlighted the splits and struggles among the bourgeois classes that developed in the Ottoman Empire from the 18th century onwards. On one side, we identified two main

2 BOA, MV189/78 (June 24, 1914).

3 Alp Yücel Kaya, "Justice of the Peace Courts in the Adjudication of Property Disputes in the Ottoman Countryside (1839-1914)", *Turkish Historical Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2024, pp. 134-160.

4 Alp Yücel Kaya, "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey 1908-1923," *Revolutionary Marxism 2023*, pp. 57-104. Here, we will recall the framework we set out in the article, but we will proceed by distillation. This effort to condense will inevitably make reading more difficult, so those familiar with the article and the terminology we are trying to develop can skip directly to the last paragraph of this section and continue reading the article.

factions: the bourgeois-bureaucrats, consisting of "a group of approximately 1,000 bureaucrats, soldiers, and ulema, mostly residing in Istanbul, with a close connection and degree of identification with the central authority," who developed through tax-farms (*mukataas*) via the *malikâne* system that emerged when some tax-farm units began to be farmed out on a lifetime basis. On the other side, we identified the provincial bourgeoisie, consisting of entrepreneurial classes located in the tax-farm regions in the provinces, referred to as notable (*ayan* and/or *eşraf*). We underscored that the struggle between these two factions was fundamentally sharpened around land ownership and land rent compounded by the tax-farming (*mukataa-iltizam*) system. In this context, we also noted that the first faction, positioned at the center of the tax-farming system, was allied with the financial and commercial bourgeoisie, consisting of bankers, merchants, and banker-merchants, who were indispensable elements of the system through financial and commercial activities. We had also shown that in the 19th century, the development of bourgeois law coincided with this split, with the bourgeois-bureaucrats following the Hegelian path and the provincial bourgeoisie following the Savignian path.[5] We observed that following the Tanzimat Edict of 1839, there was a notable intensification of competition within the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois-bureaucrats endeavored to surpass their rival bourgeois faction in the establishment of a general and universal legal order, as well as in matters concerning land ownership and rent in the provinces. However, we emphasized that bourgeois law, which leaned toward the Savignyian path based on customary law rather than the Hegelian path based on a universal understanding of law highlighting historical and social discontinuities, determined the primitive accumulation dynamics in the Ottoman provinces. To remind: During the period of Abdulhamid II, as a result of both the drying up of the economic resources of the bourgeois-bureaucrats (through the takeover of tax-farms, especially large estates, under the control of the Ministry of Sultan's Treasury - *Hazine-i Hassa Nezareti*) and their political elimination (as in the case of Midhat Pasha), the provincial bourgeoisie seized the helm and breathed a sigh of relief. Although the financial and commercial bourgeoisie lost their political support with the removal of the

5 "…the dynamics of uneven and combined development brought about by capitalism rendered debatable two paths for the making of bourgeois law in nineteenth century Prussia: The historical conception of law (the Historical School of Law), led by Friedrich Karl von Savigny, which finds its origins in the historical development of societies, customs, traditions and beliefs, attributes a special importance to Roman law, underlines historical and social continuities, and therefore is based on the construction of a law that will regulate person-to-person relations. The idealist conception of law represented by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and his follower Anton Friedrich Justus Thibaut, which, based on the theory of natural law, underlines historical and social ruptures in the example of the French Civil Code of 1804, and is based on universal and rational codification in regulating person-thing relations" (Ibid., p. 70).

bourgeois-bureaucrats, they grew stronger under the influence of the dynamics of global capitalism and gave rise to the industrial bourgeoisie through industrial investments. Certain segments of the provincial bourgeoisie, based on large estates, also underwent a transformation in the last quarter of the 19th century within the framework of same dynamics, investing not only in land but also in finance, trade, and industry. However, the rural bourgeoisie mainly targeted the subsistence rights and commons of the laborers employed on the lands on which their investments were based in the period after 1876, aiming for labor discipline that would also include categories of unfree labor. This assault triggered major peasant uprisings led by the Hunchaks in Eastern Anatolia in 1894 and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization in the Balkans in 1903, as well as the emergence of social banditry in Western Anatolia.

By 1908, amid revolutionary conditions marked by intensifying social unrest fueled by strikes, tax revolts, and military uprisings, the provincial bourgeoisie, which did not feel safe in the face of the commercial bourgeoisie and foreign capital, turned its back on Abdülhamid II's despotic regime (*İstibdat*) and took a revolutionary position. The commercial and developing industrial capital, which was stuck on the Savignyian path, also supported the revolution for a Hegelian transformation. With the participation of rural and urban working masses of all nationalities in the movement, the revolution took on the character of a people's revolution, and was called the Revolution of Liberty, in the sense of breaking away from despotism.

But the bourgeoisie, frightened by the popular revolution, did not delay in reacting, increasing the pressure on the working classes and at the same time bringing class struggle to the fore. The struggle that transcended the struggle between the provincial bourgeoisie and its rivals after 1876, intensified through the distinction between local and foreign, but more importantly between Muslim and non-Muslim, left its mark on the period after 1913, and the Savignyian vein of Muslim capitalists within the provincial bourgeoisie swelled as never before. As a result, both non-Muslim capitalists and rural Muslim and non-Muslim laborers (without distinction) were dispossessed (mostly by being subjected to categories of unfree labor). On the other hand, with the intensifying competition after the 1908 revolution, National Economy policies enabled the provincial bourgeoisie to evolve into a commercial and industrial bourgeoisie through new investments. And this emerging class did everything in its power to sideline the existing non-Muslim-dominated commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. Ultimately, amid the great upheaval that accompanied the outbreak of the World War, they expanded their portfolios by seizing assets known as "abandoned property" ("*emval-i metruke*").

A large portion of those who evolved from the provincial bourgeoisie into the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, following the October Revolution of

1917, fearing the overthrow of the established order under the threat of popular movements and communism. They adopted a revolutionary position and filled the administrative, legal, and financial vacuum left by the bourgeois-bureaucrats, alongside the financial, commercial, and industrial bourgeoisie that had developed throughout the 19th century (and which also drew from their own ranks). A large part of the provincial bourgeoisie thus shifted from the Savignian path, which had already become too restrictive for them, to the Hegelian path, which would also facilitate their relations with the Western world. While establishing their own power with the proclamation of the Republic, they built a regime that prioritized bourgeois property in exchange for recognizing public property/interest with the 1924 Constitution and the 1926 Civil Code. The Ottoman property law, which became entrenched with the Second Constitutional Era as "excessively individualistic," protecting "individual interest to the detriment of public interest," and overlooking the principle that "in the conflict between two interests, the interest of the society should always take precedence over the interest of the individual," was completely recodified from scratch with the 1926 Civil Code.[6] The difficulty arising from customary law in land law has now become defined within the private property regime established by the Civil Code, which protects the bourgeoisie. The Civil Code, adopted from the Swiss Civil Code, has completely abolished the legal framework based on Islamic and customary law, upon which the provincial bourgeoisie had historically been grounded. On the other hand, the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, which already followed the Hegelian path, has shaped the Republic by incorporating a significant portion of the provincial bourgeoisie—which represented the Savignyian path—into its own ranks. All these developments became possible only because the laboring classes, who had been the driving force behind the 1908 Liberty Revolution, suffered defeat despite making their presence felt during the National Struggle period. The laboring classes were unable to lead the 1923 Revolution, and the revolution thus remained a revolution without the masses.

In the article we are summarizing here, we have focused on the bourgeois fractions that set sail toward a new world on the road to 1923, while we have not addressed the provincial bourgeoisie—which remained in the minority and preserved the Savignyian path in opposition to them—nor the struggles that emerged among bourgeois classes after 1923; we have left those topics for another article.[7] In this

6 Choukri Cardahi, "La possession en droit ottoman, son caractère, ses effets et les actions possessoires (avec un aperçu de Droit comparé)," *Revue critique de legislation et de jurisprudence,* (new series) vol. 46, 1926, pp. 261-262.

7 For a remarkable perspective on the economic and political imaginary of the faction we call the provincial bourgeoisie that preserved the Savignian path, and its destruction with the Republic, see

article, we wish to examine the wing of the provincial bourgeoisie that preserved the Savignyian path in the post-1923 period, particularly the one concentrated in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces of the Eastern Anatolia.[8] In other words, we will pay close attention to the development of the Kurdish bourgeoisie and its insurrection. We wish to underline from the outset that such an analysis will focus on the struggle between bourgeois classes and will not address the Kurdish laboring classes and their rebellions, as these require a more comprehensive and in-depth examination. We also wish to emphasize that while the region has its own unique story, it also shares a common history with other parts of the empire, and that its specificities are defined in relation to these commonalities. Therefore, our examination of the social dynamics in the region will proceed in close interconnection with class conflicts throughout the empire as a whole. Although this may appear as repeated narratives within the text, it should be accepted as a deliberate methodological choice in order to avoid losing context.

In the article, we will first discuss the classes in the Eastern Anatolian countryside from the *Tanzimat* period to the Republic, their transformations, and the class struggles that arose in connection with these changes. Next, we will examine the relations between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies during the National Struggle period. Finally, while discussing the split between them, we will focus on the Sheikh Said Insurrection—where the struggle between the bourgeoisie that adopted the Hegelian path and the provincial bourgeoisie that preserved the Savignyian path reached its peak—as well as the so-called "revolutionary laws", the 1924 Constitution, the abolition of the tithe in 1925, the Law on the Maintenance of Order of 1925, the 1926 Civil Code, and their social impacts.

## From the Tanzimat to the Republic: Classes, class transformations, and class struggles in the Eastern Anatolian countryside

When we examine the division of classes in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces before the *Tanzimat*, we see that the ruling classes consisted of feudal lords called *mîr* at the top, followed by worldly aghas, i.e., tribal chiefs and village chiefs, and beys

Sungur Savran, "Class, State and Religion in Turkey," in Neşecan Balkan, Erol Balkan and Ahmet Öncü (eds.), *The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2015; Sungur Savran, "Faşizm mi, Rabiizm mi?," *Devrimci Marksizm*, no 27, 2016, pp. 19-68 (especially pp. 39-54).

8 Throughout the article, we will refer to the region that was predominantly Kurdish-Armenian in population during the Ottoman period and became predominantly Kurdish in the Republican period either as the "Kurdish-Armenian provinces" (depending on the period under discussion) or, more frequently and without ethnic distinction, simply as the "Eastern Anatolia".

in the cities. Among them, we also see that spiritual aghas, i.e., sheikhs and seyyids, held positions of varying degrees. The oppressed classes, on the other hand, consist of tribal population, non-tribal population, and settled peasants.[9] The *mîr*s, aghas, and beys were Muslim Kurds, as were the tribal population they ruled. Among the settled peasants, the Christian population, especially the Armenians, stood out; in the villages where they lived, the tribal structure, with all its hierarchical features (also surrounded by churches and monasteries), also left its mark on social organization.[10] The shift in the weight of this distribution and the intensification of the relations between them are occurring under the cross-impact of external dynamics (particularly the Armenian state projects that came to the agenda with the Ottoman-Russian Wars of 1828–1829 and 1877–1878) and internal dynamics (the intra-class struggle between the bourgeois-bureaucrats and the provincial bourgeoisie, which reached its peak with the *Tanzimat* reforms). Under the assault of the bourgeoisie-bureaucrats, the *mîr*s were eliminated by the 1840s, and the space they vacated was filled by worldly and spiritual aghas and beys[11]. The greatest struggle among them was to obtain the tax farming rights for the tithes (âşar) and to expand their own animal grazing and agricultural production areas, with or without obtaining these rights. The quest for dominance over land during this process increased the pressure on the oppressed classes. On the other hand, external dynamics placed the Armenian population in the dangerous class category, while internal dynamics (especially through the redirection of the tithe to the central treasury) aggravated the dominant classes' pressure on the oppressed classes in the way of compensating for losses on agricultural surplus.[12] The 1880 Sheikh Ubeydullah and 1894 Sason re-

9 Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, London: Zed Books, pp. 107-109, 169-170; Hamza Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat Havzasında Kırsaldan Kente Üretim İlişkileri (1839- 1922)*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Izmir: Ege University, pp. 21-60; Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Yol Dizisi 5d, Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu) [İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)]*, Istanbul: Sosyal İnsan Yayınları, 2009, pp. 55-77.

10 Susie Hoogasian Villa ve Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *1914 Öncesi Ermeni Köy Hayatı*, *Anlatılar ve Fotoğraflarla*, trans. by Altuğ Yılmaz, İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2006, pp. 27-34.

11 Following Kıvılcımlı's terminology, we define ordinary aghas (landlords) as worldly, while landowning sheikhs or seyyids are defined as spiritual aghas (Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu)*, p. 85, 87). By "bey", we mean land and property owners in cities.

12 Yaşar Tolga Cora, "Doğu'da Kürt-Ermeni Çatışmasının Sosyoekonomik Arkaplanı", *1915: Öncesi ve Sonrasıyla Ermeni Siyaseti, Tehcir ve Soykırım,* Fikret Adanır ve Oktay Özel (eds.), Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015, 126-139; Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility in the Ottoman Empire, Loyalty, Autonomy, Privilege*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022; Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire, Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011; Yener Koç, " 'Taxing' the Tribes in the Ottoman Empire: The Case of the Tribes of Mutki (1839–1908)", *Histories of Tax Evasion, Avoidance and Resistance*, Korinna Schönhärl, Gisela Hürlimann ve Dorothea Rohdes (derl.), Routledge, 2023; Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat…*

bellions mobilized the peasants experiencing this pressure in an atmosphere where ethnic and religious issues stood out in the first, led by a sheikh, and land issues in the second, led by socialists.

At the turn of the 20th century, tribal aghas' hunger for land and pastures and the settlement of Muslim migrants (especially Circassians) in the region brought to the fore the usurpation and seizure of Armenian lands, as well as the fraud and irregularities in land registration (by transferring title deeds to their names).[13] As the Governor of Van wrote to the Ministry of the Interior on February 19, 1913, "the conflicts between the ethnic groups in the region are mostly due to land issues."[14] These social dynamics underlie the land disputes mentioned in the introductory part of this article. According to a correspondence dated April 20, 1914, from the Muş Governorate to the Ministry of the Interior, there were 295 land disputes in Sason, of which 125 were between Kurds and Kurds, 34 between Armenians and Armenians, and 37 between Kurds and migrants and Armenians. While most of these were "of no importance," 15 cases were "serious," including four between Circassian migrants and Armenians, five between the inhabitants of two villages, and five between two individuals.[15]

There is no doubt that the land issue was serious while *de facto* usurpation and seizure continue, but the matter would become serious with the "deportation law" dated May 25, 1915[16] and the law dated September 26, 1915, known as the "Law on Abandoned Property," or the "Statutory Law on the Property, Debts, and Claims of Persons Transferred to Other Neighborhoods". With the pressure from the provincial bourgeoisie, which stood out for its large land holdings, the legal framework for the administrative prohibition in cases of land disputes and the legislation concerning justice of peace courts[17] attempted to define usurpation

13 BOA DH.MKT 77/16 (12.01.1311); Y.PRK.BŞK 45/75 (16.10.1313); A.MKT.MHM 620/15 (16.10.1313); DH.TMIK.M 58/64 (16.04.1316); DH.MKT 683/41 (11.01.1321); DH.H 74/6 (03.10.1329); DH.SYS 67/1-2 (23.01.1329); DH.SYS 67/1-5 (20.03.1330); DH.SYS 67/1-8 (21.05.1330); DH.H 55/61 (23.09.1332). See also Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, "Land Reform and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire", *Armenian Review*, vol. 48, no 3-4, 2003, pp. 25-45; Stephan H. Astourian, "The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power", in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, R. G. Suny, F. M. Göçek, N. M. Naimark (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 55-72.

14 BOA, DH.SYS 67/1-5 (20.03.1330).

15 BOA, BEO 4294/322039 (01.12.1332).

16 The full title of the law is: "Statutory Law on Measures to be Taken by the Military Against Those Who Oppose Government Actions in Times of War" ("Vakt-i Seferde İcraat-ı Hükûmete Karşı Gelenler için Cihet-i Askeriyece İttihaz Olunacak Tedabir Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat").

17 This legislation emerged in the context of property disputes that spread throughout the Empire; it was not specific to the disputes in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces but was inclusive of them. Disputes arising specifically in these provinces concerned the seizure of immovable property and land belonging to the Armenians who had migrated (and encountered them seized upon their return

and seizure. With the intensification of this pressure, it now took on a completely legal dimension.[18] As Sungur Savran emphasizes, *de facto* and legal usurpation and seizure were a process of primitive accumulation resulting from intra-class struggle, which emerged predominantly in urban areas.[19] However, it is also clear that an important extension of the primitive accumulation process emerged in the countryside as a result of interclass struggle: poor Armenian peasants, burdened with heavy obligations to aghas and beys, were dispossessed as a result of deportation. The provincial bourgeoisie that began to form in the 19th century, such as the Cemilpaşazade family[20] and the Pirinçizade family[21] in the city, and the leader of the Millî tribe, İbrahim Paşa,[22] in the countryside, increased their wealth "violently."

## Relations of production and laboring class in the eastern countryside

Having outlined the general trend, let us now focus on the provincial bourgeoisie

after 1908) and felt under the framework of the seized property (emval-i magsube) legislation. Both legislations were intertwined in the property disputes in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces. We believe that this distinction is important in order to understand the political and social dynamics of the period. Mehmet Polatel's work on property disputes in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces blurs this distinction, thereby simplifying the dynamics reigning in the region, which can lead to forced interpretations (reducing all issues to the Armenian question). See Mehmet Polatel, *Armenians and Land Disputes in the Ottoman Empire, 1850–1914*, Edinburgh University Press, 2024 (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) and especially Seda Altuğ, "Yirminci Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Mülkiyet, Koruma, Tarih, Mezhepçilik", *Mülkiyet ve Müşterekler, Türkiye'de Mülkiyetin İnşası, İcrası ve İhlali*, Begüm Özden Fırat and Fırat Genç (eds.), Istanbul: Metis Kitap, p. 102. For the development of legislation on administrative prohibition and justice of peace courts, see Alp Yücel Kaya, "The Reorganization of the Ottoman Legal Administration in the Balkans in the Nineteenth Century: the Formation of Local Administrative Councils and the Emergence of New Social Actors," *Conflict and Coexistence: The Legal Orders of Southeastern Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Volume 1: Romania, Bulgaria, Greece*, Michael Stolleis, Gerd Bender, and Jani Kirov (eds.) (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015), pp. 61–101; Kaya, "Justice of the Peace Courts…".

18 This process is reminiscent of the French proverb *"l'appétit vient en* mangeant" (appetite grows with eating). The first written references to the proverb were found in the works of Rabelais (1494-1553) and Jacques Amyot (1513-1593) (http://les-proverbes.fr/site/proverbes/l-appetit-vient-en-mangeant/), but we are using it here with reference to Marx. Marx uses this proverb (using the French in the original text) to express how large landowners who have tasted wealth seek cheap labor to become even richer. See Karl Marx, *Capital, Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (trans. Ben Fowkes), London, Penguin Books, 1982 (1867), p. 869.

19 Sungur Savran, "The Armenian Genocide as Class Struggle", *Revolutionary Marxism* 2025, pp. 44-48.

20 Cemalettin Canlı and Halil İbrahim Uçak, *Hattın Dört Yanında Cemilpaşazadeler*, Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2012, pp. 214-215.

21 Ekrem Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım, Kemalizme Karşı Kürt Aydınının Mücadelesinden Bir Yaprak* (2nd Edition), Ankara: Beybun Publications, 1992, p. 33.

22 Klein, *The Margins of Empire...*

that began to develop in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces in the 19th century, consisting of worldly and spiritual aghas and beys. To understand the social relations on which this emerging bourgeoisie was based, let us first examine the relationship between the classes that controlled the land and those cultivating it (mostly consisting of Armenians). To do this, let us focus on what the "*hafirlik*" mentioned at the beginning, expressed as the land rent in Sason, entails. According to the report of the Muş Governate, there are three types of *hafirlik*: In the first type, peasant laborers make payments in kind (cotton, grain, grapes, sheep, goats, socks, etc.) to the aghas based on their production on their own land, along with a cash payment of between 50 and 350 kuruş; they are subject to compulsory labor on the agha's land; they pay their agha up to 250 kuruş as a formariage (marriage license fee to marry off their children); they are bound to the land and are obliged to pay *hafirlik* dues even if they leave their village; aghas can sell *hafirlik* rights of peasant laborers to another landlord, and the peasant laborers' *hafirlik* obligations continue with the new ahga.[23] The second type of *hafirlik*, which must have developed after the *Tanzimat* period, emerged as a result of Armenians joining a tribal agha for protection against attacks on their lives and property by Kurds who came from outside Sason or who did not belong to a tribe, and being obliged to pay annual "gifts" and "dues" in exchange for the protection and support they received. The third type of *hafirlik* consisted of fees collected by tribal aghas in Sason from itinerant artisans and merchants in exchange for freedom of travel. Since all three types of *hafirlik* established both bondage to the land and bondage to the agha (servitude)[24], it is clear that those under this burden could almost be called "serfs."

The observation of Tumanskii, the Russian consul's assistant, who should have known what serfdom meant, at the beginning of the 20th century is also in line with this:

> In the district of Sason, Armenians are almost serf-like in their dependence on Kurds, with all the legal consequences that entails: Every Armenian is bound to a Kurd and obliged to pay him rent; when they need money, Kurds sell their serfs; if a Kurd kills a serf, the serf's master takes revenge by killing a serf belonging to the killer.[25]

23 BOA, DH.MUİ 4/16 (06.12.1327) from Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat…,* p. 267. See also DH.H 15/65 (11.04.1332); DH.ID 205/12 (19.10.1914); Yaşar Tolga Cora, " Osmanlı Taşrasındaki Ermeniler Üzerine Olan Tarihyazımında Sınıf Analizinin Eksikliği," *Praksis*, no 39, 2015, pp. 28-29.

24 BOA, DH.ID 205/12 (19.10.1914).

25 Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey, 1800-1914*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 66.

A similar observation comes from Anders, an official at the German Consulate in Erzurum in 1914:

> The Archbishop described to me in detail the situation of the Armenian peasants in the district of Motkan [Mutki]. The relationship of allegiance established by the feudal lords, similar to Gogol's depiction of serfdom in Russia [in his 1842 novel *Dead Souls*], reached the point where they sold entire villages along with their serfs, receiving an average of 5-15 Turkish lira per person. [26]

Among the working classes cultivating the land, there are other groups besides the "serfs" in Sason:

> *Marabas*, who were subject to forced labor and debt obligations within a share-cropping relationship with the aghas, under obligations similar to those of *hafir-lik* (including an additional fee called "*uma*" that they were obliged to pay even if they leave the tribal area);
> Small landowning peasants who, having no tribal ties, settled and acquired land over time but had varying degrees of obligations (such as tribute, etc.) to the local aghas;
> Daily laborers having nothing, doing (itinerant) agricultural work.[27]

The last three groups consist predominantly of the Kurdish population. On the other hand, amid all the upheavals experienced by the nomadic and sedentary populations in the 19th century, a differentiation emerged among the laborers in which economic and ethnic dimensions proceeded in parallel. For the dominant class — composed of Kurdish aghas and beys — Kurdish *maraba*s within the laboring classes were preferred over Armenian peasants. During Armenian revolutionary A-To's trip to Ağrı in 1912, an Armenian peasant succinctly stated, "[t]he most Armenian here is the Kurdish serf." In other words, "the most Armenian, that is, the most oppressed and persecuted, is the Kurdish *maraba*." Because "the Armenian *maraba*, who is more talented and hardworking than the Kurdish peasant, is more valuable [costly] in the eyes of the cruel agha."[28] This observation is interestingly

26 Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, *Taşnaklar ve İttihatçılar*, Aras Publishing, 2016, p. 86.

27 Bruinessen, Aghas…, pp. 105-121; Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat…,* pp. 54-60; Cora, "Osmanlı Taşrasındaki…", pp. 28-38; Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* pp. 79-81; İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, *Türkiye Köy İktisadiyatı*, İstanbul: Matbaacılık ve Neşriyat Türk Anonim Şirketi, 1934, pp. 176-185.

28 A-To [Hovhannes Der Mardirossian], *Vani, Bitlisi yew Erzrumi Vilayetneri: Usumnasirutyan mi Portz Ayt Yergiri Ashkharhakragan, Vicagakragan, Iravaganyev Dndesagan Trutyan*, Yerevan: Kultura, 1912, p. 278, from Cora, "Osmanlı Taşrasındaki…", pp. 30-31.

echoed in an interview conducted by Yusuf Mazhar in 1925 while traveling through the provinces of the Sheikh Said Insurrection, where a Turkish *maraba*[29] states:

> Sir, these lands have always been ours. The ancestors of these beys came and oppressed our ancestors, taking their fields. They burdened them with debt and took their fields. During times of famine, they gave us a little grain and took the field. They gave animals and seeds to those whose animals died and who had no seeds left, then seized their land. That's how our land fell into their hands. We were left with barren land. We are grateful for what we have. The Kurds are worse off... If the beys could, they would make us Kurds too. They want to bring Kurds among us and make us *marabas* with them. Once a Kurd enters the village, we are finished. Because even if the bey gives just enough grain to keep the Kurd alive, the Kurd will say "*eyvallah*" (thank you). Then the bey will no longer fear us. He will start treating us like the Kurds.[30]

Yusuf Mazhar's conclusion is the same as A-To's: "The *maraba* labor of the Kurds was more profitable for the beys. The beys would exploit them more. The Kurds feared the beys more."[31] This oppression, in our opinion, provides a clue about the economic rationale that led the aghas and beys to the deportation and massacre of the Armenians, and also gives an idea of the social problem behind the aghas and beys' ability to mobilize the masses in rebellions and insurrections. In this regard, we believe that Dr. Kıvılcımlı's diagnosis of the "social psychology" of the Kurdish people is particularly important for evaluating the rebellions and insurrections:

> The people of Kurdistan and the oppressed Kurdish peasantry live in an economic system (clan-feudal). However, this system is also intertwined with capitalist and mercantile economies: ... - Feudal lord - Merchant - Capitalist... In this country, where these four types of economic relations are intertwined, let us also consider the hidden whip called colonialism; we can now imagine how the economy always rears its head like a four-headed monster and how it has bewildered the Eastern peasantry in all its social and political relations, making it extremely unpopular. Within such an economic and social structure, the psychology that will envelop the people of Kurdistan will be equally chaotic. The dominant feature in this psychology is chiefly the father-king (*babaşah*). But the degeneration of the father-king psychology into feudal psychology, then the

29 The *maraba*s discussed here may have been Turks, or they may have been Armenians who became Turkified before or after 1915. What we are trying to emphasize here is the observation that in both cases, Kurdish *maraba*s constituted the lowest stratum of rural society.

30 Yusuf Mazhar, "İsyan Sahasında 1800 Kilometre", *Cumhuriyet*, 27.VIII.1925, from Tökin, *Türkiye Köy...,* pp. 183-184.

31 Ibid., p. 184.

> entry of the (mercantile + capitalist) microbe stamping the features of *enleperesant* [decay and crumbling] and *le comporitim* [dissolution and disintegration] into this degenerated psychology, has left no consistent social psychology in the poor Kurdistan peasantry. Undoubtedly, all these four types of social psychology are essentially dominant psychology, that is, the psychology of dominant classes. But the psychology of the condemned and oppressed masses opposing this degenerating psychology of dominant classes from within has not been able to break free from *maraba* psychology in essence. Undoubtedly, recent economic developments will increasingly provoke moral developments toward the independent psychology of a Kurdistan proletariat. But for today, the overall psychology of the Kurdistan people is the most doggedly changing psychology with the degenerated father-king + semi-land slave psychology.[32]

## The stages of development of the provincial bourgeoisie in Eastern Anatolia from the Tanzimat to the Republic: Tithes, waqfs, markets

We underlined that starting from the second half of the 19th century, throughout the Empire, the provincial bourgeoisie launched assaults on the subsistence rights and commons of laborers on the lands they controlled, aiming for labor discipline that would also encompass non-free labor categories. In the Kurdish-Armenian provinces, it is observed that labor exploitation changed in nature and intensified. We should note that, similar to other regions of the Empire, intra-class struggle was a trigger for this, but a struggle specific to these provinces also emerged: The bourgeois-bureaucrats, with their new tax policy, particularly the tithe reform, set their sights on the incomes of the landowning classes in the countryside and began to take their share from them. With the *Tanzimat*, the bourgeois-bureaucrats also displaced the *mîr*s, and in the new configuration of the tax-farming system, the worldly and spiritual aghas took their place. Waqfs, *tekke*s (lodges), and zawiyas played a particularly significant role in the rise of the spiritual aghas. In their efforts to carve out space for themselves, the worldly and spiritual aghas did not content themselves with expanding their lands (mostly through usurpation and seizure), but also set in motion the market dynamics in the region (albeit at a slower pace than in provinces such as Izmir, Thessaloniki, and Bursa) through finance, trade, and industry. Now let us examine these three factors that enabled the development of the provincial bourgeoisie in the Eastern Anatolia and fueled their appetite for land usurpation and seizure.

32 Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* p. 175.

## *Tithe (Âşar)*

The most significant transformation in the tax reform that came to the fore with the *Tanzimat* in 1839 was in the tithe taken from agricultural products. The tithe which varied from one-fifth to one-tenth of the harvest depending on the region, was fixed at one-tenth of the harvest throughout the empire. The tax-farming system, which had been in effect for tax collection, was abolished. The tithe would no longer be collected by large landowners in the provinces, who were part of the tax-farming system, but by officials affiliated with the central bureaucracy. The latter regulation remained in force for only a short time. As a result of the social reactions and financial crisis that arose, the tax-farming system was reinstated in 1842 through the Anatolia and Rumelia Companies, which were affiliated with the central bureaucracy and operated by bankers and banker-merchants with close ties to the bourgeois-bureaucrats. As a result, large landowners in the provinces were excluded from this new tax-farming system, while new entrepreneurs working with companies in the provinces began to flourish. This intervention by the bourgeois-bureaucrats, the driving force behind the *Tanzimat*, against the provincial bourgeoisie intensified the conflict between landowners and banker-merchants at the upper level and between landowners and peasants burdened with heavy obligations at the lower level. The upper-level conflict particularly led to the development of a new entrepreneurial class (both Muslim and non-Muslim) in provincial cities fed by finance and trade, (due to the nature of the tax-farming system) not cutting off from land, and eventually turning to industrial investments. In this framework, as entrepreneurs shining in the Kurdish-Armenian provinces, the Barsamoğlu brothers from Harput[33], but especially the Pirinççizades[34] and Cemilpaşazades[35] from Diyarbakır can be given as examples. This type of development of provincial bourgeoisie would bring with it violent conflicts between its own Muslim and non-Muslim members under the influence of internal and external factors at the end of the 19th century.

At the lower level, it is seen that the issue of how sharing and obligations would be after deducting one-tenth tithe from the harvest intensified inter-class conflicts in the provinces. Landowning classes, who used to take the tax-farm of the tithe on their own lands within the tax-farming system, saw exploiting from land laborers as a solution when they lost this source to finance capital (banker-merchants). This brought about the aggravation of obligations defined within customary law and unfree labor forms (such as land bondage and debt bondage).[36]

33 Ibid., pp. 173-176.
34 Ibid., pp. 162-170.
35 Ibid., pp. 140-162.
36 In the literature, the obligation of laborers to make payments in kind and cash to landowners,

For example, the Palu beys collected one-fifth of the harvest in Palu before the *Tanzimat*, and also demanded cash payments such as "threshing", "water-carrying", and "grooming".[37] After the *Tanzimat*, they introduced a levy called "*noksan-ı arz*" (land deficiency) which referred to the difference in value between the potential and actual harvest and collecting this difference from the laborers.[38] In this way, they were able to collect more than one-tenth of the yield from the laborers, thereby compensating for their losses in the tithe. Although the central government abolished the imposition of *noksan-ı arz* in the region in 1848, the beys continued to impose it on the laborers, and the *noksan-ı arz*, which was collected in kind, began to be collected in cash in subsequent years.[39]

With the loss of power by the bourgeois-bureaucrats in the 1870s, the tax farming system began to be auctioned off to small administrative units and local tax farmers.[40] While this amendment dealt a blow to the bankers and merchants who fed off it and the bourgeois-bureaucrats allied with them, it brought renewed prosperity to the landowners in the provinces. In this context, the farming out tithe in the Eastern Anatolia served a triple springboard for the worldly and spiritual aghas and beys who replaced the *mîr*s: they obtained income from tax-farming, went to land appropriation by seizing peasants' land through advance purchases (*selem*) and similar debt mechanisms in villages where they undertook tax-farming of tithe, and began to rearrange production relations in their favor.[41] A good example of such constructed dominance is seen in the Cemilpaşazades:

> The village of Enbar, twenty-five kilometers east of Diyarbekir, was established by Kasım Bey [Cemil Pasha's son], who was in charge of agricultural affairs. About twenty villages surrounding this village were the property of Cemil Pasha. In these villages, cotton, rice, and especially barley and wheat were cultivated, and flocks of sheep, cows, and horses were raised. The daily expenses of Cemil Pasha's mansion, the lavish hospitality costs of the guesthouses, the expenses of his children studying in Istanbul and Europe, and the cost of gifts distributed here

along with the tithe which began to be collected during the *Tanzimat* period by the central bureaucracy, is evaluated under the heading of "double taxation"; see Özok-Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility…,* pp. 139, 146, 204, 206; Cora, "Osmanlı Taşrasındaki…", p. 28; Koç, "'Taxing' the Tribes…", p. 96. We believe that it is incorrect to classify in-kind and cash payments originating from customary law as taxes; rather, they should be considered as rent extracted from laborers.

37 Özok-Gündoğan, *The Kurdish Nobility…,* p. 145.

38 Ibid., pp. 203-204.

39 Ibid., pp. 204-205.

40 Nadir Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli: Osmanlı'da Vergi, Siyaset ve Toplumsal Adalet (1839-1908)*, Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2015, pp. 58-59.

41 Issawi, *The Economic History…,* p. 66; Yener Koç, "'Taxing' the Tribes…", pp. 88, 94; Klein, *The Margins of Empire…,* p. 141.

> and there were all covered by the revenues of these villages.
> Kasım Bey was not only responsible for the administration of about twenty villages belonging to them. There were also about thirty friendly villages surrounding these villages. These villages had been under the protection of our family for centuries. In these villages under Mr. Kasım's administration... many people, big, small, very small, very important or not so important, would refer all their cases to Mr. Kasım's judgment and ask for his justice to resolve their disputes.[42]

On the other hand, in the 1880s, with the emergence of the Public Debt Administration, which monopolized tithe on silk and tobacco, aghas became uneasy and began to experience new competition. In this context, it should be noted that Sheikh Ubeydullah, who controlled tobacco production as a tax-farmer in the Hakkari and Şemdinli regions and was also a tobacco merchant, experienced a unity that included both competition and cooperation with the Public Debt Administration and the Régie Administration.[43]

## *Waqfs, tekkes, and zawiyas*

Before explaining the encroachment of worldly and spiritual aghas in the Eastern Anatolia in the second half of the 19th century through waqfs, *tekke*s, and zawiyas (religious lodges), it is necessary to clarify what a waqf, *tekke*, and zawiya are. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı's analysis is quite useful in this context. Kıvılcımlı divides the lands of the Empire into two groups: "public lands" and "private lands." The first group consists of state (*mîrî*) lands, abandoned (*metrûk*) lands, and dead (*mevat*) lands, while the second group consisted of privatized (*mülk*) lands and waqf lands. The prevailing trend was a shift from the former to the latter, with waqfs playing a striking and complex role in this shift. According to Kıvılcımlı, "in Islamic law, a waqf is, in fact, the principle of removing land that is privately owned from private property for the public utility. It is the removal of private monopoly. In practice, as with everything else, the situation has been reversed and exploited. State-owned lands have been shamelessly and covertly shifted towards private exploitation." This is because, although in theory the goal of the waqf is entirely to meet social needs, in practice it usually ties income to the trustee for life, and this situation, left to the discretion of the trustee, often reverses things. Therefore, "the waqf is, in relation to religion and by hiding individuals behind this veil as much as possible, to re-

42 Ekrem Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım…,* p. 14. The statement that the villages had been under the protection of the Cemilpaşazade family for "centuries" is quite exaggerated. On the other hand, it is quite striking that in the villages ruled by Kasım Bey, justice was administered in the 20th century within the framework of a manor court familiar from the feudal period.

43 Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat…,* pp. 279-285.

move the land from public property."[44] On the other hand, according to Kıvılcımlı, while the transfer of public lands to individuals by the state generally opens the door to "secular" land ownership and "secular" feudalism, waqfs first lead to religious land ownership and gradually to religious feudalism (spiritual aghaism) based on *tekke*s and zawiyas:

> Waqfs... first lead to religious land ownership and gradually to a kind of monastery organization that is claimed not to exist in our country, namely religious feudalism. The fact that monasteries are called *tekke*s in Islam does not change the situation much. Yes, on the surface, the waqf is not anyone's personal property. But this is merely superficial. In reality, the waqf is the most secure and solid form of benefiting from personal property in a regime where all lands are surrendered to the command of the Sultan.[45]

Let us also look at the worldly and spiritual aghas who replaced the *mîr*s in the Eastern Anatolia in the 1840s from this perspective. We have already seen the importance of the tithe and tax-farming system in the aghas' rule over the region. Another important part of the *Tanzimat* reforms, the registration of property ownership, also benefited no one but the aghas. Since they were already at the forefront during the land registration process, they managed to register most of the land in their own names, the final stage of which we saw in the introduction to this article. However, the spiritual aghas added the lands donated by their disciples to the lands they acquired and registered through land registration. In this context, the revenues of the villages where the *tekke*s were located were allocated to the tekke, the sheikh-disciple relationship became intertwined with the sheikh-tenant/sharecropper relationship, and under spiritual pressure, the severity of forced labor and payment obligations in these villages increased. It should not be forgotten that, in regional parlance, "the sheikh of those without a sheikh is the devil."[46] On the other hand, while *tekke*s were exempt from tithe and sheep taxes when they were established, the sheikhs (whether tax farmers or not) continued to collect tithe and sheep taxes from the villagers.[47]

> Many sheikhs combine a reputation of piety and holiness with a shrewd commercial and political insight. A reputation of having much karamat (special graces,

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44 Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Osmanlı Tarihin Maddesi*, İstanbul: Sosyal İnsan Yayınları, 2007, p. 424.
45 Ibid. pp. 433-434.
46 Nur Yalman, "On Land Disputes in Eastern Turkey," *Islam and its Cultural Divergence: Studies in Honor of Gustave E. von Grunebaum*, Girdhari L. Tikku (ed.), Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971, p. 190.
47 Bruinessen, Aghas…, p. 233, 248-249; Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat…,* pp. 199-206.

> the ability to work miracles) is in fact one of the surest ways to become rich: the holier one is said to be, the more murids one has and the more daily visitors, who, on the one hand, have to be served tea and food, but on the other bring gifts in money and in kind. Many sheikhs have inherited landed property from rich murids who were grateful for their intercession with God.[48]

This is how the Berzenci sheikhs became the richest landowners in the Süleymaniye region.[49] Similarly, in the rise of Sheikh Ubeydullah, the leader of the Naqshbandi order, whose sheikhdom and trade were intertwined and who had about 200 villages under his control, *tekke*s and zawiyas played a prominent role (also conditioned by tobacco production).[50]

## *Markets*

We witnessed the voracious appetite of worldly and spiritual aghas and lords for land acquisition. However, it appears that this land acquisition was not simply for the purpose of expanding their sphere of influence, but also for investment purposes. Indeed, Janet Klein highlights an important point when examining the activities of the Hamidiye Regiments[51] in the context of land question: although raids, grain hoarding, and other methods of theft were profitable, their returns were very low compared to the profits that land could bring. According to the leader of the Kiki tribe, Ibrahim Pasha, the leader of the leading Hamidiye Regiments, was pleased with the raids, but this method did not allow them to seize the wealth that farmers earned from agriculture and trade. That is why land grabbing was seen as the best form of plunder. Although land grabbing for both agriculture and grazing animals was not new to the region, it became widespread in the period following the establishment of the Hamidiye Regiments.[52]

Hikmet Kıvılcımlı confirms this observation, emphasizing that the dominant mode of production in Kurdistan still could not escape being a "closed economy," but that market relations were nevertheless developing. He even argues that market relations specific to Kurdistan, independent of Anatolia, were also valid. According to him, the Kurdistan market is linked to Syria for natural and historical reasons:

48 Bruinessen, Aghas…, p. 248.

49 Bruinessen, *Aghas…,* p. 233, 248-249.

50 Erdem, *Yukarı Dicle-Fırat…,* pp. 279-285.

51 The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments were irregular militia forces formed from selected Kurdish tribes. See Klein *The Margins of Empire…*

52 Klein, *Hamidiye Regiments…*, p. 143.

> a) Tripoli [Tripoli], Nizip, Besni, Malatya; b) Saraypınarı, Suruç, Urfa, Siverek, Elazığ; c) Resulayn, Viranşehir, Diyarbekir, Osmaniye, Palu, Kiğı, Erzincan... and so on. Smuggling, which systematically operates all the way to the Black Sea highlands (perhaps from there to Istanbul) and the highlands of Erzurum and Kars, beyond Lake Van, has been doing nothing but passing through the same places it has passed through for centuries.[53]

In this context, it should also be highlighted that small livestock trade was conducted from the region to the Syrian and Egyptian markets. Large flocks of sheep and goats were transported from Erzurum southward through Kiğı, Harput, and Mare to Aleppo and then to Damascus.[54] However, at the beginning of the 20th century, the largest suppliers to the Syrian markets were Diyarbakır and Mosul, with approximately 120,000 small livestock sent from the former and approximately 100,000 from the latter each year.[55] The best micro-scale example of the active merchants here is Sheikh Said, the son-in-law of the Cibran tribe, who owned a large herd (ruling over 35 villages in Varto alone) and who, along with his sons, traded by taking flocks of sheep to Aleppo.[56]

On the other hand, it is important to keep in mind the links between the Kurdistan market and Iraq, especially Mosul, in addition to Syria. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, after trade within its own province, a significant part of Mosul's trade took place with the surrounding region. This region covered all areas within a radius of approximately 800 km from the city and included Baghdad, Diyarbakır, Aleppo, Damascus, Tabriz, Erzurum, Trabzon, Bitlis, and Siirt.[57] However, Sarah D. Shields shows us that production within its own hinterland and regional trade with neighboring provinces were more effective in the transformation of the Mosul region than long-distance trade with Europe.[58] In this context, we can speak of a broader economic unit that transcended ethnic boundaries, was not limited to Kurdistan, and also included Syria.[59]

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53 Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* p. 45.

54 Yonca Köksal Özyaşar and Can Nacar, *Anatolian Livestock Trade in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, pp. 58-59.

55 Ibid., p. 157, n. 65.

56 M. Şerif Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi*, 3rd Edition, Ankara: Kardeş Matbaası, 1970, pp. 84, 198, 202; Metin Toker, *Şeyh Sait ve İsyanı,* Ankara: Akis Yayınları, 1968, p. 32; Bruinessen, *Aghas…,* pp. 281-282, 297.

57 Sarah D. Shields, "Regional Trade and 19th-Century Mosul: Revising the Role of Europe in the Middle East Economy," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1991, p. 30.

58 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

59 Here we borrow the concept of economic unit from Mustafa Akdağ. Akdağ underlined the importance of regional economic dynamics and factors in the founding of the Ottoman Empire, highlighting the role of the "Marmara economic unit." Mustafa Akdağ, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun

Looking at the production and trade of Erzurum and Diyarbakır, it is also clear that their trade life was in line with the long waves of capitalism worldwide: growth until 1873, stagnation between 1873 and 1896, and revival after 1896.[60] Therefore, there is an economic unit in eastern and southeastern Anatolia that extends to Aleppo, Damascus, and Mosul. However, it is also observed that this unit is increasingly intertwined with world markets.[61] We can call this unit the Middle and Upper Tigris-Euphrates economic unit. In any case, the result is that the Kurdish-Armenian provinces had developed relations with markets by the end of the 19th century. In this context, it is not surprising that the land usurpations and seizures undertaken by tribal chiefs were motivated by agricultural production and animal husbandry.

## Dynamics of uneven and combined development in the Eastern Anatolia

Ziya Gökalp stresses that Kurds gathered in tribes and villages, and that a form of feudalism prevailed in tribes and villages. However, he states that feudalism was divided into two types: political and economic.[62] Feudalism in the Middle Ages had political characteristics; peasants were called serfs and were legally bound to the village land; peasants did not own the property they used. As both the peasants and the land they worked belonged to the lord; the lord had judicial power over the peasants; and the peasants were obliged to make certain payments to the lord. In economic feudalism, the state did not grant lords exceptional rights, nor did it deprive peasants of their rights; both were equal; even though this was the legal situation, in economic feudalism villages were like manors, and peasants were no different from medieval serfs, bound to the village; lords disposed of the land as they wished, imposed payments on peasants, and assumed judicial functions. According to Gökalp, economic feudalism prevails in both the agha villages and the tribes in Diyarbakır,

Kuruluş ve İnkişaf Devrinde Türkiye'nin İktisadi Vaziyeti", *Belleten*, vol. 13, no. 51, 1949, pp. 497–568.

60 Veli Yadırgı, *The Political Economy of the Kurds of Turkey*, *From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 139–150.

61 On the development of carpet weaving in this context, see Yaşar Tolga Cora, "The Market as a Means of Post-Violence Recovery: Armenians and Oriental Carpets in the Late Ottoman Empire (c.1890s–1910s)," *International Review of Social History*, vol. 66, no. 2, 2021, pp. 217-241. Recent studies emphasize that as relations with world markets increased, relations with the Istanbul market also intensified, see Köksal Özyaşar and Nacar, *Anatolian Livestock...*

62 Ziya Gökalp, "İçtimaiyat: Şehir Medeniyeti, Köy Medeniyeti," *Küçük Mecmua III*, transcribed by Şahin Filiz, Antalya: Yeniden Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Yayınları, 2010 (1922), pp. 124-125. We would like to acknowledge also the work of Cavit Orhan Tütengil, whose book provides a discussion on Gökalp's intriguing conceptualization, Cavit Orhan Tütengil, *100 Soruda Kırsal Türkiye'nin Yapısı ve Sorunları*, Gerçek Yayınevi, 1975, pp. 100-101.

but the agha villages are freer than the tribes.

> If you want to see how laws are diametrically opposed to social reality, visit the agha villages and tribes of Diyarbekir. Here, you can clearly see how feudalism, characteristic of the Middle Ages, has been revived in a constitutional country.[63]

In our article "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey (1908-1923)," we underlined that the capitalist class developed in the Ottoman Empire within the context of uneven and combined development dynamics under the growing influence of world capitalism. We saw that this class split into two separate factions, each pursuing different paths to establish its dominance. While the bourgeois-bureaucrats and the financial bourgeoisie (bankers, merchants, banker-merchants) and commercial bourgeoisie collaborating with them sought a general and universal law, the provincial bourgeoisie relied on customary law in the countryside and sought to preserve it. The former class exhibited revolutionary characteristics in its quest to break away from feudal ties, while the latter class showed a development in which it cannot break away from feudal ties in order to maintain its position in intra-class competition. In summary, it can be said that the struggle within the bourgeoisie, fueled by the dynamics of uneven and combined development, also gave rise to a conflict in the field of law, and this conflict further intensified the dynamics of uneven and combined development.[64]

Ziya Gökalp's observation of economic feudalism in Diyarbakır almost coincides with our observation of the provincial bourgeoisie, which preserves and feeds on customary law in the countryside. Throughout the 19th century, the aghas and beys of Diyarbakır (along with other aghas and beys in the region) joined the ranks of the provincial bourgeoisie following the Savigny path, preserving and even strengthening all their feudal ties. So much so that in 1919, Seyyid Abdülkadir, the son of Sheikh Ubeydullah, briefly assumed the position of head of the Council of State, which was the highest judicial authority in property law legislation and incorporated customary law into its proceedings.

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63 Gökalp, "İçtimaiyat…", p. 125.

64 Here it is useful to recall Trotsky's explanation of uneven and combined development: « The laws of history have nothing in common with a pedantic schematism. Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which, for the lack o f a better name, we may call the law of combined development—by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps, a n amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms" (Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution,* transl. by Max Eastman, Penguin Books, 2017 [1931-1933], pp. 24-25).

## Kurdish aghas and beys in the National Struggle: Unity and division

With the support and guidance of central government policies after 1908, Kurdish aghas and beys, who had violently seized absolute power in Eastern Anatolia, supported the Erzurum and Sivas Congresses during the National Struggle and were represented in the Grand National Assembly. Three reasons can be cited for this unity: the Armenian (or potential Armenian state) threat, the use of this threat by the Ankara government to draw the Kurds to their side; promises and maneuvers regarding the recognition of Kurdish national rights and autonomy; and the spiritual influence of the Caliphate and the propaganda surrounding it.[65] The reflection of this support and alliance in Diyarbakır, as seen through the (critical) pen of Ekrem Cemilpaşazade, is striking:

> When Mustafa Kemal came to power, he had established national defense societies in Kurdistan and the provinces of Anatolia. The leader of the Diyarbekir National Defense Society was my eighty-year-old uncle, Cemil Paşazade Mustafa Bey. Ninety percent of Diyarbekir had gathered around him. He also believed that Mustafa Kemal was the true Mahdi. He instilled this idea in those around him, saying, "Obedience to Mustafa Kemal's orders is the way to paradise."[66]

It is clear that the reasons that made this unity possible were aimed at preserving the political power of the aghas and beys in the region, but their economic foundations should not be forgotten: the seizure of Armenian property and land had been important for the economic rise of the aghas and beys and their current position. Recognition of their own national rights was as important in this sense as protection against the Armenian threat. The Caliphate, on the one hand, formed the basis of waqfs, *tekke*s, and zawiyas and the rents drawn from them, and on the other hand, connected the commercial networks in the economic unit encompassing the Middle and Upper Tigris-Euphrates basin.

The breakdown of this unity between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies was rapid but gradual. The 1921 Treaty of Ankara, which outlined the Syrian border, thus severing ties with Aleppo, was the first rift in this direction. As we attempted to demonstrate in the section on markets above, the Kurdish-Armenian provinces formed an economic unit with Syria and Iraq. The fragmentation of this unit would shake the economic activities of the networks and beys conducting commercial

65 Cemil Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı ve Şeyh Sait Ayaklanmasına Etkileri*, Komal, 1994, pp. 29-55; Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Kürt Siyasal Hareketlerinin Sınıfsal Analizi*, Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2011, pp. 29-32.

66 Ekrem Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım…,* p. 51.

activities here and, consequently, significantly undermine their political dominance in the region. The words of Mardin deputy Ibrahim Bey during the closed session of the Grand National Assembly on December 16, 1921, where the "negotiations of the Turkish-French agreement" were discussed, express these concerns:

> Friends, since the most important part of the treaty to be concluded with the French is the border issue, and since my friends who are deputies from my constituency have made the necessary defenses and enumerated the disadvantages, I will perhaps make a statement regarding the part pertaining to Mardin: I believe that the central focus of the ongoing negotiations with the French is the land in the southern part of the most important region of the Mardin district and its surroundings. Those of your esteemed assembly who have traveled to and seen that region will confirm that the northern side of the railway line is mountainous and rocky. It is unsuitable for agriculture. The economic wealth of that region is provided by the southern part of the line, where agriculture and livestock, which constitute the main wealth of our province, are concentrated. Since the railroad line passes three or four hours away from the town and the northern part has low fertility, all agriculture is carried out on the land in the south. To abandon this land would be to ruin the district's economy. In accordance with the ancient traditions and customs of our tribes, they are obliged to live on the land between these borders for six or seven months of the year. Not only Mardin, but also the people of Diyarbekir, Siverek, and Maden are under this necessity... They are completely abandoning Resülayn, the center of the Mardin district, which consists of six districts within these borders. We are destroying the economy of this district, or rather, the entire province of Diyarbekir. We are depriving them of commercial life. Leaving the border from Nusaybin to Arata, the Tigris River to the north, and the province of Ibn Omar within their own borders undoubtedly means revoking the sovereign right of the province of Mosul.[67]

The second rift, which represented a break for certain segments of the Kurdish bourgeoisie, emerged when the uncertainty surrounding Mosul was brought to the agenda during the negotiations in Lausanne. During a closed session held in the Grand National Assembly on March 6, 1923, regarding the Lausanne Conference, Yusuf Ziya Bey, representative of Bitlis, raised his criticisms on two issues (The Straits and Karaağaç to be ceded to Greece) and then addressed the issue of Mosul:

> The situation in Mosul, its geography, its ethnic relations, its structure, its politi-

67 *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları (Minutes of the Closed Sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey), vol. 2, March 17, 1337 (1921)-February 25, 1337 (1922)*, Türkiye İş Bankası Cultural Publications, 1985, p. 335. The words of Hayalî Bey, representative of Urfa, in the same context are also noteworthy: "Ayıntab is burning. How can you accept this; history will curse us." Ibid., p. 368. See also Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı...,* pp. 69-70.

> cal and social organization, cannot endure even a minute under British policy, under British treatment, under British mandate... Friends, I wish Mosul could be called a part of Turkey. Because it is a part of Turkey, inhabited by Turks and Kurds. More than half of Mosul is Kurdish; it has value and importance in Kurdish history... Mosul has a place in Kurdish history. Friends, just as it is impossible to divide a person in two or separate any part of them, it is impossible to separate Mosul from Turkey, friends. Abandoning and withholding Mosul, postponing it for a year or six months, is a very dangerous game.[68]

Despite all of Yusuf Ziya Bey's efforts to persuade the Assembly, it was clear that his hopes for Mosul had been dashed[69] :

> Friends, I know it's futile, my words are worthless, no one will listen, the path is clear... The road ahead is dark and dangerous. We will drive them, we will go, we will drag the nation behind us; I know that too. But I am telling history, I am telling God, I am telling our ancestors, I am telling the people.[70]

It must be said that, alongside Yusuf Ziya Bey's pleas, the Turkish bourgeoisie embodied in the Ankara government had no intention of giving up Mosul, which played a key role in the Middle and Upper Tigris-Euphrates economic unit. This is because during the Lausanne negotiations, Ismet Pasha countered Lord Curzon's argument linking Mosul's economic relations to Basra by developing a counter-argument linking these relations to Diyarbakır.[71] Both the Kurdish and Turkish bo-

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68 *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları (Minutes of the Closed Sessions of the Grand National Assembly), vol. 4,* March 2, 1339 (1923) - October 25, 1934, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1985, pp. 162-163. See also Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı…,* pp. 74-77. What Yusuf Ziya Bey said in the same session regarding the Syrian border was also in line with what İbrahim Bey said in 1921: "Friends, as the delegation leaves here, it has been repeatedly expressed that the agreement made with the French is absolutely necessary for the present situation. Correct this, the people remaining on the other side of the border drawn by that agreement, the people remaining on the other side, the villages and towns, are suffering, suffocating... Friends, people need to feed themselves. This is what human beings need. The people of Mardin, Nuseybin, Kilis, Urfa, and Ayıntap also need to live. Friends, there are three important foundations of life: agriculture, trade, and crafts... What I have mentioned, friends, agriculture is not being practiced, those living here... Friends, this people cannot trade... The market is closed, friends. Crafts are dying... All people have closed their breathing tubes, the people near the border are suffocating, they are drowning. Open their breathing tubes, let them breathe, friends." Ibid., pp. 163-164.

69 Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı...,* p. 77.

70 *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları, vol. 4,* p. 165.

71 In the context of the division of Mosul, on the one hand, characteristics related to population and ethnic structure (language and religion) and, on the other hand, political, geographical, historical, and economic arguments have been the subject of debate among the parties. See Tuğrul Bakır, "Lozan Konferansı'nda Musul Meselesine Yönelik Türk Tezinin Oluşumunda Önemli Belge: Ga-

urgeoisies agreed on preserving the integrity of the economic unit, but the Turkish bourgeoisie feared also that if Mosul (Southern Kurdistan) remained under British control, the Kurdish issue would become a ticking time bomb. Sırrı Bey, the representative of İzmit, clearly stated this in a closed session on March 5, 1923:

> I will say a few words about the dangers that will arise in the future from Mosul remaining under the influence of Southern Kurdistan. Tomorrow, a government that is essentially a puppet will be created there. I can already see that this region could become a source of income for England. However, the English do not want to keep this region in their hands solely for the purpose of exploiting it as a source of income. They want to create a second source of conflict in the middle of the Islamic countries. As soon as they show that they have formed a supposedly national Kurdish government there, they will encourage the Kurds under the rule of our neighbor Iran to join them here. After completing this, and perhaps even before, they will try to get the Kurds who have been working with us and who are now sacrificing their children for this cause to join them there. I have no doubt about the current generation raised under the current education system. But how can we know now what ideas the new generation, raised under British influence, will hold? That is where a puppet government will emerge, weakening both us and Iran.[72]

The real split between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies occurred after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, following the rifts that emerged in the context of the new borders dividing the Middle and Upper Tigris-Euphrates basin. The Treaty did not mention the Kurds, and unlike the Treaty of Sèvres[73], which envisaged autonomy and independence for the Kurds, the Treaty of Lausanne denied them national rights. In this context, Article 38, under the heading "Protection of

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zeteci-Bürokrat Haşim Nihat Erbil'in Türk Delegelerine Mektubu," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, vol. 134, no. 264, 2023, pp. 43-80. With the borders drawn with Syria and Iraq, the economic unit was disrupted, and, during the Republican period, it almost entered a vegetative state, mainly through smuggling. In recent years, however, efforts to rebuild the severed ties have been aimed at the reanimation of the economic unit.

72 *TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları (Minutes of the Secret Sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey), vol. 4,* p. 112. Şaban İba, *Sevr'den Lozan'a Kürt Sorunu ve Kemalist Hareket*, Ankara: Özgür Üniversite Kitaplığı, 2008, p. 433 ff.

73 Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920) envisaged granting autonomy to the regions predominantly inhabited by Kurds, subsequently granting the Kurds the right to apply to the League of Nations Council for independence, and stipulated that if Turkey relinquished the Kurdish regions, Mosul could be annexed to the Kurdish state to be established with the approval of the Allied Powers (Articles 62, 53, 64). *Yeni ve Yakın Çağda Kürt Hareketi* (ed. Kurdish Commission of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic), Balinge (Sweden): Jina Nu Publications, 1991 (1987), p. 129.

Minorities," envisioned a Turkish population consisting of non-Muslim minorities and Turkish subjects; the Kurds seemed to have been assimilated into the Turkish subjects.[74] Thus, as Tarık Ziya Ekinci points out, with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923, all obstacles to the establishment of the independent Republic of Turkey and the construction of the "nation-state" were removed.[75] Ekrem Cemilpaşazade's interpretation of the Treaty of Lausanne also emphasizes the break:

> In the Treaty of Lausanne concluded in 1923, the British imperialist state defied all the states of the world and trampled on the rights and independence of the Kurds secured by the Treaty of Sèvres. The British state sold the Kurds like slaves in slave markets to Mustafa Kemal and King Faisal of Baghdad.[76]

It must be said that the "secret political Kurdish society" Azadî,[77] organized in 1923 by those who supported the Turkish bourgeoisie and were consequently disappointed (mainly military personnel, including Cibranlı Halid Bey and deputy Yusuf Ziya Bey), was the product of this split.[78] So much so that the rebellion of the 18th Infantry Regiment, organized by Azadî, in Beytüşşebap on September 3-4, 1924, was a warning sign before the Sheikh Said Insurrection.[79]

The second and decisive blow in the split between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie came with the so called "Revolutionary Laws" of 1924, which aimed to

74 Article 38: The Turkish Government undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Turkey without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion. All inhabitants of Turkey shall be entitled to free exercise whether in public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, the observance of which shall not be incompatible with public order and good morals. Non-Moslem minorities will enjoy full freedom of movement and of emigration, subject to the measures applied, on the whole or on part of the territory, to all Turkish nationals, and which may be taken by the Turkish Government for national defence, or for the maintenance of public order.

75 Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Kürt Siyasal Hareketlerinin Sınıfsal Analizi,* Istanbul: Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2011, p. 35.

76 Ekrem Cemil Pasha, *Muhtasar Hayatım*…, p. 53.

77 "Halit Bey from Cibran, Yusuf Ziya Bey from Bitlis, and their friends formed a secret Kurdish political society called Azadî in Erzurum after the Treaty of Lausanne. In the summer of 1924, we Kurdish nationalists in Diyarbekir also formed a branch of this society." Ekrem Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*…, p. 54.

78 Canlı and Uçak, *Hattın Dört Yanında*…, pp. 226-227. See also Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı*…, pp. 91-104.

79 Cemil Gündoğan writes that Azadî was founded by individuals belonging to the "moderate modernist wing," while individuals belonging to the "traditional religious wing" (sheikhs and clerics) were more on the periphery of the organization. Based on this, we can say that Azadî was an organization led by worldly aghas and beys rather than spiritual aghas, see Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı*…, p. 172.

eliminate the political, legal, spiritual, and material foundations of the conservative provincial bourgeoisie following the Savigny path:

- Law No. 429 (March 3, 1924): Law on the abolition of the Ministries of Sharia and Waqfs and the General Staff;
- Law No. 430 (March 3, 1924): Law on the unification of education;
- Law No. 431 (March 3, 1924): Law on the abolition of the Caliphate and the expulsion of the Ottoman dynasty from the territories of the Republic of Turkey.

The third and other decisive blow came with the 1924 Constitution. The fourth blow was the abolition of the tithe tax with Law No. 552 dated February 23, 1925, "On the abolishment of the tithe and the tax to replace it." The fifth blow was the prohibition of all political initiatives and organizations with the Law No. 578 dated March 4, 1925, "On the maintenance of order" (*Takrir-i Sükûn*). The sixth blow was the abolition of *tekke*s and zawiyas, which overlapped with waqfs both socially and economically, with Law No. 677 dated November 30, 1925, "On the closure of *tekke*s, zawiyas, and tombs, and the prohibition and abolition of certain titles", in the context intensified by the Sheikh Said Insurrection. The seventh blow came with the Civil Code, which was adopted in 1926. Now let's take a closer look at these blows.

## The abolition of the Caliphate: Peace in the world!

Sungur Savran asserts that the regime established during the transition from the National Struggle to the proclamation of the Republic effectively abandoned the "Ottoman imperialism" approach:

> The new state under Mustafa Kemal secured itself with a foreign policy of "leave me alone, and I won't touch anyone," expressed in the slogan "Peace at home, peace in the world," and then focused all its energy on establishing a brand-new state and rapidly developing capitalism.[80]

The most important indicator of "peace in the world" was the abolition of the caliphate, which formed the foundation of Ottoman expansionism.[81] In this context,

80 Sungur Savran, "Cumhuriyetin Krizinin Kökleri", *Devrimci Marksizm*, no. 55, 2023, p. 65.

81 Savran also stresses that the caliphate serves as the historical reference point for the current imperialist aspirations of the Islamist bourgeoisie: "There stands before us a huge class fraction that yearns for the Ottoman tradition and seeks to maintain its glory for the interests of the dominant class. This imitation is the ideological cloak of an expansionism aimed at obtaining every kind

in an interview that İsmet Pasha gave in Paris to a correspondent of the Muslim Standard magazine (published in London under the sponsorship of an Indian Muslim businessman) before the Lausanne Conference began (between 13–20 November 1922), he emphasized the imperialist dimension of the caliphate and underlined that the new form of government had been established by cutting this root out completely:

> We want to present ourselves to the world with bright hands and hearts. If we try to fulfill the old political traditions of Islam, if we use the Caliphate as a pretext for this movement, it will be perceived as a desire to subjugate non-Turkish nations to our own imperialism. We have established our new style of governance in such a way as to cut off such claims and accusations at the root. We are a free nation ourselves and do not wish to hinder other nations' desire for freedom. Especially if these nations are Muslim nations, I believe that mutual respect for each other's freedom in this way can ensure a more genuine, heartfelt, and sincere union among Muslim nations than the forced imposition of the dominance of a powerful Muslim nation on others. Indeed, because we are Muslims and recognize each other's freedom, there is a stronger union among us today.[82]

At the People's Party parliamentary group meeting held on November 22, 1923, where the issue of the caliphate was also on the agenda, Ismet Pasha condemned the destruction wrought by caliphate imperialism in even clearer terms:

> ...We have seen the destruction wrought by the armies of the Caliphate in this country... When we say "armies of the Caliphate," our hair stands on end, and the hair of the entire nation stands on end... We will never forget that a Caliphate fatwa threw us into the turmoil of a general war. We will never forget that a Caliphate fatwa attacked the nation in a manner more hideous than its enemies when it sought to rise up.[83]

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of economic benefit across the vast Islamic world, built on the ground of the caliphate — which, more than 400 years ago, established Turkish supremacy in the Islamic world. Just as the secular bourgeoisie has tied the very existence, future, and profitability of Turkish capitalism entirely to the imperialist West throughout a century-long history, the Islamist wing, in the same way, wants to revive the hopes of a hundred years ago — a kind of imperialism — and thereby secure a larger share for itself in the re-division of the world." ibid., p. 68.

82 Erol Kılınç (ed.), "İsmet Paşa Hazretleriyle Mülakat", *Millî Hâkimiyet ve Hilâfet*, Ötüken Yayınları, pp. 240-241. The book prepared for publication by Kılınç is based on the transcription of the work published by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey under the title: *Hilafet ve Milli Hakimiyet: Hilafet ve Milli Hakimiyet Mesaili Hakkında Muhtelif Zevatın Makalat ve Mütalaatından Mürekkep Bir Risaledir* (Matbuat ve İstihbarat Müdüriyeti Umumiyesi, 1339 [1923]).

83 Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, Ant Yayınları, 1969, pp. 108-109.

Mehmed Seyyid Bey,[84] who was both Minister of Justice and a professor of Islamic law, named the rupture that would result from the abolition of the caliphate during the discussions on the bill "on the abolition of the caliphate and the removal of the Ottoman dynasty from the territory of the Republic of Turkey" held in the Grand National Assembly on March 3, 1924: "As I said, we are making a great revolution in Islamic history. I can say that there cannot be a greater revolution than this."[85] According to Mehmed Seyyid Bey, the caliphate had changed according to time, custom, and tradition; it had not been a religious but a worldly matter, related to the law and public affairs of the nation.[86] The caliphate had been the cause of the country's backwardness, and there was no other way to develop but to get rid of it:

> We have collapsed and crumbled, destroyed and reduced to dust, all because of the Caliphate. We have lost our property, our lives, our homeland. The entire country has been left in poverty. Are these the benefits of the Caliphate? (Bravo cheers) Let us now move forward and revive ourselves. The entire civilized world has taken off, striding forward with giant steps on the path to development. Are we to stand behind them like orphaned children with bowed heads, watching and saying, "The caravan has left, and we are left behind on the mountain tops"? (Laughter) Truthfully, it makes one sad. To tell the truth, it also makes one angry. What a strange thing! Islam is such a noble religion that loves progress, yet we Muslims are the most backward of all nations! (Laughter and applause).[87]

Looking at the abolition of the Caliphate from this perspective, the first thing we must say is that before the Caliphate was abolished, it was clear that the Middle and Upper Tigris-Euphrates economic unit would be fragmented, and this turned the world of the local chiefs and aghas upside down. But it was the abolition of the Caliphate with Law No. 431 that confined them to their own world. The imperialist perspective that emerged during the reign of Abdulhamid II has completely disappeared, replaced by a capitalist development perspective within national borders,

84 We discussed Niyazi Berkes' examination of the legal transformation in Turkey in the context of the Savigny-Hegel debate in our article "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey (1908-1923)". The second scholar to refer to this debate is Mete Tunçay in the context of discussing the Republic's legal reforms. When interpreting Mehmed Seyyid Bey's speech in parliament on the abolition of the caliphate, Tunçay underlines his statement that he was against borrowing from foreign laws and positions him on the Savigny path. In our opinion, Mehmed Seyyid Bey maintains a critical distance from both the Savigny and Hegel paths. See Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1981, pp. 172-173.

85 Bozarslan, *Hilafet…,* p. 177. Bozarslan partially translated the parliamentary records into Turkish. For the original source, see *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre II, Cilt 7, İçtima Senesi 1, İkinci İçtima, 3.3.1340, pp. 15-70.

86 Bozarslan, *Hilafet…,* pp. 178-180.

87 Ibid., p. 195.

which also encompasses the internal colonialist perspective of the bourgeoisie that founded the Republic. It was doubtful what would remain for the Kurdish aghas and beys in this new framework.

## The matter of the Caliphate: Waqfs, *tekke*s, and zawiyas

Mehmed Seyyid Bey, while voicing his criticisms of the Caliphate during the discussions of Law No. 431 in the Grand National Assembly, emphasized that the Caliphate could no longer protect fundamental rights and freedoms. Also, an Islamic jurist, the Republic's first Minister of Justice, who attached importance to Islamic law, underscored historical and social continuity, and sharply criticized Savigny's bourgeois law based on customary law, stated:

> Honorable gentlemen! According to Islamic law, there are three rights, and every individual has full equality in these three rights, all of which are immutable and unshakeable. The first is the right to freedom, the second is the right to personal inviolability, and the third is the right to property. These three rights are fundamental rights in Islam. All other rights derive from these three; these three rights are the mother and source of all rights. Are not the fundamental rights of the civilized countries of our time also these three rights? Yes, they are, but we learned these fundamental rights not today, but 1,300 years ago. Unfortunately, however, the despotic governments that came later under the name of the Caliphate did not properly adhere to these fundamental rights.[88]

According to Mehmed Seyyid Bey, the caliph-sultans and the despotic governments under their shadow turned the country into their fiefdoms and used the people like servants. They confiscated the property and land of whomever they wanted and gave them away to this person or that. This situation continued until the 1839 Imperial Rescrit of Gülhane and the 1876 Constitution, which prohibited confiscation and protected property rights.[89] In this climate of insecurity, the people, seeking a way to save their property, found establishing waqfs to be a solution. It is precisely at this point that Mehmed Seyyid Bey revealed the true face of waqfs:

> Gentlemen, do you think these waqfs were established for charitable purposes? No. If you look at the waqf deeds, you will see. Property worth 50,000 lira, generating an annual income of five to ten thousand lira, is endowed. But the chari-

88 Ibid., p. 190.

89 In this passage, Mehmed Seyyid Bey is essentially summarizing — in his own terms — the conflict and power struggle between what we refer to as the bourgeois-bureaucratic class on the one hand, and the provincial bourgeoisie on the other.

> table aspect amounts to a mere hundred lira. An expense is chosen, for example, forty okkas of olive oil for such-and-such a fountain, eighty okkas of olive oil for such-and-such a mosque, thirty to forty candles for such-and-such a mosque; the rest is stipulated for their children and their children's children from generation to generation. (Laughter, applause) Why? Because it is confiscated. There is no other way to prevent confiscation. My intention is not to criticize, but to present historical facts.[90]

The historical truth as expressed by Mehmed Seyyid Bey, in Kıvılcımlı's clear words, is the covert shift of public property towards personal exploitation and the sanctification of waqf theft with a sacred mask.[91] Thus, he links the issue of the caliphate to the "Law No. 429 on the Abolition of the Ministries of Sharia, Waqfs, and General Military Affairs," which was discussed and adopted on the same day, March 3, 1924, during the first session of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, thereby emphasizing the connection between the so-called "revolutionary laws."

Let us now look at Law No. 429 and the subsequent practices that brought the waqfs under control, focusing primarily on practices applied across the country, while keeping in mind that the impact of these general practices would be much broader considering the prevalence of waqfs in Eastern Anatolia. According to Article 7 of Law No. 429, "Waqfs have been entrusted to the Prime Ministry for the time being in the form of a general directorate [General Directorate of Waqfs] to be managed in accordance with the true interests of the nation."[92] The transfer of the administration of waqfs to the Prime Ministry is indicative, but the outlines of the policies to be pursued regarding waqfs had already begun to emerge earlier: With Law No. 361 dated 24 October 1923, the "*mal-ı maktu*" system — consisting of the collection by finance officials of the income from village and agricultural waqfs (in return for a fixed lump-sum payment) — was abolished for attached waqfs (*mülhak* waqfs).[93] Following Law No. 429, Article 9 of the 1924 Budget Law abolished the

90 Ibid., p. 193.

91 Kıvılcımlı, *Osmanlı Tarihinin Maddesi*…, p. 96.

92 Nazif Öztürk, *Türk Yenileşme Tarihi Çerçevesinde Vakıf Müessesesi*, Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995, pp. 90, 379.

93 "Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and the adoption of the Civil Code, waqfs were divided into two categories: those established before and those established after the Civil Code. Attached (*mülhak*) waqfs are among those founded before the Civil Code. According to Law No. 5737 on Waqfs, attached waqfs are defined as waqfs that were established prior to the effective date of the repealed Turkish Civil Code No. 743 and whose management was stipulated to be carried out by descendants of the founder. Attached waqfs are administered and represented by managers appointed by the Parliament in accordance with the conditions of the charter of waqf that do not contravene the Constitution." (https://www.vgm.gov.tr/vakiflarimiz/vakiflarimiz/mulhak-ve-esnaf-vakiflar).

transfer (*ferağ*) and inheritance (*intikal*) fees that had been collected during the registration of waqf real estate in the name of the Treasury of Waqfs (with the fees to be returned to the Treasury). However, the most significant blow to the waqfs came with the abolition of the tithe tax in 1925. Since the *Tanzimat* period, the tithe tax had been one of the most important sources of income for waqfs: 10% of it was paid to the Treasury of the Ministry of Finance, while the remaining 90% (together with the fee for vacant land -*mahlulat bedeli*-) was paid to the waqfs. According to Nazif Öztürk's calculations, these regulations implemented in the early years of the Republic caused the Administration of Waqfs to lose one-third of its annual income, which was around 3,000,000 liras.[94]

Alongside these regulations that directly targeted the financial resources of waqfs, regulations that directly targeted the existence of waqfs made conditions even more difficult for them. With the decision of the Council of Ministers dated June 16, 1924, and numbered 1/460, the exceptional status of eight "exempted waqfs" (waqfs that were autonomous in their administration, had tax exemptions, and collected tithes and duties on their own behalf) was terminated. These were the waqfs of Mevlâna Celaleddin-i Rumi (Celaliye), Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, Abdulkadir-i Geylani, Hacı Bayram-ı Veli, Gazi Evranos Bey, Gazi Ali Bey, Gazi Mihal Bey, and Gazi Süleyman Bey.[95]

Along with all these developments, Article 5 of Law No. 429 assigned the President of Religious Affairs the responsibility for the administration of all mosques, prayer rooms, *tekke*s, and zawiyas, as well as the appointment and dismissal of imams, preachers, sheikhs, muezzins, and other officials. However, the social dynamics that emerged in the context of the Sheikh Said Insurrection also brought to the fore ideas and practices aimed at closing *tekke*s and zawiyas. For example, with Decision No. 69 of the Eastern Independence Court, the *tekke*s and zawiyas in and around Diyarbakır were closed; in July 1925, it was planned to transfer their estates, properties, and buildings to the provincial administration. Furthermore, procedures were carried out to transfer the waqf revenues in Diyarbakır and some mosques and prayer rooms to the provincial accounting office in August 1925.[96] In response to these developments, the Council of Ministers adopted a six-point decree on "the closure of *tekke*s and zawiyas" at its meeting on September 2, 1925. Accordingly, "All *tekke*s and zawiyas within the Republic of Turkey, whether built as waqfs or owned by sheikhs and registered as real estate, have been completely closed without exception." Places built as mosques or prayer rooms but later used as both mosques and *tekke*s might only be used as mosques or prayer

94 Öztürk, *Türk Yenileşme…*, pp. 115-116.
95 Ibid., pp. 110-111.
96 Ibid., p. 386.

rooms. Of the closed *tekke* and zawiya buildings used as schools, those deemed suitable would continue to be used as schools, while the rest would be sold by the General Directorate of Waqfs in accordance with the Law dated June 1, 1911, on "unneeded waqf immovable properties". The proceeds would be used to build schools in villages and necessary locations, which would be transferred to special provincial administrations. The positions of sheikh, dervish, and disciple, along with the special clothing and titles associated with these positions, was abolished.[97] Based on this decree, an instruction sent from the General Directorate of Waqfs to the provincial organization requested that the administration of waqfs belonging to sheikhs, keepers of zawiya, and tomb be taken over, and it was envisaged that such waqfs and income-producing properties would be administered by waqf officials.[98] Following these regulations and practices, Law No. 677 on the Closure of *Tekke*s, Zawiyas, and Tombs and the Abolition of Tomb-keeping and Certain Titles was passed on November 30, 1925. The law was drafted by Refik Bey, a member of parliament from Konya, and his colleagues. Its explanatory memorandum stated that there was a major conflict between the fundamental principles of the state and the *tekke*s, and that the Republic of Turkey could no longer tolerate such "medieval" phenomena and institutions.[99]

It should be noted that *tekke*s and zawiyas, which were closely related to "religious" waqfs among the exceptional waqfs whose exceptional status was removed, were also closed by the decree of the Council of Ministers dated September 2, 1925, and Law No. 677. With this regulation, the last eight exceptional waqf lands administered by trustees, keepers of zawiya, and sheikhs passed into the hands of the Ministry of Finance.[100]

The final point regarding waqfs was the replacement of the term waqf with the

97 Ibid., p. 406.

98 Ibid., p. 407. Öztürk provides a good example of the rising objections to the emerging situation and the responses to them: When Sheikh Abdulhalim, Sheikh of the Konya Mevlana Lodge, and Tahir Amil, Mevlevi Sheikh of Kastamonu, demanded that the tithe tax of the villages affiliated with the tekkes be given to them, or, if this was not possible, that the loans taken out in 1924 to cover the tekke's expenses be repaid, the Ministry of Finance, in accordance with Article 84 of the 1924 Constitution, that private and legal persons or third parties acting on their behalf could not collect tithes and other duties, and therefore the sheikhs could not collect the tithes. Although there was no objection to the tithes being given to their rightful owners, the tekkes were closed by the Council of Ministers Decision No. 2413 dated September 2, 1925. The endowed tithe belongs to the tekke, not the sheikh, and since the tekkes have been legally abolished, payment cannot be made to a non-existent institution. No bonus or monthly payment can be given to the sheikh in exchange for the abolished tithe. It has been stated that only the debt incurred by the sheikhs in 1924 to cover the expenses of the tekkes can be repaid, provided that it does not exceed the tithe collected by the state (Ibid., p. 411).

99 Ibid., p. 409.

100 Ibid., pp. 110-111.

term "institution" ("*tesis*") in the Civil Code adopted in 1926, which effectively buried "waqf theft" in history (at least until the Waqfs Law No. 903 of 1967).[101]

In summary, with the establishment of the Republic, religious community waqfs were abolished, thereby undermining the rural bourgeoisie (spiritual aghas) based on religious communities. The waqfs established by the "secular" rural bourgeoisie (worldly aghas) continued to exist under public supervision, but new ones could not be opened. Waqfs belonging to the sultan and his entourage became part of the public property. The theft of public property through waqfs, emphasized by Kıvılcımlı in his historical perspective, was reversed within the framework of the contradictory nature of class struggles, bringing the confiscation of waqfs for the public property in the 1920s to the agenda.[102]

Of course, all these developments eliminated the waqfs, *tekke*s, and zawiyas on which the spiritual aghas of the Eastern Anatolia were materially based. At the same time, it also eliminated the material-spiritual relationship they had established with their disciples around them (whether or not it was based on economic enterprises).

## The spirit of the Caliphate: madrasas and schools

The Unified Education Law No. 430, one of the so-called revolutionary laws,

101 Alp Yücel Kaya, "Cumhuriyet'in İlanı Sonrası Sınıf-içi Mücadele Alanı Olarak Vakıflar", *Modernizmin Yansımaları, 1920'ler*, Funda Barbaros and Erik Jan Zürcher (eds.), Ankara: Efil Yayınevi, 2025. We will not go into detail here, but as of 1926, waqf properties entered a widespread liquidation process. A process similar to the expropriation and sale to the public of monastery land and property after the English Revolution and of church and aristocratic land and property after the French Revolution also took place after the bourgeois revolution in Turkey, but its impact remained limited under the conditions of a "revolution without the masses." Nazif Öztürk's research is quite comprehensive on this subject, but new research is needed on this topic, which has not been studied much. See Nazif Öztürk, *Türk Yenileşme*....

102 In this context, it would be useful to consider Hüseyin Hatemi's assessment. Hatemi notes that with the enactment of the Waqf Law in 1935, old waqfs established before the Civil Code were not made subject to the Civil Code. He reveals that old waqfs that were not administered by trustees descended from the founders and were managed by the Ministry of Waqfs were defined under a single legal entity called "legal personality of closed waqfs" and that the Court of Cassation also considered this to be a "legal personality under private law." According to Hatemi, if the legal personality of endowed waqfs is a private law legal personality, this private law legal personality is under the guardianship of a public law legal personality. "This 'guardian' is the General Directorate of Waqfs, which is recognized by law as a public law legal personality. Since administrative guardianship is a relationship that can exist between two public legal entities, we can view this relationship as a *sui generis* Private Law guardianship." Waqfs known as attached waqfs, whose trustees can be identified from among the old waqfs, retain their separate legal personality. If the trustees of attached waqfs cannot be appointed and they are managed by the General Directorate of Waqfs for ten years, such waqfs also become part of the legal personality of closed waqfs (Hüseyin Hatemi, "Vakıf Kurumuna Hukuk Tarihi Açısından Genel Bir Bakış", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1997, p. 121).

is intertwined with the issue of the Caliphate as well as the issue of waqfs. Specifically, this law transferred all madrasas and schools administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Waqfs or private waqfs to the Ministry of Education. The law also stipulated the transfer of the rights to use waqf buildings related to education and the income sources endowed for this purpose to the Ministry of Education and provincial administrations. It also envisaged the transfer of the relevant budget allocated to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Waqfs. Within this framework, in 1925, a payment of 140,000 TL was made to the Ministry of Finance to be transferred from the budget of the General Directorate of Waqfs to the Ministry of Education, and this continued for many years. The revenues from the annexed waqfs that were allocated for the educational expenses of schools and madrasas transferred to the Ministry of Education and provincial administrations were, after the accounts of the trustees were examined and approved, transferred to the provincial administrations in accordance with the conditions of the waqf. This practice continued until 1937.[103]

Law No. 430 also provided for the establishment of a Faculty of Theology at İstanbul University to train "specialists in higher religious studies"[104], and at the same time envisaged the opening of separate schools to train officials who would perform services such as imamate and preaching. This emerged as a regulation targeting madrasas providing religious education, rendering them ineffective.

Bruinessen emphasizes that traditional madrasa education served an integrative function among the Kurds. The use of Kurdish as the language of instruction in Kurdish madrasas played a significant role in this. On the other hand, since Islamic law was taught according to the Shafi'i school of thought in these madrasas, they and their graduates became connected to other important Shafi'i teaching centers such as Cairo, Mecca, and Medina. Thus, in the final period of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish madrasa graduates became a local intellectual elite with a cosmopolitan orientation. In this context, Law No. 430, according to Bruinessen, posed a significant threat to the tradition of Islamic education, its intellectual networks, and the development of Kurdish literacy.[105]

To see the impact of Law No. 430 (as well as Law No. 431), it suffices to look at a short passage from the biography of Sheikh Said, who would lead the Kurdish insurrection in 1925, in the Encyclopedia of Islam published by the Türkiye Diya-

103 Öztürk, *Türk Yenileşme*..., pp. 381-382.

104 Mehmed Seyyid Bey, the first Minister of Justice of the Republic, would become the first dean of the Faculty of Theology at Istanbul University, established in 1924.

105 Martin van Bruinessen, "The Abolition of the Caliphate, Secularization and Kurdish Nationalism," *The Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, 1924, Debates and Implications*, Elisa Giunchi and Nicola Melis (eds.), Routledge, 2025, pp. 78-79.

net (Religious) Waqf:

> He was born in Palu. He was of Zaza origin from the tribes living in Eastern Anatolia and was the grandson of Sheikh Ali Sebtî of Palu, who belonged to the Khalidiya branch of the Naqshbandi order. It is recorded that Ali Sebtî was the caliph of Khalid al-Baghdadi or his brother and successor Mahmud Sâhib, and that his son Mahmud was also among his caliphs. Sheikh Said's father was Sheikh Mahmud Fevzi, who resided in Hınıs for many years, and his mother was Gule Hanım. Sheikh Said, who migrated to the Piran region during World War I, settled back in Hınıs after the War. He established several madrasas in Palu and Hınıs; he gained fame as the head of these madrasas and as the sheikh of the Palevi branch of the Naqshbandi order. Thus, he stood out both as a teacher and as a member of the class of sheikhs. At the same time, he was the leader of the surrounding tribes and the first person the local people turned to for religious and social issues and inter-tribal conflicts. Through marriage, he was also related to Cibranlı Hâlid, one of the commanders of the Hamidiye Regiments... He was an influential figure within the traditional structure of the region, whose word carried weight, whose fatwas were sought, and who was respected within the Sufi tradition.[106]

## The spirit of the laws: The 1924 Constitution

The Basic Organization Law (*Teşkilât-ı Esasiye Kanunu*), adopted on January 20, 1921, is, as Bülent Tanör points out, a short framework constitution. It did not include fundamental constitutional topics, particularly individual rights and freedoms; the provisions of the 1876 Constitution that did not conflict with the Basic Organization Law were deemed to remain in force. With this constitution, the new state, embracing those living within the borders of the National Pact (*Misak-ı Millî*) without ethnic discrimination, was named the Turkish State; it was declared that sovereignty belonged unconditionally to the nation; the Grand National Assembly assumed both legislative and executive powers; and the principle of local self-government was accepted.[107]

According to Sungur Savran, three factors played role in the Basic Organization Law being a constitution based on local self-government: The Ankara government sought to win over the Kurdish people (primarily its bourgeoisie) with such a constitution, endeavored to preserve the powers of the local congresses (organized

106 Zekeriya Kurşun, "Şeyh Said," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/seyh-said (accessed online 10/24/2025).
107 Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri, (1789-1980)*, 7th Edition, Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001 (1992), pp. 252-267.

by the provincial bourgeoisie) on which the Grand National Assembly was founded, and could not remain indifferent to the Bolshevik organization based on soviets.[108] These three factors, which made the principle of local self-government possible, also explain why the Basic Organization Law was a framework constitution and, in particular, why it did not include the heading of rights and freedoms. Because the Kurdish and Turkish bourgeoisies greatly feared any possible intervention in the properties and property rights they had acquired through *de facto* and *de jure* usurpation and seizure, this intervention could come from Armenians, occupying forces, and Bolsheviks, as well as from the poor laboring class. Article 20 of the People's Group (*Halk Zümresi*) Political Program, announced on September 8, 1920, on which the Constitution of the Republic was based, states that "the land belongs to the treasury," thus abolishing private property of land and establishing public property.[109] In Anatolia, deeply mired in social question, and under the dominant atmosphere of the October Revolution, the Grand National Assembly was forced to pass the Coppice Forest Law on October 14, 1920, which provided for the expropriation of the land of the provincial bourgeoisie in order to "preserve the country" in response to the pressure of the laboring classes, which had begun to stir.[110] In our opinion, it is precisely for this reason that the draft Basic Organization Law, discussed during the socially heated and, for the bourgeoisie, anxious autumn and winter months of 1920 in the Grand National Assembly, did not include a heading on rights and freedoms that would give the law its spirit and outline the distribution of property rights. However, it should also be noted that, based on the principle of local self-government, it protected property rights that had already been established in local administrative councils. In this context, it is evident that the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie, who clung tightly to their property, did not shed their Savigny-inspired mantle with the 1921 Constitution.

By January 1921, the elimination of Çerkes Ethem and his forces, but especially the events of the night of January 28, 1921[111], marked a rapid shift in the winds against the laboring classes. After September 9, 1922, the bourgeoisie seemed to

108 Sungur Savran, *Bir İhtilal Olarak Millî Mücadele,* Yordam Kitap, 2023, pp. 129-130.

109 "The ultimate ownership of the land belongs to the state treasury. To those who do not own land, the government shall provide a sufficient amount of land free of charge, so that every peasant can work freely and independently, and thereby the maximum cultivation and productive use of the land can be ensured..." (Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar (1908-1925)*, 3rd Edition, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1978 (1967), p. 422). See also Emel Akal, *Moskova-Ankara-Londra Üçgeninde İştirakiyuncular, Komünistler ve Paşa Hazretleri*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2013, p. 222.

110 Kaya, "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey…", pp. 92-95.

111 On the night of January 28th to 29th, 1921, Mustafa Suphi, the inaugural president of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*, TKP), along with 14 leading members of the party, were killed in Black Sea.

have declared its dominance. An entrepreneurial group consisting of 37 merchants and 55 deputies, most of whom were engaged in trade, including Yunus Nadi from the People's Group, established the Turkish National Import and Export Corporation on September 19, 1922.[112] This company is a clear indication that the bourgeoisie, the founders of the new regime (especially the large landowning provincial bourgeoisie among them), did not limit themselves to politics but also transformed themselves through new investments in trade, industry, and finance.

With the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, we saw that there were no longer any obstacles to the establishment of the independent Republic of Turkey and the construction of the "nation-state." After this, the first step towards the nation-state was taken with the adoption of the Constitution of April 20, 1924. The 1924 Constitution, prepared with reference to the 1875 French constitutional laws and the 1921 Polish Constitution, was drafted in accordance with the classical constitutional system, unlike the 1921 Constitution. It regulated the establishment of the state, its organs, and their functioning, and enshrined rights and freedoms.[113] Although the general principles emphasized that "The Turkish State is a Republic" and "Sovereignty belongs to the nation without restriction," unlike the 1921 Constitution, the principle of local self-government was abolished, and a centralist approach to administration was introduced, emphasizing the Council of Ministers. The fact that rights and freedoms were granted under the heading "Public Law of the Turks" is another indication that the principle of local self-government had been shelved. Article 88 states that "the people of Turkey are called Turks in terms of citizenship, regardless of religion and race," acknowledging the existence of ethnic differences but actually homogenizing them by calling them all Turks. The Kurds have not found a place for themselves in the new constitution.

With these characteristics, we believe that the article that gave the 1924 Constitution its spirit is Article 74, which eliminated the concerns of the bourgeoisie and guaranteed property rights:

> No one's property may be expropriated or seized unless the necessity for the public utility has been duly established and the value has been paid in advance in accordance with the relevant law.
> Except for monetary, real, and labor obligations imposed by law in extraordinary circumstances, no one may be compelled to make any sacrifice.

This article guarantees the property rights of both the Turkish and Kurdish

112 Selim İlkin, " Türkiye Milli İthalat ve İhracat Anonim Şirketi," *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi*, no. 2, 1971, pp. 229-230.
113 Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk…,* pp. 292, 294.

bourgeoisie. However, Article 73, stating that "Torture, cruelty, appropriation, and forced labor are prohibited," also sets limits on the exploitation of labor that had become entrenched among the large landowning rural bourgeoisie.[114] As such, the 1924 Constitution (based on the historical understanding of law that regulates person-to-person relations) envisions a property regime that follows the Hegelian path (based on the idealist understanding of law that regulates person-to-thing relations) rather than the Savignyian path.[115] A significant segment of the Turkish bourgeoisie accepted changing its costume and donning the Hegelian jacket, while a significant segment of the Kurdish bourgeoisie turned its back on the new costume (under the influence of other factors as well, such as the principle of local self-government and the disregard for national rights) and insisted on preserving the Savignyian jacket.

## The matter of the aghas and beys: The tithe

The "Law on the Abolishment of the Tithe (Âşar) and the Tax to Replace It" dated February 17, 1925, and numbered 552, abolished not only the tithe tax but also the mechanism for collecting the tithe tax, the tax-farming. The tax-farming, which the bourgeois-bureaucrats abolished with the *Tanzimat*, was this time abolished by the Republican bourgeoisie. The goal was the same: to weaken the material basis of the provincial bourgeoisie, which fed off large land holdings. In both periods, the bourgeoisie, following the Hegelian path, considered cutting off the branch it was sitting on in order to establish its own absolute order and overthrow the provincial bourgeoisie, which followed the Savignyian path. Even if it suffers losses in the process, this was necessary for the new regime (the Hegelian path), and a bourgeois order that could chart its own course would inevitably be built afterwards.

In this context, the abolition of the tithe and the tax-farming system had two consequences for the provincial bourgeoisie: large landowners became subject to a new agricultural production tax (which would not last long) in place of the tithe, but they were freed from the burden of the tithe. However, with the abolition of the

114 It is well known that the limits imposed by the Constitution on labor exploitation remained on paper; forced labor and other obligations are always subject to the power struggle between patrons and workers, and the governments of the Republican era never refrained from resorting to practices such as road tax, which included road construction obligations, convict labor, and compulsory labor.

115 As we saw above, Minister of Justice Mehmed Seyyid Bey stressed that the caliphate did not protect fundamental rights and freedoms, stating that property rights only began to be protected with the 1839 Imperial Rescrit of Gülhane and the 1876 Constitution. In this context, it should be noted that the 1924 Constitution showed continuity with the legal texts of 1839 and 1876 in terms of following the Hegelian path.

tax-farming, an investment area that was entirely under their control disappeared. In this situation, while some accelerated their commercial and industrial investments, which they had begun to focus on after 1908, others found a solution in switching from tax-farming to contracting (which was not very different in the essence). The new class configuration that emerged as a result of the abolition of tax-farming brought to the fore the mutual reinforcement of the provincial bourgeoisie and the Hegelian path, and vice versa.[116] However, here we must make a separate note about the provincial bourgeoisie in the Kurdish- Armenian provinces. The abolition of the tax farming system, which served as a springboard for their rise in the 19th century, turned the world of the aghas and beys upside down. Except for those who had previously turned to commercial and industrial investments and those who were in alliance with the new regime, it was difficult for them to open up a new field to replace this investment area. On the one hand, the fragmentation of the Middle and Upper Tigris-Euphrates economic unit prevented them from accelerating commercial and industrial investments as the provincial bourgeoisie doing in the West. On the other hand, contracting, which requires close ties with the central bureaucracy, was not something that the bourgeoisie that founded the Republic would share with Kurdish aghas and beys. Not only did the Kurdish aghas and beys had no intention of departing from the Savignain path on which they were founded, but for those who try to depart, the area of economic activity and investment would remain limited to their provinces.

## Law on the maintenance of order: Peace at home!

Sheikh Said, whose biography we saw a passage from above, was the most influential person in the region north and east of Diyarbakır. Thanks to the dense caliph network in the region, he had gained the loyalty of the tribes who spoke the Zaza language. He was also related by marriage to Khalid, the leader of the Cibran tribe, the largest Kurmanji-speaking tribe in the region, who was a member of Azadî, an organization of Kurdish officers, bureaucrats, and beys who were organizing to establish a Kurdish state. Sheikh Said was also a major livestock trader; every year, his son would take large flocks of sheep from the mountain pastures of Erzurum and Bingöl to the markets of Aleppo.

According to Bruinessen, although there were signs that Sheikh Said shared the nationalist sentiments of the Azadî members to a certain extent, what primarily motivated him was the collapse of the old order, namely the abolition of the sultanate

116 For an instructive study on the subject based on a rare source, see Sadık Sarısaman, "Mahkeme Kayıtlarına Göre Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında İltizam Problemi: Afyonkarahisar Örneği", *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2004, pp. 122-130.

and caliphate and the suppression of the madrasas.[117] According to Sheikh Said, these developments severed the ties that united the Kurds and Turks. Sheikh Said's 69th ruling by the Eastern Independence Court after his trial is also almost along these lines:

> …Sheikh Said bin Sheikh Mahmud had long nurtured the treacherous aim of establishing an independent Kurdistan. In recent years, he had turned this desire into an ideal and a political goal. He believed that achieving this criminal objective—which would lead to the separation of the Eastern Provinces from the Turkish Republic (forming an integral part of the whole and completing its unity), and ultimately to the dismemberment and disintegration of the homeland—was initially difficult and almost impossible. Convinced that preparations were necessary in proportion to the importance and magnitude of his ambitions, he gradually began to take action. First, he incited and deceived the sheikhs, murids, and followers around his zawiya who obeyed him unquestioningly and submitted slavishly to his every command. Then, he targeted influential local people and tribal leaders. Exploiting the Republican Government's abolition of the caliphate, madrasas, sheikhdoms, and waqfs, as well as its tolerance of misleading press publications, he personally delivered sermons in mosques and, through trusted agents, sent letters and proclamations to provoke and mislead the population. From abroad, he sought material and moral support by dispatching his son Ali Rıza with special instructions to Seyyid Abdülkadir in Istanbul—the founder of the Kurdish nationalist ideal and the most influential and hopeful figure among the Kurds. Later, he contacted traitors on the southern borders who had been expelled beyond the national frontiers in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne and who had been working to overthrow the government since the Armistice. He secured their promises of assistance and participation. He prepared weapons, ammunition, and other military supplies both internally and externally. Emboldened by the pride arising from these successful preparations, he no longer felt the need to conceal his treacherous intentions. He planned and anticipated creating a pretext and an incident to launch his scheme…[118]

According to Bruinessen, his dual role as a spiritual leader and animal trader enabled him to travel extensively among the tribes in preparation for the insurrection and to persuade local aghas and beys to join the uprising.[119] The events unfolded as follows:

> On Friday, February 13, 1925, in the village of Piran, in the Eğil district of Ergani, in the province of Genç (now a district of Bingöl province), ten of Sheikh

117 Bruinessen, "The Abolition of the Caliphate...", p. 87.
118 Mahmut Akyürekli, *Şark İstiklâl Mahkemesi 1925-1927*, Istanbul: Kitap, 2013, p. 66.
119 Bruinessen, "The Abolition of the Caliphate…", p. 87.

> Said's men, who had been arrested on charges of banditry, refused to surrender to the gendarmes and responded with gunfire, starting the uprising. For three weeks, events unfolded in favor of the rebels, and Sheikh Said's forces laid siege to Diyarbekir on March 7. Meanwhile, they dispersed some army units and captured the district of Palu and the center of Elazığ. After Sheikh Said failed to capture Diyarbekir, the mobilized soldiers gathered their forces and gradually gained control of the situation. Sheikh Said and the other leaders of the movement were captured on April 15, but the suppression campaign continued until the end of May.[120]

There were also worldly aghas and beys who sided with the government before the uprising or joined the government forces during the uprising.[121] In fact, according to Kıvılcımlı, "The Sheikh Said Insurrection was, above all, a trap set by the worldly aghas against the spiritual aghas."[122]

During these developments, the Law on the maintenance of order No. 578 was enacted on March 4, 1925. Article 1 aimed to suppress any organization that could cause religious reaction, insurrection, and disruption of order:

> The Government is authorized, upon the approval of the President of the Republic, to prohibit, on its own initiative and by administrative means, all organizations, incitements, encouragements, attempts, and publications that give rise to religious reactionism (*irtica*), insurrection (*isyan*), or that disturb the social order of the country, its peace and tranquility, and its security and public order. The Government may refer the perpetrators of such acts to the Independence Court.

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120 Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde…,* p. 128.

121 For a discussion of political groupings among the Kurds and the transformations within them, see Gündoğan, *1924 Beytüşşebap İsyanı…,* pp. 56-90.

122 "Because two of the other three beys that discussed the issue of insurrection with Sheikh Sait and would play the role of the central committee of the insurrection informed Kemalism of everything as soon as they separated from Sheikh Sait." Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* p. 197. One of the worldly aghas referred to by Kıvılcımlı must be Kasım Bey, one of the leaders of the Cibran tribe and also a major: "On April 14-15, Sheikh Sait is indecisive. First, he wants to surrender, then he changes his mind. He decides with those around him to cross into Iran via the Abdurrahman Pasha Bridge in the Dirik region south of Varto and through Bulanık. Major Kasım wants to surrender. His brother-in-law, Cibranlı Major Kasım, secretly wrote a letter to Osman Pasha and informed him that they would surrender! Major Kasım communicated with the government from October 1924 until the day they were captured! Sheikh Sait fell into the trap set by his brother-in-law, Major Kasım." Uğur Mumcu, *Kürt-İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925,* Ankara: UM-AG, 1999 (1991), p. 83 (see also pp. 85-93). For Kasım Bey's statement at the Eastern Independence Court, see Mehmet Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri, Gizli Belgeler, Araştırmalar, Notlar,* Öz-ge Yayınları, 1993, pp. 375-380.

Pursuant to the law, the Eastern Independence Court was established, and following an "administrative" trial, 46 people, including Sheikh Said, who led the insurrection in the early hours of June 29, 1925, were executed in Diyarbakır. Decision No. 69 of the Eastern Independence Court following the trial also ruled that the *tekke*s and zawiyas, which were "sources of evil and corruption" located in 14 provinces and two districts within the court's jurisdiction, should be closed.[123] As seen above, this decision was extended nationwide by a law enacted on November 30, 1925, closing all *tekke*s, tombs, and other places of pilgrimage.[124]

The Turkish bourgeoisie characterized the insurrection as a "reactionary" and "feudal" insurrection through Sheikh Said. We do not limit the insurrection solely to the Sheikh Said Insurrection, but see it as a process that began with the Beytüşşebap rebellion organized by Azadî. It is known that Azadî was mainly organized by worldly aghas and beys. Therefore, it is not possible to separate the religious and national characteristics that drove the Sheikh Said Insurrection; in our opinion, both characteristics melted into the same pot, and Savigny's characterization based on customary law in social relations, which underlines historical and social continuities, better reflects the social dynamics of the insurrection. On the other hand, as we will see below, the participation of the oppressed classes in the insurrection must also be taken into account. It should not be forgotten that their participation in the insurrection (regardless of whether it was effective or not) was sufficient to trigger the dynamics of uneven and combined development, the transformation of classes, and social leaps.

Let us not forget that Law on the maintenance of order did not only target the spiritual aghas, but also the poor Kurdish people. In this context, the course was set by the "Eastern Reform Plan" prepared by a committee consisting of Interior

123 "And upon examination of the investigations and inquiries conducted, it has been established before the court — through the testimonies and confessions given — that *tekke*s and zawiyas have become sources of evil and corruption; that in these *tekke*s and zawiyas, practices contrary to the noble Sharia are prevalent, such as — for example — sheikhs attributing to themselves — God forbid, God forbid — divine status and causing the people to worship and prostrate themselves before them, along with other conditions and rulings that the Sharia cannot accept; Therefore, since the continued existence and survival of such institutions is in no way permissible — neither from the perspective of Sharia, nor of reason, nor of law — It has been unanimously and publicly decided that all *tekke*s and zawiyas existing within the jurisdiction of our court, regardless of which Sufi order they belong to, shall be closed, sealed, and abolished." Akyürekli, *Şark İstiklal Mahkemesi...*, p. 74. According to Ahmet Süreyya (Örgeevren) Bey, the public prosecutor of the Eastern Independence Tribunal, this ruling rested on the article of the Law on Associations regarding unlicensed societies, as it had been determined that the tekkes and zaviyes had strayed from their original objectives and had effectively become administrative headquarters for political associations (Ahmet Süreyya Örgeevren, *Şeyh Sait İsyanı ve Şark İstiklâl Mahkemesi*, *Vesikalar, Olaylar, Hatıralar*, (ed. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu), İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2002, p. 179).

124 Bruinessen, *Agha…,* pp. 290-291.

Minister Cemil (Ubaydin) Bey, Justice Minister Mehmet Esat (Bozkurt) Bey, Chief of General Staff Kâzım Orbay, and Deputy Mustafa Halik (Renda) Bey, established by a decree of the Council of Ministers and submitted to the Prime Ministry and the Council of Ministers. According to the Plan, martial law declared in the Eastern provinces would continue. The general inspector was responsible for implementing the plan, and all military forces in the martial law zone were under his command. There would be no local judges, military or civilian, in the courts and martial law courts. "Abandoned Armenian land" would not be sold or leased to Kurds; Turkish migrants would be settled on this land. Kurds who occupied "abandoned Armenian land" where Turkish migrants were to be settled and could not show title deeds would be removed from these lands. A land and population census would be conducted. The people in the regions that participated in the insurrection would bear the costs incurred by the insurrection. Those who encouraged and managed the insurrection, along with their relatives, would be relocated to regions in the West designated by the government. The tribal structure would be abolished, direct contact between the people and the government would be established, and the people's rights would be preserved and guaranteed by the government; for this purpose, officials appointed to the East would receive increased salaries and would be assigned for a limited time; no Kurdish officials should be appointed to lower-level positions. No language other than Turkish shall be used in government and municipal offices, schools, bazaars, and markets; Kurds settled west of the Euphrates shall be prohibited from speaking Kurdish. Measures shall be taken in border regions to prevent smuggling.[125]

This "order" planned from such an internal colonialist perspective aimed to subjugate the laboring masses. The concern caused by the participation of the poor people in the insurrection had been significant in this regard. Bruinessen, perhaps due to his lack of information, somewhat timidly notes that the insurrection was joined by tribeless Kurds who were tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and laborers, as well as the unorganized lumpen proletariat (the urban underclass).[126] Kıvılcımlı, on the other hand, speaks more boldly of "the tremendous, uncontrollable wave of the masses of the Eastern Provinces (the unemployed + servants + laborers + *miriyvo*)":[127]

> In the villages: The sharecroppers plundered the "mansions" of the aghas at the same time as they looted the police stations. This sudden assault bewildered and

125 The report also includes sections on military measures, the division of labor among law enforcement agencies, and the construction of official buildings, roads, and railways. For the full text of the report, see Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri…*, pp. 481-489.
126 Ibid., pp. 294-295.
127 Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* p. 197.

> stunned both the spiritual and the worldly agha authority at once. The disorganized and "leaderless" hungry crowds and insurgent bands that stormed the cities began to carry out — without regard to any class-political tactics or strategic needs, without organization, openly and haphazardly — the very kind of plunder that the ruling classes in feudalism and capitalism (that is, in all class societies) carry out in an organized manner… Just as they attempted to share the wealth of the big bourgeois in the cities, they also resorted to contradictory and dangerous methods such as seizing the salt and bread of the small bourgeois who had withdrawn into their modest homes.[128]

According to Kıvılcımlı, "the uprising, which erupted as unorganized action + a spirit of banditry + a reaction by the propertyless, turned into a futile form of anarchy that could never achieve synthesis." As a result, "[t]he uprising began with the betrayal of spiritual aghas by worldly aghas. But in the end, it ended with the betrayal of all property-owning classes against the propertyless."[129] Starting from here, let us first emphasize the reemergence of the concept of "administrative prohibition" which was the driving force behind the dispossession practices before and after 1908 with the Law on the maintenance of order. Next, let us reiterate that the bourgeois revolution of 1923 was a revolution without the masses, an exclusionary revolution based on suppressing any kind of independent initiative by the masses, let alone mobilizing them.[130] As a result of the Law on the maintenance of order, the spiritual aghas who led the insurrection were punished, but more importantly, social reaction was suppressed. The law secured the ruling classes' power through pressure and violence, in the same way as the "administrative and peaceful settlement" of property disputes after 1908, in other words, through "peace at home."

## Civil Code of 1926

Since before 1908, the property law — defined within the framework of "administrative prohibition" practices that were "excessively individualistic", that "protected individual interest to the detriment of public interest", and that "overlooking the principle that in the conflict between two interests, the interest of society should always take precedence over the interest of the individual" — was completely recodified from scratch with the Civil Code of 1926.[131] The Civil Code, adopted from the Swiss Civil Code, entirely abolished the legislation based on customary law.

128 Ibid., p. 198.

129 Ibid., p. 198.

130 Sungur Savran, *Türkiye'de Sınıf Mücadeleleri, Cilt 1 1908-1980,* 4th Edition, Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2016 [1992], p. 92.

131 Cardahi, "La possession...", pp. 236-237.

Moreover, with the simultaneous entry into force of the Commercial Code No. 865 together with the Civil Code, the inconsistent legal framework in which the bourgeois world had existed since the *Tanzimat* period was also eliminated. In this way, as Niyazi Berkes underlined, Turkey was freed from the oscillations between the Savignyian and Hegelian paths that had continued since the *Tanzimat* era.[132] In the preamble (*exposé des motifs*) of the Civil Code, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt summarized — in his own way — the Hegelian path that Turkey had reached as follows:

> There are no fundamental differences between the needs of nations belonging to the family of contemporary civilization. Continuous social and economic relations have brought humanity together into a large family of civilization. It should not be forgotten that the Turkish nation has decided to accept the principles of contemporary civilization as they are... The Turkish nation, which is resolutely moving towards joining and embracing modern civilization, must adapt itself to the requirements of that civilization at all costs, rather than adapting modern civilization to itself. The purpose of this law is not to uphold religious rules or customary traditions, but to safeguard all political, social, economic, and national actions.[133]

According to Berkes, the Civil Code has established a new political law, and the revolutionary nature of the Code lies here:

> We see that the aim pursued in the adoption of the Civil Code was not to regulate the civil relations of the people in accordance with traditions, customs, and religious rules, but, on the contrary, to reorganize these relations according to what they should be. This is where the revolutionary nature of the Code lies. Cevdet Pasha considered civil law to be the foundation of political law; now, civil law has been codified with the obligation to comply with the requirements of a new political law.[134]

In other words, the law defined by tradition and religious rules has been replaced by a law defined by universal rules and economic interests (private property). Berkes refrains from saying so, but the process that culminated in the Civil Code is the formation process of the bourgeois revolution in Turkey. The commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, which had risen from large land ownership, feared the overthrow of the order it dominated after the October Revolution of 1917, under the pressure of popular movements and the specter of communism. Already unable

132 Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma* (edited by Ahmet Kuyaş), Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2012 (1973), p. 531.
133 Ibid., p. 531.
134 Ibid., p. 531.

to fit into the Savignyian path, it shifted to the Hegelian path, which would also facilitate its relations with the outside world. In land law, the force arising from customary law has now been definitively framed within the private property regime introduced by the Civil Code, which protects the bourgeoisie. Of course, the provincial bourgeoisie, which still wanted to preserve the Savignyian path, was the target of the bourgeoisie that had moved to the Hegelian path. The latter had to either draw the former to the Hegelian path or eliminate it, because the laws of capitalist development had to operate throughout the new borders of Turkey.

However, the history of the Republic shows us that the bourgeoisie, which began to follow the Hegelian path, was unable to either draw the provincial bourgeoisie, which preserved the Savignyian path, to the Hegelian path, or eliminate it. In Kıvılcımlı's words, the abolition of feudalism was "left to the whims of 'time' "; "the feudal lords and their remnants, who had wrapped their tentacles around a third of the country (and perhaps more than half)," were shown as target to the masses, but "the most essential requirements of the democratic bourgeois revolution" were not fulfilled, and achieving them was considered "a dangerous game."[135]

## Conclusion

Although Ekrem Cemilpaşazade was engaged in the struggle for an independent Kurdistan in the 1920s, it is evident that he was not particularly disturbed by the rights based on customary law that kept the laboring classes in a state of dependency while placing himself in a dominant position. In this respect, he was not like the revolutionaries of 1848 (such as the large landowning boyars of Wallachia and Moldavia[136]) who sought a land reform that would liberate the serfs:

> I spent most of my three years between 1922 and 1925 in villages, supervising my father's work. I devoted a lot of effort to improving wheat seeds and breeding fine foals from fine mares. I procured purebred rams to ensure the production of excellent purebred sheep. When I went to the city, I would meet with my friends, talk, share our troubles, and try to be helpful. After satisfying my longing for my mother, I would immediately escape back to the village. I cultivated a fruit garden with three hundred trees and a vineyard with a thousand vines, and on the hillside opposite my mansion, I also cultivated six thousand oak trees. I had an unparalleled tambourine player, and for winter nights, I had a storyteller.
> I oversaw my father's eight villages. I had about fifteen very ornate servants. They wore shawls and hats, had sleeves, swords, pistols, beautiful mares, and rifles. My villagers were also armed. Everyone in power had a new, clean rifle

135 Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* pp. 69-70.
136 Apostal Stan, *The Agrarian Problem During the Revolutions of 1848 in Wallachia*, Editions de l'Académie de la Republique socialiste de Roumanie, Bucharest, 1971.

> with plenty of ammunition. When I had time, I would go hunting. I had trained hunting dogs and very famous greyhounds. In winter, I would go horseback riding to hunt rabbits, and in other seasons I would go on foot to hunt deer, quail, ducks, and wild pigeons. I loved hunting on foot. I owned English, French, and Belgian hunting dogs.[137]

Emin Sazak, who, like Ekrem Cemilpaşazade, came from the provincial bourgeoisie and also benefited from Armenian "abandoned property", set sail for a completely different legal system and world with the bourgeois revolution of 1923:

> *October 26, 1925, Ankara*
> For quite some time now, I haven't been able to write about extraordinary circumstances either.
> I deemed the general situation suitable for establishing a construction company and have been busy setting up a company with a capital of 500,000 lira under the name "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İnşaat Türk Anonim Şirketi" (Turkish Joint Stock Company of Construction) for a period of twenty years. May God grant success. No one else has contributed capital to the company yet. I am managing it entirely on my own. God willing, if I truly achieve the result I hope for this time, I will consider myself successful.
> There is not yet a well-known, established, powerful company in the country. We are also recognized by the government and the public as "business people." The country is in need of many public works services, such as railways. I saw this as the most reliable and profitable business. If God grants success, I hope the company will earn two million liras in two years. I also see that its management is feasible. May God protect us from sorrow.[138]

In the Ottoman Empire, the provincial bourgeoisie rose within the class struggles of the 19th century and, at the beginning of the 20th century, consolidated these positions as much through the law they had constructed as through violence. During the National Struggle period, the provincial bourgeoisie — already intimately connected with and undergoing transformation within the capitalist world — saw its western wing, under the pressure of circumstances (popular movements and the specter of communism), shed its old shell and transform into a commercial

137 Ekrem Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım ...,* p. 53. Immediately after this paragraph (on the same page), in which Ekrem Cemil Pasha describes his life based on servants, his reference to the enslavement and servitude of the Kurds is quite striking: "In the Treaty of Lausanne concluded in 1923, the British imperialist state defied all the states of the world and trampled on the rights and independence of the Kurds secured by the Treaty of Sèvres. The British state sold the Kurds like slaves in slave markets to Mustafa Kemal and King Faisal of Baghdad."

138 M. Emin Sazak, *Emin Bey'in Defteri, Hatıralar*, Istanbul: Bilgeoğuz Yayınları, 2009 (2007), p. 243.

and industrial bourgeoisie (while at the same time entering into alliance with the existing financial, commercial, and industrial bourgeoisie), thereby shifting to a Hegelian position. Its eastern wing, by contrast, under the pressure of its own specific conditions (the Armenian threat, the fragmentation of the Middle-Upper Tigris-Euphrates economic unit, and the fact that its sources of wealth were rooted in spiritual relations), remained confined within its own world and preserved its Savignyian position. The proclamation of the Republic, together with the so-called revolutionary laws of 1924 and the 1924 Constitution, completely severed the ties between these two factions. The Turkish bourgeoisie in the West declared total war on the Kurdish bourgeoisie in the East — particularly on its spiritual wing. The Sheikh Said Insurrection of 1925 emerged as a consequence of this confrontation.

On the other hand, the struggle within the bourgeoisie, which had developed since the 19th century and was characterized by uneven and combined development, continued under the Republic with the slogan "peace at home, peace in the world." This opened the way for the Turkish bourgeoisie to operate in a corridor that shelved Ottoman imperialism in the outside world and suppressed society by excluding it internally. "Peace in the world" is unique to the Republican regime, but "peace at home" is not something unfamiliar to society; it was experienced both before 1908 during the despotic period and after the 1908 Revolution. It also determined the fate of the Republic.

While writing that "the republican bourgeoisie, just like the *Tanzimat* bourgeoisie (hope may their life ages not resemble) once again 'abolished' feudalism," but that it only pretended to do so when one looks at the developments after 1925,[139] Dr. Kıvılcımlı must have already foreseen in the 1930s that the life of the republican bourgeoisie (which we define as the bourgeoisie following the Hegelian path) would be short.[140] The crisis it is experiencing on the 100th anniversary of the Republic is the clearest evidence of this. This crisis is as much connected to the effort of the bourgeoisie preserving the Savignyian path — which emerged from its ashes— to put Ottoman imperialism into practice in place of "peace in the world"

139 Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç Milliyet (Doğu),* pp. 69-70.

140 Perhaps at this point it would be useful to recall the following passage from our article "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey 1908-1923": "Hegel defends the codification of private law that emerged with the French Revolution, Savigny defends the continuity of customary law against such revolutionary regulations; thus, while Hegel demands the consolidation of the rule of the bourgeois class and the preservation of the revolution, Savigny demands a conservative revolution with the restoration of the pre-revolutionary class order. But it should be noted that when it comes to Prussia or the Kingdom of Württemberg, things change, if not for Savigny, then for Hegel. In the post-Napoleonic "Tanzimat" period of the German states, Hegel would favor the preservation of the political order (under the kingdom and its institutions) while maintaining his revolutionary position in law" (Kaya, "The Bourgeois Revolution in Turkey...", pp. 71-72).

(by mobilizing its western and eastern factions), as it is rooted in the conditions of "peace at home" that have kept society under pressure since the founding period of the Republic.[141]

141 Sungur Savran, "Cumhuriyet'in Krizinin Kökleri", *Devrimci Marksizm*, no 55, 2023, pp. 53-88.

# What is Trump's final goal? Ten brief theses

Sungur Savran

*Whether it be as a result of financial over-expansion or the outcome of the contradictions of the internationalisation of finance, world capitalism harbours in its bosom a very strong tendency towards a financial crash. ... If it were to materialise, this kind of financial crash would radically upset the conjuncture through which the world is going not only in the economic sphere, but also in the political, ideological and even military domains. Were it to occur, this international financial crash would lead each and every imperialist country or bloc of countries to put its narrow interests in front of those of world capitalism and thus in all probability result in a fragmentation of the world economy. On the ideological plane neoliberalism and globalism would suffer a great defeat and the major ideological spokespeople of the bourgeoisie would once again join the ranks of a crude nationalism. As a result of this blow to international integration, the ideology of "globalisation" would evaporate. The cut-throat competition between imperialist powers would lead to a rapid change of the picture in the military domain and Europe and Japan would turn to a hasty rearmament. This kind of development would swiftly bring the world to a crossroads: either fascism and a third world war or proletarian revolution.*[1]

1 Sungur Savran, "Küreselleşme mi, Uluslararasılaşma mı?" ["Globalisation or Internationalisation?"] Article in Turkish in two parts, Part 2, *Sınıf Bilinci*, No. 17, April 1997, pp. 94-95. (https://www.devrimcimarksizm.net/sites/default/files/sinif-bilinci-17.pdf)

1. When Maduro and his spouse were surgically abducted to the United States and the "Bolivarian" government of the country gave in to the *diktat* of the Trump administration, there was a fiery debate as to what Trump's "real goal" was in carrying out this operation. Some pointed to Venezuela's oil riches, as the country possesses the largest reserves on the face of the earth, even before Saudi Arabia, although its oil is harder to process and underinvestment for a long time seems to have left the country's oil facilities in a sorry state. Others stressed the danger lurking behind the Venezuela operation for Cuba, Colombia, Mexico or Panama, the Trump administration threatening all these countries with intervention of different kinds in the near future. Many pointed to the publicly disclosed fact that Trump had revived the Monroe Doctrine of the nineteenth century, according to which the US declared a monopoly of dealings in the Western hemisphere as against the powers of other continents. All of these seemed to be true in their own right, but somehow left something to be wanting. Were these perhaps all intermediary goals, with the real strategic objective lying beyond? Or take the case of Greenland. Since this gigantic island belongs under a semi-autonomous agreement to Denmark, a NATO-member ally of the US, there was a lot of head-scratching to find the reason for the most unreasonable claim by Trump over the territory. Was it because of the severe competition between the great powers over the Arctic Circle, expected to rapidly become the busiest sea route between the Pacific and the Atlantic in the near future? Was it because the territory is said to possess an immense wealth of rare earth minerals, which are wildly coveted by America as against China, which has almost a monopoly of at least some of these elements? Or was it because, as Trump said later, the territory is indispensable for the so-called "Golden Dome" that the US wishes to equip itself with? Or, again, are these perhaps all part of the reality, but nonetheless only intermediary goals, the real strategic objective again lying somewhere beyond? There seems to be a missing link here, since one can go on with similar questions concerning Gaza and Canada and Panama (not to mention Nigeria, the bombing of which was probably only an entry point to the African continent). Why are there so many instances of projects or even of actions already undertaken, all geared to territory grabbing or outright military intervention under the Trump administration? After all, only a year has gone by since Trump took office on 20 January 2025.

2. Since the publication of the US National Security Strategy (henceforth US NSS) in December 2025, many have turned to that document looking for an answer to this specific question there. This expectation is blatantly misguided. The US NSS can teach everyone many things and it documents further, from the very mouth of the Trump administration, many aspects of its worldview. But it does not, and could not, include the entire strategy. This should be asserted even more forcibly. How

could an open-source document show the entire hand of the most important player of the world geostrategic scene? Absent from the document is the burning question of the future of the Arctic Circle. Absent also is the entire question of how the Trump administration is planning to engage Russia. Russia appears substantially in the document only in its relationship to Europe, relations of Russia with the US not even being so far as mentioned! And, in our opinion, the two absences are closely intertwined, for, in all probability, the real secret of Trump's seemingly whimsical relationship to Putin lies in the Arctic question. In the same vein, in our opinion, are absent from the document Canada and Greenland! If the document is blatantly silent on so many issues of burning importance, it would obviously keep its cards close to its chest when it comes to the final overall goal of US military interventions or blackmailing operations. The US National Defence Strategy document (US NDS), later published by the Pentagon, identified Greenland in the Arctic region, along with the Panama Canal, as key geographical areas of strategic importance for continuous access to the US, but again keeps its strategic cards close to its chest regarding the Arctic. Relations with Russia are again included in the document within the context of Europe and the country is described as a "continuous but controllable threat." The US's strategic orientation towards Russia is thus left ambiguous. So, no more than omens regarding single instances of brutal imperialist intervention in other countries can we expect the US NSS or the US NDS to be a source of true knowledge with respect to Trump's real goal.

3. We think that only a Marxist analysis of the world situation at this stage of history can provide for us the secret of this seemingly idiosyncratic policy. (We shall presently see that it is not as idiosyncratic as it seems at first sight.) Let us then start our inquiry by posing the following question: What is Trump an answer to? We have answered this question many times in discussions not only relating to Trump but also to leaders and parties made up of the same cloth as him. The long argument can thus be found in our earlier writings, most of them published in previous issues of *Revolutionary Marxism*. The very short answer is this: it is the Third Great Depression that has conjured up all the ghosts of fascist parties and leaders that were the reality of another epoch, the 1930s. With respect to the present situation, after almost three decades of neoliberalism and globalism, carefully prepared by the representatives of the international bourgeoisie in the 1980s through the 1990s (the Washington Consensus), the international financial system collapsed in a crash of historic dimensions in 2008 in what is now known as the "Global Financial Crisis", which then opened up a period of deep economic crisis of a "once in a century type" (dixit Alan Greenspan, longtime Governor of the US Fed, in obvious reference to the Great Depression of the 1930s). Through this change in the overall situation, it became evident to the representatives of the international bourgeoisie that the crisis

in the bosom of the world capitalist system, a legacy of the late twentieth century, cannot be overcome through international competition and cooperation. Each national fraction of the bourgeoisie decided to go it alone, at least those of countries of sizeable population and resources (imperialist ones, to be sure, but also poorer ones such as Brazil, Argentina, and India), trying to steer their own ship to the shore. This is the secret of the Trumps and the Le Pens and the Melonis and the Mileis and the Modis and the Bolsonaros. This we have explained many times, unfortunately not making ourselves heard to fellow Marxists, except for our closest comrades. Our judgment, let it be said in passing, was ***not*** a *post factum* deliberation, i.e. one after the fact, but based on a meticulous examination of the contradictions of the period that ***preceded*** the 2008 crash, a period that has almost universally been called "globalisation" on the basis of a totally erroneous liberal theoretical framework. (On this question, the reader may wish to consult our critique of *Empire*, the illustrious work of Antonio Negri & Michael Hardt, in the light of the history of the last quarter of a century in this issue of *Revolutionary Marxism*.) The quotation at the beginning of this piece from an article of ours that dates from 1996-1997, written in Turkish, goes to show that the diagnosis of the possibility of a depression on the horizon had been made ***before*** the crash of 2008 and the onset of the great depression of the twenty-first century.

4. Great depressions are both the result and the expression of the contradiction faced by the capitalist mode of production in its age of decline between the socialisation of the productive forces, which increasingly requires central planning in order to run the closely intertwined economy, on the one hand, and the system of private appropriation, which subordinates the productive forces to the incessant search for surplus-value by private capitalist entities, on the other. This contradiction has been aggravated by another between the increasing internationalisation of the capitalist economy and the unabated resilience (contra globalisation theory) of nation states. ***These*** are the problems to be solved by the international bourgeoisie and/or its national fractions, starting obviously with those of the imperialist countries.

5. The strategic axis for each national fraction of the bourgeoisie nowadays is more and more that of dividing the working class along national, ethnic, and racial lines. This is meant to redirect the rage and exasperation of a part of the class (the "native" sections) deriving from the catastrophic economic situation of each country towards the other part of the class (immigrant, refugee, undocumented, foreigner, latecomer, Muslim, Jewish etc.) away from those who bear the real responsibility, i.e. the capitalist class, and thus make it possible for the latter class to continue to make the working class pay for what is but the crisis of capitalism. This is why we have insisted from the beginning that these forces, including the MAGA movement and Trump himself, are fascists because using racism and nationalism to

divide the working class in order to inflict a defeat on it is ***the specific attribute of fascism***. On the other hand, we have also insisted that they are ***proto-***fascist forces, for a majority of them do not (yet) possess paramilitary troops, a hallmark of classical fascism of the Italian or German Nazi type.

6. The implementation of this domestic strategy is laden with difficulties and requires that the bourgeoisie have recourse to armed forces to practise coercion on the working class. This usually takes the form of a low-intensity civil war. Lacking his own paramilitary forces, Trump has resorted to ICE agents, to troops of the National Guard, and even to Marines in the Los Angeles incident. ICE is turning into the counterpart, for Trump, of the *Freikorps* in post-World War One Germany, before the formation of the SA and the SS. This is either a preliminary phase of fascist violence that will pave the way for the proper paramilitary forces of MAGA itself or will open a new road to power for the fascists, through the use of the already existing forces of the state in the service of the fascist movement. (For other countries, we need not document here the sheer strength of Marine Le Pen within the French police force, nor the incommensurate presence of fascist and pro-Nazi forces within the German police and army.)

7. The greater the possibilities of the national fraction of the bourgeoisie under scrutiny, the more ambitious the project. If Modi or his successors in the BJP or even the RSS (the paramilitary wing of the Hindutva nationalist/fascist movement) succeed to establish an outright fascist government in India, they will probably form a mortal threat to the rest of the Indian subcontinent. Or if Bolsonaro's movement, now pushing his son as his heir to the forefront, is successful in Brazil, this giant of Latin America will probably play a similar, but of course more modest role in spreading fascist power on the continent. In Europe, Le Pen and/or Meloni, for instance, are fundamentally absorbed in national questions without a Europe-wide component, although more and more a European ambition takes over those leaderships as well (for the moment organised in three different blocs of fascist and quasi-fascist parties in the European Parliament). When we reach Trump's heights, we discover that he harbours universal ambitions. The possibilities created by US strength in all domains (economic, technological, military, diplomatic, energy, R&D, cultural, popular-cultural etc.) are incomparably higher than any other imperialist country. As against globalism, Trump wishes to revive US industry and reassert US technological superiority.

8. However, re-establishing the US as the champion of the world economy will pose another question: capitalism has reached a stage in which national self-sufficiency is no longer desirable nor viable. Mega capital units (multinational companies) need new markets, new technological inputs (chips, rare earth minerals, ever newer technologies etc.), new raw materials, new investment outlets, "near-shor-

ing", new labour force supplies or industrial reserve armies etc. The capitalist mode of production has not only ***socialised*** production, in the sense of large-scale units with high organic composition of capital and increasing interdependence between all branches of production, but also ***internationalised*** it. The world economy is now a reality out of which no country can exit durably.

9. Three decades of neoliberal and globalist experimenting has taught the bourgeoisie that the methods of the market cannot reinvigorate the capitalist world economy. Trump will try to unify the world economy and make it function harmoniously not on the basis of ***market*** methods but on the basis of a worldwide system of ***political*** domination. So, the end goal, in other words Trump's strategic objective, is world domination. This is not equivalent to what existed before in the capitalist world economy, "hegemony" in the loose sense of the British type as in the nineteenth or of the US in the twentieth centuries. Close control of all the levers of power is what is aimed at, even if the US does not annex and swallow the rest of the world entirely. The objective requires that the US become a single world polity that is the commandeering power in every possible sense. Venezuela and Gaza are the first instances of the model that is only the initial stages of the subsumption of the rest of the world under the domination of the US. This is ***an ersatz central planning process***. So, it is not the personal whims or the bottomless megalomania of Trump that creates these tendencies. It is the objective forces of history that push the concrete development of the world in that direction. It should be carefully noted that this is ***not a synthesis*** that would carry the contradiction of the productive forces with capitalist relations of production to a higher-level solution, but a historic ***parenthesis*** to avert that synthesis.

10. Because China cannot be gobbled up, (even the US NSS characterises the US-China relationship as "one between near-peers"), a Third World War is a logical necessity born of this objective situation. In practice, by the nature of things, the entire course of events will be subject to many countervailing tendencies. But unless the international proletariat and its political organisations can grasp the nature of the contradictions that mark the present epoch through revolutions that reach out to ever larger geographies to culminate in world revolution, we will never be able to stop this catastrophic descent into barbarism with modern (or postmodern!) characteristics. The proletariat, the wretched of the earth in the poor countries, and the youth have constantly displayed their readiness to fill the barricades of revolution in the first quarter of the 21st century. The crisis of humanity, then, once again reduces itself to the crisis of the international proletarian leadership.

# West Asia at the threshold of a new era[1]

Mehmet Tevfik

The Al-Aqsa Flood military operation on October 7, 2023, will go down in the annals of history not only for the brief military humiliation it inflicted on the Israeli army and the genocide that followed it, but also for the watershed it marked in regional politics.[2] More precisely, rather than the Al-Aqsa Flood per se, the chain of events triggered by October 7 and the responses (or lack thereof) by regional actors led, as I will argue here, to a momentous shift in West Asian (Middle Eastern) politics. In this article, after briefly recalling the unfolding of events and major turning points in the last two and a half years or so, I will resume, under several distinct but interlinked titles, the major shifts under several distinct but interlinked titles of the fall of the Axis of Resistance as the defining political project of the post-Nasser era, the so-called Periphery Doctrine consolidating itself as the strategy of the Zionist enemy in the region and reactionary competition replacing the hostility to imperialism as the defining conflict line in the region.

## Basic outlines of West Asian developments since October 7

Let me start with a qualification. While offering a bird's-eye view of the developments in post-October 7 West Asia, I will not be providing an in-depth account of the suffering and resilience of the Palestinian people, facing as they are what should be considered the most horrifying human suffering so far in the 21st century,

1 This article was written in December 2025 and January 2026, before the US-Israeli aggression on Iran. In the meantime, only very minor modifications have been made, mostly for stylistic purposes.
2 On this issue, also see; Kutlu Dâne, "Zionist genocide and resistance in Palestine following the Al Aqsa Flood", *Revolutionary Marxism* 2025, pp.203-233.

created by the genocidal Zionist project and its current-day executors. The reason, needless to say, is not a lack of interest in the genocide itself – to which several pieces in this journal have already been dedicated and against which we wage a struggle as part of the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) of Turkey and the Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism platform – but rather the need use this article to discern the region-wide and long-term dynamics at play. This practice is part of an effort to contribute to a revolutionary strategy, grounded in a precise analysis of the situation in our region, with the aim of contributing to the victory of a socialist West Asia as well as the defeat of the Zionist project and the imperialist hegemony over our region. Similarly, a range of other issues, from the disarmament drive against various organizations in the region, from Hezbollah and Hamas to PKK and its offshoots, as well as the recent Syrian/HTS push to militarily nix Rojava, the semi-autonomous northeastern region of Syria governed by Kurdish-led forces[3], will not be tackled in this article. This piece intends to establish, so to speak, the new tendencies in the regional grand strategy. On this basis, we intend to dedicate other articles to the above-mentioned, and unquestionably crucial questions.

The crux of the matter, after the start of the genocidal attack on Gaza, was the relative military success. To be clear, the meaning of victory for resistance forces in Palestine – led by Hamas's military wing al-Qassam Brigades, in addition to the al-Quds Brigades of Islamic Jihad, the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the National Resistance Brigades of the Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine, among others – as guerilla forces facing one of the best funded conventional armies on earth differed significantly from that for Zionist enemy. The former had to maintain its organizational structure and ensure it regularly inflicts significant damage on the enemy to render a long-term occupation unfeasible. The latter could only claim victory if the main resistance organizations, and primarily Hamas, were destroyed or rendered incapable of fighting. In other words, and to quote from one of the more influential figures in shaping imperialist understanding of colonial wars, as well as being one of the most despicable war criminals of the 20th century, Henry Kissinger, "the conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose."[4]

In that regard, for the first stretch of the war, some ten months or so, the Palestinian resistance fought both bravely and brilliantly. Not only could the Zionist

3 One of the best expressions of the internationalist, Leninist position in this regard could be found in this statement of the Revolutionary Workers Party (DIP) in Turkey; "As Tie-Wearing Takfiris Advance in Syria, Imperialism Wins! All Peoples Lose!", *RedMed*, January 21, 2026, https://redmed.org/article/tie-wearing-takfiris-advance-syria-imperialism-wins-all-peoples-lose.

4 Cited in Britannica Online Encyclopaedia's "Asymmetrical Warfare" entry: https://www.britannica.com/topic/asymmetrical-warfare

occupier not score any big political points by recapturing the Israeli prisoners in the resistance's hands – no small feat in a stretch of land no bigger than one quarter of London – but also military forces of resistance were undertaking regular and highly-efficient operations against the occupation forces and publicizing their exploits with highly-sophisticated propaganda videos. So much so that the sweeping underground tunnel networks used by resistance forces – reminiscent of the tactics used by the Vietminh in Vietnam, but more condensed due to geographical limitations – were touted even by imperialist institutions and their media as a "subterranean fortress", showing that "future wars will be fought underground."[5]

The bravery of the resistance endures to this day. Yet eventually, and perhaps inevitably, given the lack of international military support for the resistance and its abandonment for the Zionist occupier, the military success gradually started to shift. The pace of military actions by the resistance forces began to decline. More crucially, Zionist aggression started to reach the military and political leadership of the resistance. Successful, high-profile assassinations by the occupying Zionist army were the exception from October 7 to the summer of 2024, the most notable being the killing of a top Hamas leader, Saleh al-Arouri, in Beirut in January 2024. However, things took a turn that summer. From July 2024 to the end of October, a series of high-ranking political and military leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah were killed by the enemy, including Ismail Haniyeh, Mohammed Deif, and Yahya Sinwar for the former, and Fuad Shukr, Nabil Kaouk, Hashem Safieddine, and most importantly, the General Secretary Hassan Nasrallah for the latter. The next summer, other high-profile assassinations took place, including the head of Iranian Revolutionary Guards Hossein Salami during the 12-day war, but also al-Qassam spokesperson Abu Ubeida and the figurehead of the Ansarullah government, Ahmed al-Rahawi, in Yemen.

In addition, open war has fast expanded beyond Palestine to target the other forces of the Axis of Resistance. Following sporadic military exchanges with Hezbollah and other resistance forces in Lebanon[6], Israel felt comfortable enough to expand the scope of the conflict and launch a full-blown war against Hezbollah

5 Adam Goldman et al., "Israel Unearths More of a Subterranean Fortress Under Gaza" New York Times, January 16, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/16/us/politics/israel-gaza-tunnels.html; James Stavridis, "Hamas tunnels show future wars will be fought underground", *Stars and Stripes*, September 5, 2024, https://www.stripes.com/opinion/2024-09-05/hamas-tunnels-future-wars-underground-15077952.html, (unless stated otherwise, all links to online newspapers in this article were accessed on January 15, 2026).

6 It is important to note that while Hezbollah clearly bore the brunt of the warfare, a range of other actors, including the Lebanese branches of Palestinian organizations like Hamas and the PFLP, as well as Lebanese groups like the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, have been involved in the resistance operations from Lebanon and lost fighters in those combats.

in Lebanon. Unlike 2006, when Hezbollah forces had been able to inflict a stunning defeat on the Zionist occupier in southern Lebanon[7], this time the occupation forces seemed to have the edge. Particularly important was the mass assassination of hundreds of Hezbollah cadres in two waves of attacks by exploding their beepers, which were apparently commercially provided to Hezbollah by no other than the Zionist intelligence services, using a shell company. This was followed by waves of assassinations against the leadership of the organization, as mentioned above, including the killing of Hasan Nasrallah, who had arguably been the utmost symbol of anti-Zionist resistance in the 21st century. The result, notwithstanding the brave resistance the Hezbollah fighters were able to put up for weeks, was the signing of an extremely lopsided truce. Among other points, such as Hezbollah forces' withdrawal beyond the Litani River, the agreement gave Israel carte blanche to target Lebanon at will, which it continues to do so in full impunity, while strictly forbidding Hezbollah to engage in any military action in return. In addition to the implications of this rather humiliating agreement for Hezbollah's standing in internal Lebanese politics, the result was the collapse of the relative balance of power between the two sides as well as the de facto rules of military engagement between Hezbollah and Israel, established on virtually equal footing for the last two decades.

Hezbollah's defeat shifted the military equilibrium not only in Lebanon proper but also across the region where the organization had established itself as a major player over the years. Nowhere was this more visible than in Syria, where Bashar al-Assad's rule had been able to turn the tide of the civil war thanks at least in part to the involvement of war-hardened Hezbollah forces on the ground against the imperialist-backed jihadi forces – in addition, of course, to the Iranian and Russian involvement.[8] What followed was a somewhat unexpected onslaught launched by the Takfiri HTS forces from the Idlib enclave in December 2024, in which they had been contained for the better part of a decade, with direct Turkish military assistance and probably implicit Zionist and imperialist approval. With Hezbollah's wings clipped and Russian forces focused on Ukraine, the Ba'ath Party's rule in Syria came tumbling down like a house of cards. Despite years of respite they benefited from, the Syrian army could not hold its ground against the Takfiri offensive for more than a few days. The results – unexpectedly, perhaps even for the HTS forces themselves and their leader, Sharaa – were the triumphal entry of the Jihadi forces, which had seemed doomed to irrelevance just a year before, into Damascus.

7 There is a book in French that provides a brief yet almost blow-by-blow account of the 2006 war; Michel Goya and Marc-Antoine Brillant, *Israël contre le Hezbollah: Chronique d'une défaite annoncée*, Paris: Rocher, 2014.

8 On the Syrian Civil war, see; Levent Dölek, "Phases, lessons and future of the civil war in Syria", *Revolutionary Marxism 2018*, pp. 15-47.

Bashar al-Assad was quickly evacuated to Moscow by his Russian allies, and the de-Ba'athification of the state started right away. One of the first acts of the new rulers of the country, entirely in keeping with the US-backed Takfiri posturing in the region, was a declaration of their intent to establish normal relations with Israel, just as Israel was moving to annihilate the entire Syrian arsenal, facing virtually zero resistance. With the Syrian state now safely controlled by HTS forces in a solid alliance with Turkey and in a more uneasy one with imperialism, the land connection through which Iranian arms could reach Hezbollah was also cut off.

Emboldened by these successful initiatives, Israel then moved to force a reluctant Iran into full-blown war. Following a surprise raid by the Israeli air forces in the summer of 2025, the Zionists waged a devastating war against Iran. After shaking off the stupor of the heavy losses incurred on the first day, Iran was able to put up a fight, with its missile salvos particularly effective in reaching Israeli targets despite the much-vaunted Israeli air defence system. Yet, by the end of this so-called 12-day war, Israel clearly displayed its military advantage and was able to strike strategic Iranian positions as well as military leaders and scientists with a surprising and upsetting ease. US imperialism also followed suit, to benefit from this moment of weakness for Iran, and bombed the Natanz, Isfahan, and most importantly, Fordow nuclear sites – the latter being the crowning jewel of the Iranian nuclear program – using its most advanced weaponry. This move, in addition to striking a blow to the Iranian nuclear program, was probably also meant to give Israel an "out," so that they could finish the war by claiming victory, before it turned too politically costly for US imperialism and the imperialist order as a whole.

This last assertion, that the rising political costs at least partially incentivized imperialists to force Israel to cut its war short, could also serve us as a starting point to discuss the political side of the almost curious detachment between the military and the political results of Israel's genocidal war. As it transpired, while the military odds of Palestinian resistance grew dimmer over the last two and a half years, political support for the Palestinian cause rose exponentially, a development never before witnessed. Here, it is also worthwhile to warn against a spurious conclusion that the popular masses simply cheer for the disfavoured party, which seems to be suffering. This is belied not only by the historical precedent – military defeats and the ensuing human suffering of Palestinian and Arab forces in 1948 and 1967 never triggered any sort of mass mobilization beyond the Arab or Islamic world – but also risks overlooking the qualitatively new aspect of the support for the Palestinian cause. To be sure, an international solidarity with Palestinians always existed on the international left. Yet it never succeeded in spreading beyond, and in making mass mobilization for Palestine a force to be reckoned with on its own, outside of the left or the Arab diaspora. This is exactly what is happening now, with a whole genera-

tion politicizing directly through Palestine. Scantly one could walk in any Western city without seeing streets covered in pro-Palestinian stickers and posters or without running into youth donning the Palestinian kufiyah. A similar trend of an international cause defining a whole generation of political militancy would harken back to Vietnam becoming the defining issue in the 1960s and 1970s, with other prominent examples, such as mobilizations in support of the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa or against the US war in Iraq in 2003, remaining somewhat more limited. Already, the direct impact of this political trend should not be underestimated. The constant popular support for the Palestinian cause significantly reduces the political wiggle room of imperialist governments. This way, to avoid backlashes from their own public, a range of imperialist countries either already find themselves with limited options to support Zionism or even face the need to rein it in at times. But beyond its immediate impact in the current juncture, this new ally of the anti-Zionist resistance in the West is bound to be an integral part of any revolutionary strategy for West Asia in the future. ***The generation-defining mobilization for Palestine is the irrefutable proof that a liberation project in our region led by the right leadership can have a formidable ally in the belly of the beast.***

## 2024 as the second 1967: From post-Nasser to post-Nasrallah West Asia

Beyond the factual details, these developments reveal new dynamics that might come to define the foreseeable future in West Asia. The first concerns the role of the so-called Axis of Resistance as the main center of gravity in the anti-Zionist politics in the region. To be blunt, I believe 2024 is best understood as the 1967 moment of this political current.

Let me expand on this historical analogy. As is known, in 1967 Israel launched a surprise attack on Egyptian forces across Sinai. The Zionist armies scored a big victory against the Egyptians and their Arab allies – most importantly Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. The military and geopolitical implications were horrible: the Egyptian air force was practically wiped out at the beginning of the war, and the Zionist occupier came to control the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, the Golan Heights in Syria, and the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem in Palestine (hitherto controlled by Jordanian forces). But equally decisive was the impact on the prospects for the political movement led by the Egyptian state and its charismatic leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser. After taking power in 1952 in a coup by the so-called Free Officers who toppled the pro-British monarchy, Nasser initially took up the role of an eminence grise while Mohammed Naguib was the figurehead of the Free Officers movement.[9] Nasser

9 For a study that locates 1952 revolution in Egypt in the modern history of revolutions in the

soon became the movement's undisputed leader, and in 1956 he orchestrated a spectacular victory by nationalizing the Suez Canal after a speech in which he openly declared that Egypt was receiving arms from the Soviet Union, thus adding insult to injury for the British imperialists. The same year, a tripartite invasion attempt by the British, French, and Israeli forces failed, which in turn gave Nasser an unparalleled status in the Arab world. As Nasser's Egypt showed, so the thinking went, one could stand against the former colonizers and the Zionists – militarily and politically – and carry the day. From there on, Nasser would come to be the face of the aspiration of re-found Arab dignity, including a potential Arab unity but also – and as importantly – of settling the score with Israel, after the region-wide humiliation of losing against it in 1948, and standing helplessly against the Nakba, the great Palestinian catastrophe where hundreds and thousands where forced out of their homeland. What followed was twofold, in and beyond Egypt. In Egypt, particularly with Soviet assistance, a rapid modernization of the economy and the army began. In the rest of the Arab world, a range of Nasserist and Free Officers movements started to dot the political scene, either taking power or emerging as serious contenders for it. Despite the presence of other mass anti-imperialist actors in the region, such as the Ba'athists and the communists, Nasser and his movement were the unrivalled leaders of this new historical period.

Then came 1967. Despite years and years of build-up, the prospect of a salvation that would come with the Egyptian army was destroyed by the Zionists in one swoop. Nasser resigned and then returned to power following mass demonstrations in his favour, only to pass away three years later. Most importantly, political horizons that were once set upon the strength of Nasser and Egypt – as should be recalled, at that point Egypt was the Arab country with by and far the biggest population, biggest economy, biggest army, and the greatest cultural clout – were up for a hard reckoning. Nasserist parties and pro-Nasser military movements did not disappear overnight, but their image and influence took a hit from which they would never recover. Not for nothing, it was after 1967, that is to say, the end of hopes for Egypt to lead the charge for the Palestinian liberation, that a major turn took place in the history of Palestinian resistance. It was only after this ominous and regrettable defeat that Palestinian organizations themselves came to spearhead the anti-Zionist struggle, filling the void left by Nasser. Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Fatah[10], replaced Nasser as the

region, see Sungur Savran, "Revolution as the driving force of history in the Middle East", *Revolutionary Marxism 2018*, pp. 71-92.

10 Palestinian Liberation Organization was an entity created by none other than Nasser's Egypt as a diplomatic tool. After 1967, it would come to serve as a united front of the main Palestinian resistance organizations, most importantly Arafat's Fatah, the PFLP led by George Habash, its

symbol of Palestinian liberation. This was to be the beginning of the post-Nasser West Asia, not due to his physical disappearance but because of the demise of his political project as the hegemonic force in the region. The remnants of this project, did linger in the Middle Eastern political scene, not necessarily as progressive forces, but certainly as states that were significantly more likely to come to blows with Zionism and American imperialism. Qaddafi's Libya, and Ba'athi (of different strands) Syria and Iraq were the most concrete examples of these relics. It is no coincidence that all these governments were toppled – in Muammar Qaddafi's and Saddam Hussein's cases, their leaders were also killed, either by American occupation or by American-led or approved operations. These episodes, either before the imperialist-Zionist war on the Axis of Resistance (in Libya and Iraq), or as part of it (in Syria, which was by then, even as a remnant of the Nasserist-Ba'athi wave, part of the Axis of Resistance), were moves where the imperialist-Zionist enemy eliminated its enemies in the region.

Without going into the details of the ups and downs of the PLO and its internal factions, it is important to recall that another gradual shift took place under the dual impact of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Due to the first, Islamist factions all across the Arab world emerged as major players. First, the ideological impact of the Iranian revolution was substantial, initially reaching even beyond the Shia groups and serving as a center of gravity for various groups, Shia and Sunni alike.[11] Once the collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in the end of Soviet military and financial support for resistance organizations, Iran's status as a state capable of arming various factions gave the Islamists a particular edge. Thus started the rise of groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Amal and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Hamas (an Arabic abbreviation for the Islamic Resistance Movement) initially emerged as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. The organization had the explicit goal of Islamicizing Palestinian society through proselytism, explicitly eschewing armed resistance against occupation. Then came the First Intifada, and another Islamist group, which would come to be known as Islamic Jihad, took up arms and started to outflank Hamas. This new setting meant increasing pressure on Hamas from its own base to move away from its quietism and join the armed struggle. When it did so, drawing strength from its years-long rank-and-file organization work, Hamas proved to be a much more effective armed force than Islamic Jihad, quickly becoming the face of the new Palestinian resist-

splinter DFLP led by Nayef Hwatmeh, in addition to the pro-Syrian As-Saiqa, and the pro-Iraqi Arab Liberation Front.

11 Also see, Burak Gürel, "Islamism: A comparative-historical overview", *Revolutionary Marxism 2017*, pp. 77-101.

ance and of groups refusing Fatah's capitulation in Madrid and Oslo in the early 1990s. Hamas's rise was meteoric; by the Second Intifada (2000-2005), it could compete with Fatah as the leader of the movement, and once it ended its boycott of the Palestinian Authority's elections, it scored an easy victory in 2006, making one of Hamas leaders, Ismail Haniyeh, Yasser Arafat's prime minister for a few months. Yet the Hamas-Fatah relationship was fraught from the outset, and coexistence within the same institutional framework proved impossible. In the brief intra-Palestinian civil war that followed, Hamas was able to purge Gaza of Fatah, while the latter proved to be the stronger party in the West Bank. The result was twofold. Palestinian fragmentation (a consolidating Gaza-West Bank divide) created a highly disadvantageous position for the Resistance, a divide that Zionist Israel strives to perpetuate. But also, its unbridled power in Gaza gave Hamas a quasi-state position, with all the logistical and financial advantages it entails. From there on, despite the existence of other Resistance factions in Gaza and Hamas's implantation beyond Gaza (in the West Bank, as well as Palestinian camps in Lebanon and Syria), Gaza and Hamas almost became conflated for many outside observers.

Hezbollah's rise followed a similar and interlinked path. Initially emerging as a loose collation of various Shia forces in Lebanon with the intention of fighting the Israeli occupation there after 1982, Hezbollah established itself as a formidable military force with Iranian help. Competing with the Lebanese Communist Party and its military branch, Popular Guards, as well as the rival but pro-Syrian Shia group Amal for Lebanon's Shia population's support, its military effectiveness gave Hezbollah the upper hand. The group's leading military role in the process leading to the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 and its defensive victory over Israel in 2006 propelled it to hard-to-rival prestige. The organization's military capacities also rose progressively, compared by Israelis themselves to a mid-sized army.[12] Beyond the military realm, it also ran an apparatus in southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut (known as "Dahiya", which means suburbs) that approximated the capabilities of a state, with its own health, banking, and social security infrastructure.[13]

During this process, taking place in the watershed period from the 1980s to the 2000s, two connected and crucial transformations gradually took place. First, the leadership of the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist resistance in Palestine and in Lebanon, two countries at that point partially or fully under direct Zionist oc-

12 Amos Harel, "Israel's Military Now Sees Hezbollah as an Army in Every Sense", *Haaretz*, March 4, 2026, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2016-03-04/ty-article/israel-sees-hezbollah-as-an-army-in-every-sense/0000017f-e61d-df2c-a1ff-fe5d6f920000.

13 Joseph Daher, *Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God*, London: Pluto Press, 2016.

cupation, switched from left-wing forces – PLO factions in Palestine and Jammoul factions in Lebanon – to Islamist groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, as the second crucial development, during these transformative years, Palestinian and Lebanese Islamists did not remain as they were. Not only did they come to undertake a leading role in their respective national resistances, but they also ideologically moved away from a supranational project based exclusively on the Islamic Umma toward what could be termed an Islamic nationalism. In this new orientation, their priorities and political projects lay squarely in Palestine and Lebanon. In other words, instead of being transnational Islamists who happened to be in Lebanon or Palestine – as was the case in the wake of the Iranian Revolution -, they became Palestinian and Lebanese forces whose political project was Islamic. The difference was subtle yet substantial. Tellingly, both Hamas and Hezbollah recanted on their refusal to take part in national political institutions – including taking part in elections – in 2006 and 1992, respectively.[14] Islamic Jihad still does not take part in Palestinian elections, but this is the result of an anti-colonial intransigence, refusing to acknowledge institutions based on a compromise with Israel, instead of a refusal on religious grounds. Equally telling is the fact that neither Hamas nor Hezbollah admits fighters from outside Palestine and Lebanon, respectively, unlike transnational Takfiri groups such as Daesh, Al-Qaeda, and even HTS, with their multinational fighter body, although this is at least partially a security measure. Notably, Hezbollah even sporadically ran small-scale multi-religious armed groups, named Lebanese Resistance Brigades, showing its tendency to organize itself as a Lebanese national force.

All in all, when the fateful breaking point of October 7 came, a coalition of Islamist groups, having developed a resistance strategy heavily based on nationalism and either controlling states – as in the case of Iran – or having established quasi-state status – Hezbollah and Hamas – were at the helm of the anti-Zionist resistance.[15] As importantly, with the spectacular Hezbollah victory over Israel in 2006, Iran's expanding military arsenal and the broadening networks of its allies from Yemen to Iraq, and finally culminating in the military savvy of the al-Aqsa Flood operation led by Hamas developed real hope, most particularly "on the Arab street",

14 These were no easy decisions for organizations that time and again emphasized their refusal to be part of the said institutions. So much so that Hezbollah's decision to stand in elections triggered a high-profile schism in the organization led by Subhi al-Tufayli, the organization's first Secretary-General.

15 As a side note, it should be recalled that this coalition had its ups and downs in the past. During the Syrian civil war, Hamas openly sided with the so-called Syrian opposition, mostly composed of Western-backed Sunni Islamists, which led to an open rupture between them and Iran and Hezbollah, themselves actively involved on Bashar al-Assad's side. With the civil war slowing, the rifts were mended in the last few years.

that this anti-Zionist coalition could hold its ground against the Zionist enemy.

However, the two and a half years of war since the Al-Aqsa Flood have laid bare some of the shortcomings of this leadership. The first concerns the internal coherence of the Axis of Resistance as an international force. Despite the bravery of its resistance, one of the main factors contributing to the Zionist victories was the fact that for most of the ongoing war, it was the Zionist-Imperialist bloc that chose when and where the decisive battles would be fought, the only exception being the day of October 7, when the Resistance itself unleashed the war. Different groups of the Axis undoubtedly provided crucial logistical assistance and undertook symbolic military actions. But nevertheless, when push came to shove, Israel could choose who to fight and benefit from the limited involvement of other Axis of Resistance forces in one another's wars. Most concretely, Hezbollah's symbolic involvement in the first phase of the war gave Israel a chance to concentrate its forces on Hamas and its Palestinian allies. Once feeling safer on that front, the Zionists moved to open a full-blown front in Lebanon, this time being able to focus exclusively on Hezbollah. It was only after securing the Palestinian and Lebanese fronts that Israeli aggression dared to start its open war against Iran. We do not include the Ansarullah forces in Yemen and various Iranian allies in Iraq in this equation, despite the unparalleled commitment shown particularly by Yemeni forces, given that, due to their distance from Palestine and lack of advanced weaponry in their hands they could not be anything but secondary actors in the confrontation. Admittedly, allies being trigger-shy in the face of a formidable enemy and sundry domestic considerations is not an Axis of Resistance exception, with plentiful examples in similar situations across history. Yet, the entire edifice of the Axis of Resistance was built to make sure that the depth of resistance forces across different scales – Hamas and Hezbollah taking the war into Israeli borders, Iran serving as a long-distance deterrent – would force Zionists to avoid confronting them, or be forced into an unfavourable war. Yet while this approach could have possibly worked if Zionists attacked Iran first, with minor actors mobilizing for the leader of the Axis, since October 7, we have witnessed that ***bigger actors within the Axis were not willing to cross the Rubicon to support their smaller allies***. This unwillingness certainly facilitated the Zionist enemy's task.

Another shortcoming in the current leadership displayed itself in how the increasing support for the Palestinian cause worldwide, beyond West Asia, failed to translate into mass support for the main resistance factions beyond parts of the Arab diaspora and the hardliners within the international solidarity movement. The support for Palestine could also express itself as support for Hamas in predominantly-Sunni countries of the region, but it was significantly more muted for Hezbollah, Iran and even Ansarullah. This stands in stark contrast to how the popularity of

anti-colonial leadership fared in other contexts like Algeria and Vietnam, where the support for Algerian and Vietnamese revolution came also without fail with support for the Algerian FLN and Vietnamese Vietminh/Vietcong. Clearly, part of the explanation has to do with the criminalization in the West of any sort of support for the Palestinian resistance. However, there is also no doubt that the religiously – and even, at times, sectarian – oriented line of the ***current leadership is inherently less capable of mobilizing support beyond the same religious and sectarian lines***. Whereas any internationalist revolutionary worthy of this name is duty-bound to support the anti-Zionist resistance regardless of any criticism towards the current leadership, it is similarly important to draw the lessons from this structural weakness of the religious leadership.

The stakes and consequences of the defeat experienced by Hezbollah, Iran, and, in different ways, by Hamas and Syria, could only be truly understood in this context. More than a simple military setback, the defeats that destroyed the leadership structure of the resistance groups and disenchanted broad masses about their military capabilities against the enemy, just like that of the Nasserian defeat in 1967, delivered a decisive blow to their capacity to attract support as a force that could feasibly contain the Zionist menace. It does not follow from this affirmation that these forces will immediately disappear into thin air, nor that they should be considered done for. At the risk of forcing the analogy, let me also recall that even Egypt, after the humiliating defeat of 1967, was able to put on a rather impressive military showing against Israel in 1973, eventually losing its military advantage after that surprise attack, but certainly showing that it still had some cards up its sleeve. Similarly, not by any stretch of imagination do we claim that the forces constituting the Axis of Resistance will stop being actors of importance in the region, neither immediately nor any time soon. Yet their momentum as the force capable of almost monopolizing the anti-Zionist political space and singlehandedly spearheading the Palestinian cause – their raison d'Etat in many ways – took a major blow. This new configuration could open up political space for alternative groupings to fill. It is not certain, but possible and even probable, that a political force or a set of actors would come to fill in this gap in the region. ***While standing in fullhearted solidarity with all fighters of the resistance, West Asian revolutionaries are now duty-bound to make sure that the resistance does not cease to exist for a second to rebuild the resistance on a more solid base, with revolutionary leadership***.

## Daydreaming about Pax Israeliana: Periphery Doctrine redux

Admittedly, but unfortunately, the latest wave of war gave Zionist Israel an edge over its enemies. Following a series of victories over Hezbollah, (indirectly) Syria, and Iran, it is clear that the Zionists are daydreaming about a certain Pax Israeliana,

a regional setup where Israel and its junior allies serve as the ultimate decision-makers, and no substantial shift against Israeli interests is feasible.

Particularly crucial in this drive is the disarmament push in the entire region. To recall, since 1967, various organizations – PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah, among others – rather than states spearheaded the anti-Zionist resistance. Accordingly, the current push to disarm the said organizations, particularly Hamas and Hezbollah, transparently aims to remove wayward military actors that could impede or complicate reactionary compromises to be brokered between collaborationist regimes and Zionism. The earthquake of October 7, when the military operation at the very least significantly set back, maybe even thwarted, an Israeli-Saudi "normalization," is a potent reminder of how these organizations are able to act as makers and breakers of regional politics. Disarmament will not be an easy process. It may not even be achievable. However, Hamas has already committed to some form of disarmament in the latest truce it signed with Israel. Hezbollah has been fighting tooth and nail to keep its arms, but its growing isolation in Lebanon and the Blad al-Sham region drives it to a dead end. It was recently reported that Iran and Hezbollah started considering the option of giving up Hezbollah's arms for political reforms that will ensure the Shiite organization more clout in the country without the force of arms.[16]

First and foremost, it is imperative to recall that, even if the enemy succeeds in disarming the biggest battalions of resistance, a conjectural success does not mean a lasting victory for the Zionists. To paraphrase the eloquent and perceptive reminder of Lev Trotsky at the darkest hour of Nazi occupations across Europe, Zionists cannot "attach a soldier with a rifle to each" Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Jordanian worker and peasant, hence it is all but inevitable that the resistance, even if in another shape or form, will rise again.[17]

Yet exactly the need to build, and if necessary rebuild the resistance, also comes with the sine qua non condition of having a precise understanding of the enemy's strategy. The Israeli push for this Pax Israeliana will be one of the central tenets of the latter. The strategy stands on pillars: preserving the Israeli military edge over other regional players and putting together a set of alliances that ensure the longevity of Israeli superiority.

The author of this piece is the furthest from a military expert; hence, I will not get into that in any detail, focusing rather on the political aspect. However, there

16 Mounir Rabih, "Possible brèche dans le mur : le Hezbollah passe du refus de toucher aux armes à la négociation du prix", *L'Orient-Le Jour,* January 11, 2026, https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1491109/une-breche-dans-le-mur-le-hezbollah-passe-du-refus-de-toucher-aux-armes-a-la-negociation-du-prix.html.

17 For the quote: Leon Trotsky, "We do not change our course", June 1940: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1940/06/course.htm (accessed on March 6, 2026).

are also signs that Israel, long enjoying an unparalleled military superiority in the region thanks to overwhelming imperialist assistance, might run into some hiccups on that front. A particularly important development is the increasing Saudi leverage, cultivated, not least, by a Chinese opening, and the Israeli difficulty in keeping the kingdom from obtaining cutting-edge military technology. In a noteworthy development, the Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman was able to obtain a promise – but so far only a promise – for the F-35s it long coveted from US president Donald Trump, and this despite a pronounced pushback from Israel and its allies in the US. One cannot count on this promise being honoured – the UAE has been waiting for the F-35 they were promised for the last 6 years and counting. However, even in this promise made despite Israeli objections, we could discern at least a partial US unease about the complete dedication to Israel, an alliance whose political and financial costs proved more than what some in the US establishment are comfortable with. To avoid any possibility of a misunderstanding, what is at stake is not an imperialist abandonment of Israel. But rather, the increasing unwillingness to rebuff important factors such as Saudi Arabia, with its economy more than twice the size of that of Israel, simply in order to keep the latter as the ***only*** center of the US imperialist interests in the region. Whereas the short-term impact of this tendency would be negligible, an eventual erosion of the Israeli military edge would put the outsized Zionist ambitions in the region on precarious ground.

In this context, perhaps more crucial for Israel is the establishment of a regional structure that provides it with the necessary allies and at the same time undermines any viable anti-Zionist project. To this end, and at a time when the 19th-century Monroe Doctrine is coming into full force in US politics, the Zionist state seems to revitalize an old strategy of theirs, known as the Periphery Doctrine. Initially meant as an alliance of the region's peripheral countries – as opposed to the "Arab core" – this doctrine envisioned, first and foremost, a close alliance among Israel, Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia (the latter mostly as a tool to surround Nasser's Egypt). The same doctrine gradually came to involve not only the non-Arab states but also various minorities in the region. Particularly crucial in this latter aspect were the ties with Maronite Christians in Lebanon, especially during the Lebanese Civil War, and the relations with Molla Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which reached a zenith following the debacle of the 1970 Kurdish opening under the Iraqi Ba'ath.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution destroyed one of the pillars of this strategy by turning a pro-Israeli Iran into an Israeli nemesis. Turkey never broke away from Zionism's orbit, but the period of relative cooling following the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010 made some observers hear the death knell of the Periphery Doc-

trine.[18] That diagnosis was arguably wrong even when it was uttered, but there was indeed a moment where brokering alliances with Quisling governments in the Arab core became more crucial for Zionists in the face of periphery countries becoming either outright hostile or less amenable. The recent turn of events, on the other hand, indicates that the so-called Periphery Doctrine is coming back into full force, albeit with an important twist. However, the return of the periphery operates without excluding the Zionist efforts to penetrate deeper into the core at the same time.

To reiterate, this time around, the Periphery Doctrine comes with a twist, or rather, it is turned on its head. What I mean is that national and religious minorities in the region, as well as breakaway polities, come to the fore this time, instead of simply complementing a strategy based on non-Arab states. Israel's move to form alliances with various Kurdish, Druze, and even Alawite actors, as well as the recent Israeli recognition of Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia, are clear indications of this tendency.

The latter is a mind-boggling example of the cynical nature of the Zionist foreign policy. The breakaway region, which has been reclaiming its independence since 1990, has not been recognized by any other state before. There is scant doubt that recognizing Somaliland is purely a move with the intention of having a foot on the other side of the Ansarullah-controlled Yemen, and to limit the Turkish clout in Somalia. Turkey has a massive footprint in Somalia, operating the Camp TURKSOM, where more than 5,000 Somalian soldiers have so far been trained, in addition to positioning a part of its naval fleet in Mogadishu. On the other hand, Somaliland's Berbera city hosts a UAE military camp, which will undoubtedly soon start to serve Israel as a counterweight against Turkish forces operating in Mogadishu and Ansarullah operating across the Red Sea – if this was not already the case, that is.

The most well-developed connection is the one with various strands of the Kurdish movement. Israeli ties with the KDP in Iraq date back to the 1960s, including two secret visits by Molla Mustafa Barzani to Israel in 1968 and 1973.[19] To consolidate these connections, a new range of initiatives seems to be afoot, including a joint Kurdish-Jewish Congress that took place in Berlin in September 2025.[20] More crucial, at least recently, has been the push to establish ties with the PKK tradition and particularly the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces, and eroding this political tendency's once-cherished ties with the Palestinian liberation, established also in

18 Leon Hadar, "The collapse of Israel's 'Periphery Doctrine'", *Foreign Policy*, June 26, 2010, https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/26/the-collapse-of-israels-periphery-doctrine/.

19 Ofra Bengio, The Kurds of Iraq: Building a State within a State, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012, pp. 74-75.

20 "With the participation of the Kurdistan Independence Movement, the first Kurdish–Jewish Congress was held in Berlin", *Kurd Nation*, September 15, 2025 https://en.kurdnation.com/2025/09/15/the-first-kurdish-jewish-congress/

the trenches they shared fighting side by side against Zionists in Beirut.[21]

With the Druze, the sectarian massacres against the Syrian Druze community in Suweida after the HTS takeover in late 2024 gave the Zionists a significant opening. This was further facilitated by the existence of several alternative political strands within the Druze leadership, but the fact that Israel could position itself as the defender of the Druze minority in Syria following the said massacres gave a significant edge to the leadership of Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif, representing a pro-Israeli orientation within a Druze community where attachment to Syrian nationalism remains strong. Not for nothing – for reasons that will be clearer in the next subsection – Mowafaq Tarif also made Abu Dhabi one of his habitual stops recently.[22] Another important Druze leader, Hikmat al-Hijri, recently gave credit to Zionists for saving the Druze from a genocide and called for the division of Syria.[23]

Perhaps more puzzling is the inclusion of Alawites in this picture, given that during Bashar al-Asad's rule, a power based on the Alawite community was one of the principal adversaries of Zionism. In this regard, the context of increasingly unchecked sectarian attacks in the post-Ba'ath Syria against the Alawite community, particularly in the so-called coastal area from Latakia to Tarsus and in parts of Hama, is key. The situation is further worsened by the fact that the other major neighboring state, Turkey, as the overlord of new Syria, is abetting and at times even encouraging the anti-Alawite massacres. In this context, the Alawite population is stuck between a rock and a hard place, with Zionists' involvement being a means of survival for them. Israeli Defense Minister Katz clearly showed the Zionists' intent to exploit the situation, with declarations following the massacres by jihadists against the Alawite community in Syria.[24]

Beyond the Zionist strategy, even the relative success that its pushes found in different contexts should also serve as a damning verdict of history on the nationalist and sectarian policies of bourgeois leaderships in the region. These policies, often wrapped in a spurious anti-Western rhetoric, had no use but letting Zionists and imperialists make headways among marginalized minority groups. This picture should serve as a stark warning that ***anti-imperialist liberation in our region cannot but come through a policy of internationalism, including the right of nations***

21 Jose Lev Alvarez Gomes, "Israel's Quiet Bet on Syria's Kurds", *Times of Israel Blog,* December 25, 2025, https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israels-quiet-bet-on-syrias-kurds/

22 Ohad Merlin, "Abu Dhabi hosts second International Dialogue of Civilizations and Tolerance Conference", *The Jerusalem Post*, February 27, 2025, https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-843970.

23 "Al-za'em al-durzi Hakmat Al-Hijri: Israil anqidhatna min al-ibada wa al-taqsim huwa al-hal", *Al Jazeera*, January 13, 2026, https://tinyurl.com/n9eknf6r.

24 Shaina Oppenheimer, "Explainer: Why is Israel pushing for ties with Syrian minority groups?", *BBC Monitoring*, March 21, 2025, https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/b0003jp0.

***to self-determination***, including the right to establish one's own state.

The role of non-Arab states in the new orientation is secondary compared to the doctrine's first iteration under David Ben-Gurion, but it is not nonexistent. A crucial part of the new strategy, both as a counterweight to Iran and a source of cheap energy, is Azerbaijan. It is remarkable, but at the same time deeply disturbing, that from 2016 to 2021, Israel accounted for 69 percent of all Azerbaijani arms imports while Azerbaijan provided 40 percent of Israeli oil needs during the genocide in Gaza.[25] Turkey, despite emerging lines of contradiction with Israel (see below), keeps showing its willingness to rekindle its alliance with Zionism under the right conditions. Not for nothing, the US ambassador for Turkey, Tom Barack, predicted an "alignment from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean" when talking about Turkish-Israeli relations, implying nothing less than an Israeli-Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance as the central node in the region.[26] This goes to remind the revolutionaries in the region, particularly those in Turkey and Azerbaijan, that a struggle against the new doctrine of Zionism will have to splice proletarian internationalism towards the region's minorities to deprive Zionists of the opportunity to drive a wedge between our peoples, but also to fight against the Zionist-compatible despotic regimes in our own countries.

## Reactionary competition as the defining regional dynamic in the short term

As I hinted above, it is entirely possible that new forces, or even splinters of the old, would come to gain increasing political prominence in the anti-Zionist struggle over the years to come. However, at this low point for resistance organizations (but definitely not for anti-Zionist sentiments in the region or worldwide), the most immediate dynamic is quite different. More than anything, at this point, what is at play is the replacement of the contradiction between Zionism and its enemies by a rivalry between competing, but ultimately reactionary forces. The internal math of this transformation, so to speak, is rather straightforward. So far, despite clear and periodically resurfacing tensions between various reactionary and pro-imperialist forces in the region (Turkey-Israel, Saudi-Qatar tensions, for instance), the existence of a mighty force – the Axis of Resistance led by Iran - that propagated hostil-

25 Rovshan Mammadli, "Azerbaijan in the Abraham Accords: A new phase in Baku's alliance with Israel?", *The New Arab*, April 22, 2025, https://www.newarab.com/analysis/azerbaijan-abraham-accords-bakus-deepening-israel-ties; Yousef Bardouka, "Azerbaijan supplied Israel with 40% of its oil during Gaza war, report finds" *OC Media*, November 20, 2025, https://oc-media.org/azerbaijan-supplied-israel-with-40-of-its-petrol-during-gaza-war-report-finds/.

26 "Turkey and Israel will not be at war with each other: US ambassador", *Turkish Minute,* November 3, 2025, https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/11/03/turkey-and-israel-will-not-be-at-war-with-each-other-us-ambassador/.

ity against Zionist and imperialist interests in the region played a mitigating role. When all was said and done, four centers of the pro-imperialist camp in West Asia – Tel Aviv, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Ankara – were better disposed to line up, overtly or covertly, with one another in the case of open conflict with the Iranian camp. The fact that Israel showed extensive tolerance towards Sunni jihadi militias operating right across its northern border in Syria while they fought against the Baathi power, or the fact that Gulf countries and their Egyptian as well as Jordanian allies showed particular eagerness in shooting down Yemeni or Iranian missiles targeting Israel are irrefutable proof of what could be called a latent complicity even at times of tension.

However, the consequent defeat of Hezbollah, Ba'ath, and Iran – even if those defeats took different forms – left an Iran-sized hole in this matrix. With Iran relegated to a non-primary – if not quite secondary – role in the region, both with its own military losses and the fall of its allies, the region started facing the prospect of the above-mentioned Pax Israeliana. In this new setup, Israel seems poised to reshape the regional architecture, both with the military muscle that it is more than willing to flex and with the new allies it found in the region. In the face of this daunting prospect – where Israel and Israel alone call the shot in the region – outcompeting Israel will assume an ever more important role for a number of other actors.

As a starting point, it should be noted that the newfound Israeli geopolitical clout does not fail to produce its lackeys. In this regard, the United Arab Emirates holds the dubious honor of leading the pack. Let us recall that the UAE was the first signatory of the infamous Abraham Accords in 2020, and it developed the most extensive ties with the Zionist state. In addition to quashing any sort of anti-Zionist voice within the country – a PhD student at the New York University's Abu Dhabi campus was swiftly detained and deported in 2024 after using his graduation speech to protest the ongoing genocide against the Palestinians[27] –the Israeli ties are not only accepted but also actively cherished by the state: unlike other "normalizing countries", in the UAE high-profile celebrations could be seen with people dancing with UAE and Israeli flags in the wake of Abraham Accords. In addition, it was widely reported that when the Ansarullah government controlling parts of Yemen (commonly and somewhat derogatively called the Houthis) imposed a de facto blockade to the commercial ships faring through the Red Sea to Israel, the UAE mobilized its exceptionally well-developed port and shipping infrastructure – a sector in which the UAE is one of the world leaders– to welcome the commercial ships headed to

27 "UAE deported student who wore Palestinian keffiyeh at graduation ceremony", *Middle East Eye*, July 21, 2024, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-deported-student-who-wore-keffiyeh-graduation-ceremony.

Israel. The ships were reportedly unloaded at Emirati ports and then reshipped to Israel, with Jordanian trucks.[28]

Now, this cordiality between the UAE and Israel seems to be taking another turn, paving the way for a still somewhat tacit yet strategic alliance, not unlike the first stages of the Israeli-Azerbaijani ties, before they were acknowledged openly. It is already asserted that the UAE has been building a joint military base with Israel in Socotra, a Yemeni island that remained under Emirati control for several years, before nominally being transferred to pro-Emirati Yemeni groups.[29] Notably, when Israel recognized Somaliland as a sovereign state, as I discussed above, the UAE refused to sign the joint statement led by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran condemning the move. However, it was not the only Arab country to refrain from doing so, as Bahrain and Morocco – fellow Abraham signatories – as well as Syria and Lebanon also broke ranks. But more telling was another silent move: the UAE reportedly started accepting Somaliland passports on its visa platform, a move that came merely days after Israel's recognition and meant nothing less than UAE's recognition, even if it came with significantly less fanfare.[30] With this move, the UAE becomes the first state to openly break ranks within this Arab and even Islamic front and align with Israel by extending de facto recognition to Somaliland. It should also be recalled that, beyond simply piggybacking the Zionists, there is a clear alignment between the two sides' interests. It seems that the UAE is not simply following suit but is actively advising Israel, as it was widely reported that the UAE was part of the talks that led to Israel recognizing Somalia's breakaway region.[31] It would be wise to remember that since 2017, the UAE has been operating a naval base out of Somaliland in Berbera, and a military base. In this regard, the alignment between Israeli and Emirati interests is evident.

Yet, it is equally important to emphasize that the Emirates practically operates as a co-sponsor of Israel's Periphery Doctrine. In coming years, we should anticipate seeing more breakaway movements across the region, sponsored by the UAE and supported by Israel. Beyond the Somaliland case, what is currently unfolding

28 Sharon Wrobel, "Houthi bypass: Quietly, goods forge overland path to Israel via Saudi Arabia, Jordan," *The Times of Israel*, February 14, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/houthi-bypass-quietly-goods-forge-overland-path-to-israel-via-saudi-arabia-jordan/.

29 "UAE Fast-Tracks Development of Joint Military Base with Israel in Yemen's Socotra", *Emirates Leaks*, August 8, 2024, https://emiratesleaks.com/uae-fast-tracks-development-of-joint-military-base-with-israel-in-yemens-socotra/?lang=en.

30 "UAE 'Quietly' Accepts Somaliland Passports but Not Somali Documents: Report", *The Media Line*, January 6, 2026,https://themedialine.org/headlines/uae-quietly-accepts-somaliland-passports-but-not-somali-documents-report/.

31 Lokman Abdullah, "Somaliland and the Israel–UAE Project in the Red Sea", *Al-Akhbar English*, December 30, 2025, https://en.al-akhbar.com/news/somaliland-and-the-israel-uae-project-in-the-red-sea.

in Yemen is another textbook example of this dynamic. As, I will develop more a bit below, in December 2025, the so-called Southern Transition Council (STC) declared that it was launching an independence process for South Yemen – only to be rebuffed militarily by Saudi Arabia. But here, to understand the UAE's role as an Israeli lackey within the Arab world, it is important to note that, in ***a crucial declaration, the STC leadership stated that, once they are independent, they would join the Abraham Accords***.[32] This move was patently made in the UAE, as the STC is known as an Emirati proxy, and even the celebrations involved the Southern Yemeni and Emirati flags side by side.

In other cases, the Israeli ties sometimes, and probably only for now, remain hidden. This is mostly because agreements with Israel are still taboo, especially among the population in the Arab world, even in the countries that signed the Abraham Accords. One would be ill-advised to play that card too soon – hence the UAE is much better positioned for leading the push for more breakaway regions in the periphery of the Arab world. It is no secret that the UAE has been serving as the main backer of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, who have been waging a genocidal war. Some expect the RSF to put its challenge for the control of the Sudanese state to the back burner – main cities, including the capital Khartoum-Um Durman are now controlled by Burhan al-Fattah's army – and declare a Darfur-based breakaway state, half-jokingly called the Tasis state.[33] Moreover, Algeria is also in the midst of a diplomatic crisis with the UAE, after the revelation that the Abu Dhabi government has been underhandedly funding a separatist Kabylia movement in the country.[34] The verdict should be clear at this point: in the upcoming period, the UAE will be Israel's co-sponsor in the Periphery Doctrine.

In this context, one can expect a partial reshuffling of regional alliances. As Zionists are seeking to forcefully redesign the region, with the UAE openly on its bandwagon, this orientation started to clash with the interests of other crucial actors in the region. Turkey and Saudi Arabia figure as the main players who take

32 Amberin Zaman, "From Red Sea to Horn of Africa: How Yemen exposed the Saudi-UAE divide", Al-Monitor, January 7, 2026, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2026/01/red-sea-horn-africa-how-yemen-exposed-saudi-uae-divide.

33 Jennifer Hollies, "Sudan: Is a rival government splitting the country in two?", *Deutsche Welle*, January 8, 2026, https://www.dw.com/en/sudan-is-a-rival-government-splitting-the-country-in-two/a-73483875; Andrew McGregor, "RSF Establishes Rival Government as Sudan's War Spirals", *Jamestown*, November 20, 2025, https://jamestown.org/rsf-establishes-rival-government-as-sudans-war-spirals/; Jonathan Fenton-Harvey, "How the fall of El-Fasher could cement Sudan's partition", *The New Arab*, November 3, 2025, https://www.newarab.com/analysis/how-fall-el-fasher-could-cement-sudans-partition.

34 Malik ben Salem, "Peur sur la Kabylie" : le MAK s'apprête à déclarer l'indépendance", *Courrier International*, December 11, 2025 https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/algerie-peur-sur-la-kabylie-le-mak-s-apprete-a-declarer-l-independance_238382.

objection. The tragedy of the novel situation is the fact that even the ones trying to push back against the new Zionist drive do so not out of sheer hostility to Zionism – unlike Iran, Hezbollah, or Hamas – but due to tactical considerations and refusal to be relegated to a secondary role. In other words, while trying to compete with the Zionist project, sometimes even forcefully, they wholly remain within the pro-Imperialist camp and are even willing to broker a compromise with Zionists under the right conditions. The root of the current competition is the lack of these right conditions that could lead Zionists to compromise. Hence, in the new upcoming period, the ***hostility between the imperialist-Zionist camp and its enemies*** is being replaced by a ***competition between a Zionist-led project and its rivals within the imperialist camp***. The new conflict, due to both parties' alliance within the broader imperialist camp, could easily turn into a brokered compromise in the medium term.

So far, the competition has been unfolding in a series of constellations. In different theatres of conflict, whether Syria, Yemen, or Sudan, different sets of actors have been facing one another in head-on confrontations. In Syria, Turkey's uneasy cooperation with Ahmad al-Sharaa's HTS in the organization's Idlib days, when Turkey was more heavily invested in the group called Syrian National Army, gave way to a strategic alliance after the HTS takeover of the country in December 2024. Even though Turkey is going to great lengths to project the image of a fully independent Syria, it is no secret that it has been acting almost like Syria's overlord in many regards. It was widely reported that the chummy scenes between the US president Donald Trump and Syrian president Ahmad al-Sharaa in Washington were brokered through the good offices of Erdogan's government, including Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan making a surprise visit to Washington, D.C. at the same time.[35] In addition, a flurry of new agreements has been signed between Turkey and Syria, in many ways incorporating the latter into the former's infrastructure. Yet the Zionists did not shy away from using military means to rebuff the Turkish advances in Syria. Without going into details, the most notable were a range of bombardments to nix the establishment of Turkish military bases in Syria and the open occupation of parts of southern Syria.

In Sudan, the new shift in the civil war is increasingly bringing the UAE and Turkey to loggerheads. As already noted, the Emirates have been acting as the main backer of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by the infamous Hemedti and formed on the basis of the no-less-infamous Janjaweed forces, from the very outset of the war. However, despite intense support by the UAE, RSF's initial success gave way to a relative stabilization of the front between it and the Sudanese army. Whereas

35 Ezgi Akın, "Turkey's Fidan joins Trump-Sharaa talks at White House", *Al-Monitor*, November 10, 2025, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/11/turkeys-fidan-joins-trump-sharaa-talks-white-house.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia have been siding with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) that belonged to the central government from the beginning, Turkey had been sitting on the fence for the first year or so of the war. Its muscular involvement in the war since late 2024, particularly with drone shipments after August 2024,[36] seems to have tilted the balance. Not for nothing, it was in early 2025 that the SAF was able to dislocate the RSF from the country's capital as well as adjacent regions such as al-Jazeera state. According to an evaluation by Africa Defense Forum, "Turkey's drones have helped turn the tide in the SAF's favor."[37] As a sign of simmering tensions between Turkey and the UAE in Sudan, a UAE-supported RSF attack on the city of Port Sudan reportedly injured several Turkish drone operators in May 2025, an action that came in response to the destruction of a UAE airplane and killing of several UAE soldiers a day earlier in Nyala – the de facto RSF capital – by drones provided by Turkey.[38]

In Yemen, this time, the Saudi and Emirati sides came to a rather spectacular collision. Whereas the two sides worked together in the first stages of the Yemeni civil war in fighting against Ansarullah forces and supporting the central government, the UAE abruptly dropped out of the war in 2019. Even at that stage, there were reports that the Saudi leader, Mohammad bin Salman, perceived this move as a treason of sorts. But more crucially, while ceasing open military involvement, the UAE continued its extensive collaboration with the Southern separatist forces centred in Aden. To recall, from 1967 to 1990, a socialist South Yemeni state had existed with its capital in Aden, until the collapse of the workers' state in Europe forced them to reunite with the North, under highly unfavorable conditions. Now, capitalizing on these southern grievances – but, needless to say, this time freed from its socialist content – the UAE had been patronizing a coalition of forces known as the Southern Transition Council. This low-profile effort came to the limelight when the STC moved its forces to capture the Hadramout region in Yemen and declared its intention to start the self-determination process for the South. The move was particularly painful for Saudi Arabia, which would not only find itself neighboring a UAE puppet state, but also an STC-controlled Hadramout would relegate the Saudi-backed central government practically to irrelevance in Yemen, squeezed between

36 "A Turkish arms firm helped fuel Sudan's brutal civil war, reports show", *Washington Post*, March 7, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/03/07/sudan-war-turkey-baykar-rsf-saf/.

37 "Drone Attacks in Darfur, Port Sudan Reflect Growing Turkey-UAE Tensions", *Africa Defense Forum*, June 17, 2025, https://adf-magazine.com/2025/06/drone-attacks-in-darfur-port-sudan-reflect-growing-turkey-uae-tensions/.

38 Ragıp Soylu and Oscar Rickett, "Sudan's shadow war: Drone strikes reveal escalating tensions between UAE and Turkey", *Middle East Eye*, May 15, 2025, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/shadow-war-sudan-drone-strikes-reveal-escalating-tensions-between-uae-and-turkey.

the hammer of Ansarullah and the anvil of the STC. What followed was a furious statement from Saudi Arabia, openly naming the UAE as the source of the STC offensive. Afterwards, the Saudi side quickly made it clear they meant business. First, Saudi Arabia bombed a shipment of arms from the UAE to Mukalla, the biggest city in Hadramout.[39] Then, the Saudi-backed Presidential Leadership Council – the central government – dissolved the defense pact it had with the UAE, and gave the latter an ultimatum to withdraw all its forces in Yemen within 24 hours.[40] Possibly realizing that it could not openly fight the Saudi military might, the UAE agreed to withdraw entirely from Yemen, and the Saudi-backed forces overtook the entire Hadramout region within a few hours. Whereas the UAE seems to have accepted that it tried to bite off more than it could chew at this time and conceded defeat in this battle, this remains exactly that: a battle in what might become a protracted war.

While acknowledging that we are still far from fully formed blocks colliding, a genuine realignment between Saudi-Turkish and Israeli-Emirati interests is becoming increasingly evident. Because of this shared interest, an accelerated warming of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia should be expected. It is also no coincidence that the media recently reported Turkey's intention to join the Saudi-Pakistani "Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement" that was signed in September 2025.[41] As a further sign of growing military cooperation, Saudi Arabia and Turkey held their first-ever naval cooperation meeting in Turkey in early 2026.[42] While Ankara and Riyadh constitute the main poles of power, it is likely that they would bring their Qatari and Egyptian allies into the fold. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood is a considerably less significant factor after its heyday in the 2010s also facilitates this rapprochement by removing a particularly thorny issue, given that the organization was the bane of the Saudi-Egyptian side but a crucial ally for Turkey and Qatar.

## Conclusion

Since the earth-shattering chain of events triggered by the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, our region, West Asia, stands as one of the central fronts, not to say the

39 William Christou, "UAE promises to withdraw forces from Yemen after bombing by Saudi Arabia", *The Guardian*, December 30, 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/dec/30/saudi-arabia-bombs-yemen-over-weapons-shipment-alleged-uae.

40 "Saudi Arabia reveals details of Yemen bombing, as UAE set to withdraw", *Al Jazeera*, December 31, 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/31/uae-to-pull-forces-out-of-yemen-as-tensions-rise-with-saudi-arabia.

41 Selcan Hacaoğlu et al., "Turkey said to seek membership of Saudi-Pakistan defense pact", *Bloomberg*, January 6, 2026, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-01-09/turkey-said-to-seek-membership-of-saudi-pakistan-defense-pact?embedded-checkout=true.

42 Fatma Zehra Solmaz, "Türkiye, Saudi Arabia hold 1st naval cooperation meeting", Anadolu Agency, January 8, 2026, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiye-saudi-arabia-hold-1st-naval-cooperation-meeting/3793128.

centermost, in the spasmodic acceleration of the drive towards a world war. It is there that we see some of the clearest alignments of international powers, with world imperialism in one corner and a motley crowd of forces resisting it. It also stands to reason that West Asia, along with Ukraine and the South China Sea, is the most likely place where a miscalculated spark can end up triggering a worldwide conflagration, unless working-class and popular revolutions can arrive in time to save humanity from a potentially nuclear disaster. Two different phases of Arabi revolutions in the region (2011 and 2019), as well as persistent waves of mobilizations in Iran, in addition to the popular rebellion in Turkey in 2013, clearly prove that a strategy built on popular agency in the region has concrete and solid bases, and is not simple wishful thinking.

The region is in the midst of a protracted crisis with some setbacks, such as the strategic defeat of the current leadership of the anti-Zionist resistance, and an imperialist-Zionist push for more, from the full disarmament of resistance organizations to the Periphery Doctrine coming back into full force. In this immediate context, the prospect of a reactionary competition between various forces within the imperialist camp is poised to become the defining geopolitical factor in the region. Yet, neither setbacks nor sundry reactionary forces being in the forefront can indefinitely trump over national and class contradictions waiting to burst into the scene. It is the utmost duty of the region's revolutionaries to get ready for the protracted fight that lies ahead of us, and ensure that when the imperialist-Zionist yoke in the region comes apart at the seams, they are able to pick up the banner of anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist struggle.

# The EU as a sui generis imperialist project[1]

Burak Saygan

This essay aims to provide a broad overview of the European Union as a somewhat original imperialist project. Its original nature lies in its framework going beyond nation-states – it is commonly called a "supranational" entity. Whereas it is not possible to tackle any of the aspects in-depth, I will start with the basic context that made the EU project viable – and necessary – as the tool for the survival of various European empires as imperialist powers, capable of contending with the US and face the Soviet threat. Then, I will turn to the EU's colonial past and present to take an objection to the common narrative about the EU as a peaceful project of development and democracy. After dealing with the EU on an international scale, the following subsection will argue that ***even within Europe,*** the EU as an exceptional project of peaceful coexistence is nothing but an oft-repeated myth. Finally, I will conclude with an overview of the EU's most recent crises and its current imperialist engagements.

## EU: imperialist survival as a proto-state

The EU is best understood as a proto-state, derailed in its very making—possi-

1 This article first appeared in a book published in Brazil in Portuguese: Osvaldo Coggiola (ed.), *A Era do Imperialismo*, Sao Paolo: LF Editorial, 2004, pp. 633-649. We republish it here with the editor's permission.

bly only temporarily, but more likely for good. The EU's[2] proto-state nature shows itself from the get-go, with an initial set-up that was meant to end up in a state-like formation.

The orientation of Jean Monnet, one of the main architects of the predecessors of the EU, leaves scant doubt as to this original intention. Not for nothing, following his presidency in the European Coal and Steel Community (ESCS), and just in the wake of the two Treaties of Rome in 1957, respectively forming the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), Monnet spearheaded the Action Committee for the United States of Europe.[3] Monnet's intention seems to use partial economic integration and a customs union to lay the groundwork for a complete political union, not unlike the customs union (known as Zollverein) before the German unification in the 19th century, initially advocated by Friedrich List. Indeed, the very modeling of the ESCS seems to be conceived as a transitional program for political union. The following remark by George W. Ball, a US official who took a role in the establishment of the ESCS, attests to this vision:

> "All of us working with Monnet well understood how irrational it was to carve a limited economic sector out of the jurisdiction of national governments and subject that sector to the sovereign control of supranational institutions. Yet, with his usual perspicacity, Monnet recognized that the very irrationality of this scheme might provide the pressure to achieve exactly what he wanted—the triggering of a chain reaction. The awkwardness and complexity resulting from the singling out of coal and steel would drive member governments to accept the idea of pooling other production as well."[4]

Yet, rendering the federalist vision of its founders feasible—few regions in the 20th century lacked visionaries who elaborated on forging regional polities, yet one would be hard-pressed to find today any trace of these projects on the world map—was the structural ground laid by the relative decline of European imperialism, starting in the interwar period and making a qualitative leap after World War II.

The years between the two worldwide conflagrations unfolded as a transitional period where the leadership of world imperialism slowly but steadily inched away

2 I will be using the EU as a shorthand for the EU as it has existed since 1993, as well as its predecessors ESCS, EEC, the "Common Market", and EC to avoid cumbersome digressions about the changing names throughout the text.

3 Gilles Grin, "Jean Monnet, the Action Committee for a United States of Europe, and the Origins of the Treaties of Rome," *Relations internationales* 136, no. 4 (2008): 21–32.

4 Alex Callinicos, "The Internationalist Case against the European Union," *International Socialism* (blog), May 10, 2015, https://isj.org.uk/the-internationalist-case-against-the-european-union/.

from its former European heartlands towards North America. The massive debts incurred by the French and British empires to their wartime ally, the US, was a symbolic but not yet decisive sign of the changing geography of world imperialism.

The same period also witnessed the rise of another challenge to the imperialist world order with its center in Europe. This time, the challenge put into peril not only the internal configuration of imperialism, but its very existence. The October Revolution in the former Russian Empire not only gave a jolt to the working class movement all across Europe and rendered the socialist revolution in imperial metropolises a concrete possibility, but also formed a unique state structure, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, capable of unifying would-be workers state across Europe (and beyond) under a federal structure.[5] The revolutionary wave that came on the heels of the October Revolution would come to a halt in Europe in 1923 and in the colonial world in 1927, and the newly victorious bureaucracy in the Soviet Union would recalibrate the Soviet Union away from the nation-less world socialist state in germ and towards a state among states. However, Europe could not rewind the clock back to pre-WWI. The constant threat against European imperialism by both the potent workers' movement in Europe – often led by Soviet-aligned communist parties – and the rising Soviet power, whose economic, military and scientific development – thanks to the acquisitions of the Soviet Revolution – put its European counterparts into shame, would shape the entire 20th century of Europe.

The Second World War would mark a watershed event in the process of European imperial decline. By the end of the war, continental Europe was ravaged by the impact of the most extensive destruction in its history. On the contrary, the US, whose homeland saw no actual fighting, was leaving the war unscathed for all intents and purposes, ready to flex its muscles and assume the role of uncontested hegemon of the capitalist world. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had to endure an unprecedented loss of human lives and industry as the main theatre of the world war. Yet, as the big victors of the war, the USSR cast a long shadow over Europe, with good chunks of Eastern and central Europe as well as the Balkans under its sphere of influence owing to the Red Army's exploits and asserting itself as the world's foremost force of conventional warfare.

In sum, yesteryear's world empires faced the second half of the 20th century as secondary imperial powers whose very survival against the mighty workers states

5 For more on this point, see Sungur Savran, "Lenin as alternative", *Revolutionary Marxism,* 2024: http://www.devrimcimarksizm.net/tr/sungur-savran-lenin-alternative; For a shorter piece on the same theme, this one in Portuguese, see Sungur Savran, "O Legado do Lenin Negado", in *O Legado do Lenin. Cem Anos da Morte de Vladimir I. Lenin (1924-2024)*, Osvaldo Coggiola (org.), Saõ Paulo: Livreria de Física, 2024.

in the East seemed to depend on the protection of the US. Under these conditions, Europe's imperialist survival depended on it being able to pool up sources to maintain a leeway between two bigger players on the world scene. It was this quest for imperialist survival, (That is to say, surviving as an imperial force with a fighting chance in world politics, not defending its existence as individual states) that explains the drive towards European unification. After establishing this, one could have no doubt that the internal peace that the EU established in Europe in the post-WWII period is the direct result of the EU's *raison d'être* as an organization of competition against other imperialists and imperialism's challengers such as the Soviet Union.

## Pax Europaea: European Union as a colonial project

Yet, any analysis of the EU's evolution—as an imperialist project, in our case—would be incomplete without attention to its position as a colonial empire. The European Union's role as a colonial power was a distinctive feature and one of the most transparent aspects of its nature as an empire among empires. This aspect of European imperialism shows itself both *de jure* and *de facto.*

On the first level, the newly emerging union assumed its colonial role by ensuring its numerous founding documents and treaties were colonialism-compatible. Not coincidentally, the EU predecessor EEC's founding document, the Treaty of Rome, dedicated the whole part four of the treaty, consisting of six articles, to "overseas countries and territories."[6] These "countries and territories", which is but a euphemism for the EEC's colonial empire, are also listed on the treaty's Annex IV to leave no doubt as to the demarcation of the new colonial empire in town. The extensive list includes the majority of sub-Saharan Africa just before the peak of decolonization in Africa in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and spans from the French colonies in West Africa to Belgian Congo, from Italian Somalia to the Dutch New Guinea (not to be mistaken with Papua New Guinea, as the Dutch colony was on the western side of the same island, and then was later to be incorporated into Indonesia).

Not only saving the remnants of erstwhile imperial empires, but the European Union has also clearly moved to ***preserve power relations of the colonial epoch in a world in the throes of decolonization***. If we were to paraphrase the oft-repeated words of Tomasi, the EU's work during this time of decolonial transition was a bid to change everything so that all remained the same. Indeed, as a relatively recent book on the EU and Africa illustrates based on archival research, the approach to Africa was central for the EEC, in its authors' words, as "a European subject which,

6 Traité instituant la Communauté Economique Européenne, 1957: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11957E/TXT.

worried about its future viability on the economic and geopolitical levels, turns towards the African object to offer itself a new lease of life."[7]

The policy of preserving a neo-colonial yoke on formerly colonized countries, and particularly the sub-saharan African ones, has been a persistent underlying theme in the EU's history. Particularly with a number of African countries (but not all of them, as the continent was rocked by often Marxist anti-colonial revolutionary movements, expectedly antagonistic towards the former European colonizers), a series of conventions would constitute the legal infrastructure of neo-colonial domination. The start of these conventions was the Yaoundé Convention, signed between 19 African countries and the EEC in Cameroon's capital in 1963 – that is to say, at the peak of African decolonization. The Lomé Convention in 1975 extended the same framework to 71 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries (known as the ACP countries) and then further expanded to 79 countries, first with the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 and the Samoa Agreement in late 2023. Whereas particularly the latest iterations of these agreements were sugarcoated with the habitual shiny language of sustainability, democracy and such, the gist of these agreements is the maintenance of an unequal relationship between European imperialists and former colonies. The rebranding of the colonial situation with a fancy lingo could already be seen as early as the above-mentioned Treaty of Rome, where the ACP countries in question were still officially colonies and where the rapport between the colonial overlord and the colonized countries was coded as the "special relationship" in the obnoxiously euphemistic language of imperialists.

Let us conclude this part on the European Union as a colonial empire with two concrete examples. The first concerns the EU's function as an apparatus of colonial warfare. A most obvious example is the Malvinas (Falklands) war, which stands out as an episode of colonial war that the EU faced after its foundation period as an entity with well-defined contours. In 1982, Argentina occupied the Malvinas Islands, about 350 kilometers off the Argentinian coast and 12,350 kilometres from the UK – which is around as long as the world's diameter. Margaret Thatcher's government in the UK, in a political impasse in domestic politics after the previous decade's onslaught against the working-class, decided to make a stance to defend its colonial possessions half a globe away by dispatching a fleet. Due to the clearly colonial nature of the conflict, Argentina could garner the backing of the "third world" countries, particularly those gathered around the Non-Aligned Movement, whereas

7 For the quotations, see Peo Jonsson and Stefan Hansen, "L'Union européenne fut aussi un projet colonial," *CONTRETEMPS* (blog), June 26, 2024, https://www.contretemps.eu/union-europeenne-projet-colonial-eurafrique/; Also see, Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), particularly pp. 147-238.

the UK benefited from the backing of the US under Ronald Reagan's administration and, expectedly, the EEC. The theatre of war was too distant, and the military power between the belligerent sides too lopsidedly in favor of British imperialism, hence the EEC did not need to provide any military backing, but by mobilizing its heaviest sanction arsenal against Argentina, the organization clearly showed where its loyalties lay when push came to shove, notwithstanding all the veneer of equal partnerships.[8]

The second concerns the European Union and North Africa and the way European imperialism is willing to engage with what is now known as the Global South. In 1987, Morocco, as a significantly pro-Western country, applied for membership in the EEC. The application was bluntly rejected, with the explanation that Morocco was not part of Europe. This simple reasoning might make some sense at first glance. Yet, let us recall that Morocco's eastern neighbor, Algeria, had been included in the framework of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, not as one of the overseas countries and territories cited above, but as a special case pointed out by its name throughout the text. Of course, this did not mean EEC membership for Algeria, but rather a *sui generis* status to include this crown jewel of the French colonial empire – whose legal status was also different than other colonies – in the EEC. In addition to Algeria's brief stint in the EEC, two coastal cities in Morocco, under the colonial domination of the Spanish State, Melilla and Ceuta, are currently part of the European Union. Hence, taking the EEC's explanation at its face value and sticking to a definition of Europe whose southern borders extend from Gibraltar across the northern shores of the Mediterranean would create an awkward situation, given that a quick look into the map of North Africa would leave no doubt that, neither Melilla and Ceuta nor Algeria are any more European than Morocco. How to square this circle? The explanation is plain and simple: the Third World could belong to Europe, but only as colonial possessions and not as equal partners ***This way, we also establish as the second level of analysis that the European Union's purportedly peaceful existence is only made possible through economic and direct violence against the Third World***.

The point on Melilla and Ceuta should also serve as a reminder that not only European Union's past is that of colonial domination, but it still is very much a colonial entity in the present. Including but not limited to its extant colonies. The colonial possessions belonging to EU nations extend all over the globe, where France has the dubitable honor of holding the biggest chunk from New Caledonia in Oceania, Guyane, Guadeloupe, and Martinique in Latin America and the Caribbean and Re-

8 About the sanctions, see Lisa L. Martin, "Institutions and Cooperation: Sanctions during the Falkland Islands Conflict," *International Security* 16, no. 4 (1992): 143–78, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539190.

union in the Pacific. All in all, ***the difference with Europe's colonial past*** – when smaller European nations dominated colonial populations many times their own size – ***is a quantitative one, in the sense that the*** European colonial empire controls manageable, smaller-sized colonies, ***but not a qualitative one*** where the EU ceased to be a colonial entity. The latter, will only come true when the EU ceases to exist, *tout court*.

## Is the EU an internationalist panacea against nationalism?

The troubling question, perhaps, is whether the European Union constitutes an internationalist alternative to nationalism. This seems to be the underlying assumption for many who, even if willing to take a stance against punctual policies of the EU, find it distasteful to question the merits of its existence, lest they be taken for backwater provincialists, from Negri to Žižek.[9]

Our initial argument against the EU was the one formulated above: that is to say, the dialectical connection between European internal peace and the imperialist competition abroad. Yet, one should take a step further and challenge the assumption about the inherent contradiction between the European Union as a form and jingoist nationalism as the content. In other words, we want to point out the spurious nature of an implied connection between pro-EU politics and internationalism. In that regard, several tendencies in Europe in the last decade or so have incontrovertibly illustrated that the European Union could very well accommodate and even serve as the bedrock for various forms of European nationalism and fascism.

The immigration crisis in the last decade and a half, triggered first and foremost by the reactionary civil war in Syria, provided an initial path in the reconciliation of mainstream European Union politics with European fascism. The rise of anti-immigration politics in various EU countries, spearheaded as expected by fascist or proto-fascist forces, led to numerous European governments trying to co-opt these tendencies by selectively adopting parts of the traditional proto-fascist playbook. Crucially, the most prominent expression of European mainstream politics caving in the face of rising anti-immigration rights was the repressive immigration policies, commonly (but not officially) called "Fortress Europe", in reference to the homonymous Nazi policy of European border defense during the World War II. Beyond the details and gruesome impact of these policies – which turned the Mediterranean into one big mass grave – what matters here is that under the impact of rising fascism and the Third Great Depression, the EU proved itself highly compatible

9 Antonio Negri, "From the End of National Lefts to Subversive Movements for Europe," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 181 (2013): 26–32; "Slavoj Žižek on Brexit, the Crisis of the Left, and the Future of Europe," openDemocracy, accessed August 11, 2024, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/slavoj-i-ek-on-brexit-crisis-of-left-and-future-of-eur/.

with border policies that would give Donald Trump a run for his money. Moreover, by outsourcing the dirty work of keeping migrants out of Europe's border to countries such as Turkey, Tunisia, and Libya, the EU is turning the Mediterranean zone into one big concentration camp. To be clear, these barbaric policies, which even some magnanimous liberals would find distasteful, ***are not a sign of the EU failing to live up to its ideals***. Rather, it is the flipside, ***or the dialectical counterpart of Schengen policies, which ensures red-tape-free travel within Europe at the cost of tens of thousands of black and brown people lying dead around the border of the "Fortress Europe."***

> It is important to underline that these policies were implemented by the so-called moderate governments in the main EU nations, where the fascist and proto-fascist groups held no decision-making post and only exerted what is known in sociology as a radical-flank effect. Rather than just one-off tactical compromises, it should also be recalled that overcoming the EU's crisis by borrowing from the fascists's playbook is advocated by some prominent pro-EU public intellectuals as a new strategical orientation.[10]

The second tendency that disproves the myth of the inherently internationalist EU is the fact that proto-fascists of Europe are increasingly cozying up with the EU. Whereas one should talk about a tendency, years in the making, and not a clear-cut turnabout, arguably 2017 stands as a crucial juncture in European fascism's newly-found appreciation for the EU. It was in that year that Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French proto-fascist party then known as FN (National Front), faced off Emmanuel Macron in the second round of presidential elections, only to get an underwhelming score following a debate debacle. Mind you, this electoral campaign was marked by a starkly anti-EU stance by the FN, including dropping the Euro as France's currency. But following the electoral defeat, possibly as a result of long-simmering internal problems, the party parted ways with Florian Philippot, then Le Pen's right hand and the main standard-bearer of the anti-EU orientation of the FN. The following years saw the tacit embrace of the EU institutions by the FN, and shelving of any debates about a potential Frexit. Giorgia Meloni and her FdI (Brotherhood of Italy) soon followed suit, carving themselves a sizeable space within the EU institutions such as the European Parliament and coveting an influential role within the EU framework. Even though Meloni's initial ambition to serve as a kingmaker was rebuffed by the better-than-expected showing of the European People's Party, that is to say, traditional right-wing parties in the EU, a precedent is already set. European fascism, currently suffering from a division of its forces with

10 Ivan Krastev, *After Europe,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, 107–13.

three different groups in the European Parliament, is the biggest contender to obtain the plurality of the seats there in the next elections. Their willingness to play ball, so to speak, by negotiating with the likes of Ursula von der Leyen, is graciously reciprocated by their counterparts. This puts the prospect of an EU led by the disciples of Mussolini within reaching distance. So much for the EU, that mighty beacon of liberal democracy!

## Current crises and the changing odds of European imperialism

For the better part of its first three decades of existence under a new name, the European Union emerged as a new model coveted by many, seemingly on track for unbridled success. The formation of the new Union in 1993, with the Maastricht Treaty, was to serve as the counter-example of the collapse of the Soviet Union – a couple of years after the latter came undone at the seams with multiple nation-states emerging from its ashes, Europe was creating a new unity out of its nation-states. In other words, the EU was to be the incarnation of the brave new world promised by the end of history following the implosion of the Soviet Union and the other bureaucratically degenerated worker's states. The EU as a spuriously progressive model without the baggage of communism and the inconveniences of anti-imperialism, was further cemented by the victory of European Socialists in 1994, in what was the first European elections.

The halo of success and the promise of wealth and democracy were soon mobilized to reshape European geopolitics. After the admission of countries like Austria, Sweden, and Finland in the 1995 enlargement, the EU's newly-found prestige was weaponized to absorb the successors of Eastern European worker's states into European imperialism's orbit. The following three enlargements (2004, 2007, and 2013) focused almost exclusively on bringing former worker's states to the fold – with the exception of Malta and Cyprus in 2007. Thus, the political credit of the EU had served, for the most part, to decommunize vast swathes of Europe. As part of this drive to reshuffle European geopolitics, even the age-old Balkans were rebaptized with the cumbersome name of Southeastern Europe to leave no doubt as to their gravitation point.

The lot of the EU as an imperialist power ascendant was to take a drastic, if initially hard-to-perceive downturn under the conditions of the Third Great Depression after 2008/9 with the increasing tendencies towards war, fascism, and popular rebellions it entailed. The impact was particularly pronounced in the southern European countries commonly abbreviated as PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain) or PIIGS, with the addition of Ireland. The fragility of these economics made the EU a weak link in the chain of imperialism.

No doubt, the nadir of the European Union's crisis and the moment of biggest uncertainty around its viability was the so-called Brexit referendum in 2016. The leave vote in this referendum was overwhelmingly supported by working-class constituencies in the country and after a campaign spearheaded by the British proto-fascist party, then named the UKIP in coalition with a faction of the Conservative Party – counting, among others, the future prime minister Boris Johnson. This was, on a smaller scale, the EU – whose official foundation came on the heels of the buoyant mode of European imperialism due to the Soviet Union's implosion – facing its own 1989 moment. Indeed, the Brexit vote triggered an array of "-exit" movements all across Europe – the most considerable one was the "Grexit", in a Greece in the throes of a profound economic crisis – mostly led by fascist or right-wing organizations. If the EU's internal bleeding came to a stop – or perhaps more precisely, a hiatus – it was due to the changing orientation of European fascism (see above) and not the EU's resilience.

Yet, even if the EU has survived the immediate ripple effect of the Brexit crisis to live another day, it now finds itself mired in multiple military conflicts to preserve its unofficial sphere of influence – and, as it becomes increasingly clear, fighting losing battles on most of these fronts. The following is a cursory and inevitably schematical glance into EU imperialism's current theaters of conflict, in an increasing order of importance.

The first could be encapsulated as the ***direct anti-colonial tendencies in the remaining European colonies overseas***, in addition to the increasingly vocal aspirations for self-determination of regions and minorities in the European continent. Particularly the overseas French colonies experienced various recent waves of rebellion, particularly French Guyana in 2017, Martinique and Guadeloupe in 2021-2022, and New Caledonia in 2024. The contents of the demands differ a great deal between these cases – in Guyana further investment to the country's infrastructure was the bone of contention, whereas in New Caledonia the rights of non-native settlers stood at the centre – and so does the level of militancy – in New Caledonia, the protests reached the level of a low-scale civil war, with militia formations in bud making their re-entry into the scene. But despite differences, the main point is that, notwithstanding several generations under the new refined forms of French colonialism, these "overseas territories" show impressive anticolonial vibrancy. The separatist tendencies in the European mainland, most developed in Catalonia but also present in Corsica and the Flemish region of Belgium, might in the future consolidate this internal centrifugal tendency in the EU – a potential that the latter clearly realizes, as they weaponize the loss of EU membership against Catalonia's independence aspirations.

On a second level, the EU and its constituents face an ***anti-imperialist push*** in some of the former colonies they hold under a neo-colonial yoke. The prime example in this regard is West Africa. The region has long been dominated by French imperialism, including through the CFA currency widely used in the region as a remnant from the colonial era. The anti-imperialist tendencies that emerged in the post-colonial period, not least the valiant leader of Haute Volga-turned-Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, were quelled by European imperialism, including through – overt or covert – military means. The tides have turned in the regions by 2020, with military takeovers in Mali, Guinée, Burkina Faso, and Niger with clear anti-French orientations (Chad, commonly uttered in the same breath as these countries is an outlier where another coup d'Etat did not bring about a clear anti-French orientation). The tendency was further strengthened in Senegal, where Macky Sall – a French lackey par excellence – lost the elections to an opposition that seems quite distanced towards French imperialism, if not openly antagonistic as the others cited above. Particularly after the abject failure of the projects for military interventions by France and Nigeria against Niger in 2023, this anti-French alliance seems to have consolidated itself in the region. Whereas Guinée stands somewhat apart, the other three countries are establishing a solid alliance, also supported by Russia, ever so impatient to carve itself some space. The creation of a loose confederation between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger was the latest sign of a deepening alliance. I consider the process in the first half of 2020s something akin to Latin America's transformation from the US imperialism's backyard into a bastion of anti-imperialism. What is afoot is ***an incipient process of West Africa's Latin Americanisation*** – that is to say, France's imperial backyard turning into its diametrical opposite. The process is only at its beginning with a less-than-certain outcome and the possibility of an abortive process. But if it could continue on its path, this bodes particularly ill for the interests of European imperialism in the region.

Whereas it deserves a standalone article of its own, I will not go into details about the ongoing genocide in Palestine and Europe's involvement in it. But what is particularly important is that through its high profile – including state visits to Israel by almost all major European heads of state, in addition to Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission – and blatant support, the EU clearly sided with Israel in its genocidal warfare. The blank cheque offered to Israel by countries such as Germany and France – two countries that stand at the center of the EU as a political project – and the brutal repression of any form of pro-Palestinian mobilization in their cities had a decisive contribution in the disenchantment of many with the EU project. Moreover, this abject showing by the most important countries in the European Union also contributes to the deepening of internal fissures within the organization. Whereas Germany leads the charge in the

EU with an all-encompassing defense of Israel, from military contributions to the Israeli army to its legal defense at the International Court of Justice, other strands of relatively peripheral EU countries express an increasingly vocal disapproval. The biggest showing in that regard was the recent recognition of a Palestinian state by Spain, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia. Belgium and Malta have also been reported to be close to making a similar decision. Whereas these divergent positions have not turned into an open internal rift within the European Union, they certainly render a joint EU international policy less and less viable.

Last but not least, the main frontline whose outcomes might trigger profound questions about the EU is found in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine should be seen as the last step in the continuous expansion undertaken jointly by the EU and NATO towards the innermost parts of the former Soviet space. Whereas the direct stakes were Ukraine's NATO membership first and foremost, it is no coincidence that the EU also responded to the war with a *fuite en avant* and started the negotiations for Ukraine's admission into the EU. Yet the war also underscored the fault lines within the EU on several levels. The first concerns the EU's dependency on the US as a military deterrent, not least due to the series of shortcomings of the former as a proto-state. Even though the EU was able to undertake a more or less successful institution-building effort in certain fields – from the European Central Bank to the European Parliament – the military aspect of it always stood as an exception. The elusive project of a European army appears and reappears on the horizon every now and then, but NATO itself has been successful in pushing back. As a secondary military power, the EU and its constituents often tail-end the US – in some occasions less enthusiastically than others. The fact that the EU countries, particularly those who are geographically closer to Russia, bore the burden of the war's economic repercussions – from rising energy prices to the destabilizing impact of Ukrainian grains for the neighboring European countries - while the US called the shots came with some grievances. Also, and as crucially, the EU countries show varying degrees of commitment to a protracted war with Russia and the costs it entails. The most vocal in its opposition is Viktor Orbán's Hungary, which served as an obstacle to numerous European initiatives and refused to toe the European line vis-à-vis Russia. Even though Hungary remains in the minority, the prospect of a negotiated peace in Ukraine- becoming ever more likely by every passing day – is likely to deepen the internal fissures and deal a severe blow to European prestige.

Potential setbacks in any number of these fronts are likely to deal a blow to the already fragile stability of the EU and have an accelerating effect on centrifugal tendencies. As is, lending a new lease of life to the whole EU project and keeping it afloat following the crisis triggered by Brexit in 2016 was the change of hearts in European proto-fascism and fascism – and, by implication, a faction with the Euro-

pean bourgeoisie – with the conviction that the European Union and Europe provide and suitable platform in their bid against the globalist wing of the European bourgeoisie. In other words, a qualitative step in the long drift of supplanting Europe as the subject of a national project – in lieu of singular European states – kept the Eurexit forces at bay for the time being. However, it would not be unlikely that the setbacks in the main initiatives of European imperialism, and most particularly the war in Ukraine, have a reshuffling effect and give the forces more willing to challenge the European framework a shot in the arm. One way or another, the much-vaulted epitome of liberal democracy, the European Union, as it currently stands, emerges as an imperialist power never shying away from neo-colonial reflexes, whose very survival depends on a historical compromise with fascism ascendant. Those who pro bono sang the praises of this entity from the left are up for a much-belated reckoning.

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# The IMC-TMA struggle in the international medical arena against Israel's crimes

Ertuğrul Oruç*

There are many oppressed peoples in the world. In the geography of West Asia (the Middle East), the Palestinian people, with whom we share this region, are among those subjected to the harshest forms of oppression, alongside the Kurdish people. The Palestinian people have long been resisting and struggling against the process of colonisation carried out in Palestine for more than a century by the Zionist project, backed by the imperialist powers, and against the policies of occupation, displacement and discrimination pursued by the state of Israel founded in 1948. The heroic struggle of the Palestinian people against imperialism and Zionism has become a symbol across the world, inspiring oppressed peoples.

The Al-Aqsa Flood operation carried out on 7 October 2023 by the Palestinian resistance organizations against Zionist Israel represents one of the major turning points in the more-than-century-long history of the Palestinian people's struggle, and it did not come out of nowhere. This uprising was a just and legitimate response to the occupying, murderous and ethnically cleansing Zionist state of Israel and to those who back it.

After October 2023, occupying Israel persisted, as before, in its policy aimed

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at eliminating all conditions of life so that the Palestinian people would surrender, renounce their rights and leave their homeland. It elevated this aggression to the level of genocide. As an important component of this genocide, it has deliberately and consciously targeted Gaza's health infrastructure and health workers. During this period, the great majority of Gaza's hospitals were bombed. At least 36 hospitals suffered severe damage and were rendered unusable. In addition, the Israeli state directly targeted and killed more than roughly 1,700 health workers, while many others were detained, tortured or killed in prison. At the time of writing, the total number of recorded Palestinian deaths in Gaza had exceeded 71,000, while the number of wounded had surpassed 170,000. Under conditions in which the bombardment continued intensely and the heavy siege remained in place, Palestinian doctors and health workers, despite being directly targeted, upheld the honour of humanity by struggling with all their strength to heal the wounded.

## 1. Why was the Istanbul Medical Chamber Solidarity Working Group with Palestine founded?

The Istanbul Medical Chamber (IMC) has long been a professional organization that has managed to fuse the struggle to improve physicians' rights and working conditions with the struggle for the people's right to health, a task also assigned to it by the law governing the Turkish Medical Association (TMA).[1] It has been a broadly supportive organization, attentive to physicians.

It has never regarded health and the right to health in the narrow sense of health services alone. Many of the determinants that affect health actually lie outside the "health field". Economic, social and political conditions have a direct impact on health. Unfortunately, the geography in which we live has taught us this through bitter experience. We live in a region where economic crises and social and political convulsions are never absent. For this reason, IMC does not concern itself only with matters pertaining to the "field of medicine"; it also struggles against injustices arising from relations of oppression in society. For the chains fastened around the necks of the oppressed are at the same time fastened around the necks of physicians.

IMC sides with the oppressed, the just, and the weak; it is not neutral. It was therefore inconceivable that it would remain silent in the face of the human drama endured by the Palestinians. To support the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people against occupying and genocidal Israel, and to defend their freedom, is not only a humanitarian and internationalist duty, but also a requirement of medicine and of the values of the medical profession. Measures such as ending the geno-

1 Law No. 6023 on the Turkish Medical Association, Articles 1 and 4, http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.3.6023.pdf

cide and immediately removing the obstacles blocking the provision of healthcare and medical supplies would constitute a major step towards the liberation of the Palestinian people and of all the oppressed in the region and in the world, workers, labouring people, oppressed nations, and women alike.

Even before 7 October 2023, IMC took part in platforms established in solidarity with the Palestinian people against the atrocities inflicted on them, as well as in actions and events organized for that purpose. Likewise, after 7 October 2023, in response to the genocide launched by occupying Israel, IMC was among the initiators of one of the first mass protest actions in Turkey following Israel's deliberate and knowing bombardment of the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza on 17 October 2023.[2] In order to support and show solidarity with the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people, IMC also joined the Palestine Action Committee founded in Istanbul on the call of BDS[3] Turkey on the 76th anniversary of the Nakba.[4] Bringing together many pro-Palestinian political parties, trade unions, associations and professional organizations, the committee represented a first in the history of Turkey in this respect.

The problem of the liberation of the Palestinian people is, of course, not one that can be reduced to the field of health. Above all, it depends on developments in the political (and, intertwined with it, military), social and economic spheres. While health is an arena directly affected by these broader determinants, the number of organizations in the world that treat health itself as a terrain of struggle is small. For that reason, it was imperative both to lay bare in detail the devastation wrought by the genocide in the field of health and to organize the struggle against genocide internationally from within the field of health, which is IMC's principal area of activity. This was at the same time a strategic choice. For while demands for political, economic and cultural sanctions against Israel were relatively more visible, efforts to generate similar pressure in the health field were far more limited. An international solidarity built within the health arena therefore had a special significance in making Israel's crimes visible and in legitimising the very idea of sanctions in this sphere as well.

For this purpose, we decided not only to rely on IMC's own members and resources, but also to form a working group that could include pro-Palestinian organizations in Turkey, above all those active in the field of health. Such a working group

2 The Istanbul Medical Chamber, "Press Statement Against the Hospital Massacre in Gaza", 18 October 2023, https://filistin.istabip.org.tr/filistin-halkinin-yanindayiz

3 BDS stands for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions".

4 Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe") is the historical event referring to the forced displacement of approximately 700,000 Palestinians and the depopulation of hundreds of Palestinian villages during the process that led to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Palestinians commemorate 15 May each year as Nakba Day.

would also allow us to remain active in periods when there was no active war in Palestine, but occupation and blockade nonetheless continued.

To that end, in February 2025 we founded the Solidarity Working Group with Palestine within IMC and began work, with the aim of building solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are fighting for their historical and human right to life, wherever they live; ensuring that the Palestinian question remains on the agenda not only in times of war but also in periods of so-called "peace"; supporting Palestinian doctors and health workers; organizing solidarity together with national and international health organizations wherever possible; and generating pressure for the Turkish state to impose a full embargo on Israel and for this to be organized on a world scale.

## 2. The World Medical Association and its stance during the genocide

The World Medical Association (World MA) is an international organization founded in 1947, with the medical associations of 118 countries as members. Its official purpose is to serve humanity by contributing to the highest international standards in medical education, medical science, and the art of medicine, medical ethics and health services for all people in the world.

Although the formal structure of the World MA gives the appearance of an international organization in which all member medical associations are equally represented, the actual balance of power is by no means independent of the political and institutional weight of countries. Historically, the medical associations of imperialist countries such as Britain, the United States and Germany have wielded considerable influence within the organization. Owing to both the number of physicians they represent and to the relations they have built with international medical institutions, these associations rank among the decisive actors within the World MA. The Israeli Medical Association (Israeli MA) is likewise an active member of the World MA and acts in close coordination with the medical associations of the imperialist countries. By contrast, TMA, the South African Medical Association and the medical associations of certain Latin American and Asian countries have tended to stand out as actors representing a more critical line on human rights and violations in the spheres of war and health.

These relations of power make themselves felt not only in institutional relations but also in decision-making processes. Within the World MA, policy texts and resolutions come onto the agenda through proposals submitted by member associations. These proposals are first discussed in the relevant committees, then considered by the World MA Council, and finally put to the vote in the General Assembly. Although each member association formally has voting rights, the number of physi-

cians represented and the historical weight that some medical associations possess within international medical institutions are important factors determining their real influence. For this reason, decisions taken within the World MA often emerge not simply as reflections of technical medical policy, but also as reflections of international power relations.

Another reason for this tendency lies in the historical context in which the World MA emerged. The organization was founded immediately after the Second World War and at the outset of the Cold War. In this period, a large portion of the international institutions took shape under the political and institutional weight of the Western bloc. Many workers' states remained outside the World MA for a long time, and the organization's orientation was shaped to a great extent by the influence of medical associations in Western Europe and North America. This historical legacy is important for understanding the background to the World MA's language in international crises, a language that tends to avoid direct confrontation with imperialist states and with states allied to imperialism, as in the case of Israel. Instead, it takes refuge in the rhetoric of "medical neutrality".

The World MA is not alone in this respect; international organizations of a similar kind are likewise not independent of ideological and political influences. These institutions are shaped under the pressure of both their members and international power relations. Their decisions and modes of operation are therefore often far from possessing the "supra-ideological" or "universal" character they claim. The historical line of the World MA, too, has largely been one that avoids confronting imperialism and Zionism-under certain conditions even supporting them-and that often indirectly legitimises this line. The statements issued during the most recent war in Gaza have provided a contemporary example of this orientation. The press statement issued by the World MA on 13 October 2023, for instance, implied that the Al-Aqsa Flood operation had occurred for no reason at all. It condemned Hamas, demanded that the hostages held by Hamas be released, yet did not utter a single word against Israel, indeed conveying a strong message of solidarity with the Israeli MA.[5]

Two days later, on 15 October 2023, the World MA called on the warring parties not to target health personnel or health facilities and stated that medical supplies destined for Gaza should be sent through a humanitarian corridor to be opened for that purpose.[6] At first glance, aside from its equalising approach to the two sides,

5 The World Medical Association, "Strong Condemnation of Hamas's Attack on Israel and Call for the Immediate Release of Hostages", 13 October 2023, https://www.wma.net/news-post/wma-strongly-condemns-the-attack-of-hamas-on-israel-urging-immediate-liberation-of-hostages/

6 The World Medical Association, "The World Medical Association Stands Firmly for the Principles of Medical Neutrality …", 15 October 2023, https://www.wma.net/news-post/the-world-med-

there seemed little in this text to object to. But when Israel's intensive bombardment of Gaza began, there was no response from the World MA. Moreover, as became clear again and again in what followed, the bombardment also targeted hospitals as symbolic and strategic sites. Indeed, only two days after the World MA's 15 October statement, Israel bombed the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza. Yet no condemnation or assessment whatsoever came from the World MA. In the subsequent period, throughout the devastation and genocidal process waged by Israel in Gaza, a similar attitude was maintained in its statements. The World MA neither explicitly condemned Israel, criticized the Israeli MA, nor called on it to act. In many of the texts issued by the organization, it was not even possible to identify who the perpetrator of the attacks was.

The last straw, however, was the press statement published by the World MA on 19 May 2025. The ceasefire reached on 19 January 2025 had been unilaterally broken by Israel on 18 March, and at the beginning of May 2025 an expansion of the attacks on Gaza had been announced. Yet the statement published by the World MA was again dominated by a language that equalised the two sides. The text called on both parties to comply with international law and not to target health workers and health facilities. More than that, it established a framework implying that the war had begun with Hamas's attack on 7 October and called on Hamas to release the hostages in its hands. But the war had not begun on 7 October, nor was the question of hostages confined only to those held by Hamas. In addition, there was a colossal inequality in the balance of forces between the two sides. From October 2023 onward, Israel had systematically targeted Gaza's health infrastructure; hundreds of attacks had been carried out against hospitals, and more than 1,500 health workers had lost their lives. In such a context, the real addressee of the World MA's call should have been Israel.[7]

This stance is, in fact, nothing new for the World MA. During apartheid, the Medical Association of South Africa (MASA) came under growing criticism internationally because it failed to develop an effective professional stance against the regime's racist policies. As a matter of fact, in 1976 MASA withdrew from the World MA following diplomatic obstacles that became concrete when, first Japan and then Ghana, refused visas to South African delegates. But the deeper crisis emerged in 1977 with Steve Biko's death under torture in detention and the acquittal of the doctors implicated in the case. The failure to conduct an effective

ical-association-stands-firmly-for-the-principles-of-medical-neutrality-as-defined-by-the-geneva-convention-and-calls-on-all-parties-to-respect-international-law-and-the-integrity-of-unr/

7 The World Medical Association, "World Medical Association Calls on the Israeli Government to Ensure Humanitarian Aid Reaches Gaza", 19 May 2025, https://www.wma.net/news-post/world-medical-association-calls-on-the-israeli-government-to-ensure-humanitarian-aid-reaches-gaza/

disciplinary process against those doctors further undermined MASA's legitimacy in terms of medical ethics and human rights. Despite this, MASA's readmission to the World MA in 1981, with the support of the American Medical Association, was seriously protested by anti-apartheid physicians and many national medical associations.[8] The criticism concerned not only the nature of the relationship between the professional association and the apartheid regime, but also the fact that MASA was granted renewed international legitimacy without any genuine ethical reckoning after the Biko affair. In protest, the British Medical Association (British MA) left the World MA in 1984. In this way, the World MA's discourse of "separating ethics from politics" or of "remaining neutral" was revealed, in the face of systematic oppression and racist state violence, as a stance that in practice legitimised the status quo. After the end of apartheid, the physicians' organizations in South Africa were restructured. The South African Medical Association (SAMA) active today is not a direct continuation of MASA, but was founded within a new institutional framework that included the anti-apartheid National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA). This historical experience shows that, in the face of regimes of systematic oppression, the claim of neutrality advanced by international professional organizations can often signify not ethical neutrality, but a tacit endorsement of existing relations of force. The equalising language used today in the context of Gaza is a reminder of this historical experience.

About a month after the statement of 19 May 2025, on 20 June 2025, the World MA issued a new statement. While it had not, to that day, condemned by name a single health centre targeted by Israeli attacks in Palestine, the World MA moved at lightning speed to condemn an attack on a health centre in Israel.[9]

## 3. The British MA takes the first step internationally

The British MA, following the resolutions[10] adopted at its Annual Representative Meeting in June 2025, published in July 2025 a text summarising these decisions. The text condemned the situation created by Israel in Gaza and called on the government of the United Kingdom to play an active role in investigations and prosecutions concerning allegations of genocide. It also drew attention to the fact

8 Mandisa Mbali, "A Matter of Conscience: The Moral Authority of the World Medical Association and the Readmission of the South Africans, 1976–1994", *Medical History* 58, no. 3 (2014): 393–412.

9 The World Medical Association, "Statement Condemning the Missile Strike on a Hospital in Israel", 20 June 2025, https://www.wma.net/news-post/wma-condemns-missile-strike-on-israeli-hospital-and-calls-for-protection-of-healthcare-facilities/

10 The British Medical Association, "ARM 2025: Resolutions on International Relations", June 2025, https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/arm-2025-bma-passes-resolutions-on-international-relations

that while the World MA had swiftly condemned an attack on a health centre in Israel, it had issued no comparable statement regarding the systematic destruction of the health system in Gaza, and it underlined that the Israeli MA had remained silent in the face of Palestinian health workers and health facilities being targeted, detained and killed. The text concluded by calling for a letter to be sent to the World MA so that attacks on health services, including those in Gaza, are condemned consistently, and for relations with the Israeli MA to be suspended until it explicitly reaffirmed medical neutrality and condemned the attacks on healthcare in Gaza.[11]

The step taken by the British MA represented one of the clearest decisions up to that point by any medical association in the world to openly confront the World MA and the Israeli MA. In the days that followed, these decisions would become an important turning point, encouraging many medical associations that had hitherto acted timidly and refrained from taking a concrete stance, and pushing them to move into action under the leadership of TMA. This intervention did not merely signify the British MA's declaration of its own position; it also created the institutional basis of legitimacy for the international line that TMA would later broaden.

## 4. A call from the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine to TMA

As the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, we had been carrying out work to document the humanitarian and health crisis in Gaza, to bring it to public attention in Turkey, and to establish links with various international organizations active in this field with whom we had not previously been in contact. Yet beyond these efforts, it was clear that an initiative capable of having a real international impact was needed.

We thus raised the idea of organizing a regional meeting of medical associations in support of Palestine with the participation of medical associations in West Asia that adopt an anti-Zionist line. In a preliminary meeting with the TMA Central Council, this proposal was received positively. In our informal contacts, the Jordan Medical Association also appeared open to such a gathering. It would also have been possible to secure the participation of the Palestinian medical authority. With the participation of these and several other medical associations from the region, such a meeting could have been held in Amman, the capital of Jordan. However, because active war conditions persisted, along with a range of other obstacles, this initiative could not be realised. We hope that such a meeting can be held in the

11 The British Medical Association, "Update on the British Medical Association's Position on the Israel–Gaza Conflict", 4 July 2025, https://www.bma.org.uk/what-we-do/working-internationally/our-international-work/an-update-on-the-bma-s-position-on-the-israel-gaza-conflict

period ahead.

At precisely this juncture, we came across the decision of the British MA mentioned above. We attached great importance to this decision and thought it had to be amplified on a world scale. We therefore decided, first of all, to place the matter on the agenda of our umbrella organization, TMA.

On 4 July 2025, as the Executive Board of the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, we wrote a letter to the TMA Central Council. After summarising the catastrophic humanitarian and health situation in Gaza, the letter continued as follows:

(...)

As an extension of the reactions recently expressed by institutions and organizations bringing together physicians across the world, the British MA has taken a historic step against the silence of the World MA in the face of the health catastrophe in Gaza. In that spirit, we believe that a stronger, broader and more international response must be organized.

To that end, we believe that TMA should make a call containing the following points:

1.The establishment of a permanent ceasefire and a durable peace,

2.The opening of humanitarian aid corridors at the borders so that humanitarian aid and medical supplies can enter Gaza unconditionally,

3.The restoration of the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza, under the leadership of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA),

4.The strict observance of the Geneva Conventions and international law with regard to the protection of health facilities, health personnel and patients,

5.The release of detained health personnel,

6.The necessary arrangements to enable the transfer of patients from Gaza to Turkey,

7.The urgent initiation of the necessary work to support Gaza's healthcare system, which is on the verge of collapse.

We believe that such a call would have an important impact on the political authorities, the national and international medical community, and public opinion.

In addition, we believe that an open public letter should be sent to the World MA and the Israeli MA conveying our criticisms of their one-sided attitude on this question.

Should it be deemed appropriate and necessary, we wish to state that, as a working group, we stand ready to provide every kind of contribution.

In its reply dated 16 July 2025, the TMA Central Council informed us that the letter had been forwarded to the TMA Office of International Relations and that the initiative of the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine was considered as valuable. The council further stated that

- letters would be written on this matter to the United Nations, the World MA and the Israeli MA
- work would be carried out to secure the adoption of a resolution on this matter at the World MA General Assembly to be held in Porto, Portugal, in October 2025
- the decision adopted in favour of solidarity with Palestine at the 77th Grand Congress of TMA would be made public.

## 5.The road to the World MA General Assembly

In the period leading up to the Porto General Assembly, TMA, while on the one hand engaging in diplomatic initiatives aimed at changing the World MA's stance, on the other hand began to work on texts that could be submitted to the World MA General Assembly and establish contacts with other national medical associations.

In July 2025, TMA prepared a proposal addressed to the World MA and placed it on the agenda of member medical associations. This document discussed in detail the destruction suffered by Gaza's health system and emphasised that attacks on health workers, patients and health facilities had to stop immediately. At the same time, it pointed to the open violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions and demanded that the World MA adopt a clear position on the matter.[12]

At this stage, three distinct but connected steps were taken here: a letter was sent to the World MA calling on it to make an explicit appeal to the Israeli government; a formal motion was prepared to be discussed at the World MA General Assembly; and a joint text was opened for signature by member associations together with the British MA. Though close in content, these three initiatives differed from one another in function and in addressee.

As part of this multi-layered line, TMA also sent a letter to the Israeli MA, clearly stating that the targeting of health workers, the bombing of hospitals and the ill-treatment of detained health workers were incompatible with the values of the

12 The Turkish Medical Association, "Resolution Submitted by the TMA for Discussion at the World MA General Assembly", 28 July 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=6a372a28-6bc2-11f0-a4f1-bd2273d9e8fe

medical profession. It thus made known to the Israeli MA that relations could not be maintained if no clear stance were taken on these questions.[13]

As these initiatives began to resonate internationally, TMA and the British MA prepared a joint text calling for a stronger and clearer stance in the face of the health catastrophe unfolding in Gaza.[14] The document, which was sent to the medical associations that are members of the World MA and simultaneously opened for their signatures, listed demands such as an immediate ceasefire, the cessation of attacks on healthcare facilities, the release of detained health workers, the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid, and compliance with international humanitarian law. This initiative served to make visible the emerging alignments and polarization among medical associations internationally on the eve of the World MA General Assembly.

Opening the joint text for signature also drew into the issue many medical associations that had long remained silent or acted cautiously. As the World MA General Assembly in Porto approached, medical associations from eleven different countries, including Ireland, Spain, South Africa, Tunisia, Pakistan and Uruguay, signed the text, and the initiative thus won a broader basis of international support.[15] In a statement shared with the international public on the day the World MA General Assembly began, concern was expressed over the severe damage inflicted on Gaza's health system by Israeli forces since October 2023, and it was stressed that the targeting of health workers in violation of international humanitarian law was unacceptable. The statement listed demands such as a ceasefire, the protection of healthcare services, independent investigations, and the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. This joint declaration became an important step in making visible the common position that had taken shape among international medical associations before the Porto General Assembly and in calling on the World MA to adopt an explicit stance.

## 6. A rupture in Porto: the World MA General Assembly

The World MA General Assembly held in Porto in October 2025 convened un-

13 The Turkish Medical Association, "The TMA Called on the Israeli Medical Association to Take an Active Stand to Prevent the Humanitarian Tragedy in Gaza", 16 September 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=32500200-9300-11f0-9f74-bd5fa10d5dac

14 The Turkish Medical Association and British Medical Association, "Letter from the TMA and the British MA to the Member Medical Associations of the World MA Calling on Them to 'Act for Gaza'", September 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=a6ce2bbc-994e-11f0-bc01-624b51b495cd

15 The Turkish Medical Association, "Joint Statement by Medical Associations from Different Countries on the Humanitarian Tragedy in Gaza: Urgent Measures Must Be Taken", 8 October 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=de33f0d3-a436-11f0-9982-42010a9c0003

der the shadow of these debates. TMA's representatives at the General Assembly were Prof. Dr. Alpay Azap, President of the TMA Central Council, and Prof. Dr. Murat Civaner, Coordinator of the TMA Office of International Relations. The attacks in Gaza on health workers, patients and health facilities had become the foremost issue on the agenda of the General Assembly. On the first day of the assembly, various democratic mass organizations held protests for Gaza in front of the conference venue. In the declaration read by the protesters, the World MA's silence regarding what was taking place in Gaza was denounced, and the organization was called upon to adopt a clearer stance against the Israeli government and the Israeli MA. The declaration also thanked some medical associations, including TMA, the British MA and the SAMA for their sensitivity to the situation in Gaza. The fact that the protesters carried placards referring positively to TMA and chanted slogans in its favour was a source of pride, showing that the defence of medical values rising from Turkey had also resonated internationally.[16]

As a result of the negotiations, the World MA, on the basis of the motion submitted by TMA, unanimously adopted a resolution at the General Assembly calling on the Israeli government to comply with the Geneva Conventions and the other fundamental texts of international humanitarian law.[17] TMA's was the only motion on Gaza submitted to the General Assembly in Porto. It was first discussed in the socio-medical committee, then in the council, and finally in the General Assembly. Throughout the process, there were attempts to dilute the political weight of the text, to render Israel invisible and to reduce the matter to a conflict between two equal parties. In particular, the amendment proposed by the German Medical Association leaned towards a line that presented the devastation as if it were merely the result of a war between two equal sides, thereby pushing Israel's direct responsibility into the background and obscuring the perpetrator. By contrast, proposals coming from the Scandinavian countries were closer to TMA's line. In the end, thanks to the intensive contacts, meetings and negotiations conducted by the TMA delegation, the resolution was preserved in its essential political content. The dominance of a language that obscures Israel and equates the oppressed with the oppressor was

16 The Turkish Medical Association, "The World Medical Association General Assembly Opens in Porto Amid Demonstrations", https://www.ttb.org.tr/745ykzk

17 The Turkish Medical Association, "The TMA's Motion Was Adopted Unanimously: The World Medical Association Called on the Israeli Government to Comply with the Geneva Conventions", October 2025, https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=6f327a00-a81b-11f0-8e44-42010a9c0003; The World Medical Association, "WMA Resolution Calling on the Israeli Government to Comply with the Geneva Conventions and Other Applicable Instruments of Humanitarian Law", 76th WMA General Assembly, 11 October 2025, https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-resolution-calling-on-the-israeli-government-to-comply-with-the-geneva-conventions-and-other-applicable-instruments-of-humanitarian-law/

not allowed.

Unlike World MA statements issued during the genocide, the adopted resolution did not employ ambiguous language covering over the perpetrator. By addressing the Israeli government directly, it demanded an immediate halt to attacks on health workers, patients and health facilities, respect for medical neutrality, the unobstructed delivery of humanitarian and medical aid to Gaza, the involvement of independent investigators, attention to the situation of detained health workers, and a comprehensive study by the World Health Organization to establish the scale of damage done to Gaza's health system and to address reconstruction and reparations. It also called on the World MA and all member medical associations to condemn clearly and unequivocally the attacks on health workers and health institutions in the ongoing conflict.

The Porto resolution became a document shaping the World MA's future stance. Indeed, after the General Assembly, the World MA published this text as an official policy document, thereby giving it an institutional character that went beyond the provisional assessment of a meeting. Thus, for the first time on this scale, the pro-Israeli language prevailing within the World MA and blurring political responsibility was seriously challenged. Whereas earlier statements had often rendered the perpetrator invisible, the text adopted in Porto was compelled, to the extent possible, to employ the correct words required by the values of the medical profession. This resolution also meant that Israel's targeting of health workers in Gaza, and its systematic attacks on the health system and the Palestinian people, were now openly placed on record in the international medical arena. In short, the Porto resolution marked a historic turning point: it opened a breach in the World MA's silent and conciliatory line towards Israel and demonstrated what organized international pressure can achieve.

## 7. The anti-Zionist struggle in the field of health must continue

The attacks carried out by the occupying Zionist Israeli state against Gaza systematically targeted civilians, hospitals, ambulances, and health workers. The bombing of hospitals, the arrest and killing of health workers, and the obstruction of humanitarian and medical aid constituted clear violations of international humanitarian law and the ethical values of the medical profession. The deliberate destruction of Gaza's health system, infrastructure, and health services formed one of the central dimensions of genocidal devastation. In this context, the field of health became one of the principal terrains of struggle where colonial violence was directly exercised and the conditions of life of an entire people were targeted.

The World MA's silence during the early stages of the genocide, and its language that equated the perpetrator and victim, brought into sharper focus the question of

what kind of political position international medical organizations should adopt in such a process. The resolution adopted in Porto showed that this line was not unchangeable, and that even institutional structures such as the World MA could be forced open through organized intervention and international solidarity. This resolution does not merely signify a limited change in the World MA's discourse on Palestine. It also represents a historic threshold by making Israel's crimes in the field of health more visible within international professional organizations and by establishing more clearly that discussions of isolation, sanctions, and political pressure—until now largely kept outside this sphere—also constitute a legitimate line of struggle in the field of health.

This threshold was not crossed spontaneously. The initiative launched by the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, and its adoption by the TMA and transfer to the international level, provided the political and organizational foundation of the process leading to the Porto resolution. The efforts to make visible the destruction inflicted upon Gaza's health system, the contacts established with international medical associations, and the joint initiative carried out together with the British MA played a decisive role in the emergence of the unanimously adopted Porto resolution. The fact that an initiative launched at the local level was able, through a correct political line and determined international intervention, to produce results on a platform such as the World MA showed that struggle in the field of health is not merely a form of bearing witness, but a terrain of struggle capable of producing direct political consequences.

The Porto resolution also demonstrated that the struggle to be waged against Israel in the field of health does not have to remain limited to the level of statements, exposure, and moral reaction. It is now more clearly visible that institutional relations, forms of representation, partnerships, and mechanisms of international legitimacy in the field of health are themselves matters of political struggle. While hospitals are being bombed in Palestine, health workers are being killed, and the health system of an entire people is being systematically destroyed, questioning Israel's ordinary international position in the field of health, expanding discussions of isolation and sanctions in this sphere, and advancing this line through more concrete instruments have become urgent tasks that can no longer be postponed. The breach opened in Porto shows that the international struggle against Israel in the field of health has entered a new stage.

The Porto resolution also revealed a broader truth: international professional organizations are not "neutral" or "universal" institutions. The positions adopted by these institutions are shaped within the political balance of forces created by their members, health workers, and international public opinion. The refusal of physicians and health organizations to remain silent in the face of the genocide in Gaza

has shown that it is possible to create a form of solidarity powerful enough to alter the direction of such international institutions. Yet it should not be assumed that this gain will become permanent on its own. Implementing, following up, expanding, and transforming the decisions taken into new fields of intervention all require political struggle. The consolidation of an anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist line in the field of health depends on the solidarity of health workers, the determined stance of professional organizations, and organized pressure capable of challenging the regime of legitimacy in this sphere. The breach that has been opened can widen only to the extent that this pressure is sustained.

Therefore, the result achieved in Porto is not a conclusion but a beginning. The field of health can no longer be conceived as a neutral ground standing outside colonial occupation, genocidal destruction, and the international normality that protects them. The task today is to transform the political opening created in Porto into a lasting line of struggle, to carry forward the instruments of isolation, sanctions, and international pressure against Israel in the field of health, and to raise solidarity with the Palestinian people to a more organized, more sustained, and more effective level. The breach opened in Porto has shown that the common and determined intervention of physicians' organizations can alter the stance of international institutions. For this reason, the Porto resolution should be regarded as a historical threshold that will shape the future course of the struggle for isolation and sanctions against Israel in the field of health.[18]

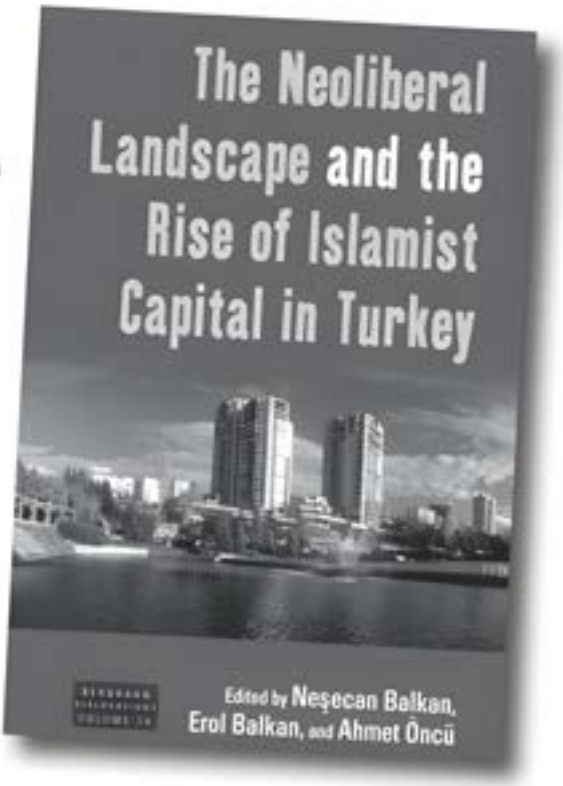
18 In such a barren environment, in which many medical associations across the world have been hesitant to take a stand against the World MA and the Israeli MA, we owe thanks to all those whose labour made this initiative possible and turned it into an oasis in the desert. I would like to thank above all Prof. Dr. Serap Erdoğan Taycan, a member of the Executive Board of the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine, who contributed in this period to the work of the TMA Office of International Relations and is also President of the Central Executive Board of the Turkish Psychiatric Association; Prof. Dr. Alpay Azap and the TMA Central Council; Prof. Dr. Murat Civaner and the TMA Office of International Relations; the IMC Executive Board; and the IMC Solidarity Working Group with Palestine. Thank you all. Solidarity.

# The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey

Berghahn Books,
New York, 2015

Edited by Neşecan Balkan,
Erol Balkan and Ahmet Öncü

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




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

The hardback edition was published in February 2015 and the paperback edition came out in January 2017. The book has already been published in Turkish translation. It has also been published in two different Farsi translations in Iran.

# Thoughts about the past, or fragments of memories with attempts at synthesis[1]

Iosif G. Abramson[2]

I was born in Leningrad on 20 November 1927 into a family of doctors: my mother was a pediatrician and my father was a venereologist. My maternal grandfather was a merchant of the first guild. My father came from a large family in Zhmerynka and was the only one of 12 brothers and sisters to receive a higher education. My mother's cousin, also a doctor, lived with us; she was a therapist. In 1933, my brother Leonid was born.

Looking back on my childhood, youth and adult years, I can say that the adults in my family belonged to the ordinary Soviet intelligentsia. They were Soviet patriots, rejoiced in the successes of the Soviet Union, were proud of its policies based on the principles of social justice and internationalism, and were deeply saddened when the actual actions of the authorities contradicted these principles.

One of my vivid childhood memories is from 1934, when I was not yet 7 years

1 This article was originally written in Russian for Issue of journal *Alternativy* No. 4, 2012, pp. 90–107; 50.

2 Doctor of Technical Sciences, Chief Researcher at the Giprocement-Nauka Research Centre (St. Petersburg).

old. My uncle and namesake, my mother's brother Joseph Gerasimovich Eliasberg, a metallurgical engineer, returns from vacation to Kuzbass, where he helps Academician Bardin implement a project to further expand the Kuznetsk Metallurgical Plant. Accompanying him was his wife, Aunt Lelia, Elena Georgievna, who had become a patriot of Kuznetsk (then Stalinsk, now Novokuznetsk). Of course, I could not remember the content of Uncle Osi's story. But I still cannot forget the burning eyes of this Bolshevik-Leninist, who enthusiastically described the construction of a new socialist garden city: "I know the city will be, I know the garden will bloom, when there are such people in the Soviet country" (Vladimir Mayakovsky). I. G. Eliasberg was one of the leaders of the party organisation of the Kuznetsk Combine and was a member of the West Siberian Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). In 1937, he was shot along with a group of communists led by the first secretary of the regional committee, Robert Eiche.

Two more episodes from the same year, 1934, remain etched in my memory.

7 November. Aunt Manya takes me to a festive demonstration in honour of the 17th anniversary of October. The column from the October district, which includes employees of her polyclinic, marches across Uritsky Square (renamed Dvortsovaya Square in 1944), third from the main tribune near the Winter Palace. In the centre of the column, very close to us, stands Sergei Mironovich Kirov, the head of the city's party organisation, who has gained enormous authority among the townspeople over the past few years, smiling and greeting the demonstrators. He often appeared in factory workshops, sometimes with little or no security, talking openly with workers and engineers, and was also open to scientists and cultural figures.

And then, on 1 December, the city and the whole country were shaken by terrible news: Kirov had been killed in Smolny. I remember the day in Leningrad when Kirov's body was laid to rest: five minutes of factory sirens, people stopping in the streets (I watched from the window). Stalin arrived in the city along with other leaders of the country. He walked behind the coffin. The anger of the people of Leningrad, especially the workers, and indeed the entire Soviet people towards the murderer and the organisers of the crime is difficult to describe. But to this day, the mystery surrounding it has not been fully revealed. Not only was a certain Nikolayev, who was recognised as the murderer, shot, but also the leaders of the Leningrad special services at that time; under various strange circumstances, almost everyone who could be considered a witness died. Twenty-nine years later, those in the United States who could have known something or who sought information beyond what was officially reported about the assassination of President Kennedy were eliminated in much the same way. In light of what happened in the USSR afterwards, it can be said that Kirov's murder was the starting point for the launch of the Great Terror campaign, which reached its peak just over two years later, in 1937.

But if the assassination was a monstrous provocation (the most common and still unrefuted version), why was S. M. Kirov chosen as the victim? In 1926, during a heated internal party debate, Stalin defeated the Leningrad party organisation led by the chairman of the Leningrad Soviet, the prominent Bolshevik Grigory Zinoviev, who was removed from all his posts and expelled from the party in 1927 (later reinstated for a time). So, in his speech at the 17th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in early 1934, Kirov said that Zinoviev's supporters "are not lost to the party; they can still be of considerable use." Further. During the preparations for the 20th Congress of the CPSU (February 1956), the surviving delegates of that "congress of victors" in 1934 said that many delegates had asked Kirov to agree to be nominated for the post of general secretary. Kirov not only refused, but also told Stalin about this proposal himself. Finally, the same comrades said that in the Central Committee elections, about 300 votes were cast against Stalin and only 3 against Kirov. The officially announced results "equalised" these votes. Archival data that could confirm these stories, used by N. S. Khrushchev in his famous report on the cult of personality at the 20th Congress, have not been found. However, indirect confirmation can be found in the fact that during the Great Terror of 1937–38, more than 70% of the delegates to the 17th Party Congress were shot.

I return to my childhood. I went straight to the second grade at school. My parents sent me to a German-language school. There I became an Oktyabrenok (a pre-Pioneer organisation for children of primary school age), receiving my first lessons in collectivism. It was the autumn of 1936.

The country was filled with enthusiasm. Radio and newspapers glorified workers and collective farmers who set labour records in factories, mines, construction sites, fields, and in all republics of the Soviet Union. The party encouraged the education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism. There was widespread support for the Soviet government's policy of providing moral and military-economic assistance to the Ethiopian people's struggle for liberation against fascist Italy and, in particular, comprehensive assistance to the Spanish Republicans in their fight against the Francoists, who were backed by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. The Soviet Union welcomed Spanish children who had been taken out of their country, which was engulfed in civil war. At the same time, spy mania was gaining momentum in the USSR. The German school, where I studied for only one year, also fell victim to it. The school's management and several teachers were accused of spying for Hitler's Germany.

From the third to the sixth grade, i.e. from the autumn of 1937 to the spring of 1941, I studied at a regular secondary school. Here I became a pioneer, a member of the squad council. We were very active, easily and enthusiastically absorbing the basics of general knowledge and the fundamentals of political knowledge. The

spirit of collectivism permeated our daily lives. This was helped by various clubs at the Leningrad Palace of Pioneers, cultural trips to theatres, and a variety of pioneer activities. We were all quite politicised. From adolescence, we were well educated as Soviet patriots and internationalists. We deeply sympathised with the Spanish Republicans, the Chinese people, especially Mao Zedong and Zhu De's People's Liberation Army, who were fighting back against Japanese imperialism, and rejoiced at the successes of the Red Army, which drove the Japanese aggressors out of Mongolia and struck them at Lake Khasan. We were proud of the successes of our polar explorers, who established the world's first drifting scientific station in the North Pole region, and proud of our pilots, who made the first non-stop flights across the North Pole to America. And it was not only schoolchildren; most adults associated the country's successes with the advantages of the Soviet social system and with the correct, and even wise, as it was proclaimed at the time, leadership of the party and its leader, Comrade Stalin, "the faithful disciple and comrade-in-arms of V. I. Lenin" (later the wording was modified from "faithful" to "closest comrade-in-arms"). Agitation and propaganda were masterfully executed. Outstanding works of Soviet literature, cinema, music, and theatre also contributed to this effort.

On the other hand, during those same years, high-profile trials were held against prominent party and military figures, after which the country plunged into the terrible months of the "Great Terror," a kind of new St. Bartholomew's Day massacre that lasted a year and a half. In history textbooks, portraits of heroes of the October Revolution and the Civil War, who suddenly turned out to be "enemies of the people," were blacked out. The hysteria reached ridiculous proportions. At one time, pioneer ties were fastened with a badge depicting a bonfire. An order came to schools to remove these badges. Someone thought that the logs in the bonfire were arranged to look like the letters L and T, referring to "Lev Trotsky." Fear hung in the air. The obvious questions — how could it be that the most prominent Bolsheviks surrounding Lenin, who had made an enormous contribution to the victory of the October Revolution and its defence in the Civil War and were members of the first Soviet government, suddenly went over to the enemy — were met with answers like this: we are surrounded by capitalism, and global capital spares no expense in corrupting the Soviet leadership, exploiting the careerism and inflated self-esteem of individual leaders. Stalinist propaganda was able to convince even some left-wingers in the West of the justice of the Moscow trials. An example is Lion Feuchtwanger's *Moscow 1937*.

The Anschluss of Austria, the criminal policy of appeasement of Hitler by England and France (Munich, 1938) with the surrender of Czechoslovakia to him meant that World War II was inexorably approaching. During this period, the Soviet government's foreign policy, aimed at curbing Nazi Germany, enjoyed the full support

of the people. Anti-Nazi films such as *The Oppenheim Family* and *Professor Mamlock* were successful at the box office, and newspapers were filled with exposés of Hitler's racist crimes and misanthropic ideology.

The sluggish negotiations of 1939 with England and France on organising joint action to suppress possible German aggression ended in failure due to the frankly unequal terms offered by the Western partners to the Soviet Union. It became clear that British and French capital sought to channel German expansion eastward in order to exhaust both Germany and the Soviet Union through mutual conflict.

In order to delay the start of the war for as long as possible and to prepare for it as best as possible, the USSR leadership agreed to conclude a non-aggression pact and even a friendship treaty with Nazi Germany. This was not only a sensation for the West, but also a shock for the citizens of our country. Although the real reasons for such an unexpected decision were explained (not in the official press, of course, but to work collectives through representatives of party committees), I remember well how eerie it was to see photographs of V. M. Molotov shaking hands with Hitler and J. V. Stalin receiving Ribbentrop on the front pages of Pravda. On 23 August 1939, the Soviet-German pact was signed. On September 1st, with Germany's attack on Poland, the Second World War began to reap its terrible harvest.

As early as 1939, with the annexation of the eastern territories of Poland – Western Ukraine and Western Belarus – to the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs, respectively, the territories inhabited by the Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples were reunited and moved away from the borders of the capitals of these republics, Kiev and Minsk. With a similar goal – to distance Leningrad from the border with a possible ally of Germany (in the absence of any serious formal justification) – the USSR started a war with Finland. My father spent the entire Finnish campaign, which lasted three and a half months, from 30 November 1939 to 12 March 1940, on the front lines as the chief medical officer of a medical battalion, and it was very difficult for the Soviet Union. Our country suffered disproportionately high losses in terms of human lives and reputation. The weakness of the Soviet command in tactical training became apparent. In 1940, the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia became part of the USSR. It is not true that the broad masses of the people in these economically backward republics initially regarded joining the USSR as a Soviet occupation. People of my age remember well the film footage of the Red Army's arrival in Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn. The Lithuanians were grateful for the return of their historic capital and the port city of Klaipėda, and, together with all their Baltic neighbours, for their liberation from the social injustices of capitalism. But the truth is that shortly after joining the USSR, all the Baltic republics began deporting "class enemies" beyond the Urals, a term that was interpreted very broadly in many cases. Together with the equally clumsy collectivisation of the countryside, this

large-scale deportation served as one of the main arguments in favour of leaving the USSR during the years of perestroika. This outweighed in the mass consciousness the obvious gigantic growth of the economy, higher than the average for the Union, with the emergence of previously non-existent industries and very high investments in the development of science, education, health care and culture. This harsh policy, like a time bomb, took effect almost 50 years later: the republics that were the last to join the USSR were the first to leave it.

Blindly believing in his own foresight, Stalin thought that Hitler would not dare to break the pact too quickly – at least not in 1941 – and that the Soviet Union would have time to get everything ready to fight back and crush the enemy. He did not believe the numerous intelligence reports that the invasion was planned for the second half of June. It was only on 13 June that TASS published a report in which the frequent violations of land and water borders by German aircraft were described as possible mistakes and it was suggested that everything necessary should be done to prevent them from happening again in order to avoid dangerous provocations. If my memory serves me correctly, this document confirmed the Soviet Union's loyalty to the 1939 treaty. It became clear to everyone that war was imminent.

Hitler outmaneuvered Stalin. At 4 a.m. on 22 June, troops of Germany and its allies crossed the western border of the USSR along its entire length, and Kiev, Minsk and several other large cities were subjected to the first air raids. At 11 a.m., First Deputy Chairman of the Government Molotov gave a speech on the radio. It was not until 3 July, on the 13th day, that Stalin addressed his "brothers and sisters". By that time, the enemy had already advanced deep into Soviet territory and inflicted enormous damage, including casualties, wounded and prisoners, military-technical and other material losses and, most importantly, moral and psychological damage. In his well-thought-out speech, Stalin emphasised the mobilisation not only of Soviet patriotism, but also of broad, non-class patriotism. This line of propaganda resonated well with the mood of the people.

My mother, younger brother and I were evacuated from Leningrad on 21 August, 18 days before the city was completely blockaded. In the cities of Krasnovishersk and Berezniki in the Molotov Region (now Perm Krai), Western Urals, I studied in grades 7–9 and joined the Komsomol. In the summer of 1943, along with other kids from Krasnovishersk who had moved up to Year 9, I worked on a timber raft for a month. My dad served as a military doctor in the active army from the first day to the last day of the Great Patriotic War, ending the war with the rank of major in the medical service.

When I recall the war years, I immediately feel the atmosphere of unity among the entire population around the central task of surviving and defeating the enemy. The atmosphere of fear in the pre-war years was replaced by a mobilisation atmos-

phere of concentrating all forces to accomplish this central task. In this connection, it is worth mentioning the fulfilment of the functions assigned to the party, the State Defence Committee (GKO) and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Stalin's *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, published in 1938, ends with the word "end". Stalin was right. After the purges and the "Great Terror" of 1937–38, the party as a Bolshevik, Leninist party ceased to exist. It was transformed into a different structure under the same name, into the party of Stalin's dream, openly expressed by him at the time, – into a kind of Order of the Sword (its members unquestioningly obeyed the decisions of their leader). But the ideology of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) remained, at least formally. Both ordinary members and leaders of party organisations at various levels, being convinced supporters of communist ideology, showed true everyday heroism at the front and in the rear. Influenced by their example, many joined the party at the front. It was largely thanks to the work of the communists that Hitler's propaganda attempts to use the multinational composition of the USSR's population to stir up internal conflicts failed. On the contrary, the friendship between peoples became one of the factors of the country's strength.

Most members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) joined the State Defence Committee, which was formed in the early days of the war. The tasks of this body included the transition to a war footing and maintaining the entire economy of the country at the level necessary to repel the enemy. Each member of the GKO had their own area of responsibility: the production and supply of tanks, aircraft, artillery, ammunition, transport, etc. to the army. I would particularly like to note the enormous difficulty of relocating many large enterprises from the western regions to the Urals and Siberia and quickly putting them into operation in their new locations. This work was coordinated by the GKO chairman of the State Planning Committee, N. A. Voznesensky.

Of course, the main figure who coordinated, controlled and directed the multifaceted struggle of the Soviet people and their armed forces against Nazi Germany and its allies was J. V. Stalin, Supreme Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the GKO. In those years, he enjoyed absolute trust (largely, but not only, thanks to excellently organised propaganda) and was the object of worship for the overwhelming majority of Soviet people. As a teenager and young man, and indeed until 1950–52, I was among them. But starting at the age of 23–25, I gradually began to recover from my conformism. So, what can be said about Stalin's leadership during the war years? The first two years, 1941–42, were years of the heaviest defeats, human, material and territorial losses. Ukraine and Belarus were completely surrendered to the enemy, Hitler's troops advanced to the North Caucasus and the Volga, established a blockade of Leningrad and approached the outskirts of Moscow (although

in December 1941 they were pushed back 100–250 km from the capital, which was psychologically important as the first major victory of the Red Army). A huge amount of military equipment was lost in the retreats of 1941–42. Most importantly, the overwhelming majority of the 27 million victims of the Great Patriotic War fell during these years. The reason is that ***less than three years before the start of the war, the armed forces of the USSR were practically decapitated***: almost the entire high command and more than two-thirds of the commanders of divisions, brigades, squadrons and regiments ***were*** physically ***destroyed***. Thus, the main blame for the losses and disgrace of the first two years of the war lies personally with Stalin. But Stalin, according to the disgraced (in the last years of the leader's life) Marshal G. K. Zhukov in his memoirs, "knew how to learn." Marshal Zhukov noted the well-organised work of the Supreme Command Headquarters, the serious attitude towards the proposals of the General Staff and the opinions of the front commanders. And, starting with the Battle of Stalingrad (19 November 1942 – 2 February 1943), the largest battle of World War II, there was a series of outstanding victories, culminating in the capture of Berlin and the surrender of Nazi Germany.

The victory over fascism was a triumph for the Soviet Union, an alternative social system to capitalism, communist ideology and, of course, Joseph Stalin.

I celebrated Victory Day in Leningrad, where I had returned from Berezniki in August 1944 and enrolled in the second year of the Construction Technical School. After passing my external exams for a secondary school leaving certificate, I was admitted to the Physics Department of Leningrad University in September 1945. And on 9 May 1945, we, a group of second-year students from the technical college, strolled along the festive Nevsky Prospect, which had not yet completely recovered from the traces of the blockade, caught leaflets scattered by aeroplanes with the texts of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's victory order, ate ice cream and admired the fireworks salute. The joy was long-awaited.

Many people at the time believed that the pre-war atmosphere of harsh restrictions, barracks discipline and fear would disappear from everyday life. The Soviet people deserved it, and Stalin had consolidated his position as leader to such an extent that he had no one to fear. But these hopes proved to be in vain. The atmosphere of fear was necessary not only for Stalin, but also for his entourage, who were thinking about their own future after the natural departure of the "Master". Democracy, including within the party, posed a certain danger to the top nomenclature. There was much talk of criticism, but the highest acceptable target for criticism from below was the regional leadership.

The October Revolution gave a powerful impetus to the free development of all forms of culture. Soviet literature, theatre, cinema, visual arts and music made a significant contribution to world culture in the first 10–15 years after the end of the

civil war, striking with their diversity of styles and genres. Soviet culture suffered a barrage of unjust blows from Stalin's nomenclature during the years of the "Great Terror," when many of its outstanding creators perished and thousands of writers, artists, and musicians spent many years in camps. Russian cultural figures worthily reflected the collective feat of the people in the Great Patriotic War and supported the steadfastness and fighting spirit of the soldiers with their topical works. But just a year after the great Victory, in 1946–47, the Central Committee issued a series of decrees on literature, cinema, theatre and music, in which the state of affairs in these areas was subjected to scathing criticism. By accusing creative workers of formalism, the country's leadership was in fact prohibiting the search for new forms, techniques and styles, i.e. closing off the paths of development for literature and art. World-renowned artists were subjected to persecution. For several months, it was forbidden to play the works of Shostakovich, Khachaturian, and other composers who had been accused in a completely unprofessional manner on the radio.

In 1948, the infamous session of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences was held under Stalin's personal, albeit invisible, patronage. Ignoring Lenin's well-known warning about the inadmissibility ***of imposing*** certain conclusions on specific sciences based solely on philosophical ideas, instead of a dialectical-materialistic ***interpretation of the*** scientific ***results obtained,*** the organisers of this session and Stalin himself, based on their illiterate attitude towards classical genetics, destroyed Soviet biology, which had previously occupied a leading position in world biology. Many world-renowned scientists lost their laboratories and the opportunity to continue their research. This was not only a blow to biological science. In the eyes of scientists, the authority of communist ideology and materialist dialectics, which were discredited by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), fell sharply.

In 1949, a campaign against cosmopolitanism was launched in the USSR, which in fact masked the transition to state anti-Semitism, especially in the humanities. It should be noted that the slide towards national isolation began during the war years. In this context, we should consider the dissolution of the Third International in early 1943 – a tsarist gift to the Anglo-American allies – and the rejection of "The Internationale" as the national anthem (although it remained the party anthem in ritual terms). And in the text of the national anthem, written by poets Sergei Mikhalkov and Gabriel El-Registan, Stalin was placed alongside Lenin: "Through the storms, the sun of freedom shone upon us, and Lenin illuminated the great path for us, Stalin raised us, inspired us to be loyal to the people, to work and to perform feats." The Cold War accelerated the resurgence of great power chauvinism in the policies of the Central Committee.

In contrast to all this, at the university, in the physics department until gradu-

ation in 1950, and in other departments until 1948, relations were imbued with socialist democracy. Komsomol (Communist Youth League) work was creative, free from any formalism, and literally flourishing. Here are just three examples. In 1948, the Komsomol bureau of the physics department (of which I was a member) proposed holding a broad conference on science, literature and art in the current five-year plan. This proposal was supported by other departments. The organising committee, of which I was also a member, was headed by the rector, Professor Alexander Voznesensky, an economist (and brother of a member of the Politburo). He was loved by the entire university, professors, teachers, students and technical staff, and deservedly bore the nickname "Papa". So, the best halls in the city were given over to discussions during the winter holidays as part of the conference. I particularly remember the discussion of Konstantin Simonov's controversial political play *The Russian Question*, which was staged in three theatres in the city. We talked with the directors and actors who played the leading roles (the setting was the United States at the beginning of the Cold War and McCarthyism), visited some of them at home, and then had a general discussion. There were also lively discussions with musicians at the Conservatory and with scientists about the latest scientific developments. Moscow celebrities also came to visit us. Another example is our active involvement in the upcoming discussion in Moscow (under the auspices of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks) on the teaching of physics in higher education. Inspired by the defeat of biological science, reactionaries from philosophy and physics set about preparing a similar execution of Soviet physics under the pretext of the dominance of "physical idealists" and "anti-patriots" in it. At forty-two meetings of the Organising Committee for the planned conference, Soviet physicists fought hard against the reactionaries and defended modern physics, preventing a repeat of the shameful destruction of biology. During those months, at meetings of the philosophy seminar of the physics faculty, the renowned Leningrad scientists Vladimir Fok, Alexander Alexandrov, and Lev Gurevich, armed with materialist dialectics and magnificent sarcasm, put the fighter against "physical idealism" Vl. Lvov in his place. Their speeches inspired us, the students of that time. For example, following Vl. Lvov's article "Troubadours of Idealism in Physics" in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* on 20 November 1948, a brilliant satire appeared in the faculty wall newspaper – an article entitled "Meistersingers of Idealism in Arithmetic," signed by Bl. Tigrov. Four days later, on 24 November, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* published the second part of Vl. Lvov's "dilogy" entitled "Against Idealism in Physics." And, accordingly, the same wall newspaper published an equally angry statement by Bl. Tigrov entitled "Against Idealism in Arithmetic." The author of both works by Bl. Tigrov was a fourth-year student, Oleg Grossman, who would later become a prominent employee of the

Central Shipbuilding Institute.

Third example. We were taught philosophy well at the physics department. And so we at the Komsomol bureau decided to hold a competition for essays on topics chosen by the fifth-year students themselves, using the works of the classics of Marxism. And many people took up this proposal. The philosophy teacher headed the jury. Nowadays, it is difficult to imagine such an initiative coming from the bottom up.

In 1949, a movement was launched to organise student construction brigades to help the countryside. The movement was initiated by students of the Polytechnic Institute. Leningrad State University supported it, and in the summer of 1949, students from various departments went to remote areas of the region to build inter-collective farm hydroelectric power stations. A couple of weeks before departure, I had hepatitis and was forbidden from doing physical labour for some time. But I could not stay on the sidelines, so I insisted that they take me. Once there, I was put in charge of a mobile group to help the district Komsomol committee. We travelled around the villages, gathered young people, told them about the situation in the country and the world, and helped to set up primary organisations where there were none.

In 1949–50, the country, and Leningrad in particular, faced a real-life repetition of the horrors of 1937. As a result of the intrigues of Beria and Malenkov, the members of the Politburo closest to Stalin at the time, a group of Moscow leaders headed by Politburo member N. Voznesensky and the entire Leningrad party leadership were accused of a "separatist conspiracy." The "conspiracy" allegedly consisted of an attempt to create a second centre by declaring Leningrad the capital of the Russian Federal Republic. What followed was a scenario that had been rehearsed in 1937–38: the execution of the group of "conspirators," long prison terms for a large number of Leningrad party activists, and the replacement of the leadership of virtually all significant enterprises and institutions in the city. After a year and a half as Minister of Education of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, our remarkable rector Alexander Voznesensky was shot, just like his all-Union famous brother...

The early post-war years are remembered in the collective consciousness for the rapid recovery of the economy, the systematic reduction of prices, the noticeable improvement in living conditions and the revival of a stifling atmosphere of oppression.

December 1950. I graduated from university with a degree in nuclear physics. However, I was not assigned to work at one of the nuclear centres, but in Vorkuta, a polar centre of the coal industry and, at that time, a centre of mass imprisonment and subsequent settlement. For two years, from 1951 to 1953, I taught physics and

heat transfer theory at the Mining Technical School, and for the next two years, from early 1953 to May 1955, I worked as a researcher at the Vorkuta branch of the All-Union Coal Institute. In Vorkuta, I was actively involved in the Komsomol and was elected to the city Komsomol committee. In September 1953, I was accepted as a candidate member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In 1952, the publication of Joseph Stalin's last major work, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, had a wide resonance. It contained some important judgments about the existence and role of the market in the Soviet national economy, about its subordinate position in relation to the state plan. At the same time, however, this work demonstrated a break with Marxist ideas about the transitional socialist phase of communism. Formulating the basic law of socialism as "ensuring the maximum satisfaction of the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the whole society through the continuous growth and improvement of socialist production on the basis of advanced technology," the author does not mention the need to develop self-organisation and self-government of labour collectives, to organise a gradual process of transferring state functions to various types of production and public associations, or to promote internationalist cooperation between the countries of the socialist community and with revolutionary and national liberation movements. This work served as the basis for the anti-scientific view of socialism as an independent socio-economic formation that emerged in left-wing circles.

Stalin's last and relatively short speech, delivered at the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1952, was addressed to foreign guests. He called on communists in capitalist countries and countries that had not yet freed themselves from colonial dependence to take up the banner of the struggle for bourgeois-democratic freedoms and national liberation abandoned by the bourgeoisie. Apparently, with this speech, Stalin was distracting the attention of foreign communists, and not only them, from the new horrors of Soviet "socialist" totalitarianism.

The last surge of Stalinist terror was the so-called Doctors' Plot, fabricated at the end of 1952. A group of well-known medical professors who served the country's top leadership was accused of malicious activity – killing, through improper treatment, the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet state. They allegedly acted on behalf of the American Zionist organisation "Joint" (the majority of the "exposed" group were ethnic Jews). Shortly after Stalin's death, all those repressed in this case were fully rehabilitated (although not all of them survived the ordeal).

Stalin's death was perceived by most of the people as a great collective grief. Knowing or guessing about the atrocities he had committed, people nevertheless perceived him as a harsh but wise father of the Soviet people. This was the result of centuries of paternalism, Stalin's propaganda skilfully exploiting this tradition,

his acting skills, and an objective assessment of Stalin's undoubted strength of will.

I am grateful to fate for giving me Vorkuta as the starting point of my professional career. In addition to acquiring important skills in teaching (at a technical college and the educational and consulting centre of the All-Union Correspondence Polytechnic Institute) and in scientific research (studying the characteristics of heat transfer processes in various soils in the permafrost zone), in my relationships with my colleagues, my four years in the Arctic were filled with the luxury of meeting, communicating, and then forming long-lasting friendships with remarkable people of high principles and morals. I will mention only three names: chemist and science historian Naum Rodny, mathematician Dmitry Redozubov, and diplomat and literary scholar Artur Moiseevich Dribinsky. All of them, like thousands of honest communists and non-party members, spent years in prison camps, and after serving their sentences and being released from the camps, they remained in Vorkuta, holding fairly high positions: for example, Dmitry Redozubov headed the laboratory at the Vorkuta branch of the Coal Institute, and Artur Dribinsky was elected chairman of the trade union committee of the Mechanical Plant. The young specialists who arrived from Leningrad and Moscow were most charmed by Artur Dribinsky and his wife Natalia Ivanovna, who came to him as soon as he was released from the camp. In January 1924, he was among those who stood guard at the coffin with the body of V. I. Lenin. He worked in the apparatus of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs when it was headed by Chicherin, was consul in Harbin, and worked in the consular department of the USSR representation in Turkey. He was arrested in 1938, while working at the Literary Museum in Moscow and as a lecturer for the Moscow City Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), for "friendly contacts with Trotskyist elements." (After his full rehabilitation and return to Moscow in 1957, he became the scientific secretary and secretary of the party organisation of the Leo Tolstoy Museum.) I think that communicating with such people helped us to overcome the conformism that dominated the minds and behaviour of most active communists and Komsomol members at the time.

I cannot fail to mention that I am also grateful to Vorkuta for the fact that in 1953, Sofya Galperina came there to marry me. In 2012, we celebrated 59 years of married life.

In September 1954, my probationary period as a party member was coming to an end. I received the necessary recommendations and awaited the decision of the city party committee on my admission to the CPSU. But at that time, a conflict was growing in the VUGI (All-Union Scientific Research Coal Institute) branch between the Komsomol members and the branch's new leader, Tkachev, the former head of one of the Vorkutugol coal trusts. The Komsomol members were outraged that Tkachev systematically appropriated the inventions of the talented engineer

Umalatov, a special settler from Dagestan, taking advantage of his dependent position. As a member of the city Komsomol committee, I supported the young employees of VUGI. At the time my question was considered by the city committee bureau, Tkachev was the secretary of the party bureau of the VUGI branch. Not only was I not transferred from candidate to full member of the CPSU at the city committee bureau, but I was also excluded from the list of candidates. Not only for my alleged participation in the campaign to discredit the secretary of the party bureau, but also for concealing in my autobiography the fact that my father had been tried for currency speculation in the early 1930s. My appeal was considered by the Audit Commission of the Komi Republican Party Organisation. I travelled to Syktyvkar in early 1955 to deal with this matter. There, in the Komi Republic, I was told that I had committed no offences against the party and that my father was also not guilty of anything. The Vorkuta leaders had received a reference from Leningrad about my father's namesake. I was reinstated as a candidate member of the CPSU, and the secretary of the Vorkuta City Party Committee was dismissed from his post. I still have a copy of the Komi republican newspaper *Krasnoe Znamya,* which covered this story in detail. This episode reflects the uncertain three-year (1953–56) transition period between Stalin's death and the proclamation of a break with his cult and his methods.

In May 1955, after the closure of the laboratory where I worked at VUGI, I returned to Leningrad and soon got a job at the large complex institute Giprocement. There, I worked my way up from engineer (1955) to senior engineer, team leader and then head of the laboratory (1968), which by the time of the general collapse (1991) had a total of 33 employees in Leningrad and Novosibirsk. In November 1967, I defended my master's dissertation, and in January 1995, my doctoral dissertation. A year after starting work at Giprocement, in July 1956, I became a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. By the time the Communist Party was dissolved, I had been secretary of the party bureau of the scientific section of the institute for a number of years.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU (February 1956) brought catharsis and a surge of new energy. The Thaw (as Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg called the period that followed the 20th Congress) stimulated a powerful rise in creative forces in a wide variety of fields. This was most vividly and symbolically expressed in the Soviet Union's breakthrough into space: the first satellite on 4 October 1957 and the first cosmonaut on 12 July 1961.

But the 22nd Congress (October 1961), having approved a new programme proclaiming the "exhaustion of the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat within the country" and the transformation of the dictatorship of the proletariat into a "people's state," showed that Stalin's anti-Marxist and metaphysical ideas about

socialism and communism had not been outgrown by the leaders of the CPSU. They had not grasped that the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the smallest degree and only at the initial stage after the proletariat had seized power, was violence against the resisting overthrown class, that it was mainly, as the political content of the transition period from capitalism to communism, is a dictatorship of the proletariat over itself, a kind of Kantian "categorical imperative" to learn in everyday practice to gradually transition from managing people to managing technological processes, to live and create in a self-governing association.

The shooting against a workers' demonstration in Novocherkassk in 1962 marked the end of the thaw and predetermined the end of Khrushchev's political career. He was not "one of their own" in the nomenclature, which had already become detached from the working people, and when he made ill-considered impromptu remarks, the bureaucratic elite not only failed to help him correct his mistakes, but provoked him to make new ones. This was the case when the heads of the Central Committee's ideological departments openly set him against artists and writers. Khrushchev became an increasingly unpopular figure in society, thereby facilitating the success of his opponents, who wanted quiet rule under ritualistic speeches.

However, Khrushchev's removal in 1964 did not yet mean the complete victory of bureaucratic deadness over living, albeit error-ridden, work. Brezhnev's ascension to the post of First Secretary of the Central Committee was accompanied by the appointment of Alexei Kosygin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. He obtained the consent of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to carry out a major economic reform. Its essence, based on the proposals of Kharkiv professor Lieberman, consisted of a system of economic calculation, starting with production brigades and workshops. The plan was largely indicative, specifying ***what*** needed to be produced and, approximately, in what quantities, while the primary production team decided ***how***, organisationally and technologically. Socialist competition combined, quite organically, moral incentives with the principle of material interest. Freedom of manoeuvre and initiative was given to enterprise managers: the interference of district party committees in the current production process was practically eliminated. The effect of the reform was almost immediate. The press began to feature new names of enterprising workers, foremen, masters, workshop managers, innovators and entire factory teams. Self-organisation of teams developed, starting with brigades, self-management skills were mastered, the energy of social and engineering creativity was unleashed, and, accordingly, the shackles of nomenclature-bureaucratic control were weakened (or completely removed). The results of the eighth five-year plan (1966–70) are striking. In 1970, industrial production was almost twice as high as in all the pre-war five-year plans combined. Agricultural production grew by 21%

in the eighth five-year plan, compared to 12% growth in the seventh. Retail trade turnover grew by 48%. Science and culture showed great success in the generally positive atmosphere of those years. Let us take, for illustration, only the last year of that five-year period, 1970, and only some scientific fields. Important results were achieved in all areas of theoretical and applied mathematics. In atomic physics, the 105th element was synthesised and studied for the first time. The Institute of Atomic Energy continued its comprehensive research into the pride of domestic science – the tokamak device, accepted by the global scientific and engineering community as the best reactor design for controlled thermonuclear fusion, ideally retaining high-temperature plasma particles. The creators of spacecraft and cosmonauts continued to delight the Soviet people with their great achievements. Considerable funds were invested in science. New scientific institutions were put into operation. Kosygin's five-year plan can safely be called the "second thaw". Alexander Zinoviev defined these years as the period of the country's highest rise in its history.

The bureaucracy instinctively sensed that it was gradually losing its leverage. And the events in Czechoslovakia, which could have been the start of a process of purifying socialism of its distortions and injecting new energy into the global labour movement, which was as anti-capitalist as it was anti-bureaucratic, terrified the long-since reborn majority of the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. And the signal was given for a general retreat. All the leaders of the Prague Spring were declared right-wing revisionists or direct agents of imperialism, and Dubček was labelled a "conciliator" who did not understand the situation. In the USSR, the reform that had begun so successfully was quickly rolled back. Market economists, who in fact did not absolutise the market but considered it necessary to use market mechanisms for the effective implementation of planned production development plans, were treated as alleged renegades from socialist principles. And from 1971, a retreat to real stagnation in politics and economics began. Here is just one example. In 1970, at the end of the "Kosygin" five-year plan, 202,000 metal-cutting machines of various types were produced. That was the peak. In 1980, only 118,000 were produced, and in 1985, less than 100,000.

The years of stagnation foreshadowed the collapse of the USSR, becoming the final fatal blow to it. The root cause lies in unresolved Stalinism. This point of view is explained in detail in the analytical section of the Russian Communist Party's programme.

But today in Russia, we are convinced that those years favourably and radically distinguish the state bureaucracy of that time from the current Russian one, which is thoroughly corrupt. A striking example is the radiation-thermal technology of energy-intensive products. It is based on the phenomenon of radiation-thermal (RT) activation of solid-phase reactions in inorganic systems, discovered by a group

of authors representing industrial and academic institutions in Leningrad, Novosibirsk, Yerevan and Alma-Ata. The energy source in RT technology is a powerful beam of accelerated electrons. In cement production, RT activation results in the formation of high-quality cement clinker in 5–15 seconds, which is more than 300 times faster than in modern rotary kilns. The basics of RT cement technology were developed by Giprocement (Leningrad) in collaboration with NIIEFA (Leningrad) and the Institute of Nuclear Physics of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences (Novosibirsk). The work was financed under a special programme of the USSR Ministry of Building Materials. At the end of 1991, the launch of a pilot semi-industrial line was planned. However, it was in 1991 that funding was discontinued, indefinitely delaying the implementation of the technology, whose main advantages are the elimination of hydrocarbon fuel use and a dramatic reduction in harmful emissions into the atmosphere. This unfinished project clearly demonstrates the difference in modernisation capabilities between planned and market-based management systems

* * *

Some conclusions from a brief overview of the history of the USSR against the backdrop of the impressions of one Soviet citizen's long life can be summarised as follows:

The undeniable successes in the economic, social, scientific and cultural development of the Soviet Union, despite the far from Leninist methods of leadership of the party and the country after the bureaucratic, essentially counter-revolutionary coup of 1927–34, can be explained by the powerful impetus of October and the proletarian internationalist ideology that prevailed in the country. Bureaucratic, essentially counter-revolutionary coup in 1927–34, can be explained by the powerful impetus of October and the proletarian internationalist ideology that prevailed in the country. The energy of October overcame the pressure of fear and the heavy superstructure.

Many people now yearn for the "happy Soviet past," when certain elements of communist social relations were achieved—the opportunity to receive education, including higher education, ***according to need***; medical care, limited mainly only by the level of medicine achieved; ***and the development of*** technical, artistic, and athletic abilities of children and adults, etc. Today, when people nostalgically recall the Soviet era, they often come to the conclusion that its main fault was that it led to the advent of the current repulsive era. The distortions of socialism facilitated the restoration of capitalism. There is also a concise aphorism: 1991 is the price we

pay for 1937.

Could the coup of 1927–34 have been avoided? Or was Plekhanov right in considering the defeat of the proletarian revolution in a country with underdeveloped capitalism a foregone conclusion? The answer to this far from simple question is very difficult. Let us recall Marx's opinion, expressed in a letter to Vera Zasulich: A revolution may begin in Russia, but its success is only guaranteed if it is supported by proletarian revolutions in countries with developed capitalism. Lenin proceeded from the same premise when he came to the conclusion that the imperialist chain would first be broken by a revolution in its weakest link, and then the stronger links would fall away... Unfortunately, the proletarian uprisings in Germany, Hungary, Finland and Bulgaria that followed the Russian Revolution were drowned in blood. Left alone, the Bolsheviks faced a complex set of problems. It was hardly possible to solve them without making mistakes. In the context of the well-known stabilisation of European and American capitalism, meticulous (a term first coined by A. Magdushevsky) political, economic and ideological work was required to consolidate the successes of 1917–20 and create an attractive image of socialism for the world proletariat.

Recognising the meticulous nature of the extremely difficult work that the Bolsheviks had to carry out after the end of the Civil War in the circumstances that had arisen, we will try to identify their decisive mistakes. Two of them were made during Lenin's lifetime. Four months after the Russian working class seized power, at the first party congress after the historic October victory – the 7th Congress of the RCP(b) – a decision was made to develop a new, Second Party Programme. It was adopted a year later, in 1919, by the 8th Congress. With the overthrow of the power of the landlords and capitalists, the First Programme, adopted in 1903, had been fulfilled. A new historical period was about to begin – a transitional phase from capitalism to a global classless society. The tasks of the RCP(b) in its implementation became the content of the party's Second Programme (the general tasks of the other parties – sections of the Third International, created in the same year, 1919, in achieving the same goal were defined by its Programme). Thus, in connection with the radically changed situation after the seizure of power, the Communist Party of the RSFSR adopted a new programme. This was historically quite correct. Its charter, however, remained virtually unchanged. Was this correct? After all, in the transitional phase, the state gradually transfers its functions to self-organising and self-governing associations of manual and intellectual workers. And the party, as the leading force in this process of the withering away of the state, must at the same time be a model association. This means that in the basic organisational principle –

democratic centralism – the emphasis must be shifted from the second word to the first: ***democratic*** centralism. This means, in particular, ensuring guarantees for the rights of minorities. This, incidentally, is the issue that greatly concerned the great revolutionary and Marxist thinker Rosa Luxemburg and was the subject of her discussions with V. I. Lenin. All this means that the charter of the proletarian party ***after*** the seizure of power must be different than ***before***. Alas, this was not done. And this was the first mistake of the Bolsheviks and... Lenin. The second mistake, derived from the first, was the decision to ban factions, adopted at the 10th Party Congress in 1921. At the 10th Congress, the party passed the test of history by adopting the New Economic Policy. At the 10th Congress, the party failed the test of history by banning factions. In 1921, a way was found to develop the basis of the transitional phase. In 1921, a superstructure that negated it was simultaneously conceived. The proviso about the temporary nature of the ban remained empty words. Later, Stalin skilfully used this ban on factions to crack down on everyone who had been part of Lenin's Bolshevik Party leadership. After Lenin's death, it is no longer a question of mistakes, but of the struggle between democratic and bureaucratic tendencies within the party. It ended with the victory of the bureaucratic tendency. This was reflected in the disregard for the basic requirements of Lenin's political testament: workers' control of state and party bodies was not introduced, collectivisation in the countryside was carried out with massive violations of voluntarism, and in national policy, the principles of proletarian internationalism were effectively superseded by great-power chauvinistic and petty-bourgeois nationalist tendencies encouraged from above. The party and the Soviets became objects and subjects of bureaucratic degeneration. From 1937 onwards, an atmosphere of fear prevailed in the Soviet Union that was contrary to the interests of the socialist transition phase. ***History does not forgive its creators for the mistakes they have made.***

## Book launch

# In the Tracks of Marx's *Capital*

**Authors:**
Sungur Savran
E. Ahmet Tonak

**Publisher:**
Palgrave Macmillan




*"A masterly work... A passionate and intelligent application of Marxist categories."*
—Guglielmo Carchedi

*"This thought-provoking book clarifies many of the controversies and confusions surrounding Marx's Capital, and considers how to measure and assess some crucial Marxist variables."*
—Jayati Ghosh

*"Tonak and Savran show convincingly that Marx's Capital remains the bedrock for understanding the laws of motion of capitalist production."*
—Michael Roberts

*"This is living Marxism!"*
—Tamás Krausz

*"Indispensable."*
—Alfredo Saad-Filho

This book provides an accessible introduction to Marx's seminal work Capital and explores the core ideas of Marxian political economy relevant for modern day economies. The first part gives an overview of Capital based on the authors' original thinking in the methodology of Capital. The second part discusses the application of these ideas to some understudied questions of measuring profit on alienation, the rate of exploitation, the reconstruction of input-output tables, and the role of the welfare state and social wage. The third part sets forth new research in Marxian analysis in the 21st century, facing the challenges brought about by digital labor and the deep crisis of the global economy. The last part discusses the Marxism/Neo-Ricardianism controversy.

# Methodological remarks concerning the present state of the organised consistent Left's position in social Critique and social struggles

Ana Bazac[1]

This article, while highlighting philosophical concepts, addresses theoretical, intrinsically ideological aspects, outlining methodological frameworks related to the consistent left's behaviour at least over the last decades. Ultimately, these frameworks are guilty for the retreat and weak efficiency of the organised consistent left and, somehow, of the popular left-wing spirit, although, of course, they are historically determined. Concretely, on the one hand, the frameworks can be seen as general epistemic but, on the other hand, as the political thinking – here, somehow even of the consistent left – that takes over the political patterns of the adversary,

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here, the right wing.

The point is that they can be reversed, and here the simple "philosophical" expression of the logic all the way and of the reasons-to-be of the consistent left is a key condition.

Actually, the article has an asymmetrical form: the pointing of methodological frameworks follows after a longer discussion of aspects substantiating the choice of this topic.

## (1) Instead of an introduction

The left is, obviously, differentiated in the consistent Marxist part and the treacherous social-democratic type that supports the capitalist organisation of society, and even in its malignant evolution. Marxism and the consistent Marxist left are rejected and harshly contested by the social-democratic false left. It is clear that the consistent left has stronger and more numerous enemies of the working masses than the explicit right wing. But even the false left is pressed by the right-wing forces in order to not maintain even the rest of the social policies and slogans. Consequently, neither the false left is significant, while many young people and a large part of the capitalist countries' population choose either a right-wing or extreme-right-wing mimicked "revolution" or different kinds of informal activism which are rather circumscribed to particular problems like the ecological, but do not explicitly oppose the root causes of these problems.

Yes, when all is said and done many people know that "somehow, capitalism is not quite good", but at the same time, either by inserting themselves within voluntary NGOs of concrete aid (which, aside from the necessary alleviation of suffering of those in need, help even the system) or by retreating into an inert state of externalisation towards any domestic and international social problem, they do not vote against it: more clearly, they do not vote for the most progressive political force (and not necessarily a declared communist one) in different certain moments of the last decades of history. A pithy caricature synthesises both the ordinary people's representation that "capitalism is not quite good" and their and the consistent left's difficulty to give in a coherent, clear and resolute manner the root causes of capitalist historical structural unsolvable contradictions, waste and destruction, *as well as* their logical solutions: "-Socialism is a nice idea, but only capitalism actually works; -define 'works'"[2].

But why is, ultimately, so inefficient the organised consistent left, namely, why does it not *convince* a majority of the population so that it can apply the most peaceful, fruitful, economical, therefore better, methods for people's daily lives? Once

2 @cartoonralph, in Holly Ilia, Jan 12, 2020, https://mastodon.social/@daved3464.

again, from all the political, economic, cultural/ideological causes, this paper tries to select only some methodological frameworks the consistent left has assumed, consciously or not. If so, the overthrowing of these frameworks is the at-hand manner to change the results in the present relations of forces. And this overthrowing becomes obvious here, in capitalism, not in the distant future: *just with the proof of the vast majority's choice*, as resolute clever deeds to constitute and defend a consistent organised left and as a vote for the consistent left. Electoralism is not the way to change capitalism: but it is a concrete measure, a "thermometer" of the social conscience of the population and, ultimately, of the state of the ideological hegemony of capitalism. And without strong coherent consistent beliefs of the vast majorities, no change in the world relations of forces can occur. This aspect is very well known by capitalism, and till nowadays it won, to the misfortune of the world majority destructed in imperialist wars and unimaginable suffering and waste. Consequently, *the transformation of methodological frameworks of the behaviour of the left is an existential exigency*.

*

So, we are already familiar with the methodological approach proposed in the article: the starting point of the analysis is not the vote, to which, as to the given that explains and directs the following political tactics, the consistent left must adapt, but just the methodological frameworks of its political attitudes which generated that vote. The interest is not how to improve the score for the consistent left, but how to ratiocinate *in order to fuel the consistent logical and humanist perspective of the populations of the world*.

From the standpoint of the *criteria of the cognitive process*, in other words *epistemologically*, the methodological frameworks of a long series of facts can be grasped at the (relative) end of the series, because only after the accumulation of meanings of every fact in the history of their unfolding, we are able to discern, select and coagulate a coherent synthesis of the inherent complexity. However, because the facts of the series are not isolated from other facts and series, and because human cognition involves not only empirical concepts reflecting the concrete deployment of facts (events, situations) but also abstract concepts extracted from them and synthesising *universal meanings related to their deep causality and significance for humans*[3], people can usefully judge every fact and not only the aggregation of facts.

But both the object and the subject of judgements about social facts are *ideologi-*

3 These abstract concepts were called by Kant, *transcendental*: constituting the most important *frameworks* and *criteria* of human judging.

*cal/have multi-mediated class positions in the domination-submission structural relations*, that is, the judgements themselves concern *at the same time* direct and indirect, implicated meanings. The first result from/are related to the visible. In this sense, it's clear why social critique as such is easy to do. Much more complicated is to judge the deep causality of facts and their significance for humans.

In class-based societies, the dominant way of social thought – the most diffuse and the general assumption of criteria and values – is the social thinking of dominant classes, as Marx demonstrated long before. *This "contamination" of social thought has attacked also the left: and in different proportions, also the consistent left*. The methodological frameworks pointed out in the paper regard just this "contamination".

However, it can be reversed if we are aware of it. And, besides the practical strategies resulted – and are absolutely required by the present state of things – two interrelated not so philosophical points of view as they seem have to be considered as *proofs* of the necessary "maturation" of the left and, thus, of the social conscience of populations of the world: *the point of view* – as a criterion of questioning – of the *moral finality* of political (and economic and cultural) deeds, and, somehow within its deep down, *the point of view* of the human *telos*, of the *what for* of our life and our deeds.

*

These points of view *do not substitute* the economic and social class criteria of analysis: first of all, humans act and construct social relations and institutions because of their existential interests of survival at the highest possible parameters in given space-time frameworks, namely and more specifically, according to the preservation of dominant class position or to the trend to arrive at the most favourable class position possible in the domination-submission societies. At the most coherent theoretical level – as well as at the level of practical decisions towards the course of events – *the economic and political class interests explain the strategies of all actors in the world*: even though, because of complex good and bad political representations, nowadays it is in fashion to speak only about geopolitical reasons. But all of these interests have in their background, even though suppressed – and/or covered – *a moral position*/the *human moral position*.

Clearer: the humans have the possibility to *question the ultimate human reason* of their actions and strategies; in the *dominant* behaviour, education and position, this possibility is *reduced* to private inter-individual emotions, and even *ridiculed*; and this attitude was determined to be taken over in different proportions by the general public taught to pursue immediate goals, isolated from other goals pursued

by others and irrespective of "collateral" consequences[4]; and, by pursuing practical political goals, even the left took over, in different proportions, this attitude. It "forgot" *to clearly and loudly express its concerns about the ultimate "what for" of its own behaviour*. Therefore, once more, one of the most important methodological frameworks pointed out in the paper appears.

So, if these two points of view do not become prominent in the consistent left's behaviour and motivation – and thus, in the behaviour and motivation of populations in the world – the social/cultural evolution of mankind can turn in a very dangerous direction.

# I

## (2) A model of estrangement

In 1874, the greatest Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) wrote *Emperor and proletarian*[5], a unique creation in the Romanian literature, and not only because it was the first and single presence of the word "proletarian" in the Romanian poetry.

Actually, he made the first draft in 1871, even before the Paris Commune. He was born in the countryside and, despite his moving in towns as a schoolboy and, a little later, as a *souffleur* in an itinerant theatrical team, he was imbued by the peasant social landscape, overwhelming in the backward Romanian Countries. But when he arrived in Vienna, he was struck by the "big" urban milieu and its social differences. And, obviously, he learned: and found that, opposite to the at least apparently passive submission of peasants to the out-of-date order led by boyars, configuring an inert state of things, in the resolutely modernising Western world, the *class opposition* was on the agenda. And who opposed, more precisely?

*The proletarian* – who gave the title of the first draft – and who was not only the industrial worker, but also those employed in all the services demanded by the frenetic construction of modern capitalism celebrating the definite victory of the

4 The well-known formula "all is fair in love and war" was coined from the standpoint of *those who dominate*, and the lack of scruples it suggests shows not only the deep destruction of moral reasoning, but also the irresolvable contradiction of domination-submission as such, besides the historical determination of this structure of social relations: the development of the modern, capitalist form of this structure brought about *moral brakes* of "the formula" (the human rights, the laws of war, obviously generated by complex capitalist interests and relations of forces, and contradictory to the structural exploitation, oppression and war), but at the same time, the continuous infringement of these brakes.

5 See here a translation into English, https://www.gabrielditu.com/eminescu/emperor_and_proletarian.asp.

alliance of the big financial and industrial bourgeoisie with the old noble strata. And in that epoch the future separation of "middle class" layers did not yet take place. The poem highlighted the *causes* of the inherent and necessary revolt of the proletarians: the unendurable *social misery*. Indeed, social polarisation in Western cities – to which Eminescu refers – was paroxysmal throughout the 19th century, at least until the 1890s when social security laws appeared. Thus, who was the proletarian? He formed a *social class*[6] that *does not control the means of production at all (moreover, the means of subsistence)* and thus, *in order to live, can only sell his capacity for work*. And the conditions of this selling are miserable.

At 21 years, Eminescu desired to *explain*, and not only to express his observations: only the scientific analysis explains, not poetry, but Eminescu was not able to explain scientifically the causes of his indignation. Thus, he explained in his poem what every sensitive human being could observe, beyond deeper questions about what if the misery disappears, does the proletarian still remain proletarian? And, *methodologically*, his focus on the proletarian shows that the human being should not be described "in general": 1) even the concept of man is consistent only when it is confronted with the reality of its condition, and this concrete social condition is so different that the causes and the results on the life of every person are so different and opposed to each other that an endless glossing about man becomes absurd. And 2) the description of the social condition of the proletarians is more than necessary.

The second variant of the poem, 1873-1874, is important here only because the pessimistic conclusion of the poem in its final variant is introduced by King Lear. But even the contraposition between the proletarian and the king – later, the emperor – suggests that both personify *social classes*. What is more suggestive for the concentration of power of class domination than, irrespective of its modern formal impotence and reduction to ceremonial representativity, the crowned head?

And finally, the finished poem in 1874:

a) after the description of the "desperate" situation of proletarians – and desperate not only because the material (that is, also, cultural) state of misery they are forced in, but also because of the overwhelming injustice[7] they are surrounded by

6 The fact that he used the latter notion (*the proletarian*) to name a social class shows a particular maturity in his social conception: what was known in the socialist/communist literature of the time already indicated more than poverty, more than the state of subordination in all forms, therefore more than a visible quality, hated over time and blamed for being the source of its own misfortunes; but an understanding of the *cause* of this state beyond particular faults: the *class relations.*

7 Do not forget: *justice* is the complete/perfect (*teleios*) virtue (*Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics)*. Translated, with an interpretive essay, notes, and glossary by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 92, Book V, Chapter 1, 1129b27-30). And Plato, *The Republic*. Edited by G.R.F. Ferrari, Translated by Tom Griffith, Cambridge University Press, 2000/2018, p. 342, 618e1-3, the "worse (life) which leads the soul along the road to greater injustice, and that better which leads along the road to greater justice".

that signals the cancelling of any hope for the future –, thus after the indignation leading to the logical conclusion of the overthrowing of this inhuman system,

b) and after the description of the bloody defeat of the Commune,

highlighting

c) the despair of the defeated proletarians whose mood shifts from rebellion to *acceptance of domination as an implacable "natural" given*, their unique life no longer being anything more that the fulfilment of a mechanical function in an eternal scheme: where the emperor seems to embody "the natural laws" of clever domination[8]. Which, once more, have no more importance than any other solution: life ceases to be *important through its content*, it is only a dream, an interlude between the moments of non-existence.

Dryly, the description of this conclusion is that of *estrangement*. People *complain*, of course – or, being taught to not care and to think positively, *simply ignore* – but nevertheless they *accept* the irrational as an irreversible framework of life.

## (3) Why start with poetry?

Because the conclusions of the poem are the same with the situation of *the disappointment of people in the face of failures of the beneficial social change*. We are interested in the behaviour of the left. *When the left fails to induce the transformations which it proposed and militated for, people fall into a deep state of despair*. This state may be unconscious, it may be sublimated into a quite right-wing position, or it may be overlooked by a pragmatic analysis of forces, relations, the inevitable bourgeois hegemony of ideology, the historically fragmented left, the complex situations far from the ideal/textbook objective and subjective conditions of class struggles. Ultimately, politics is a cold deduction of the best strategies in the *hic et nunc* real-world conditions, isn't it?

But *the left must consider just the deep moods of people, the deep state of their conscience*. The right ignores them: or, obviously, proacts against the eventual tendencies of disobedience, infringing in its ideology any consideration of the life and dignity of human beings which are designed by it to obey. But the *reason-to-be* of the left is just to serve *the multitude*: *humanity* as the *entire human species* and as *every member* of it. Therefore, the main criterion of the left's endeavour to judge its own facts *is to not disappoint the multitude, the people and the peoples*.

8 In the conclusion of the poem, Eminescu was not the proletarian. But he was neither the old Lear from the second variant nor the emperor – Caesar – from the final form. Even though the last words of the poem seem to approve Caesar – life is a dream, so *why* question the order of the dream? – *in fact, the proletarian cannot be denied*: because we all see that life is not a dream, and we must make our life beautiful and dignified here on Earth. *What the proletarian said cannot be refuted in any way.*

Not only because the disappointed people could be more easily recruited by the right, thus acting against their own interests to not waste their unique life. But, first and foremost, because when humans are disappointed, they lose support points, they lose social ideals, they lose their own reason-to-be, and thus the certitude concerning their life trajectories and deeds. They remain, of course, at the level of existential functions, and they even have joy in them: briefly, they remain at the level of *living beings* in their environment. But they restrict their *human being* power to change this environment according to their rational free will, and are limited to working for and adapting to the changes which come from outside them.

## (4) The occasion

It is a concept that is much more important than one believes it. The *occasion* describes the particular *complex of tendencies and events* that *precedes* the decisions related to actions which, as any action, are bifurcation points and generate changes in the course of things.

We can decide on one path or another according to the theory of *causes as conditions* for decision/action; more generally, *input →action→output*/consequences. But this theory involves *finesse*: defalcation of different proximate and different distant causes, as well as understanding of their mixture with, however, different weights, and obviously evaluation of results according to all of these.

At the political level, the *subjective* causes and the *objective* causes are especially important; both at proximate and distant levels. And, because there is never an optimum proportion and mixture of causes, people must choose the decision/action best suitable to the real situation: actually, the *less harmful concerning its consequences*.

These are generalities. But what the left is obliged to do is to think not only of the easiest action (from the standpoint of its feasibility) according to its immediate results, but firstly, *of the conscience*, the *psyche* of people. Yes, firstly, because the left fights for maintaining the hope of the *multitude* of *unique human beings* – the hope of the people, of the peoples – that they and every one of them will change for the better their own lives. Not only as a living standard but – here, first of all – as the possibility of the embodiment of social justice, as the possibility of living in a world of social justice and peace.

A *counter-example* – in tone with the above personification of domination by the Crown – is the decision of the Spanish Communist Party in 1975 to promote the monarchical institution as a form of state/governance after the death of Franco. We know that this decision was imbued with “Eurocommunism”, the glide and leaning of Western communist parties toward a bourgeois reformism of “cohabitation”,

"concertation"[9], "consociationalism" – of not only opposite right-wing parties but, besides the already declared "reformist"/pro-capitalist socialist/social-democratic parties, of the communist "elites" mimicking the burden of representation of the people[10] but destroying the reason-to-be and thus, credibility of the communist parties. Because the logic of these parties, in parliaments or not, was not only to press for the most general and social democratic rights, but also always to emphasise the structural contradictions of capitalism – even when it accepts social rights – the causes of both these contradictions and the acceptance of rights, and the structural

9 The bourgeois reformism was and is a world strategy of capitalism, of course, it is not limited to Europe. Its main long-term consequence is the time lost by the working people, the waste of their lives because of the infringement of their dignity. Reduced to political behaviour, this consequence was seen both in shaking moments – as in the support of a majority of the German people for Nazism – and in long rather passive submission to the spectacle of bourgeois democracy. In order to move from Europe, and not ignoring but putting here in parenthesis the vivid Latin American peasants and peoples, see Marcos Roitman Rosenmann, *Chili : l'arnaque de la post-dictature consommée*, 17 décembre 2025, https://www.legrandsoir.info/chili-l-arnaque-de-la-post-dictature-consommee.html, taken from https://www.lahaine.org/mundo.php/chile-se-consuma-la-estafa-posdictadura (the watchword in Chile is *concertation*, too).

10 "While *populism* is, essentially, an *anti-elitist* ideology, consociationalism is, at its very heart, about power sharing between *political elites*. As such, consociationalism marks … a theoretical alternative to polarized and/or populist government", and "while consociationalism in plural societies is premised on inclusion, "militant consociational democracy"… deliberately excludes the extreme right from the consociational grand coalition in order to protect democratic values. In Belgium, the same parties that work together across the country's linguistic divisions in an elaborate consociational federation have systematically excluded the Flemish and Francophone extreme-right parties from electoral, legislative, and governmental cooperation", Matthijs Bogaart, Lutger Helms, Arend Lijphart, "The Importance of Consociationalism for Twenty-First Century Politics and Political Science", *Swiss Political Science Review (*SPSR), Vol. 25, Issue 4, 2019, pp. 341-356 (342, 343) (my emphasis, AB).

(AB: the exclusion of extreme-right parties – observed in 2019 – involves explicit assumptions on behalf of democratic parties, but, letting aside this *institutionalised* aspect, more and more are the extreme-right *attitudes* and *policies* introduced surreptitiously in the "democratic" coalitions; obviously, not those shaking the unbridled neoliberal sexual diversity, but those opposing to the popular democratic right of masses to express and impose their interests. The outside interventions of intelligence states and private institutions in electoral processes, culminating in "colour revolutions", are an aspect and example countering the formal position of right-wing parties. See the recent elections in Honduras, Maurice Lemoine, *Au Honduras, les dessous du coup d'Etat électoral*, mardi 9 décembre 2025, https://www.medelu.org/Au-Honduras-les-dessous-du-coup-d-Etat-electoral, where the conservative candidate backed by the USA president won, *Honduras declares Asfura, backed by Trump, as presidential winner*, 12/24/25, https://thehill.com/policy/international/5662890-nasry-asfura-wins-honduras/).

Thus, it is important to question whether "parity, proportionality, autonomy, and minority veto-rights" (Brendan O'Leary, "Consociation in the Present", *Swiss Political Science Review (*SPSR), Vol. 25, Issue 4, 2019, pp. 556-574) – but keep attention, between elites – are specific only to the capitalist power-sharing. Do they not work better when the rights of the ruled are taken into account?

solutions to surpass the capitalist limits of social progress. Otherwise, why would these communist parties be necessary at all? The bourgeois political reformism of cohabitation relied on the old "socialist reformism" *à la* Bernstein, and both constituted a betrayal of the European and world proletarians: actually, of the *proletarian spirit of peoples*.

Here, I am – and we are – interested to see the weight (something more than the big influence) of the decisions of the left. *The ideal conditions are never met*, but the left must decide: and, really first of all, according to the *long-term consequences on the mind and soul of people*. Because any practical consideration has in its *arrière plan* the concern about what the people will think and thus, according to this thinking, do. And no, the *general* mood in Spain in 1975 was not favourable to the monarchical form of state, there would not have been any civil war *if the communists would have clearly and loudly propagated the reasons and benefits of the republican democracy*. No Western representative democracy, obviously bourgeois, did annihilate capitalism until 1975, and a future Spanish republic would have continued the post-war capitalist development. If, still obviously, the former success would have continued without any impediment brought by the world logic of capitalist competition. But, letting aside this parenthesis signalling the *autonomy of economic logic towards the capitalist forms of governance*, the symbol of monarchy and of the keeping of monarchy – by communists! – induced sadness and disappointment: "so, everything questionable will continue; and the communists?: are not better than the others". The following passive rejection of the institutional consistent left activism and the turnout in the electoral spectacles are the proofs till today.

Another counter-example is the Romanian left's acceptance and promotion *post 1990* (!) of the "Royal House" – giving it back all its pre-war properties and paying it big amounts of subsidies –, of the monarchy abolished in 1947, although the big majority of the people had and has resolute republican beliefs. It's true, this left was and is social-democratic and it should have accepted it in the first decade from 1990 onwards because of the ugly pressure of the right-wing parties and their external supporters; but after 2000, when Iliescu won his second term and no one revised the conditions of subsidies, and especially after 2017, when the "king" – Mihai (1921-2017) – passed away and his daughter was appointed "Custodian of the Crown" (*sic*) continuing to extort subsidies from the state[11], no left-wing voice[12], be it social-

11 Till today, when the official austerity policy searches for money to finance the armament industry and the participation in the war against Russia, and reduces the wages and income of the majority of the population, as well as reduces all the social expenditures for infrastructure maintenance, culture, health: no one asked why this absurd institution of "Custodian of the Crown" is paid from public money.

12 I wrote *Monarhia salvează România?*, 28 iunie 2011, http://www.criticatac.ro/8496/monarhia-salveaza-romania/ [Does the monarchy save Romania?], because the right wing, and even social-democrats who were excluded from the social-democratic leadership, continued to press toward

democratic, since traditionally social-democracy was republican, or "communist"[13], dared even to approach the problem.

## (5) The temporal aspect of the occasion

As a complex of tendencies and events, the *occasion* occurs at a certain time, in a certain *moment*. The moment and the occasion are phenomena of different orders, although people consider them to be tantamount to each other, and as words to mutually signal the presence of the corresponding phenomenon of different order. Perhaps we can relate the occasion to a *set* of *puncta*, specific details captured in a photo and even though each detail, *punctum*, has a unique meaning (pricking us/stinging in us), actually only all of them transmit to us the coherent uniqueness of the intention of the photo/of the photographed phenomenon[14]. In a more up-to-date manner, we can equate *puncta* with the *data* of ICT, while their assembly in a set whose unity gives and is given by a coherent meaning, with *information*. Or, in philosophical and scientific language, the moments are *events*, constituting a *trend* that in a moment/in each moment emphasises an *occasion*.

An epistemic mistake is to ignore *the trends* unfolding over a long period of time, and to see only the events, disparately, or some present events which are considered as triggers of the occasion to which one has to react. The prestige of Franco's economic legacy – the postwar economic growth in the framework of Cold War integration with the USA[15] – and his early decision (1969) to impose monarchy as his successor, as well as the power of the conservative big bourgeois parties, should have been understood as facts illustrating the trend of structural class domination: in no way enough to decide the submission of Spanish working masses to them. If, once more, *the communists would have clearly and loudly propagated the reasons and benefits of the republican democracy.*

Another epistemic mistake is to judge past behaviours with present lenses,

monarchy, their slogan being Monarchy saves Romania, and calling Mihai "the King of Romanians", and "His Majesty". These, in a republic.

13 The social-democracy in power accepted different tiny groups of "communists" led by former and present intelligence officers, which were absolutely invisible and disappeared after some mocked appearances by mass media.

14 Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire. Notes sur la photographie*, Paris, Gallimard Seuil, 1980, p. 49: "because *punctum* is also: a prick, a small hole, a small spot, a small cut — and also a throw of the dice. The *punctum* of a photograph is that chance which, in it, *points me*".

15 Sima Lieberman, *Growth and Crisis in the Spanish Economy: 1940-93*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995; Oscar Calvo-Gonzalez, "American Military Interests and Economic Confidence in Spain under the Franco Dictatorship", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 67, Issue 3, 2007, pp. 740-767; Neal M. Rosendorf, *Franco Sells Spain to America: Hollywood, Tourism and Public Relations as Postwar Spanish Soft Power*, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2014.

namely, *as if* people in the past would have known what we do know today. The economic postwar Franco era "miracle" was part of the postwar European economic recovery and growth with the help of the new technology and international integration: but, and irrespective of the political forms of governance, it was to evolve through crises. And since the logic of economy is autonomous towards the forms of state, *these forms as such are favourable or unfavourable frameworks for the evolution of class structure and dominant ideology*.

According to monarchy, not only is the social constitutive inequality between upper classes and the rest "natural", but also the political one. In every capitalist organisation of society, the hegemony of the dominant class ideology is obvious (Marx, Gramsci), but since in the democratic/republican form of governance the hegemonic ideology insists on the political equality of citizens, the monarchical form of governance *cannot demonstrate why*, if all members of society are *politically* equal, "some are more equal than others": we vote for our representatives at the level of villages, cities, counties, parliament, but not at the level of head of state: he/she is hereditary. Why? Because. No subterfuge calling the modern monarchy "constitutional" – *as if* this presence of the constitution would annul the absurd hereditary feature of the head of state who has mostly a ceremonial function and is paid by the state for this, thus the "royal house" being the chief of "oligarchs" criticised by the right-wing critique of capitalism, and *as if* the modern constitution would not have been and would not be the proof of the absolute victory of the bourgeoisie, inserting within capitalism all the old dominant strata, thus over any drag eventually imposed by the "God's anointed".

In philosophy, the temporal aspect of the occasion was called *kairos*. It signified the *opportune moment* considered by humans for their actions, the *internal* time constructed by their consciousness because it was related to decisions, and being *within* the *exterior* linear time that flows inexorably in a series of accidents as if generated by a child[16].Thus, *kairos* does not flow, but "is created" by humans and is creative of facts, of the world. It is not the occasion that is given to individuals from outside, but it is the temporal framework they create. However, both because of its mixture with the exterior time and because of the thinking that deliberates before deciding, the *kairos* is not only a moment but also an interval. Therefore, because it is the subjective time of the thinking humans, the *kairos* dismisses *both* the incomprehensible *destiny – the time given from a mysterious without* – and *the explicit imposition of restrictive, irrational and harmful interests of dominant forces.* Because *kairos* is chosen time, and the optimal choice arises only from the freedom to think and propose the best actions for both the individual and all his/her human

16 Herakleitos, Fragment 52, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Griechisch und Deutsch, von Hermann Diels, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1903, p. 74.

fellows. Consequently, the optimal choice and *kairos* depend on the optimal choice and *kairos* of all the other fellow humans, of all humankind. If so, no *kairos* should be *captured* by divisive forces of domination, because just this capture annuls the human decision and transforms the *kairoi* into fatal constraints. Always the results light the decisions, distinguishing between full use of occasions and waste of time.

The above example of the behaviour of the post-1990 Romanian "left" shows that when the occasion is lost even to promote minimal goals – as the consistent fight for democracy[17], for rights which do not harm the rights of others and for today's possible and generally accepted social reforms (as universal free health care) – then even a space for the maintaining of the present capitalism is lost[18]. Actually, the present system does not have this space, and the good *kairoi – rational opportunities* – are substituted with the *sudden moment*, with accidental very short-term political reactions which do not even alleviate the phenomena of global societal crisis. *The opportunity is lost, the present time is lost, the future time is wasted*.

The question of occasion and its temporal interval to convert it into beneficial actions involves, ultimately, time but, more, the *conditions of possibility to freely think*, reflect on the societal problems. In front of the present capitalism – and in front of the unimaginable contradictions between the enfranchisement of the intellectual capacities of the individuals/the development of science and, on the other hand, the cognitive state of a big majority condemned to *react to phenomena according to patterns of consumerism and physical survival and pleasures* – the endeavour of the consistent left suggests to people to think of *structurally opposed alternatives to the current social logic*: to discuss in terms of concepts almost non-existent before, but having much more weight than one thinks, in terms of *the intolerable*, the *negation* of *the irreversible*, of *the implacable*[19].

17 As mentioned above, the *representative democratic political regime* is contradicted by the *monarchical form of government*.

18 The cut or shrinking of social expenditures, even for the most deprived, who were an old concern of the ruling strata. The example of the USA is significant, because *this country embodies the most advanced contradictory trends of capitalism*. And the "social state" for instance in Denmark or Israel (with free universal health care etc.) does not contradict the logic of the world capitalist system, because it is today an exception, determined by specific historical conditions, not the trend of the system. This "social state" still gives the system space/time to exist, because it preserves the social conscience of their populations in the area of domination-submission, in the area of supporters of capitalism: at the expense of wars, and domination of other populations.See *Understanding the SNAP program—and what cuts to these benefits may mean*, November 10, 2025, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/social-policy/explainer-understanding-snap-program-and-what-cuts.But, because I gave the example of Denmark, see a sample of "modernity": *the Denmark Constitution* (https://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/da00000_.html). 1992. Section 12: "…the King shall have the supreme authority in all the affairs of the Realm…;" Section 13: "the King shall not be answerable for his actions; his person shall be sacrosanct".

19 Ana Bazac, « Le temps d'agir », *Diotima*, vol. 42, 2014, pp. 6-22, republished because of the

When the conditions to freely think and act are missing, people flee from that country or struggle quietly to make both ends meet by any means in the country: these are the indications of the capitalist ideology. But what if these solutions have limited validity, so limited that they give room to other ones? For capitalism, this "third issue" is absolutely forbidden. And then?

## (6) Injustice

Why would justice be the biggest *virtue* even for sophisticated intellectuals like Plato and Aristotle? And thus, injustice – the biggest *vice*? As it is known, after the ancient polytheist religions where man was definitely positioned within human society, thus towards other human fellows, the world of gods signifying the entirety of all human capacities and errors, all searches for the fulfilment of human creativity (this fulfilment being equated with happiness), the monotheist religions – or rather Christianity – moved that position as the fundamental relationship between man and God. Consequently, the individual vice lost its internal obligation towards other humans and became ultimately responsible towards God[20], as *sin* towards Him. However, the capital sins – from which issued all the harmful behaviours – were just those manifested towards humans: from the set of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth[21], only pride and envy would be related to God, as the popular tale The Gold Fish[22] warns against not a simple insatiable want, but against the foolish desire of man to be equal to God.

But in the above list of sins, injustice misses, and since the list as such is so important we cannot speculate that injustice would be indirectly present as a sin.

What is justice? Justice expresses the *mutuality*/symmetry of human relationships in their concrete deployment. It is felt already by children[23], showing the

disappearance of that interesting Greek/international journal, as « Le temps d'agir », *Analele Universităţii din Craiova. Seria Filosofie*, 44, 2, 2019, pp. 73-97.

20 It's not important here that God personified the entire humanity, thus Man – as the young Hegelians Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx already showed – but only that the human forces were severed from the humans now let without their constitutive condition of independence, thus *autonomy*, ability to give to themselves – from their capacity of reason – the laws of conduct.

21 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_deadly_sins.

22 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tale_of_the_Fisherman_and_the_Fish, where Pushkin's tale in verses (1835) and both the German Grimm and the Russian Afanasyev collections of popular tales in the 19th century were rather interpreted as of popular origin. In my mother's Romanian village between the two world wars, in the tale the poor peasants asked the Lord who was their guest for a night to make them boyar and boyar's wife, then prince and princess, and then God and Goddess (AB, not an ancient goddess, but God's wife). But the Lord got angry and turned them into a pair of hoopoes.

23 Jean Piaget, *Le jugement moral chez l'enfant* (1932), Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2000; Thomas Kesselring, « La rationalité des émotions. Un complément à la théorie de Piaget »,

structural connections and interdependence in society. It is not the simple opposite of rivalry/ competition, as if these two opposite elements would have equal importance and generative power, but the *original sentiment* in the deployment of social relations. Actually, the social interdependence was thought of as *symmetry in the control of the human existence* within communities.

The cold academic theory distinguishes *distributive* justice as fairness of the results of human activities (so, what/*how much* to share), from *procedural* justice as fairness of processes leading to results and the fair manner to arrive at and share them (*how* to share). In the capitalist ideology, the latter tends to cover the first, namely the "philanthropy" that gives "what one can"[24] but without changing the framework of domination-submission. But justice is not control of objective resources, of the neutral "what and how to share", but *control of the social relations* which involve the definition itself of resources and their sharing.

Why would be so important this difference? Because it implies different attitudes/sentiments: it's one thing when we cannot control a flood and another one when we cannot control the social organisation within which the flood occurred as a curse of gods. Obviously, we recognise the importance of the historical tendency of capitalism to compensate for its cruel neglect of "the undeserving", and we support any capitalist "philanthropy" as aid and concrete solidarity with those in need because of exceptional events or "normal decay": but this aid and solidarity within capitalism must never exhaust our expression that they have structural limits, which can be surpassed with the transformation of the structural relations of capitalism.

A way of the capitalist "philanthropy", a way in which it tends to reduce itself, is to focus on the extreme poverty – its criteria are not important here – and aid in emergency situations. We should not forget that the focus on extreme poverty and aid is *integrated into the capitalist logic*: it is based on state-guaranteed funds and on private funds which ultimately represent investments.

Leaving aside this lucrative aspect of "philanthropy", what it brings is a raping of the deep intimacy of the individuals, generating acute sentiments of *helplessness*,

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*Cahiers Gaston Bachelard*, 9, 2007, pp. 121-136 ; Kristen A. Dunfield and Valerie A. Kuhlmeier, "Classifying Prosocial Behavior: Children's Responses to Instrumental Need, Emotional Distress, and Material Desire", *Child Development*, 2013 Sep-Oct;84(5):1766-76 ; Alexandra Éléonore Didry, *De l'influence du sentiment d'injustice procédurale et interactionnelle à la prédiction de la colère-état et de la violence au travail*, Thèse, Strasbourg, 2008 ; Sophie Richardot, « Le(s) sens de la justice distributive chez les enfants : revue de la littérature et perspective psycho-sociale », *Les cahiers internationaux de psychologie sociale*, 2014/3, Numéro 103, pp. 421-454 ; Nasrédine Goutas, Azeddine Goutas. « De la prise de décision de justice aux implications sociales et psychosociales : L'impact du Sentiment d'Injustice Subie (SIS) ». In : Emanuel Jeuland (Ed.), *Droit et Emotion*, Paris : IRJS Éditions, 2024, pp. 465-506.

24 See Ana Bazac, "Global injustice: what is known, what is assumed and what is promised?", *Studia UBB, Philosophia*, 58, No.2, 2013, pp. 145-157.

of *implacable* and *irreparable dependency*. In this sense, the old liberal saying that we must not give a fish to a hungry person, but a fishing rod to catch fish, is true: *but the fishing rod must belong to the hungry*. The Western propaganda showing large groups of children and adults waiting *today* for food fails to suggest the magnanimity of capitalism: actually, it indicates its bankruptcy. There are no words to express the despair of those who are constrained to be feed: "there is no hope" for them, "what could we hope?". *The implacable*, *the irreparable* are all the more acute as the individuals no longer see any way of change.

The capitalist ideology shows the trend of decreasing differences between incomes in the world – although inequality increases on a national scale – as proof of "nevertheless, there is progress under capitalism"[25]. But this trend highlights, on the one hand, the *middle ground* between high-middle-income states, China which has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, and lower-middle-income states. On the other hand, the average increase – ontologically based on the general accumulation of objects as a result of human labour and generating cumulative effects[26] – and measured in the economic statistics as the quantitative multiplication of a conventional unit, covers the worsening of the quality of goods[27] of the majority of the world population. But, when all is said and done, actually the inequality rose to the absurd level where "0.001% of the world's population – control three times as much wealth as the entire bottom half of humanity"[28].

Also, the word "convergence" – suggesting a future with such a big reduction of inequality worldwide that the different levels of the economic state will converge

25 Branko Milanovic, "The Great Convergence: Global Equality and Its Discontents", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2023; June 14, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/great-convergence-equality-branko-milanovic.

26 We do not construct a bridge near a village after we did it some years ago (we construct other structures), and if before having the bridge the villagers crossed the river in boats to go to the market across the river, now the proportion of villagers and, thus, the proportion and value of trade increase, generating new opportunities of production etc.

27 John McMurtry, *Global Poverty: How the Rich Eat the Poor and the World*, August 31, 2018, https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-davos-blind-eye-how-the-rich-eat-the-poor-and-the-world/5503273; Colin Todhunter, *The Globalisation of Bad Food and Poor Health: Sustainable Development or Sustainable Profits?*, September 01, 2018, https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-globalisation-of-bad-food-and-poor-health-sustainable-development-or-sustainable-profits/5518194 ; and even Joanna Blythman, *Swallow This: Serving Up the Food Industry's Darkest Secrets*. London: Fourth Estate. 2015; but see Samuel L. Swift et al., "Unsecured debt in early adulthood and premature mortality in adults in the USA: a longitudinal analysis of prospective national cohort data", *Lancet Public Health*, 10, 2025, e979–87.

28 Michael Roberts, *Extreme inequality – and what to do about it*, December 10, 2025, https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2025/12/10/extreme-inequality-and-what-to-do-about-it/; and *World Inequality Report 2026*, https://wir2026.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2025/12/World_Inequality_Report_2026.pdf.

into a "world welfare", here, in capitalism – reminds us of *the theory* of *convergence of systems*, of socialism and capitalism, based on the objective development and diffusion of science and technology, so, on the assumption that there's no more need to "oppose" the two systems or to fight for socialism, since capitalism will transform automatically, as a result of the scientific development of productive forces, into something good, into socialism for instance. The theory was a variant of the *technophile* image about capitalism – "science and technology will solve everything" – and more importantly, was a right-wing solution issued from the capitalist "think tanks" and sometimes assumed by writers from the "socialist camp": who were incredibly morally blind and egotistic to exclude from "civilisation" the fundamental difference of structural relations of the two systems and their *psychical* consequences.

But the focus on the quantitative measure of justice as the reduction of differences between incomes once more shows both the irreconcilable contradictions and the spiritual limits of capitalism. Within a state, its perspective is to individually strive to climb the social ladder so as to have more/bigger income. No matter how. While internationally, it implies that the leading strata of each country must accord with the hegemon states so as to be part of the privileged countries from the standpoint of their incomes. If so, every such endeavour is good, isn't it?

Epistemologically, this theory concretises the *methodological individualism*: the sociological paradigm that the social is explained by the individual, and, in the common parlance of capitalism, that human society = individual + individual + individual… But the human social cannot be reduced to the individual, because it is in fact, as Marx formulated, the ensemble of the social relations: it would be absurd to explain the human values and, generally, the human culture as individual *conatus*[29], wouldn't it? But if we can solve the epistemological aspect by emphasising that society can be *reduced neither* to the individual *nor* to the social, but is explained

29 *Conatus* is the philosophical concept coined by the first Stoics and taken over by, for example, Spinoza and Leibniz, who defined it as the internal force of things/monads, or *vital force* (Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*. Translated by George Eliot, Edited by Thomas Deegan, Salsburg: Institut fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universitat Salzburg, 1981, III, Prop. VI, p. 100 ("Every thing, as far as in it lies, strives to persevere in its existence"; G.W. Leibniz, "On the Reform of Metaphysics and of the Notion of Substance" (1694), in *The Philosophical Works of Leibniz*, Translated from the original Latin and French, with notes of George Martin Duncan, Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Publishers, New Haven, 1890, pp. 69-70).Not in order to challenge, let's however grasp a difference between *conatus* as the force of any individual thing, or the force of the living, and *fitra* from Islam. *Fitra* is the disposition/constitution/instinct of man both towards his persistence as a being and towards what is essential for the being to be human: compassion, intelligence and *ihsan* – (the responsibility to achieve) perfection. *Conatus* signals the *genus proximum* of the human being – that it is a being and a living being – while *fitra* denominates the *differentia specifica*, the *humanity* of the human being.

*through their tandem*, the moral aspect of the theory of distributive justice through the capitalist state and private "philanthropy" that would reduce the differences between incomes – as a "proof" of the beneficial character of capitalism – generates stupefaction. Because – and obviously because it assumes that capitalism is the only and ultimate desirable system – it reduces the dignified life of everyone aiming it at the quest and fulfilment of a progressive/high income, and lacks any empathy towards those "deserving" who are on the lower rungs of the social ladder and, as a multitude/as their coherent totality determined by their lack of control of the means of existence[30], can never surpass this condition. It is not "an economic theory" that cannot take into account "philosophical problems", it is/is part of the ideology of class domination, it legitimises it.

Therefore, justice and injustice, too, are the result of the power relations, of domination-submission. *They are social relations* and defined as *values* not simply in the cognitive process, but in the concrete deployment of class relations. Their importance as values – and core values, assumed as such by the leading ideology – is, ultimately, the result of deaf and sometimes loud class struggle, of pressure from below.

As demonstrated by Marx, the human estrangement of both the ruled and the rulers arises not from an objective, thus inevitable, difference between and exteriority of the subject towards the object (Hegel), but from the *domination-submission structural relations* of the social systems which are based on them, that is, from the *capitalist structural relations*. The human estrangement is, ultimately, an estrangement from the *values* which synthesise and bear the human unique singularity or, borrowing the concept from philosophy, quiddity as essence: the *human moral reason*. *Human logic* and *human morals*. The estranged humans do not understand the absolute necessity to consistently follow and actualise the *human logic and the human moral in their intimate unity*. The rulers despise them, considering them catchwords used to fool the ruled, but they being are above them. While the ruled arrive to take over the contempt: it's because they are in the position to not trust them.

In societies based on structural domination-submission relations, estrangement is a *universal* feature, although it is counterpoised by the disinterested relations of aid, solidarity, love. Just *these* relations show that the real – and not the historical, conjunctural – universal human feature is the unity of human logic and human morality: because these relations show the *reason-to-be* of the human accident in

30 Obviously, even those in necessary services. You must read *Nurses whose shitty boss is a shitty app*, Dec 18, 2024, https://doctorow.medium.com/https-pluralistic-net-2024-12-17-loose-flapping-ends-luigi-has-a-point-db7e46c1c9c9; and Katie J. Wells, Funda Ustek Spilda, *Uber for Nursing: How an AI-Powered Gig Model Is Threatening Health Care*, December 17, 2024, https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/uber-for-nursing/.

the universe. Why? Are all of these not superfluous pompous philosophical words? Not at all: and the *criterion* is the *universalizability* of relations and values. If the estranged, violent, irrational interhuman relations would universalise without any compensating love, aid and solidarity, the humans would disappear. But the universalisation of relations of aid, solidarity and love assures the flourishing of the human species. And as long as the universe exists, *the unity of human reason and morality makes this species* – unfolded as transient beings who, however, do not cease to act and act and act – *equal to the universe*[31], *as if* the reason-to-be of the universe would be the unity of reason and morality.

## (7) Class domination

As it is known and as Marx himself specified[32], neither *classes* nor *class struggle* were discovered by him, but by bourgeois historians and economists. But in Marx, these concepts which had a concrete empirical determination, became ontologically relevant: just because their former *static* form – that there are classes, and classes struggle with each other – became *dynamic*, generated by the evolution and transformation of economic, political and cultural social relations. The *ontological relevance of concepts is absolutely opposed to metaphysics*: in metaphysics, concepts are posed as the roots/principles of the world, they are not questioned but justified with speculations and life-world examples selected so that they fit their "origin". In Marx, *the human history and its dissection show the concepts* – namely, the *contents/meanings resulted from the historical analysis*.

Traditionally, those below were called *slaves*, *the poor*, *the villains*. Marx took over the metaphor "proletarians" – issued from the analogy between the ancient Roman *proletarii*, the poorest strata of free citizens who could support the army only by enrolling them and their scions (*proles*) within it, and the modern wage-earners – for instance from the liberal thought suggested by the Swiss economist J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi[33], and from the radical Christian socialist Félicité de

31 This equality is felt by the mother: for whom her children give the value of the universe.

32 Karl Marx to J. Weydemeyer in New York, London, March 5, 1852, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/letters/52_03_05-ab.htm: "no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists, the economic anatomy of classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production (*historische Entwicklungsphasen der Production*), (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the *transition* to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*".

33 J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, Études sur les sciences sociales. Tome second. *Études sur l'Économie politique*, À Paris, Chez Treuttel et Würtz, Libraires, M.DCCC.XXXVII, pp. 35, 36

La Mennais (or Lamennais)[34], and from the socialist literature belonging to the French movement surrounding the 1830 revolution led by petty-bourgeoisie representatives who suffered because of the "treason" of the big bourgeoisie that arrived to control the French Revolution, turning it into a historical event sealing its definite victory over the former dominant layers which became subordinated to and integrated within its logic, and obviously over *le peuple*[35] of the lower class and the lower middle class, to which it signalled the structural continuity of class domination, beyond slogans about LEF (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*).

With the whole accurate *description* of class relationships before and in capitalism, and of the concrete conditions of proletarians, the above writers oscillated between the assumption that the domination-submission relationships are necessary[36] and the hope that the universal juridical rights established in capitalism – rights which, first of all, allow the freedom of the modern labour force to sell its capacity to work, the freedom to be part of a contract – will evolve toward rights of economic equality[37] –. Accordingly, the proletarians were rather a passive class, the *moral*[38] progress of humankind being in fact the result of habitual rebellions from below and preventive reforms from above.

Starting from the peculiarity of the proletarian condition/labour – that of having *no propriety that would assure his existence*, the proletarian sells his working power for *a wage*[39] – Marx developed the concept of *the proletariat* as no longer

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etc.; J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Nouveaux principes d'Economie politique, ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population* (1819), Paris: Delaunay, 1827.

34 F. Lamennais, *De l'esclavage moderne* (1839), pp. 215-255, in *Paroles d'un croyant, Une voie de prison, De l'esclavage moderne*, Paris : Michel Lévy Frères, Editeurs, 1869.

35 *Ibidem*, p. 224: "By 'people' we mean the proletarians, that is, those who, owning nothing, live solely by their labour. The type of work is irrelevant; and thus, there are proletarians of every condition and profession. Only the vast majority subsists on physical labour."

36 J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, Études sur les sciences sociales. Tome second. *Études sur l'Économie politique*, pp. 173-174.

37 F. Lamennais, *De l'esclavage moderne*, p. 227: "We do not, of course, dispute moral progress or the recognition of rights, and this progress is great, because, by restoring human dignity and enshrining the fruitful principle of natural equality, it prepares the way for another; because it will produce sooner or later the social reality that logically corresponds to it. But, in the present state of affairs, the condition of the proletarian, morally superior, is, with regard to physical life, often inferior to that of the slave".

38 *Ibidem*: "But this freedom is only fictitious. The body is not enslaved, but the will is". Indeed, morality refers to the will to choose.

39 This peculiarity was emphasised by all writers. But see also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, With a *Prelude in German Rhymes* and an *Appendix of Songs* (1882), Edited by Bernard Williams, Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff, Poems translated by Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge University Press, 2001, § 42, p 57: "Seeking work for the sake of wages - in this, nearly all people in civilized countries are alike; to all of them, work is just a means and not itself the end, which is why they are unrefined in their choice of work provided it yields an ample reward. Now there are

denominating a particular class opposed to another, the bourgeoisie – although the industrial working class was/is the best illustration of the proletariat – but the *universal* class of the future developed capitalism. This universal mark does not mean an impossible uniformity of concrete domains, skills and human satisfaction, but, in capitalism:

the universal opposition between the lack of *property that would assure the existence*, therefore, the *lack of control over the means of existence*, and the universal characteristic of *the producer* of all the means of existence,

the universal dependency on wages, that implies a savage competition for work and wages between proletarians[40],

and thus, the universal possibility to overthrow this dependency.

From the above, the universal characteristic of *the producer* of all the means of existence cannot be reversed, of course. It remains to destroy the *private appropriation of* property. And by doing this, the universal class destroys *its dependency on private property*: this means the abolition of its *class character*; from a class opposing to *capital*, from its proletarian status in capitalism, the universal class becomes, indeed, *the people*. And, the destruction of the private feature of property relations/ of private appropriation of the means of existence is possible just because its author is the universal class: but is possible only as a conscious *revolution* – a movement of radical transformation of the capitalist structural relations –. The communist revolution does not work for a new "class balance between the rich and the poor"[41], but for the abolition of this distinction and "balance".

Not this distinction – actually, naming the capital-owners and the proletarians – and its keeping would solve the problem of "particularity"[42], of different strata within the world proletariat, thus, of different strata of "middle classes" which arose from the industrial working class of 80 or 50 years ago. Yes, the proletariat within

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rare individuals who would rather perish than work without taking pleasure in their work: they are choosy, hard to please, and have no use for ample rewards if the work is not itself the reward of rewards. To this rare breed belong artists and contemplative men of all kinds, but also men of leisure who spend their lives hunting, travelling, in love affairs, or on adventures".

40 J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, Études sur les sciences sociales. Tome second. *Études sur l'Economie politique*, p. 249: "this universal competition, decorated with the word of limitless freedom of industry".

41 *Ibidem*, p. 176.

42 As David W. Lovell, *The Concept of the Proletariat in the Work of Karl Marx*, Thesis submitted for the degree of doctor of philosophy of the Australian National University, August 1984, p. 423, considered that the universality of the class destined to be the author of revolution would annul the concrete particularity under which the different states and interests of social strata lie. (But the thesis is interesting. It was published as *Marx's proletariat: the making of a myth*, Routledge, 1988, aiming to show that Marx's concept was utopian and, just because of their suffering, the proletarians strive for reforms alleviating their condition, thus accepting capitalism).

capitalism has a *contradictory* nature: on the one hand, it is/feels/knows that it *is* proletariat, that is, it has/sees no other future than destroying as a class its condition/ destroying its class condition, therefore, it is convinced of its moral superiority; on the other hand, because of the framework of constraints it lives within, it submits to the capitalist rules, it is a "subaltern" class. But this contradictory nature is not tantamount to its "non-revolutionary nature"[43].

Logically, that is, on the basis of the development of productive forces – thus, including the technical abilities of the proletariat – this development constituting the *objective condition* for the transformation of the idea (strategy) of revolution into actuality, and on the basis of *subjective conditions* (the revolutionary party, strong class conscience and militantism), all of these conditions being *sine qua non*, the revolutionary nature of the proletariat will prevail over the "non-revolutionary" one. But this is a logical deduction, and highlights a trend. In reality, the capitalist class[44], being pushed by competition for profit to develop – even though in a contradictory and unfinished manner – the productive forces, cannot stop the constitution of the objective conditions for the transformation of capitalism; so, it does everything to stop the evolution of the subjective conditions.

And one of the results of the development of productive forces is the generalisation of the material civilisation, that is, the increased affordability and *consumption* of goods, with big layers of wage-earners becoming "middle class", no matter its stratification. This economic basis – and we do not consider here the force of the many faces of capitalist ideology and education – allows the capitalist class to more efficiently form the social conscience of this big part of the population: that ignores its proletarian feature and becomes an enthusiastic or passive supporter of capitalism. This subordinated social conscience is highly *inertial*, even after the impoverishment of even the middle class, and not only of the lower strata of workers. Consequently, even though the intrinsic nature of class relations in capitalism is *dual*, opposing the proletariat and the capitalist class, in fact it is very *stratified*: and here not the capital-owners' strata are taken into account – therefore, all of them no matter the weight of the capital, so also the classical petty bourgeoisie or the real historical middle class – but only the wage-earners able to more or less conspicuously consume (Veblen). All of these – essentially bourgeois and essentially pro-

43 *Ibidem*, p. 425.

44 We do not employ the term used by the dominant ideology – "elites" – and also by the critical positions which want to sound respectable, thus avoiding the class denominations. From a quality standpoint: the majority of them are not elite, that is, highly-specialised people able to *anticipatively* manage the economic units and national and global economic organisations; and the anticipative management involves humanism, that's absolutely lacking. The use of "elites" is ideological, inducing the feeling of the natural subordination towards the capitalist class and the forgetting of the class and class relations.

letarian – strata have more stratified and coloured guises: *from the standpoints* of types of labour, habitation, country, nationality, political organisations and unions, religion and lack of religion, sex, and result *from ideological transfigurations* which lead to particular beliefs of *group self-enclosure*, but *within the inevitable, destined capitalism*.

Well, the present processes and events in world capitalism – the shrinking of the welfare state, proletarianizing the lower strata of both the recipients of wage-earners and of the petty-capital, the increased explicit authoritarianism that annuls the former hypocritical respect of forms, the direct explicit infringement of even the post-1945 order, the absolute arbitrariness of discourses, the obvious "capitalocenic"[45] destruction of nature and the human species – hit the social conscience of the many. There is a deep trend of the "middle class" to act – but not to think to itself – as proletariat, that is, as the people of the world. And at the same time, a more aggressive policy of the world capitalist class to frighten and ideologically control the world population is deployed. Which force will win this class struggle?

In our Marxist optimism generated by the logical – and not speculative – inference related to these empirical facts, we are not utopian. The future is open, meaning that if the effect of the capitalist policy will be stronger, that is that. The conclusion of all the demonstrations about the dystopic guises of this future, is the recalling of the questions put by Dostoevsky: why do humans live at all? What is their ultimate *reason-to-be*? To feel good at the expense of others, of the entire human environment? Therefore, the philosophical standpoint of the ultimate *reason-to-be* is not an idealistic deviation from the focus on political strategies, but the consistent left's absolutely necessary presence in the ideological struggle with the various forms of capitalism's defence. Only the consistent proletarian position puts forward the problem of the ultimate *reason-to-be of humans*, which capitalism tends to avoid, to annul with particular goals.

45 See Carles Soriano, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Other '-Cenes': Why a Correct Understanding of Marx's Theory of Value Is Necessary to Leave the Planetary Crisis", *Monthly Review*, Vol. 76, No 06, 2022; Álvaro San Román & Yoan Molinero-Gerbeau, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene or Westernocene? On the Ideological Foundations of the Current Climate Crisis", *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, Vol. 34, No 4, 2023, pp. 39-57.

## (8) The crisis[46]

Capitalism is in its *system crisis*. As it is known, Lenin – following Marx's demonstrations related to the contradictions and structural limits of the victory of capitalism over the feudal regime – gave its first theoretical description: when the former/dominant classes can no longer stabilise the system they created and when the new classes are not yet able to conduct society toward the structure that assures it a better, fairer and more efficient development[47]. Concretely, the conventional starting moment of the capitalist system crisis was the beginning of WWI, which proved that, with the entire development of productive forces (of *civilisation*), as well as with the ugly extorting of wealth from the colonies covering a much bigger surface of Terra than the imperialist metropoles, the economic competition between these ones is so huge that their peaceful guise illustrated by so many legal documents endorsing beautiful utopian liberal principles cracked.

Capitalism is, by its core relations, a *world system*. As a world system did capitalism enter its root crisis. For this reason, the cure can be only systemic, on a world scale[48]. And for this reason, the system crisis is a "system of system crises", as both manifestations in all the countries and as manifestations in *all the domains* (economy, science and technology, policies, civilisation, culture, psyche, nation-states, geopolitics). Obviously, the intensity of the system crisis was and is not the same in all the places and time intervals. There were and are showcases of countries of capitalism: the "First world" of the core capitalist system, that must to be preserved regardless of the price paid by "the rest" and, generally, by humanity. Also, there are the *visible* guises of *civilisation* – the infrastructure of big cities, the mobile phones used by everyone and the casual clothing worn by everyone, the malls and the payment by cards, the values of transience and relativity generally assumed, the spectator feature in front of the mad occurrences which madly succeed one another and are thus, considered an inevitable entertainment – which seem to add to the privileged core, new countries as "allies", which thus have or will have privileges, too. Those outside this "gold billion"? Well, the single model, the single alternative

46 As the Greek *krisis*, coming from the verb *krineo*, to discern (therefore, to emphasise), that means also a paroxysmal point of bifurcation/inflection (as a result of the discernment of states), the Chinese word *wēijī* (危机), formed from *wēi* (危, danger) and *jī* (机, opportunity), suggests an incipient moment/point of bifurcation (*jī*), because in fact any point of bifurcation is an opportunity, a window for future (different) paths. (And the word *criterion* comes from the same root, as well as *critique*).

47 See also the Gramscian formula: "the old is dying and the new cannot be born", Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971), New York: International Publishers, 1992, p. 276.

48 John McMurtry, *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism: From Crisis to Cure* (1999), London, Pluto Press, 2013.

that is "ours", is capitalism, and those who oppose it are, if not fools, enemies. And the destiny of enemies is "on the shield": *au fond*, they chose it, didn't they?

The inter-war first official institutionalisation of the extreme-right governance, WWII and then the many wars and events on the edge bringing us closer to the abyss[49], on its brink, all certified that capitalism is in its system crisis. The post-war welfare-state did not mean that the inter-war fascism was an accident and that

49 We should remember at least the anti-communist civil war in Greece (1944-1949); the Korean War (1950-1953); the essentially anti-communist interest against the left-wing and anti-imperialist forces and tendencies in Near-East Arab countries, by imposing the state of Israel's policies in Palestine from 1948 on; the 1953 coup, backed by USA and Great Britain against the independentist policies of Mohammad Mossadegh (1951-1953) in Iran; the US-backed coup in Guatemala (1954); the Vietnam war (1955-1975); the military anti-communist radical repression in 1965 Indonesia; the military (actually, extreme-right) coup and rule in Brazil in 1964 until 1985; the extreme-right coup and regime in Greece (1967-1974); the American coup against the elected socialist governance in Chile 1973; the 1974 coup in Cyprus, led by the Greek junta against the anti-imperialist course of the Cypriot government; the US and Latin American extreme-right and right-wing governments sanctions and military pressure against the Cuban patriotic revolution and then communist system (1961, 1962 – the Cuban Missile Crisis, till today (see the non-binding resolutions of UNGA against the US economic, commercial and financial embargo of Cuba, even the latest: https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/L.6, and GA/12723, 29 October 2025, *General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts Resolution Calling on United States to End Cuba Embargo…*, https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12723.doc.htm; the pressure, sanctions and imperialist involvement to overthrow the Iranian revolution (1979-today). Therefore: the colonialist military wars against the African colonies after 1945, and the military (dryly, extreme-right) coups to impose neo-colonialism in all the African countries which were previously liberated from the secular colonialism of the Western European countries; the military coups in Latin American countries against the forces which fought for social development, and the extreme-right repression, backed by the USA and Western European powers, against these forces (1975-1983)…); the imperialist and anti-communist policies in Asia, in order to contain communist China (1949-today); and the "Cold War" anti-communist policies in order to contain (this word means to overthrow, to destroy) the USSR and its European allies. As well as the *state terrorism* in the democratic Western states – through the collaboration of state intelligence agencies and non-state neo-fascist groups, forged and supported by the state – in order to frighten the population and stop the pressure of unions (as in 1969 Italy) and the protests promoted especially by young (1968-1969, especially France and Italy). In this frame, a main strategy was the influence: 1) on left-wing young protesters to respond to the "passivity" of the state and the extreme-right terrorism with opposed terrorism justified as conquest of power with arms, a movement that was to compromise the left-wing ideas, and 2) on the communist leaders to accept and promote the position of not opposing to the right-wing parties in power (this was the "*compromesso storico*" of Berlinguer), that is, of *not promoting the reason-to-be of communist parties*: to permanently, clearly and loudly show that the democratic reforms within the capitalist system *are not enough* for the solving of deep contradictions of this system, and that the only way is to transform the structural power/economic relations.The result of class collaboration in capitalism – as it was in the Western "Eurocommunism" – was neither the presence of communists in governs of "national solidarity/unity" and nor the increase of left-wing policies in the capitalist reforms: but the irrevocable *decrease of the prestige and power of communist ideas*. The context is always important and the vote reflects it, but the majority's vote for non- and anti-communist parties in the last decades is highly relevant.

"capitalism is democracy (human rights) and general prosperity": because the democratic "welfare state" was in tandem with the savage wars against the peoples who wanted to remove their colony and dependence status, in tandem with discretionary sanctions in order to destroy these peoples, in tandem with cynical "political realism".

The continuity of the system crisis is obvious. But the last decades – in an accelerated movement that once more leads to the impression that we are hit by an unprecedented event, the crisis – emphasise it on an unprecedented *scale* and *intensity*. It is not about "quantity"[50], but about the *taking over*, by the European[51] and world capitalism, of the ugly, non-democratic manifestations of the American capitalism highlighting at least from the beginning of the 20th century the most advanced forms of capitalism and its structural contradictions[52], and about the transformation of all the "Victorian" "civilised manners" which covered it before. The behaviours of the Western leaders and propaganda deviate from the appearances of politeness, respect

50 The "quantity" itself does not regard only the "simple" decay of material infrastructure and the decrease of the living standard of even the lower middle class, so, "objective" contexts (*Living Paycheck to Paycheck? You're Not Alone—67% of People Are in 2025*, https://www.investopedia.com/living-paycheck-to-paycheck-youre-not-alone-67-percent-of-people-are-in-2025-11812027; or Professor Patricia Thane FBA, *How poverty in modern Britain echoes the past*, 11 Jan 2019, https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/how-poverty-modern-britain-echoes-past/; or *Households Below Average Income: an analysis of the UK income distribution: FYE 1995 to FYE 2024*, Updated 28 May 2025, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2024/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-uk-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2024#children-in-low-income-households), but at the same time their corresponding feelings and subjective states; see David G. Blanchflower & Alex Bryson, *Young Worker Despair in the United States*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 34071, July 2025.

51 The dramatic shrinking of state expenditures for social infrastructure and needs together with the copying of the American manners and topics of propaganda are illustrated in the former East-European Socialist countries, like Romania.

52 See the *must-read* Antonio Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism", in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsc*i, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971), New York: International Publishers, 1992, pp. 277-318; and Jean Baudrillard, *Amérique*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1986. Dr Warwick Powell, *The Bad Dream of Modernity, Baudrillard's* America *Forty Years On*, Jan 02, 2026, https://warwickpowell.substack.com/p/the-bad-dream-of-modernity referred to the latter, insisting on the "semiotic hegemony" of American capitalism. The results of all these objective processes in economy and ideology are: David U. Himmelstein, Steffie Woolhandler, "Poverty and death in the wealthiest of nations", *The Lance*t, Vol 10, November 2025, e897-e898.It's interesting, however, that America was seen as the future best form of the European economic and scientific civilization, because it will develop all these acquisitions of civilization without being "burdened with an immense class of proletarians demanding work, and who seem on the verge of perishing if a machine were to replace their arms", J.C.L. Simonde de Sisimondi, *Études sur les sciences sociales. Tome premier. Études sur les Constitutions des peuples libres* (1836), Bruxelles, Société typographique belge, 1839, p. 129.

of legality[53], logic as visible common sense maintained in one way or another before.

We must not forget that, on the one hand, capitalism itself shows the path toward its own overtaking and, on the other hand, hinders this path. Not only the development of technology required and requires a coherent unitary management (a plan and ways of carrying it out) – and, obviously, not only at the level of an economic unit, but at the level of the entire (national and, yes, international) economy – but also the capitalist relations. The technology of flight requires international management of rules, trajectories, time, but the capitalist competition leading to trans-nationalisation of economic activities, to *concentration and centralisation of capital*, emphasised the necessity to take into account all the national and international connections for necessary functioning[54]. In this, capitalism exposes its structural contradictions related to competition and extortion of profit. With all its stages which, *functionally* are the *industrial*, light and heavy, *financial*[55], leading to a *rentier economy* that makes money for oligarchs from money[56], from speculation, buying of existing assets, and wars rather than from production; while *spatially*, the stages are *national* (concentration and centralisation) and *transnational. Every stage assured new room for the development of capital*, *and every stage highlighted the unsolvable contradictions of this development*.

On the one hand, everything is connected, according to the economic logic; on the other hand, everything is restrictively forged and shrunk because the capitalist goal is to make money *now*, and if the economic logic brings money *after*, it's better to fragment it and to sell it. Also, on the one hand, to produce *valuable* goods for (effective) demand is the purpose of economic logic, and obviously this means

53 See *L' attacco USA in Nigeria, fuori da legalità internazionale, svela il piano criminale di Trump che vuole comandare il mondo. E spinge alla crisi totale per scatenare un conflitto totale. Verso una guerra sistemica: l'imperialismo pirata torna a colpire* (Editoriale di Luciano Vasapollo), 26/12/2025, https://www.farodiroma.it/l-attacco-usa-in-nigeria-fuori-da-legalita-internazionale-svela-il-piano-criminale-di-trump-che-vuole-comandare-il-mondo-e-spinge-alla-crisi-totale-per-scatenare-un-conflitto-totale-verso-una-gu/.

54 See this also in the development of AI together with the new instruments of financialization (the crypto), Marwan S., *Les nouvelles données de l'impérialisme étatsunien*, Janvier 2026, https://la-pensee-libre.over-blog.com/2026/01/n-269-les-nouvelles-donnees-de-l-imperialisme-etatsunien-bitcoin-et-imperialisme-0.html.

55 Michael Hudson, *The Neo-Rentier Economy*, January 31, 2012, https://www.levyinstitute.org/blog/hudson-the-neo-rentier-economy/; Michael Hudson, *The Destiny of Civilization: Finance Capitalism, Industrial Capitalism or Socialism*, Islet, 2022.

56 It's the financial stage/financialization. John McMurtry, *ibidem*, developed Marx's formulas of capital formation – M-C-M (money/investment-commodity production-money – by showing the difference between the M-C-M for life (C being necessary goods) and parasitic M-C-M in two forms: a) C – weapons, harmful products; b) C=M, financialization.

to catch as many buyers as possible, irrespective of the means used and of their results[57]; on the other hand, because every investor acts according to this same logic, it's easier to speculate and make money from selling-buying money.

But which are the *good* goods? Since taste is relative, and the criteria of needs (food etc.) confuse us and do not annul the relativity that dissolves the value of economic goods, the feature encompassing all of these differences and criteria is the *universalizability* of goods. Everyone eats, dwells etc., but no one buys tanks, bombs, rockets. Therefore, the parasitic and malignant characteristics of capitalism are the result of the *deformation of the supply and demand economic cycle*: of the *production of means of death*, wasting matter, energy, human creativity and destroying nature, and directly and indirectly destroying human lives, increasing the suffering and promising a darker future because of the absurd *debt of states,* resulting mostly from military spending[58] and paid by the population, while the hegemon states will not pay it[59]. The US "net debt is now nearing 100 percent of national income, (but) creditors at home and abroad showed no signs of debt fatigue"[60]. Why? Because they know that the only solution for them is to continue this absurd carrousel. Once more, the capitalist economy presents itself as a *Ponzi scheme*, where the speculators at the top obtain profits by determining the permanent entrance of money at the bottom, with all means, irrespective of the malignant results on the economy as such. The only solution of capitalism is to continue and exacerbate the wars[61] and general destruction[62], hoping that the new sources of profit will bring it not simply profits, but a forever class domination.

57 See the car industry that pushed for both the creation of suburbs of individual houses far from the workplaces and services, the suffocation of roads, the increase of transportation time, the waste of energy and matter, and the destruction of railways.

58 See Kenneth S. Rogoff, *America's Coming Crash Will Washington's Debt Addiction Spark the Next Global Crisis?*, Published on August 19, 2025, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/americas-coming-crash-rogoff.

59 Michael Hudson, *Debts that can't be paid, won't be*, April 10, 2012, https://michael-hudson.com/2012/04/debts-that-cant-be-paid-wont-be/; Michael Hudson, *How America Makes Money Without Paying*, 11 Oct 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VCsf_sKKXs; Michael Roberts, *Debt and the cockroaches*, November 1, 2025, https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2025/11/01/debt-and-the-cockroaches/.

60 Kenneth S. Rogoff, *ibidem*. But see https://www.usdebtclock.org/, moving in real time.

61 See Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, *War and Oil: Connecting the dots*, Jan 7, 2026, https://popular-resistance.blogspot.com/2026/01/war-and-oil-connecting-dots.html.

62 This *general destruction* is not tantamount to Schumpeter's "creative destruction" of obsolete technology in order to give room to the new one, but the counter-productive destruction of nature and resources. See Ana Bazac, "Incompatible Deployment: The Non-Creative Destruction of the Human Constructions", *Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria Filosofie*, N. 53 (1/2024), pp. 126-152. And, for this general destruction to be accepted by the ruled, capitalism strengthens the belief that nature is able to resorb and dissolve all the malignant facts of capitalist type production.

Once more, capitalism is a *world system*. And it is a "space-phage", since it always needs new markets of raw materials, energy and consumers: it is an *extensive economy* by its nature, irrespective of the intensive marks resulting from the development of technology from the propensity for a circular economy: *as if* it would be an old society based on the rarity of livelihood. Actually, the profit rate decreased, while the financial profit is not enough for the real economy that must supply the demands; therefore, capitalism must acquire new sources of profit, must tear them out from nature and non-capitalist management, and must absorb them. Thus, capitalism is also a "time-phage": it wastes the time for innovating new ways and means of economizing and coherently administering the natural and human resources.

At the same time, by showing the path toward its own overtaking, capitalism took over a historical preoccupation of leading strata to alleviate and better the condition of the poor[63] in order to discourage and dissuade revolts. But the eventual moral propensity of leading official representatives was and is not enough, and it is countered by both the structural impossibility to universalise a welfare economic regime worldwide – because the capitalist conquest of new economic spaces assures only the welfare state of the conquerors – and the structural poverty of the capitalist moral values, their reduction to prosperity and individualistic happiness.

## (9) The social critique

The right-wing social critique was very important for the ideology of domination. On the one hand, the right-wing social critique has developed according to the paradigm of *prevention* of the social opposition from below. On the other hand, both in order to prevent a popular unity against the savage forms of oppression and to induce the idea of capitalism=human rights/democracy, the right-wing critique's most significant manifestations were those *against the extreme-right* phenomena and regimes.

Many beautiful words defending the democratic institutions and rights exist in the right-wing social critique. But this social critique was not tantamount to the critique of capitalism: because it did not attain the capitalist structural relations, that is, it did not explain the *root causes* of the weak, formal or disappeared democracy and of the ugly and inhuman relationships. It *described* these perverted forms and relationships,[64] but only as a result of particular conjunctures and concrete persons:

63 *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration*, Vol. 1 – Report and Appendix, presented to both houses of parliament, London: Wyman & Sons, 1904; Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England, *Youth Voices: Child poverty*, 2025, https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/youth-voices-child-poverty/; 2025, https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/more-than-400-million-children-globally-live-in-poverty-unicef/.

64 See Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*, Metropolitan Books,

so, somehow as a temporary accident indicating rather the imprescriptible human nature that, here it is, "cannot change its spots".

The right-wing literature of social critique had a big role in the development of the *general social sensitivity* in the 19th and 20th centuries, in both a *positive* and *negative* sense: because the description of oppression was no longer forbidden, and to discuss about oppression was no longer quite subversive, however not fully advisable; and, because it reduced the structural problems of capitalism to individual and historical accidents, the social sensitivity intertwined with the deep *belief in the inevitability of class domination and of submission to it*. We can retake Marx's expression about the proletariat: in this phase, in its deep taking over of the capitalist ideology, the proletariat – even though rather in its "privileged" forms of urban workers and "middle class" – was only a class *in itself* (having the objective attributes of the proletariat), but not a class *for itself*, having the full class conscience allowing consistent actions for its emancipation.

Therefore, in order to acquire this full class conscience, the features of the right-wing critique must be disbanded. *The social critique of the utopian socialists and of communists was that which constructed the proletarian social conscience*: because it showed the *root causes* of domination, injustice and war – the power relations resulting from the private property relations – and thus, *the ways to abolish these root causes*.

Today, with the advent of a new phase of the capitalist system crisis, the social critique did not change in its duality of right-wing and consistent left sides.

*Economically*, this is the phase of the huge *concentration and centralisation of capital*, that is, the development of *transnational capital* which, with all its power, *did not increase the profit rate*: not even with the help of technological discoveries, of financialisation techniques, of neo-colonialist extortion of resources and profit from the vasal "allies" and countries with "democratic regimes" imposed in the majority of countries, and of deregulations of all the former relations between capital and the labour force which assured a necessary basis for the capitalist control of the world, of the social consciences of the world populations. And, not only because of all the contradictions of imperialist countries/of different "national" wings of the transnational capital – so, of their competition – this transnational capital absolutely needs new "vital space", new "free" (for it) markets of resources: from the remaining countries which did not obey until now the transnational capitalism's policies to privatise them and *de facto* insert them within a neo-colonialist system, and even from yards of other imperialist countries (see the warning against Greenland).

*Politically*, this phase accelerates the inter-imperialist tensions and, more impor-

2007.

tantly, the *open* wars against every country that opposes it. From this standpoint, the danger of general destruction and annihilation of huge human communities once more shows that only world socialism/communism saves the human species from the irrational path determined by capitalism.

*From the standpoint of social critique*, the phase emphasises the contradictions of the right-wing critique. *On the one hand* – and obviously facing those who *legitimate* every movement of imperialism – it knows that this slavish attitude is counter-productive for capitalism, and thus it *describes* with displeasure the present brutal and cynical assumption of the *à la* 19th century wild imperialism, that reveals what was previously hypocritically hidden through words about legality, diplomacy, civilisation, peace. It deplores this revealing, the generalisation of the state of exception and the assumed exceptionalism of some imperialisms to the detriment of other ones. But, *on the other hand*, it considers that the evil is imperialism, but not capitalism as such. It does not understand/ does not accept that *imperialism is a structural feature/relation of capitalism, together with exploitation and competition*. And when it accuses only US imperialism[65], once more it shows that it represents capitalism: under the guise of weaker imperialist competitors. Because US imperialism is only the hegemon in the pyramid of imperialist countries, and the pyramid itself is the result of inter-imperialist/ intra-capitalist competition.

Anyway, the right-wing critique always focuses on the direct or implicated effects of "the excesses" of capitalism, be they economic or political. And it analyses these effects absolutely disconnected from the problem of *the waste of the human lives*. This problem as such does not appear in the right-wing ideology. Thus, nor the problem of the ultimate reason-to-be of human actions. So, the right-wing critique is "technical", and not humanist. And a characteristic and proof of this is that it is *static*, namely it avoids the *continuity* problem of the "excesses" of capitalism, and thus *the present moment* is always separated from its past: only in this way can the present moment be described as an accident.

65 An interesting proof of the dissociation of the political and the economic and of the ignorance of the latter is – as an example of the general tendency to move the analysis from real processes to words (about them), but at the same time as a contribution to the history of ideas and their concepts – the remark about the covering of "imperialism" with "globalisation" (Daniel Arnaud, *Globalisme contre impérialisme: leçons vénézuéliennes*, janv. 07, 2026, https://regisdecastelnau.substack.com/p/globalisme-contre-imperialisme-lecons). Indeed, the apparent victory of the USA in the Cold War against the USSR (1991) and then against Russia led to the disappearance of the word "imperialism" from the political discourses/theories. That is to say, not imperialism was seen as the specific form of capitalism that is the driving force of the capitalist evolution, but globalisation as the transnational form and phase of capitalism. But these two phenomena are of different orders, and imperialism is a permanent feature of capitalism in all its phases. Thus, instead of substituting one with the other, in fact globalisation leads to more imperialism, irrespective of the means of imposing it.

Nevertheless, the right-wing critique assumed until now, consciously or not, the ultimate *reason-to-be* of human actions: because, with all its diatribes against the "excessive" moves of capitalism, it always tried to *justify that which cannot be justified*.

The false left took over the fallacies of the right-wing critique. The consistent left-wing critique is the reverse of all of the above aspects of the right-wing critique. And it deploys as both an insistence on the necessary respect of international law by all the political actors[66] and generally of the principles of right[67], and as a logical explanation *all the way* to the *root causes* of the present deviation.

## (10) Compromise

Politics is the art of compromise, it is said, with the left-wing decision-makers accepting the necessity of compromises. But what kind of compromises can they accept? Analytically, the right is always much more powerful, because it is/represents class domination. Accordingly, the compromise made by the left consists in acknowledging its subordination in the asymmetric power relations. Thus, the left starts from its structural inferiority in the asymmetry of power. But would this inferior starting point lead inexorably to taking over the points of view of the right? Of course not, because this would annihilate the left as such, its *telos/reason-to-be*.

Political theorists speak about *acceptable* and *unacceptable* compromises, according to the gains and the losses resulting from compromises for both parties. If so, since the respectable democratic parties of the right promote the conception that capitalism is "the best of all possible worlds" – more aggressively, that "there is no alternative" – because "capitalism=democracy and socialism/communism= dictatorship", and thus accepting only the "constructive opposition" of fake left-wing parties and equating the revolutionary systems having in their core the communist ideas from the USSR and China to Cuba with the evil enemy of mankind, then the consistent left cannot accept compromises that fall within that conception.

From the standpoint of compromises, the difference between the fake left and the consistent left is that the first is *minimalist*: *on the one hand*, it assumes the inevitability of class domination and thus it considers the questions of social ideals and the politics that develops the ultimate reason-to-be of humans as utopia and idealistic dreams; *on the other hand*, it strives only for welfare goals and calibrates these goals according to the concrete existing relationship of forces in a given mo-

66 *When the US 'puts Maduro on trial,' the world also puts the US under scrutiny*: *Global Times* editorial, Jan 06, 2026, https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202601/1352485.shtml.

67 Victor Dedaj, *Helms Burton, Assange, Maduro, etc. L'extraterritorialité dans tous ses états*, 6 Janvier 2026, https://www.reveilcommuniste.fr/2026/01/helms-burton-assange-maduro-etc.l-extraterritorialite-dans-tous-ses-etats.

ment: therefore, fundamentally according to the power of dominant classes. Anyway, the fake left is a strong pro-capitalism weapon: its shameful[68] servile attitude gives the lie to the denominations it assumes ("socialist", "left", "democratic"), but, since in the official dominant ideology "it is the left", people better choose some more honest right-wing candidates.

On the contrary, the consistent left is – and must be – *maximalist*. But what does this mean? Of course, it struggles for every social reform possible in a certain moment. But it always must accompany its sincere benevolence for a large collaboration for social reforms and peace with a clear, explicit discourse of their *temporal* and *spatial* limits, so, *of the necessity to surpass these limits*. This is not "philosophy": the social reforms are implemented when capitalism has no other solution to stop the radicalisation of the popular conscience, for example, the post-war welfare state that had to show that not only the socialist countries offer it; while all the improvements of living standards in Western countries even before the socialist example were "in one country", that is, not in the whole system but only in the countries with the most powerful capitalism and which were and are the core of capitalism; therefore, these improvements were contemporary with and took place at the expense of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation, pillage and horrible crimes.

Not only the social reforms but also the democratic ones were and are the result of class struggle. And this class struggle must be *permanent*: and only the maximalist view of the consistent left's struggle determines in fact this *continuity*, because it is that which gives the *deep motivation* of the express class positions in political conflicts, not the deterioration of the living standards but obviously on this basis. Indeed, and once more the social critique, the loud articulation of the causes and meanings of political and economic phenomena are that which determine the social conscience.

This importance of theory for the practical class struggle is emphasised in every concrete aspect. And only in the maximalist framework can we surpass the dominant *right-wing agenda* of problems and discourses. In this agenda, transparency as a requirement and feature of democracy is confined to the laws and committees to supervise them, and indeed the struggle for these laws was harsh. But concrete political decisions as, today, regarding the armament and fuel for wars and the brokerage process to transfer the armament and fuel are not on the right-wing agenda. *Neither the fake left raises this issue*. *But the consistent left must do it*. Apparently, there are two main obstacles to discussing this: the complex brokerage that would

68 See a simple example: the Portuguese National Assembly adopted a proposition of the Portuguese Communist Party to create an anti-fascist museum in Porto. The Social-Democrats abstained (New FIRs, *Bulletin de la Fédération Internationale des Resistants/FIR Association des Antifascistes*, No 78, Décembre 2025, p. 7).

disclose foreign countries and the vile deception of intertwined capitalist interests, as well as the mostly private companies doing the brokerage. But the consistent left can and must deconstruct just these "obstacles". Is the entwining of capitalist interests seated in different countries really so secret? And why? And does it not show the world the character of capitalism? And would the concentration of decisions and their opacity in parliaments not be rather a warning about the capitalist representative democracy? And would the autonomy of private companies towards states not be rather a demonstration of both the harmful character of the private property as such, and that it is the main feature of the capitalist state because it is the structural instrument of class domination?

As stated above, ideal conditions are never met, but the consistent left is always *anticipative*, and *must accustom people to anticipative thinking*. Yes, we always better understand things after their deployment, but if anticipation is an explicit main criterion of our political debates, we must highlight in our statements *what could happen if we accept half-measures*. For example, the defence of the unique example of revolutionary Cuba – an example at least of the democratic freedom of the people to choose, since we must discuss also using the ideas of the dominant agenda – should have been stated as a necessary criterion and result of the socialist type reforms and their consistent development that were taken by Latin American governments, because if these governments do not act consistently with the interests of the many, their legitimacy as such is jolting and opens the path towards a stage of right-wing majorities in elections and thus the submission of these majorities to a new, perhaps wilder, imperialist domination in its "backyard".

Actually, the consistent left must not be shy, trying to please to the middle class and thus giving the impression that it would be "centre-left"[69]: that is to say, the consistent left must not decay as a petty-bourgeois servant of the class domination. Because ultimately, and especially in the present stage of the system crisis, the middle class supports the right-wing policies which give it, really or as an illusion, some possibility to keep its class standing.

During the Enlightenment, the middle class was "left-wing" – that is, liberal – because[70] it fought for and obtained the rights paving its real and imaginary capital-

69 Like Eurocommunism, for instance.

70 The following reasoning in the text is an abridgement. We can think of the Enlightenment as an era of legitimating the increasing power of capitalist relations in Western Europe especially. These relations required and induced a higher general cultural level and living standard than before. For this reason, the monarchs promoted modernising reforms, even though for old beneficiaries, the rentier aristocrats. The Enlightenment intellectuals suggested, however, that the republican political regime is better suited for the democratic reforms.

The bourgeois republics that followed – and which ought to be copied by the new constitutional monarchies – supported, on the one hand, the development of capitalist relations in the economy

ist type deployment. But, and beyond its behaviour in the bourgeois revolutions era and then in their bourgeois-democratic repetitions when it twice betrayed the lower strata on whose back it thought to obtain LEF but in its particular understanding, with the development of *concentration and centralisation of capital* – so, with the power shown by the big bourgeois layers, even from the last decades of the 19th century and then in the first half of the 20th century when they fuelled and opposed the WWI even to it, and when they developed the extreme-right in order to subdue everyone, working class and middle class, to their power – the different kinds of middle

making visible the new class contradictions; on the other hand, they made more resolute reforms of political institutions, even though in order to stop the possible democratization, so, even though for "restoration", but this aspect continued to accustom people (especially the intellectuals) to the idea of possible and necessary reforms, while the "restoration" official framework generated a strong propensity for political democracy, even though its understanding had a class seal. And with the development of radical communist solutions, from the utopian socialists to Marx, the influence and prestige of social critique became significant. This is why, towards the end of the 19th century, socialist ideas were assumed by many intellectuals. But this assumption was rather passive and integrated into the dominant ideological mechanism, being deviated towards particularism and fragmentation. The *fascist* type liberal-conservative convergence was a *first liberal/capitalist counter-revolution* in the 20th century. It had intellectual representatives (Monica R. McLemore, *The Complicated Legacy of E. O. Wilson*, 29 Dec 2021, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-complicated-legacy-of-e-o-wilson/). From the last decades until now, the *second liberal counter-revolution* followed, and there are intellectuals who promote ideas about the "natural" hierarchy of humans and the rarefaction of culture, the nature-culture opposition (See Stacy Farina and Matthew Gibbons, "The Last Refuge of Scoundrels", *Monthly Review online*, https://mronline.org/2022/02/11/the-last-refuge-of-scoundrels). But the biggest role of neo-liberal intellectuals was not so much the promotion of the new economic *laissez-faire* servicing the trans-national capital, as the strong support and legitimating of the individualist "emancipation" through gender differences and creation, as opposed to class emancipation. The anti-human morality of the individualist emancipation through gender differences and creation ought to be specified: 1) the creation through dominant psychological influence and material privileges/constraints of new members of the group of random sexual deviations (some millions in the USA, for example, starting from adolescents) is an infringement of the freedom of decision of these new members, and the freedom of decision/freedom to choose is a main feature of human persons; 2) the above infringement and the "right" of the same-sex partners to raise children once more infringe the right of a human person: the right of the children, no matter if one of their biological parents is one of the same-sex partners.The fake left wholly took over the above neo-liberal position, considering it a supreme proof of individual freedom. The neo-liberal ideology was so aggressive that it silenced any critique. Not even the consistent left dared to discuss this problem, being afraid that it will be removed from it the group and it will be accused of conservatism. But it must not be shy: *the persons with sexual deviations must not be discriminated against in any way*, *but this is not tantamount to the artificial creation of gender*s. Actually, the neo-liberal stance equates them and, moreover, it equates the struggle against racism, and that for social equality of men and women with its pressure for gender "diversity, equity, inclusion". But the racist discriminations and discrimination of women resulted from class domination as supplementary means of exploitation, and their solution is not to accept this "diversity" and this "inclusion", while the gender "diversity" is promoted just for its role to blur the class domination origin of discriminations. The consistent left has to show which are the effects of both the discriminations and their capitalist means of treatment for the radical critique of capitalism.

class *became mostly right-wing*. The post-war welfare state seemed to reverse this trend, because this welfare state assured its markets of new buyers who became more prosperous because of class mobility. But with the trans-nationalisation stage of concentration and centralisation of capital, its buyers and its economic space were almost fully captured: the economic relations are getting harder and harder, and its old class standing is hit by the necessity of "survival"[71].

And since the guise of the present world is the result of decades of dominance of fake left politics as an ally of capitalism, it's clear that the "centre-left" itself is a non-realist solution. The consistent proletarian left is the only opposition and the only opposing force to capitalism.

The consistent left's task at present is to express and work for a clear, definite *anti-capitalist character of the anti-imperialist revolt*. To imagine a new "popular front", in new antifascist or anti-imperialist variants – which, in order to attract the middle class, would express the assumption of the inevitable dominance of capitalist relations since "the bourgeois are now necessary allies" – is to once more betray the ruled of the whole world and to lose the occasion to emancipate them. In other words, we obviously learned from the past, when in order to establish a large antifascist front including "right-wing democratic parties", the communists accepted the dissociation of fascism and imperialism from capitalism, and this event, thought by them to be temporary, reverberated in the popular conscience until now. Clearer: it would be a tragedy if in the present people would think that the enemy is the "excessive authoritarianism" – manifested even through attacks against fellow imperialisms (as the threat against Denmark) – and would not be able to understand that the origin of this "excessive authoritarianism" is capitalism that, even today, strengthens the unity between imperialisms irrespective of their different gauges against the peoples of the world.

The principles must be defended. Thus, we can rightly so criticise any progressive leader *if* he had values – why to have these values? – and transferred them into a foreign box, allowing a disastrous image of the ideas that leader seemed to represent. We cannot defend unconditionally the leaders, even if they were treated by imperialism in a way that is acceptable neither to the bourgeois law and order, nor in a way that infringes their dignity as an illustration of the infringement of the dignity of all. *If* they themselves behave in a non-consistent way according to their historical responsibility, they must be criticised and defined as non-representative of the

71 The social concept of *survival* is today in fashion, that is, the terrain of ideological clash. It gives the "legitimacy" of savage capitalist behaviour towards all. Concretely, it is conceived as the goal of groups – i.e. as "decent" nations/states "legitimately" fighting against other nations/states which oppose domination. (The formula "decent peoples" is from Rawls). Also, it is conceived as the "legitimate" goal of "decent" individuals fighting against natural phenomena and aliens: it would be too cruel to show a struggle against other individuals.

principles they are considered to represent, and as weapons against these principles.

Once more, the maximalist requirements and perspective are nowadays the only responsible political attitude for a humanist participative social order worldwide. And the minimalist fake opposition did not and does not fool the capitalists. They always knew and do perfectly know that their opposing *rulers* are enemies and that, ultimately, the *goal of the ruled is to overthrow their subjugated status*: that this goal is behind any subdued behaviour and accommodation with capitalism, which are only temporary; or, philosophically, an appearance.

If the left does not behave in a consistent, maximalist way, the time for real emancipation from domination is wasted, and this waste affects irremediably those experiencing it, as well as it seals the future, because it generates its own continuity: as domination, as inhumanity.

## (11) Capitalism and imperialism: political strategies and the left

*Imperialism is a structural manifestation of capitalism*, of its Centre-Periphery relations. Therefore, it is not a temporary stage, since the old colonies have obtained their political independence from the Western metropoles, because the following *neo-colonialist* rule of economic exploitation continued after these metropoles overthrew the socialist type, popular and democratic governments that resulted from the previous struggle for independence.

Capitalism is, inherently, a better student than its opposing forces. It learned to use the local petty bourgeoisie that previously united with the popular classes for independence, and to create new well-off strata as compradors. It obviously used and rather exacerbated ethnical and religious differences: and the result of its strategy was an economy based on monoculture and thus incapable of assuring the livelihood of the many, as well as an economy based on resource extraction, consequently a debt economy where the debt service payment meant new borrowings in an endless vicious circle, and the privatisation of its assets, the neo-colonies becoming more polarised and having more social problems than before.

If these are the urgent problems, then the progressive popular forces focus on their solving. These forces – which may or may not include socialist type parties – may be, however, in the theoretical, and inherently practical danger of dissociating imperialism, their clear-cut enemy, from capitalism. I do not discuss here the class structure that led to this danger, but only the theoretical content of the anti-imperialist policies. Yes, the popular forces must establish "a new development theory for the Global South"[72], based on the reversal of imperialist neo-liberal domination.

72 Vijay Prashad, *Towards a New Development Theory for the Global South*, 14 January 2025, https://thetricontinental.org/towards-a-new-development-theory-for-the-global-south/.

And this new development theory includes[73]: 1. Democratic planning, 2. State-led industrial policy, 3. Capital controls and taxation, 4. Public development finance, 5. Public ownership, 6. Food sovereignty, 7. Technological sovereignty, 8. Regional integration, 9. Debt sovereignty, 10. Universal public goods. But first of all, *these directions are not only anti-imperialist, but also anti-capitalist*.

Then, because they suppose the maintaining of private property, it's imperative to control it, somehow as China does not allow the political power of private property owners. And this control means, beforehand and permanently, the transparent specification of the principles and goals of these popular forces: that private property is not tantamount to personal property, that private property is allowed and supported as long as it fulfils its functions to meet the concrete needs of people, that state control is beneficial because it is representative of the entire population, and that it will control itself so as to not become bureaucratic, and that the food and technological sovereignty are not absurd autarchic ends because these directions do not oppose to globalisation/world economic integration, but only to the capitalist type/imperialist globalisation; and that the food and technological sovereignty are only paths toward and challenges of an economy not for profit but for needs: nationally and internationally. The old Ricardian model of the Portuguese wine of Porto exchanged with English textiles – that actually was a model of Centre-Periphery economic exchange – is no longer allowed (through the present imperialist form of extractivism in the Periphery necessary for the Centre's military and new profitable industries).

However, all of these problems and ways must be implemented coherently and in a unitary, concomitant way. And this means to always clearly state that the fulfilment of the technical aspects[74] of one direction or another is not tantamount to building an "industrial capitalist economy" that would revert the former rentier one of the national elites' rentier accumulation[75]: because by keeping the former economic integration within capitalism, the opposed measures will simply not be allowed. In order for the state to "correct market failures and strategically incubate domestic industry", it is necessary to declare and follow all the above measures.

Not all the communist and socialist parties in the world are similar. Some of them – in the Global South – followed as much as possible the way of social and

73 Vijay Prashad, *We Greet the New Year with Optimism: The First Newsletter (2026*), 1 January 2026, https://thetricontinental.org/newsletterissue/unctad-debt-development/.

74 Javier Hernández, *Deuda odiosa y tabula rasa: El derecho de Puerto Rico a comenzar limpio como nación soberana*, 5 de julio de 2025, https://eyboricua.com/deuda-odiosa-y-tabula-rasa-el-derecho-de-puerto-rico-a-comenzar-limpio-como-nacion-soberana/.

75 Miguel Santos García, *Puerto Rico "INDEPENDENCIA Plan B": Build a Productive Economy Beyond US Neoliberal Constraints*, December 23, 2025, https://www.globalresearch.ca/puerto-rican-independence-productive-economy-us-neoliberal-constraints/5909800.

democratic reforms in order to solve the *main*[76] contradictions issued from the secular imperialist domination of countries, even though these reforms[77], opposed by the internal compradors, coexisted with compromises with the internal and international bourgeoisie. These compromises were determined by the existence of the internal bourgeois layers, the general strong influence of the capitalist ideology, including through the fragmentation of the left, and, obviously, the international imperialist pressure by all means. Briefly and taking the example again, if Cuba led all the way to the end the socialist revolution, the Latin American countries which arrived to have left-wing governments did not follow this path and, ultimately, these governments collapsed just because they could not support a unitary coherent socialist politics without nationalising the Central Bank and the big private capital. And only this politics is able to fight the capitalist ideology and to resist against the imperialist forces.

But, more or less jokingly said, history acts through detours. The giant multi-dimensional power of the communist-led China and the anti-imperialist Russia initiated the geopolitical paradigm of *multi-polarity*, manifested first of all economically as dedolarisation and investments assuring a "win-win" economy. The adherence of many countries frightened imperialism. Its last brutal intervention in Venezuela generated, nevertheless, a higher level of understanding: of both the more efficient economic response that China could and did[78] and the coherent strategy of *necessary* and *decisive* anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist *continuity*, with both a focus on the technological sovereignty (especially related to AI) and economic sovereignty and political conscious unity[79]. This understanding is all the more important as even the adherence to BRICS is countered in many countries by contrary interests – as, geopolitically, there is a new redistribution of areas of power –: but the resistance to these interests is the *popular sovereignty* in popular international concert, "supported by popular participation, social justice and collective ownership of economic choices"[80].

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76 The *main* contradictions concern the living standard of the majority of peasants and workers, due to the secular colonial/neo-colonial character of the economy, while the *fundamental* contradictions concern the private property relations which seal the internal and international relations of the country.

77 *Bringing the state closer to people: 25 years of Kerala's 'People's Plan'*, September 19, 2021, https://peoplesdispatch.org/2021/09/19/bringing-the-state-closer-to-people-25-years-of-keralas-peoples-plan.

78 Dr. Kurt Grötsch, *VENEZUELA: China responde a tope*, Publicado el 10 de enero de 2026, https://abyayalasoberana.org/noticias/venezuela-china-responde-a-tope/.

79 Asdrúbal J. Alamilla G., *El Contraataque de la Dignidad: Análisis del 3-E como Punto de Inflexión en la Guerra Descolonial*, https://abyayalasoberana.org/noticias/el-contraataque-de-la-dignidad-analisis-del-3-e-como-punto-de-inflexion-en-la-guerra-descolonial/.

80 Abdelatif Rebah, Collectif « Échos de la vie ici-bas », *Venezuela*, Alger, le 5 janvier 2026, email.

And outside the Global South? The decay of capitalism in its most advanced form of transnational imperialism is illustrated also by the *incredible backwardness of the left forces* especially in the core countries of this system. Because the first end of all the decision-makers of these countries was to consolidate with *material measures* and *cultural hegemony* the alignment and submission of their populations.

*On the one hand*, either the *communist parties* do not exist at all[81], or they have no voice – thus, no declarations are heard by the population, but there is an offensive permanent presence in all types of media and in the real world – or, and even when they have no voice, they are expelled from the official political system[82], while the "socialist"/social-democratic parties are absolutely unanimous with the right-wing, emitting even extreme-right messages. All of them collaborate for the destruction of class consciousness, of any collective hope, and the strengthening of the passive individual quest for entertainment[83] in separated "civilised" nations fighting for domination in the name of "the exceptional" they represent[84].

*On the other hand*, the series of *elections* – which were considered by the dominant ideology as proofs of democracy and, more, of the "capitalism=democracy" founding ideological principle – and which, letting aside here the practical manipulations, give the winners, show the strong *internalisation of non-proletarian ideas and their methodological frameworks*.

The immediate conclusion is that individualism– the opposite of the Marxian logical deduction of revolution where the social contradictions are sharper on the basis of the highest level of productive forces – proletarian type upheavals based on proletarian class consciousness are unlikely. And that the mass support of capitalism in these countries not only gives capitalism the strength, but also at the same time attacks the historical position of the core countries in the capitalist hierarchy of countries: the class contradictions and consciousness are no longer the most developed in these countries, but in the Periphery that arrives to change its peripheral position, and the place of proletarian sensitivity is occupied by a vague mass of selfish "middle class" focusing on its own well-being at the expense of blindness towards reasoning and morals, putting their countries in a backward position.

81 For instance, in Romania.

82 *Appel: Non à l'interdiction du parti communiste polonais*, 2 Janvier 2026, https://www.communcommune.com/2025/12/appel-non-a-l-interdiction-du-parti-communiste-polonais-kpp.html.

83 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*. Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'Ecole des Hautes Études, réunies et publiées par Raymond Queneau. Paris: Gallimard, (1947), Gallimard, 1968, 1997, pp. 434, 435, is once more worth to be cited.

84 China proposed the Global Governance Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, as strategies for the preservation of the human species.

Beyond this immediate conclusion, the complex causes of this situation and, in order to understand the enemy ideology of the world proletarians, the capitalist ideology paradigmatic frameworks should be mentioned.

# II

## (12) Theoretical paradigms and methodological frameworks

The *blindness towards reasoning and morals* is constituted, obviously, on the basis of information allowed by the decision-makers. So, if the Euro-Atlantic people is constantly drowned in and only in data and messages about the deep general suffering under the communist dictatorships and rule, or about the popular opposition of the terrorised Russian Federation people to the dictator Putin, as well as about the opposition of Iranians to the republican government and that of Venezuelans to Maduro, they will think that the imperialist-capitalist interventions and wars against the Soviet Revolution in 1918-1922, against the USSR in 1941-1945, against communist Vietnam etc. etc. etc. were fully legitimate. But how can we understand – and once more, letting aside both the distorted information and lies and the material and spiritual constraints of the people – that even after the spectacle of cruelty and death caused by these interventions and annexations of people and lands, many people still consider the interventions and annexations as legitimate?

Psychology teaches us that humans tend to forget and, generally, to ignore the past or present facts which harm their psychical equilibrium. But – and letting aside that the above tendency concerns one's own behaviour and that of relatives or people who had/have close relations with – psychology emphasises also that humans are *sensitive* towards both injustice and cruelty, the view of injury and death. If so, the refusal to react in front of repeated and increased cruelty and death is not a normal human reaction but a deviated one, an inert psychic state. And it is generated, determined by the dominant classes which want to stop both the moral awakening and the starting of logical inquiring of causes, meanings, authors, correlations, consequences. The "do not care!", ", yes, but…", "think positively!" are not psychological slogans in order to calm stressed patients, but explicit ways to psychologise that which is not psychical, the harsh dominant ideology of "only obey"[85].

Obviously, all classes in capitalism are estranged, even though not in the same manner and, what is important here, even though it is blurred by the concrete material conditions of the middle class and the gloss of industrialised food and mo-

85 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question What is Enlightenment" (1784), in Immanuel Kant, Practical Philosophy, Edited by Mary Gregor, Introduction by Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 11, 22 (AA VIII:35, AA VIII:42).

bile phones for the rest. *The intellectuals*, too, are estranged because, with all the privileged conditions of the intellectual labour and the superior functions of the economic and political power owners, they must sell themselves to those who buy them. The last decades of the visible increasing role of professionals without which no real scientific and technological improvement would occur, once more[86] generated, but not only in the "translation" of some political scientists, economists and philosophers, the conception of an "inherent", "natural" hierarchy of work and thus, a social hierarchy of domination-subordination. As a result, everything that follows this hierarchy is "inherent".

The lack of empathy towards the subject is *epistemically* legitimated by this *methodological pattern of the natural domination-submission hierarchy*. If we take the example of philosophers, the assumption of this pattern, however historically determined, is incredible. Philosophical work implies two structural requirements, highly internalised although not necessarily consciously: that of the *critical spirit/ criticism* and that of the permanent *awareness* of one's own unfolding of reasoning. But the social constraints led to a *selective* critical spirit: to the technical philosophical topics, but not to everything/not to the social problems from the world of appearances. While awareness slumbers when it concerns one's own limits of critical spirit.

The analytical deconstruction of concepts is not easy, but the *assumption of the hierarchy of types of work denotes the ignorance of the interdependence of social activities*[87]. *Epistemologically*, the knowing is based on the *fragmentation* and *isolation* of its objects, because otherwise it cannot succeed, but this pattern of thinking and, generally, of theoretical work was transposed by the intellectuals

86 Originally, the idea of division of labour was based on the different technical abilities of humans to fulfil specific productive tasks (Plato's *oikeiopragia*, *The Republic*, *ibidem*, 433a4-6, p. 127; *oikeiopragia* – to act there where you are the best fitted for; later, the Stoics conceived of *oikeiosis*, to feel in one's own skin at home). People have established as logical (or "natural") not only the principle, let's call it *technical*, of fulfilling tasks according to their division and according to the ability of each one to perform some of them better, but also the *social-historical framework* - with all its ideological legitimations - which forged this principle and at the same time supported it, giving it its concrete historical content. Adaptation to the existing social logic of dominating hierarchy implied a) the remanence of some ordering patterns of social phenomena and b) the inertia of behaviours according to the remanence. In fact, principles as such are retained and followed by people only in their concrete packaging, that concerns the historical context filled with traditions and, especially, with legitimations in which these principles are carried.

87 An example is the inherent contempt towards physical labour, because the intellectuals who work with words do not understand the specific difficulty of the human ability to control matter, so, even one's own force. The development of skills in both types of labour generated professionals in both types. The hierarchisation of professionals is, at least today, absurd and it hides the hierarchy of power, when the state is confiscated by "the elite" of capital owners and their political and media "chevaliers servants".

who were and are in the service of domination, in the representation of society. The result was and is the lack of empathy towards those outside the "inner circle" of those close to the system. The lack of empathy has nothing to do with friendships in the specific areas given by the division of labour and intellectual speciality, but, aside from the misunderstanding because of the capitalist type teaching, with what Rabelais formulated as a lack of moral sensitivity: science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul[88].

Accordingly, they forged the patterns of *methodological individualism* according to which society = individual + individual + individual, each pursuing more or less rationally their own interests: and the coherency of society is just the result of the relative compensation made by the exchange feature of the relations, however tense, of the pursuit of interests. Methodological individualism is a weak explicative paradigm – because society is more than a sum of individuals, it is a system of relations, institutions, values, whose structure is not the individual – but it is, consciously or not, a legitimation of capitalism: society is, *au fond*, a struggle of competing interests and then, "might is right" both domestically and internationally. This pattern is assumed by all intellectuals who legitimise capitalism.

And it manifests through different methodological forms, all of them equally internalised:

- the *fragmentation* of the approach to social problems, each discussed separately from its root causes[89],
- the *isolation* of events – the neglect of their past and of their future consequences – and their explanation from conjunctures[90],
- the equivalence of capitalism with a *sum of countries in different "natural" hierarchie*s of culture, internal economic development, civilisation, and ultimately the leadership of each country being responsible for the living standard of the people; this is the pattern of capitalism in one country.

88 François Rabelais, (*Les horribles et espoventables faictz et prouesses du tresrenommé Pantagruel Roy des Dispodes, filz du Grand geant Gargantua. Composé nouvellement par maistre Alcofribas Nasier*, Lyon : Édition Claude Nourry, 1532), *Pantagruel, roy des dipsodes*, in *Les œuvres de François Rabelais* (Éditions Marty-Laveaux, 1868), Tome premier, chapitre VIII, p. 257.

89 For example, the separation of the political from the economical; or the "extreme" phenomena of prostitution, mercenaries, surrogate mothers, and also the controversial ones like abortion, are not discussed all the way to the root causes, but *in themselves*: and then, the problem is their rights, which rights, why their rights?; the false moral does not accept the rights of prostitutes, or prostitution at all "in our country", pretending not to see the sexual tourism; the liberal policy considers these rights necessary both for the "sex workers" and for the social peace, etc. And all these wings of capitalist ideology consider prostitution as the inevitable "oldest profession in the world".

90 One of the most general examples is the *isolation of the domestic policies of the state from its international policies*.

Two more forms/paradigms which are frameworks of the approach of society should be added:

- the *equivalence between politics and administration*, and
- the *exclusion of morals from politics*.

Concerning the first: *politics* is the setting of goals and allocating of resources for these goals, directly reflecting the power ultimately resulting from private property and its control over society's means of existence, thus being the expression of *interests and will*. *Administration* is the management of social property in order to solve problems resulting from the common cohabitation of a community, it is a technical activity. For example, the construction of a bridge is administration: it depends on the studies of constructors, ecologists, sociologists, economists, regarding the necessity, feasibility, costs, other aspects. But politics decides the construction as such. Thus, politics subordinate administration, but the *huge difference is between types of politics*: in capitalism, politics reflects primarily private, restrictive interests and will, and politicians promise before elections that they will construct the bridge: figuratively yes, they will allocate the resources for it, but literally they may negate the technical expertise according to which the bridge is not necessary and even harmful. *In capitalism, politics is contradictory to administration*[91]. Only the socialist transformation of structural relations assures what Engels said, that politics will be the administration of things. And this problem once more substantiates what the role of the *state* is*:* it is the coordinating system of the administration of a community, and as an administrative system it will never disappear; only its instrumentality of asymmetrical power, of class domination will disappear, as Marx insisted to the anarchists who did not grasp the difference between administration and class domination.

Concerning the second: already Machiavelli, the realist modern ideologist of politics, proved that the political actions are *autonomous* from moral and religious precepts, because they pursue ends related to the interests of the state, even though these ends and interests involve religious institutions and the morals of the people. Later on, the ideologists of capitalism developed this realism, covering the *deep contradictions* between the *interests of the ruling classes determining the politics of the state no matter the cost of these interests for the people of the state and for other peoples* and, on the other hand, *the necessity to compensate somehow for this*

91 See only the embezzlement of funds from social problems (social infrastructure maintenance etc.) to armament.

*cost* with *internal social policies* which, however, hamper their priority to maximise their profits – a priority transferred as imperialist-neo-colonialist policies towards other peoples – and also with *international laws limiting the means of intra-capitalist competition* and struggle and thus "moralising" politics (as the 20th century laws of war). But the capitalist interests are the priority and, especially in moments of economic and political crisis, the aggressive ideology representing this priority attacks both the social policies and the international laws and institutions which are "inimical towards our state". The present era once more shows that the moral aspect of capitalist-imperialist politics has not the power to counter this politics, and that "politics and morals are two different things". But are they really so external to one another? The setting of goals and the allocation of resources are dealing with entire communities, with their existential interests, but if the setting and allocation are made from the standpoint of restrictive interests opposing to the community and the communities, they are unjust, thus not moral: because *morals means and is based on justice*. Consequently, *politics must be moral*, even though it is made from the standpoint of the reckoning of interests. And *it can be*: in the communist model where politics is the administration of things according to justice.

*

Nowadays, the *historical rhythm is accelerating* in a tempo not seen before. *On the one hand*, *right-wing intellectuals* are shaken by the sudden changes in the world, and they split between the loyalty due to the specific masters each of them served when they were in power and the solution to jump in the boat of the new masters who won the elections. They *tend to impose the public agenda of opposition* between the *"progressist" neo-liberals* who carried out to the end the principles of absolute freedom given by the Western system of trans-nationalisation of capital and world civilisation, and the *conservative neo-liberals* who accentuate the hierarchy and contradictions in this system and envelop the struggle for top position in the hierarchical system of world capitalism with the "one nation/one country first" slogan, actually continuing the old exceptionalism promoted by capitalism, and with the traditional religious brakes of behaviour. And the weaker national capitalisms support this public agenda, as well as the fake left which supports the war against Russia, Iran etc. does.

This right-wing public agenda is logically incoherent but dangerous: because it tends to divert the class struggle to the electoral process, and continues to reduce the options to branches of capitalism/capitalist parties and ideologies. And it would be more than sad if the populations would endorse again one capitalist branch, irrespective of which of them. *On the other hand*, even right-wing intellectuals arrive

to assume the historical acceleration[92], and a criticism beyond its former restriction to one branch or another, to some or other "excesses".

But the more the objective capitalist crisis advances, the stronger the capitalist ideological aggression. Both its forces and the level of general consciousness forbid a predetermined bright future. The "predetermination" meant for Marx and means for us only that, logically, the high development of productive forces assuring the end of an extensive and wasteful economy and the advancement of public awareness of the waste, destruction and death generated by capitalist relations will assure the revolutionization of the structural relations and organisation of society. But this logic never meant and means automatic processes.

What is now more important is the understanding of the deep patterns of social thinking which influence the left – sometimes even in its consistent form – framing its messages and determining the prestige and force of its struggle.

## (13) Methodological frameworks in left-wing thinking

*It is very important to use* – and, yes, *internalise at the level of popular common-sensical attitude towards life and society – the philosophical perspective* that should not frighten for it emphasises concepts since, obviously, it has been developed in the analysis of the real social world. This methodological requirement follows and is inserted within the Marxist-Leninist theory of the construction of the subjective conditions of revolution – and, ultimately, of the general social consciousness of the world proletariat, therefore, of the formation of that popular common-sensical attitude specified by Gramsci –. We can quickly formulate three aspects of the philosophical perspective in the form of caveats, and there is no delicate political phenomenon that may be excepted from their truly dialectical approach:

- never oppose *the form* to *the content*, or vice-versa, and do understand that they cannot be considered hierarchically, thus postponing the approach of one of them while focusing on the other; people feel that *the form and the content are indestructibly interdependent* and immediately remove themselves from the left-wing discourse that does not consider this interdependency[93];
- never oppose *the particular* pursued in a choice to *the universal* contained

92 Editorial, "In desperate need of systems change", *The Lancet Planetary Health*, Vol. 9, Issue 12, 101420, December 2025.

93 For example, *formally* – namely, from the standpoint of the right of a people, since in modernity the sovereign is the people and it gives the legitimacy of its representatives – any community has the right to choose its own state. The standpoint of *content* lights the *reasons* for the choice, and the necessity to put face to face *these reasons* and *the consequences* of the choice according to the reasons.

within the virtual choice of humankind, thus of every human being; *there is no group legitimacy of the particular that can annul the universal legitimated by the interests of humankind, thus of every human being*[94];

- it is clear that the two philosophical requirements – so, principles – are intertwined, and thus, it is the biggest mistake to procrastinate the approach of one of their components because "this is not the time"; any reasoning in terms of other components lets open the missing one and the unsatisfactory solution pushes to removal from those who provided it; consequently, *never procrastinate* and *always do anticipate* things according to the principle of universalizability of choices and actions[95].

Once more, the power asymmetry in capitalism generates *the precedence of themes for the public debate*, given by the dominant ideology. On this basis, we can continue the caveats related to the methodological frameworks:

- *to not follow the agenda* of problems given by the dominant ideology, but to counter it with its own approach pointing out the root causes of phenomena and their systemic interdependence.

From this a main method:

- to not add to the general lament, but *to counter it with ways of action*, answering to the implied question posed only by the consistent left: *what is to be done since the reforms until now led to the present world result*?

This practical content of the consistent left-wing criticism directs to the paradigms which reverse those given by the dominant ideology, and which must be assumed as methodological frameworks:

- *to no longer discuss capitalism in one country*, even though the problem is related to domestic political relations, but always emphasise the more than connections, the interdependence of these domestic problems with international decisions, relations of force and situations; always emphasise that capitalism is not a collection of shop windows in different stores of different calibers, but a system;

94 It is now clear that any exclusive privileging of form, or of content, is once more invalid when they are confronted with the requirement of universalizability, thus of universal mutuality of rights.
95 See Ana Bazac, *Moral Anticipation*, 28/08/2025, https://egophobia.ro/?p=15879.

- *to always counterpose to the capitalist unfinished criticism* – when it is not simply hypocritical – the indication of both the concrete conjunctural all the way and the structural causes of phenomena;
- *to always show what the procrastination of both permanent presence in the public debate and solving did and does mean*; thus, to oppose procrastination with clear concrete steps: that are *feasible*, if and when *these steps are related to changes in other sub-systems of society*;
- *to always put the problem of the future, and counterpose to the capitalist variants the socialist and communist openings;*
- *to always put* – as indeed a specific problem posed by the consistent left – *the problem of capitalist solutions' human costs and waste:* namely, *to oppose to the capitalist neglecting of collateral output externalised both in environment and society (as "collateral damage"), the anticipative circular integrated nature-society and local-global unitary thinking.*

This last point shows a *sine qua non* paradigm for the political praxis of the left:

- the permanent close collaboration of left-wing forces on the basis of consensus concerning the minimisation of human costs and waste *hic et nunc*; the consistent left must challenge all the left-wing/popular forces just with the question of *what for* to inertially follow the capitalist policies; this question shows the *impossibility to express the acceptation of the human costs and waste*; the permanent close collaboration surpasses the historical differences related to definitions and explanations of the past; it doesn't mean first of all organised unity, but only organised collaboration regarding *the present era of capitalist decay and its existential dangers*; it is a proletarian front, not an inter-class front; it doesn't take place under the starting point of debates about the historical differences of the left, but on that of a non-conventional (philosophical) approach of the present incomprehensible multiplication of the left and its image of redundance and inefficiency: of that of the *what f*or and *with which costs*; but just this non-conventional (philosophical) approach proves to give the criteria of proletarian class unity now under the guise of close collaboration; if the consistent left clearly posits the criteria of *root causes and interests*, as well as those of *finality* of capitalist strategies, thus the criterion of the *reason-to-be* of the left-wing opposition and activism, then the responses from all the left-wing and popular forces remove from the explicit or implicit support of capitalism.

## (14) Concluding remarks

All classes in capitalism are estranged and, even though some arrive to not feel it and others – feel it in different manners, at the bottom of all their quest for lesser social suffering or "troubles" and more pleasure of life is the *despair* of a dark future already more than visible: and not because now the president of the USA shook the capitalist state of affairs which should not have been shaken – they already were in deep shaking – but because the present radicality of world warmongering destroys even the rest of the former weak stability for life continuity.

However, this deep state of despair, even that covered by rejoicing, involves in its core the impossibility to have a coherent explanation – thus, expressible deployment – of not only the external facts/causes but also of the human capacity to control and surpass them. Human beliefs are not forged by facts – because the facts need to be explained, namely, translated into their cognition – but by logical legitimations, by theories. And all the theories desperate humans face acknowledge and strengthen that capitalism, be it considered through an apologetic or critical lens, does not change their horizon.

But what opposes despair? The possibility to have *social ideals*[96]. The desperate individuals – who *do not arrive* on the way of fulfilment of their expectations of members of human society, but *renounce* – have no social ideals, because any ideal supplied to them in the name of *particular* values and communities of shared beliefs, wellbeing or despair is confronted with the ideas of *injustice towards those outside these communities*. A social ideal can be only a *universalistic* one, in the name of the *human species* – so, of *each of its members* – because only the universal value of the human species is congruent with the ideas of justice and dignity of every human being. There can't be a valuable particularistic[97] social ideal that cannot be universalised, because, by arriving to clash with other particularistic ideals, it is denied: why would a particularistic social ideal be better than other particularistic ideals? *The proletarian social ideal is universalizable*, because it doesn't configure a future of proletarians against the dominant classes – this would be a particularistic ideal – but the abolishment of the proletarian class and the class domination as such: its/their transformation into unique and unrepeatable individual members of the human species freed from oppression and able to "make human life happy, both in the comparatively humble sense of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning, of rendering life, not what it now is almost universally, puerile and insignificant, but such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to

96 Therefore, social ideals are not tantamount to individual aspirations (to health, a good job, a family, travels etc.).

97 The most obvious particularistic ideals are the nationalisms of capitalism in one (exceptional) country based on the domination of other countries.

have"[98].

This paper drew attention to the philosophical perspective and principles which can boost and refresh the proletarian class's consistent political organisation and action. Briefly, the first is the up-to-date Aristotelian concept of *telos*, of the *reason-to-be* of a phenomenon, object and action. By putting the question of *what for* to the contemporary class relations, political decisions of exploitation and war, and oppositions to them, the malignant character of these relations and dominant decisions appears more clearly in the consistent left's ideological struggle. For the consistent left, the communist revolution does not follow from benevolent dreams and wishes, but it is demonstrated: inter alia, by the concept of *telos*, that showed it as the means to arrive at the non-proletarian and non-class divided human species.

The second is the *moral basis* of the political decisions. Marx did not write about morals: he took over from Kant and developed the concept of *man as a species being*, each member of the species being its unique and uniquely precious representative. Accordingly, human thinking – indestructibly arising from and leading to human action – after a long historical experience and structuring of existential conditions, is capable of surpassing the victory of normative ethical theories with the idea of practical moral revolution and the complex practical strategy to actualise the potentiality promoted by that idea. Just the work of consistent economic, philosophical and political demonstration of the historical objective formation of revolutionary forces and determination of revolution, as well as the warning against an automatic determinism, as well as the praxis of proletarian struggle, made Marx and the constellation of known and unknown revolutionaries of the world the most morally sensible humans, shedding light on the human structural unity of reason and morals, which alone causes the challenging equivalence of the human being and the infinite universe and maybe the future of incessant equivalence.

98 John Stuart Mill, *A System Of Logic, Ratiocinative And Inductive* (1843), Eighth Edition. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1882, Book VII, Chapter V, § 7, pp. 1155-1156.

# Marxism in the Epoch of Capitalist Decline[1]

Savas Mikhail-Matsas

1. In our current turbulent times, it is now universally admitted that the international order, as it was formed and evolved over the last 80 years from the end of World War II, dominated by the US world hegemony, has crumbled in ruins.

It had received a series of devastating successive blows.

- The collapse of the post-war international Keynesian framework in the 1970s followed by the failure of post 1980 neoliberalism with the implosion of finance capital globalization with Global Crash in 2008, the new Great Depression, and a still insoluble global capitalist crisis;
- The international radical changes brought by the apparent end of the "Cold War" with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 rapidly followed by the end

1 This paper was presented at the Conference "Socio-Philosophical Ideas of Historical Formation. Marxism Today: Condition, Problems, Contradictions, General Directions of Evolution, and Prospects", organized by Plekhanov House, National Library of Russia's Saint-Petersburg Branch, Institute of the History of Natural Science and Technology Center for Modern Marxist Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University and the Association for Marxist Social Science in Saint Petersburg on November 7-8, 2025.

of the post-"Cold War" period, the eruption of new geopolitical crises, military conflagrations, and escalating antagonism of Western imperialism with Russia and China, bringing the existential menace of a new World War;

- The end of the transitory, illusory "uni-polar moment of an American Empire" at the end of the 20th century was followed by the overwhelmingly acknowledged decline of US world hegemony in the first quarter of the 21st century;
- The non-stop environmental shocks and the Covid pandemic have made manifest the urgent menace of a climate catastrophe;
- The world historical landscape has dramatically changed by social polarization, political destabilization, breakdown of liberalism, rise of fascism, but also new popular upheavals and rebellions of a younger generation all over the world, from Europe and America itself to the Middle East, and Asia, from Africa to the Caribbeans and Latin America.

The world seems to be plunging into chaos, where reigns a breakdown of all certainties, compounded after Donald Trump's reelection as US President. How to make sense of an apparently nonsensical situation? ***Is there a logic in the current chaos, and how could it be discovered*?**

We will argue that only ***a logic of contradictions*** in objective reality, in history, and in thinking, i.e., ***a non-dogmatic, creative materialist dialectics,*** can provide a compass to navigate in uncharted waters, especially in conditions of a "perfect storm". Unfortunately, these dialectics fell into disrepute or has been abandoned in "the general disorientation of the world after 1991" (to use the terms of the French philosopher Alain Badiou in his *Remarques sur la désorientation du monde,* Gallimard, 2022). It has to be rediscovered and developed without any schematic formalism.

Mainstream bourgeois thought, in all its variations –"orthodox" and "heterodox"– cannot hide its limitations, bewilderment and failure to grasp movement and change, especially in turning points of history in our transitional epoch, such as today.

2.The predominant interpretation of the current chaotic world disorder principally focuses on the ***decline of the US global hegemony*,** and the constant efforts by the American ruling class, the State and its successive Administrations ***to reverse*** it by all means against all competitors and rivals, first of all against the ascent of ***China***, now the world's second-largest economy.

The US economic decline in all its aspects – the fall in productivity growth, a gigantic debt approaching $40 trillion, manufacturing in recession with too many zombie companies, an immense AI financial bubble threatening a new global crash,

etc. – is so evident in the first quarter of the 21st century. It is combined and compounded by new Vietnam-like military defeats and war debacles in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even the MAGA crowd of the Trump camp admits it by its own battle cry to make "Great Again" an America which has lost its "Greatness" ...

In relation to the US decline and China's ascent, the metaphor of a "***Thucydides trap***" is often used, where the ancient Greek historian describes how the rivalry between ascending Athens and hegemonic Sparta inexorably led to war. The analogy has all the limitations and problems of transposing a paradigm from the restrained pre-modern, non-capitalist conditions of late Greek Antiquity to the world conditions of late capitalist modernity.

Other quite common interpretations, both on the Left and the Right, use another analogy, closer to our present times: they stress the ***similarities with the emergence of modern imperialism at the late 19th century-early 20th century***, with the rivalries between old and new imperialist "Great Powers" for a new division of the world and world market, leading finally to the First World War. They transpose mechanically and a-historically the past to the present, the first phase of the imperialist epoch of capitalism to the present much more advanced phase, by misreading and misrepresenting as "inter-imperialist rivalry for world domination" the escalating confrontation between imperialism in America and Europe together with their "willing allies" and proxies and, from the other side, Russia and China.

The formal analogy with the late 19th century emerging modern imperialism sees (and distorts) the "apparent return of the old" without its new content, staying at the surface of some external similarities between "competing new and old powers", without deepening into their essential differences as social formations, and ignoring quantitative/qualitative changes that have reshaped the world during the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century.

To remind just two of the most important differences between the two periods of imperialism, in its earlier past and the present:

- The first Great Depression of 1873-1893 was very different than the Great Depression of the 1930s, after the Crash of 1929, and even much more different than the Third Great Depression after the Crash of 2008 (as brilliantly analyzed by Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak in their book *In the Tracks of Marx's Capital*, Palgrave McMillan, 2024).
- In late 19th century, the British Empire was still in existence and its world hegemony had started to decline while the emergence of American capitalism to the position of the new global hegemon was still in its early stages becoming evident only after World War I and clearly established after World War II; in the first quarter of the 21st century, Britain and capitalist Europe are a shadow

of their past, while the historic decline of American capitalism and of its global hegemony is evident, fueling new far more destructive explosions.

The "apparent return of the old", as Lenin noted in his *Philosophical Notebooks* (Progress Publishers, Moscow: 1972, vol. 38, p. 222), "the repetition at a higher stage of certain features, properties, etc. of the lower" represents a ***negation of the negation***, not the mythical Eternal Return of the Same. As a matter of fact, for more than a century now, capitalism tried by all means to negate its own decline and failed. Now he tries to negate its failures by the most barbaric but equally bankrupt methods.

All formal interpretations through a-historical analogies, mainly approach imperialism as ***a policy*** of expansion, military aggression, conquest of new territories with their resources and of new markets, for geopolitical domination They blindly miss out or refuse to grasp the specific ***historical*** nature of imperialism as ***a stage in capitalist development*****,** the ***epoch of capitalist decline***, according Vladimir I. Lenin's pioneering Marxist analysis. ***An epoch of transition from a "decaying", "parasitic", "rotten", "agonizing"*** capitalism – the adjectives are Lenin's – ***to world Socialism.***

The US capitalism is the center of ***global*** capitalism and its highest point of historical development as a mode of production. Consequently, the US decline as the global hegemonic power does not represent the decline only of a ***national*** capitalism. It is the most explosive manifestation of the advanced decay of the entire ***world*** capitalist system. No other capitalist country can replace it, only another higher social mode of production – **world Socialism** (See L. D. Trotsky, *Europe and America*, 1926).

3.***Capitalist decline*** is neither a stationary period nor a gradual progress of decomposition up to a final automatic collapse. It is ***a non-linear, contradictory, i.e., dialectical process***. Karl Marx investigated and revealed in *Capital,* his magnum opus*,* the contradictions, tendencies, limits of capital as the dominant but transitory social relation, driving it through ever more cataclysmic crises to its historic exhaustion and demise – the revolutionary expropriation of expropriators.

"*Capitalist production,*" Marx writes, "*seeks continuously to overcome these immanent barriers, but overcomes them only by means which again place these barriers in its way and on a formidable scale. The* ***real barrier*** *of capitalist production* ***is capital itself***" (*Capital,* vol III, Progress Publishers, Moscow: 1972, p. 250, emphasis in the original).

Capital is clashing with the same conditions by which it was born and which are driving its worldwide expansion, and social, economic, political, and cultural life

into international interconnectedness. Capitalist globalization, particularly over the last 40 years, considered a blessing by capitalists, has proved to be a curse, pushing both capital's external limits and its immanent barriers to their extremes.

What today appears as global chaos actually demonstrates what Marx has called "capital as self-dissolving contradiction" (op.cit. p. 438).

An epoch of historic decline, Hegel rightly had stated (*Principles of Philosophy of the Right and State*, paragraph # 347), is the negative form of appearance of an emerging new higher principle of social organization. In our epoch, declining Capitalism is its special historical stage of imperialism. "When", Lenin writes, "the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres (see *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* Chapter VII).

Dialectics examines transition as contradiction, a unity and struggle of opposites. This dialectical conception, "***alone***", Lenin stresses, "furnishes the key to the "self-movement" of everything existing; it alone furnishes the key to the "leaps", to the "break in continuity", to the "transformation into the opposite", to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new (*Philosophical Notebooks* op. cit., p.360).

The transition beyond capitalism is ***not***, as in the past, a transition from one form of class society to another form of class society. It is ***an entire historical epoch of transition from class to a classless society, world communism.*** It is not an automatic linear evolution but it need***s a world socialist revolution***.

The role of ***revolutionary subjectivity*** becomes ***immense, preponderant.*** To lead the transition forward, the ***conscious participation*** of the ***working class*** as a ***universal class is needed***, which cannot emancipate itself without leading a universal human emancipation from all forms of exploitation, oppression, and humiliation. To fulfill its historical task, the working class has to be organized into its own independent organs of mass struggle and political power, first of all to be organized into ***revolutionary combat parties of a revolutionary International.***

These are both the living legacy and the still unfulfilled world tasks of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the first victorious moment of the world socialist revolution in our transitional epoch. After the tragedy of the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991, now, in the third decade of the 21st century, Rosa Luxembourg's alternative "Either Socialism or Barbarism" includes also the dilemma: ***either completion of the 1991 disaster by the imperialist war-mongers of capitalist decline or its revolutionary reversal by a Soviet Renaissance in the Land of October and beyond, from Lisbon to Vladivostok!***

November 2025




## RedMed and Christian Rakovsky Centre on the move!

RedMed (short for Red Mediterranean) was, until recently, a web site that published news, opinion, commentary and political declarations from around the Mediterranean Sea, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Black Sea region, Transcaucasia, and the broader Eurasian region. It has now been transformed, as of the beginning of 2020, into a centre for propagating socialist thinking, carrying commentary and political statements and publishing various journals from the Mediterranean region all the way to Russia and the former Soviet Union.

RedMed used to work hand in hand with the Balkan Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky to establish links between socialists and revolutionaries from these regions. However, parallel to the expansion of RedMed, the Christian Rakovsky Centre also broadened its remit. Over time three Russian organisations became members of the Christian Rakovsky Centre: the OKP (United Communist Party), the RPK (Russian Party of Communists), and the Association “Soviet Union”, in addition to the original members, two political parties of two Mediterranean countries, EEK (Workers Revolutionary Party) of Greece and DIP (Revolutionary Workers Party) of Turkey. Thereupon the centre changed its name to the International Socialist Centre Christian Rakovsky.

RedMed is now publishing on a bimonthly basis both the Communist of Leningrad, journal brought out for quite some time in Russian by the RPK, and Soviet Renaissance, a new online journal in Russian prepared by the Association “Soviet Union”. This is in addition to its already established commentary and political statements on world affairs in many different languages, first and foremost in English, but also French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Russian, Farsi and Arabic.

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

Let us join hands to bring down the yoke of imperialism and capitalism in Europe, in Asia, in the Middle East and North Africa, and across the world.

@RedMedOrg /RedMed @contact@redmed.org

# The main sources of twenty-first-century Marxism

Sungur Savran

It is no secret that the 20th century experiment in the construction of socialism has landed in a practical defeat, most importantly in the country of the Great October Revolution, the Soviet Union. There are of course very many results born from such an epoch-making development. The overall effect was a tremendous setback to socialism internationally. One of the more benign ones is the lifting of the barriers between societies living under different socio-economic and political conditions. No longer are there any "iron curtains" (to use a well-worn metaphor) in the theoretical and ideological fields. The 21st century will probably see, after a period of gestation, a worldwide reunification of Marxism as in late nineteenth century. But that reunification will be the result of a synthesis of as well as a struggle between the different Marxist traditions of the 20th century. A broad depiction of the main contenders for a place in the overall Marxism of the 21st century would be useful in order to understand the likely prospects. This is what I will try to discuss so as to remind fellow Marxists that many traps exist that might lead us to take the wrong road if we are not careful enough.

A warning at the beginning. Since we will be looking at the different strands of Marxism in the 20th century, we should admit from the beginning that our field

of investigation is immense. Even a book-length discussion will not suffice if one wishes to cover the entire field. This is obviously not what we intend to do in a fifteen-minute talk. We will not discuss schools of thought for instance. To cite some examples, Austro-Marxism (late 19th-early twentieth century Austria-Hungary) or the *Monthly Review* school (mid twentieth-century America) or the German state-derivation school (late twentieth century) etc. will not be dealt one by one. Nor will we dwell on particular political movements, revolutionary or otherwise. For instance, our object of discussion will not be Stalinism or Trotskyism or Maoism or Castroism. None of these would be devoid of interest. Schools of thought are relatively coherent formulations of Marxism that would be of interest to delve into, but there are too many of them. It is not possible to even enumerate all of them in such a short speech. As for political movements, everyone has an initial idea on them, though some of our ideas may turn out to be simply hearsay or prejudices. More importantly, the discussion may turn into partisan name-calling.

What I would like to offer to you is not a comparison of different views on what Marxism stands for. I would like to offer you a panorama of the different outlooks that have been in the forefront in four different geographic entities. Their views and sensibilities are not of course the result of geographical conditions but of definite socio-economic and political relationships and structures.

The four different constellations I would like to offer you are the following: Western Marxism; national-liberation Marxism; Soviet Marxism; and, finally, revolutionary Marxism.

## Western Marxism

Marxism was obviously the product of Western Europe, the earliest homeland of the capitalist mode of production. The pioneers, Marx and Engels themselves, are from that region of the world. However as soon as the main theory and practice, in close unity, of the pioneers, were formulated in a systematic manner, the road of Western Marxism diverged into two different routes. On the one side was the wing that regarded Marxism as the theory and practice of revolution, a theory and practice with the class struggle and the modern proletariat at its epicenter, all other questions being taken up and arranged in their relation to that central core. Let me mention some names so as to make clear what wing I am talking about: Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Antonio Gramsci, György Lukács or Bertolt Brecht (whom I consider to be a philosopher as well as a playwright and poet). These are some prominent examples.

Another wing moved out into a wider foray, trying to use the tools of dialectical materialism, not always very faithfully, into psychology, questions of the libido, arts and music, religion etc. etc. The most important circle here is the Frankfurt

School (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkhheimer and many other celebrities, of which the name of Herbert Marcuse must be mentioned because he had such great impact on the youth of 1968). This then turned into what is now called "Critical Theory". The distancing of this school of Marxism from class struggle and the proletariat ended in the replacement of the proletariat as the agent of change by the student youth!

It is not that the first wing did not take any interest in fields outside of class struggle. Quite the contrary. Clara Zetkin devoted years and years to the question of women's emancipation. Gramsci discussed fervently the national question in Italy or the role of superstitions among the people or many other things. Brecht was obviously interested, as a poet and a playwright, in everything. But whatever they took up, they ultimately connected its significance to class struggle and revolution.

Now, it is important to point out that the Frankfurt School, after it turned into "critical theory", was ripe to fuse with postmodernism after the 1970s. One of the main warnings of this speech will be this: Beware of those who push postmodernist ideas in the guise of Marxism. The key name here is Frederic Jameson, who presented postmodernism as an organic growth of a new stage of capitalism, thus giving that obscurantist school of thinking credibility among Marxists.

Now postmodernism is of different kinds. There is Foucault and his most influential follower Judith Butler or the post-Marxism of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe or the globalism of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt. What one should watch out for is this: All these different strands of present-day social theory pretend they are a continuation and improvement of Marxism, but destroy the very basis of Marxism, by negating the importance of class struggle, the central historic role of the proletariat, the necessity of revolution and the existence of imperialism to be fought.

There is a third strand of Western Marxism. The excellent historians of Britain (E. Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, I. Deutscher, C. Hill etc.), France (Albert Soboul, Daniel Guérin etc.), Germany (for instance Wolfgang Abendroth) and other countries have contributed immensely to Marxism and deserve their fame and prestige among Marxists of all countries.

## National-liberation Marxism

We now come to the second source from which the Marxism of the 21st century may flow forth. This second source offers the benefit of being a corrective to the wing of Western Marxism typified by the Frankfurt School that delved into problems peculiar to advanced capitalist-imperialist societies and simply ignored relations of oppression flowing from the rise of imperialism and colonialism and the struggles born thereof.

There are two different strands of thinking in national-liberation Marxism. One deals with the economic bases of this new phenomenon, The basis of this strand of Marxism lies, of course, in the theory of imperialism developed by second-generation Marxists of the school that we call revolutionary Marxism, to which we will come at the end of this paper, whose most important representatives in the area of the theory of imperialism are obviously Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. National-liberation took over some of the ideas of the theory of imperialism and developed them in directions that were relevant for the other side of the equation, i.e. the countries oppressed by imperialism. Authors such as those of the Latin American dependency school, Andre Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin are the main representatives.

There is also another variant that delves deeper into questions of colonial psychology, of the cultural peculiarities of colonial society and the route to be taken by the artists of such societies, and the interconnection between anti-imperialist struggles and the fight for socialism. Franz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Juan Antonio Mella, José Carlos Mariátegui, Mao Zedong, and Ho Chi Minh are some of the prominent figures here.

Although many views of the national-liberation Marxism of the twentieth century may be found wanting or plain wrong, we are of the opinion that, given the continuing inequalities and relations of oppression that exist between different types of societies in the world and, in many cases, even different peoples within the borders of the same country, this school has an immense contribution to make to the Marxism of the 21st century.

## Soviet Marxism

The contribution of Soviet Marxism to Marxism at the international level is something yet to be discovered by those of us that have remained outside of the Soviet experience. It is thinkers, academics and fighters for socialism with whom we share this conference who are best-placed to reveal for us in the rest of the world the secrets of Soviet Marxism. Nonetheless, let us say a few words, with humility, on the general lines of the historical formation of Soviet Marxism that may provide clues for all of us.

It is of vital importance to start from two very important facts. One is the fact that Soviet Marxism has its roots in the Marxism of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, whose Marxism we will be taking up below under the rubric of "revolutionary Marxism". This very fact creates room for hope in the achievements of Soviet Marxism. Added to this comes the additional positive factor that flows from Marxism being the main philosophical and ideological world view through which all the sciences, natural and social, were viewed in Soviet times.

That is the positive side. However, there is also a very negative factor that went into the formation of Soviet Marxism. That is the transformation of Marxism from a universalist theory and ideology into a nationally limited one. Stalinist leadership and rule did not only imply terror and oppression. That would be a very limited view of what happened in the Soviet Union after Lenin's death. Stalinist leadership meant, first and foremost, abandoning world revolution as the condition for the final triumph of socialism and the construction of a classless society. It involved the replacement of the internationalism of Marxism and Leninism by a novel outlook that can best be described as "national communism". It is, first and foremost, the duty of the Marxists of those nations that went through the Soviet experience to distinguish between these two influences in the formation of Soviet Marxism.

Allow me to make an observation that may help us to distinguish between the Leninist brand of Marxism, on the one hand, and Stalinism on the other. Over the years of my very fruitful exchange with Russian Marxists, I have observed that for them Dimitrov's theory of fascism is non-negotiable, that they immediately refer to that concept of fascism, even if their personal attitude towards the Stalin period is critical in the extreme. However, Dimitrov's definition of fascism is in fact not a ***theoretical*** construct as we would understand it from the Marxist point of view but an instrumentalist ideological construct. It instrumentalizes Marxist class struggle theory by implying, *sotto voce*, that imperialist fractions of capital exist that are anti-fascist, ***with which the Soviet Union could form alliances***. This is simply the intellectual justification for the popular fronts, such as those in Spain and France, that were formed before the next period of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact set in. This is not a scientific theory of fascism but a definition made up for purposes of political justification. This is a very clear example of one of the decisive characteristics of Soviet Marxism.

So, although I insist that the contributions and the shortcomings of Soviet Marxism can only be fully assessed, in the last analysis, by Marxists who have experienced the Soviet intellectual climate, I would simply warn our comrades here that not all that shines is gold.

## Revolutionary Marxism

I will not dwell long on revolutionary Marxism. The reason is not that it is unimportant. On the contrary the reason is that it is indispensable.

Let me first give very brief information on the genesis of the concept revolutionary Marxism. This is a concept coined by Lenin. He used it against all the phony Marxisms of his age, first in Russia and then internationally. In other words, he used it to distinguish the genuine Marxism of his own Bolshevik Party (and movements parallel to it, such as the Spartacists of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in

Germany) from those trends represented by Karl Kautsky or Edouard Bernstein or the Mensheviks in Russia that were Marxist in name but liberal in reality.

Revolutionary Marxism did not of course come to an end with the death of Lenin. Since "national communism" got the upper hand in the Soviet Union as a new social stratum that would best be characterised as "workers' bureaucracy" rose to dominate the state under the socio-economic relations of state property over the large means of production and circulation, coupled with central planning, those tendencies within Bolshevism that insisted on the internationalism of the revolutionary Marxist programme organised against this new turn. This is what gave rise to the Fourth International after the bureaucracy won the political struggle. Throughout the rest of the 20th century, it was the Fourth Internationalist movement, first briefly under Trotsky's leadership and later without him, that fought for the continuity of revolutionary Marxism. One should also include within the field of revolutionary Marxism the attempts, until the death of Che Guevara, of the Cuban leadership to further world revolution, mostly in the so-called "Third World".

We do not have time to discuss at length either the main characteristics and propositions of revolutionary Marxism or its achievements. I will only very emphatically dwell on two points: first, I said above that the different versions of postmodernism "pretend they are a continuation and improvement of Marxism, but destroy the very basis of Marxism, by negating the importance of class struggle, the central historic role of the proletariat, the necessity of revolution and the existence of imperialism to be fought."

And, second, add to these four points what I said about the Stalinist brand of Soviet Marxism: "the replacement of the internationalism of Marxism and Leninism by a novel outlook that can best be described as 'national communism' ".

These five points necessarily interconnected to each other are the hallmarks of revolutionary Marxism.

This, then, is the central message of my presentation: let a hundred flowers bloom in constructing 21st century Marxism, but never sacrifice the centrality of the following five points: class struggle, the historic role of the proletariat, the necessity of revolution, unbending anti-imperialism, and proletarian internationalism.

Any theory that negates one or more of these points is incompatible with the emancipation of humanity, this century or beyond. Marxism, on the contrary, is the theory and programme of universal human emancipation.

# Evolution of the concept of economic and social formation to world history

Yuri Shakhin

One of the most important theoretical innovations of Marxism is a materialist theory of history. This fundamentally new approach attempted to rethink the entire history of humanity. Many modern promoters of Marxism believe that this task has been completed and successfully realized. The article will demonstrate that it is far from the case, and Marxist historians continue to face complex theoretical challenges. This article will examine the concept of economic and social formation, which traditionally occupies a central place in the materialist theory of history. A formation is a social system, all of whose elements are interconnected, and the central element is the mode of production, which is determined by the dialectical unity of productive forces and production relations.

The Marxist concept of economic and social formation did not arise out of nowhere: it is a variation of the stage approach to history. The stage approach originated in Western Europe and was first developed by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Most of these philosophers associated the stages of human development with the progress of human reason, but some believed that the change in economic types

was the basis for changes in human society. In this regard, the views of A. Turgot are of particular interest. The Soviet historian V.P. Ilyushechkin noted: "Many of the ideas he [Turgot] expressed subsequently received widespread dissemination and promoted further development in science. Thus, his ideas on the social division of labor as the defining basis of estate-class division, on determination of the class division in society along economic lines by exploitative (large-scale private) ownership of the means of production, and on the need to closely link historical and sociological constructs with the data of political economy were inherited and later developed by Marxist science".[1]

The Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century envisioned history as a sequential change of stages common for all societies, but among the predecessors of Marxism were also those who adhered to relay-stage theories of history. First and foremost, this was Hegel. He conceived of history idealistically, as the self-knowledge of the world spirit through the hands of various peoples. According to his teaching, for humanity to move to a new stage of development, it is sufficient for just one people to do so. The rest may, however, continue to exist at lower stages or disappear entirely from the face of the earth. In this regard, Hegel even divided peoples into historical and non-historical. Naturally, this approach was not shared by contemporary Romantic historians, who believed that all peoples are historical, each following the same path, albeit with its own characteristics. Thus, pre-Marxist historical thought held different views on the relationship between the stages of human development and the stages of development of particular societies. Some believed that all stages were necessary for each society, while others believed that such a necessity did not exist. In their works, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels never directly compared these two models, but they were aware of their existence.

The Marxist concept of economic and social formation emerged in the mid-19th century. Studying its development is difficult due to several features of the theoretical heritage of Marx and Engels. First, having once broken with the traditions of old philosophy, they made it a rule not to construct complete theoretical systems. Although their views were marked by internal integrity, they hardly bothered to systematically expound them during their lifetimes. Second, one must distinguish between Marx and Engels's own views and their reception by their contemporaries. Third, a number of Marx's manuscripts, fundamentally important for understanding his teachings, were published only in the 20th century, and the ideas expressed there became the property of an entirely different period in intellectual history. The concept of social economic formation became the most important category for the stage analysis of human history in Marxism. It was thoroughly developed by Marx

1 Ilyushechkin V.P., Teoriya stadiynogo razvitiya obshchestva (istoriya i problemy) [Theory of Stage Development of Society (History and Problems)], Moscow, 1996. p. 29-30.

using capitalist society as a subject of study, and the general principles underlying it were actively popularized by the classics of Marxism.

Marxism is a materialist doctrine and sees the unity of human history in labor, i.e., the subject-practical activity of transforming nature into an artificial environment that supports human existence. Labor is the foundation of any social organization, but under different historical conditions, labor is carried out differently, which provides the basis for dividing human history into formations. In some formations, production relations presuppose division into conflicting classes, while in others, such a division does not exist. Therefore, formations can be divided into antagonistic and non-antagonistic. Changes in formations occur through revolution: internal contradictions accumulate within a social system, simultaneously generating the foundations of a new system. Then, a qualitative leap occurs, and a new society is being formed on the ruins of the old. History, as a process of social development, is directional; it includes progress, although it is not absolute and is accompanied by regression. Progress is always regression, only in a different sense, Engels once warned.[2] The criterion of progress is the development of human freedom, understood as the ability to make decisions with a knowledge ground. The pinnacle of freedom will be a social order in which workers themselves can govern society and nature in their own interests.

All these abstract propositions require concretization and an answer to the question: what formation stages does humanity pass through? This question remains a subject of debate in Marxism to this day. Marx and Engels limited themselves to rough sketches of the stages of world history. In manuscripts from 1857, which awaited publication for over a hundred years, Marx outlined the following universal schema for human history:

1. prehistory of humanity

a) natural dependence

b) personal dependence

c) objective [sachlicher] dependence

2. true history – the realm of freedom.

The realm of freedom is a future communism, and all other stages are societies that actually existed in human history. Natural dependence is inherent in primitive

2 Engels F., *Dialectics of Nature*, Chapter Biology.

society; the era of personal dependence is associated with pre-capitalist antagonistic formations, while the system of material objective dependence corresponds to capitalism. Marx unites the stages of personal and objective dependence under the category of "economic social formation". In this formation, labor activity is conditioned by the pressure of external necessity.[3]

An echo of this view is easily discernible in the famous "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy", published in 1859 and widely known: "In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production... This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of society to a close".[4] First, it is important to note that the Russian translation of this text differs both from the German original and its English translation. In the Russian text in the last sentence, it traditionally writes "bourgeois"" instead of "this". It forms the illusion that Marx ambiguously used the term "formation" and applied it uniformly to social systems of varying hierarchical orders. So, there were some misunderstandings of Marx in the Soviet and Russian scholarship tradition.[5]

Second, and most importantly, Marx outlined a consistent, progressive series of modes of production and, accordingly, formations in human history. Individual characteristics of these formations were presented in the works of Marx and Engels, but they did not provide an expanded division of history into stages. Engels slightly expanded this schema of world history: he designated primitive society, based on hunting and gathering, as the stage of savagery, equated primitive society based on agriculture with barbarism, and class societies with civilization.

Marx revealed the secret of such a meager stage scheme in one of his last works - a letter to the editors of the Russian journal Otechestvenniye Zapisky. Marx protested against the attempts of the populist N.K. Mikhailovsky to metamorphose his "historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the *marche generale* [general path] imposed by fate upon every people, whatever the historic circumstances in which it finds itself". By studying the processes of social evolution in each society, taking into account its specific historical features, "and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon (when similar processes lead to radically different results – Yu.Sh.), but one will never arrive there by the universal passport of a general

3 Marx K., *Grundrisse: Notebook I* – The Chapter on Money, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch03.htm

4 Marx K., Preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.*

5 Volkov V.V., Marksism: ot autentichnosti k novym gorizontam razvitiya [Marxism: From Authenticity to New Horizons of Development], Saint Petersburg, 2025. p. 53.

historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical".[6] Meanwhile, according to the unanimous opinion of Marxists of the late 19th century, Marx had adequately studied only one capitalist formation. All the others waited their turn. A stage view of human history required a great deal of scholarly research and remained a matter for the future.

The above quote is also interesting because, prior to conducting specialized research, Marx did not assert that the historical process was linear; rather, he leaned toward the opposite view. This position contrasts with his own conceptualizations in the second half of the 1850s. Nevertheless, this perception of human history became firmly established in the collective consciousness of Marx's followers. Moreover, this linear-stage worldview rejected the understanding of capitalism as a global formation that Marx and Engels had been developing since the 1840s, replacing it with a mechanical set of capitalist systems developing at different rates in different countries. The history of each country was viewed separately from global processes, and development was perceived as a kind of race between runners running on parallel tracks, yet simultaneously in the same direction. In Russia, one of the popularizers of this approach was the "legal Marxist" P.B. Struve. Official Soviet scholarship's negative attitude toward "legal Marxism" in general and Struve in particular did not prevent it from adopting this interpretation of Marxism.[7] However, Marx himself provided some justification for this. In one of his prefaces to "Capital", he asserted that a more developed country presents a less developed country with a picture of its own future, without making any additional qualifications.

Nevertheless, the decisive reason for conceptualizing history as a race between runners running on parallel tracks is unrelated to either Marx's qualifications or P.B. Struve's machinations. This perception of the historical process was laid down in the first half of the 19th century and developed by European Romantic historiography, which shaped grand national narratives and addressed the challenges of nation-building. The perception of world history as a mechanical aggregation of national histories, clearly evident in the works of Marxist historians both in Russia and Western Europe, merely testifies to the level of their theoretical reflection at that time.

The victory of the revolution in Russia created favorable conditions for the development of Marxism and the scientific study of world history from a materialist perspective. Soviet historians were faced with the urgent need to provide a periodization of not only global but also domestic history according to the concept of economic and social formation. Fierce debates on this issue erupted in the second

6 Letter from Marx to Editor of the *Otecestvenniye Zapisky.*

7 Kagarlitsky B.Yu., Periferiynaya imperiya: tsikly russkoy istorii [Peripheral Empire: Cycles of Russian History], Moscow, 2009. p. 14.

half of the 1920s and first half of the 1930s. These debates involved not only professional social scientists but also party officials, who ultimately settled the debate. Particularly challenging were the Asiatic mode of production, social relations in Kievan Rus', and Russian society from the 16th to the first half of the 19th centuries. Some historians argued that the countries of the East had a feudal system. Others categorically insisted on a distinct Asiatic mode of production. Some Soviet historians believed that Ancient Rus' had a slave-owning system, while others believed it was feudal. Three theories have been advanced regarding Russia from the 16th to the first half of the 19th centuries. The leading historian of the 1920s, M.N. Pokrovsky, argued that this was an era of merchant capitalism, whereas his opponents saw in this period either a distinct serf system or a distinct stage of feudalism. [8]

Discussions about social economic formations in Soviet scholarship had largely concluded by 1933. Thanks to V.V. Struve's research on forms of dependence in Ancient Mesopotamia, the Asiatic mode of production concept was abandoned and ancient Eastern societies were recognized as a local variant of the slave-owning system. B.D. Grekov succeeded in substantiating the feudal nature of Ancient Russian society, although proponents of the slave-owning system in Kievan Rus' persisted until the 1970s. A.G. Prigozhin demonstrated that the era of serfdom in Russia does not qualify as a separate formation, but rather a stage in the development of feudalism. Politics had a powerful influence on the subsequent development of the concept of economic and social formation. The bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state and the establishment of the Stalinist dictatorship led to the substitution of scientific knowledge with political dogmas that were not subject to revision. The results of scholarly debates on world and Russian history were canonized in a short course on the history of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), published in 1938. This work was conceived as a popular textbook on the party's history; I.V. Stalin personally participated in its editing, and the book itself was published without citing its authors, in the name of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). There, the Central Committee proclaimed a linear, five-stage socio-economic formation scheme of world history. According to this scheme, humanity developed through five universal formations: primitive communal society, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and communism, the lower socialist stage of which the USSR entered. Some peoples, however, were able to skip certain formations; for example, the Germans and Slavs moved directly from primitive communal society to feudalism, while the Mongols moved from feudalism to socialism, bypassing capitalism. This picture of world history became mandatory for all Soviet social scientists and was actively promoted in all Stalinist communist parties worldwide.

8 Ocherki istorii istoricheskoy nauki v SSSR [Essays on the History of Historical Science in the USSR], Moscow, 1966. Vol. 4, p. 165-169, 273.

During the first decades of its existence, this scheme exerted a fruitful influence on Soviet historical scholarship. It enabled a transition from theoretical debates to large-scale, concrete historical studies of entire world history based on a unified theoretical foundation, fostering a significant increase in historical knowledge and the emergence of extensive generalizing works. However, by the 1950s, it became clear that new factual material no longer fit into this framework. Eastern countries posed particular difficulties. It turned out that by the beginning of the modern era, some large Eastern societies surpassed early bourgeois Europe in labor productivity, yet the prevailing type of social relations in them had changed little since ancient times and, most importantly, found no direct parallels in European history.[9] They can be compared to feudalism, but can't be passed off as a slave system. Yet, chronologically, it does precede the ancient formation, as Marx noted when writing about the Asiatic mode of production.

A reconsideration of the approach was necessary, but the five-stage linear scheme of formations was sanctified by the Party's authority and could not simply be abolished following scholarly debate. Consequently, an abnormal situation developed in Soviet historical scholarship. The outdated scheme continued to be reproduced in scholarly, educational, and popular literature, while alternative views were confined to a small group of scholars who were unable to convey them to the broader scientific community. Alternative formation concepts, breaking with the official Soviet scheme, became the property of historians at a time when most of them no longer needed them. The collapse of the USSR, in the eyes of most historians, confirmed the non-viability of Marxism, and they ignored alternative stage ideas published in the late 1980s and mid-1990s.

Among the most interesting Soviet and Russian authors who contributed to the development of new versions of the stages theory of history, V.P. Ilyushechkin, Yu.M. Kobishchanov, V.V. Krylov, and Yu.I. Semionov deserve special mention. Kobishchanov reconsidered the composition of pre-capitalist formations. He developed a general theory of feudal formation and concluded that all pre-capitalist class societies share a common foundation, differing only in local characteristics. As a result, Kobishchanov advanced the theory of a great feudal formation, replacing the slavery-owning system, the Asian mode of production, and feudalism[10]. The slave-owning system in the Mediterranean countries proved to be merely a specific, hypertrophied form on par with the dominant feudal system, and the total number of social formations was reduced to four: primitive communal, great feudal, capitalist,

9 Krylov V.V., Proizvodstvo. Vlast'. Sobstvennost'. Fursov o Krylove [Production. Power. Property. Fursov on Krylov], Moscow, 2024, p. 34-48.

10 Kobishchanov Yu.M., Teoriya bol'shoy feodal'noy formacii [Theory of the Great Feudal Formation], *Voprosy istorii,* 1992, No:4-5, p. 57-72.

and communist.

Ilyushechkin came to a similar four-stage scheme, although he called the second link a single estate-class formation, based on the rent mode of production. His theoretical argumentation also differed. While Kobishchanov stressed on the nature of productive relations, Ilyushechkin paid particular attention to the nature of productive forces. According to his theory, we cannot measure the level of development of productive forces simply by the quantitative indicator of labor productivity. The qualitative uniqueness of productive forces must be taken into account, regardless of the output they provide per worker. His theory placed emphasis on the qualitative uniqueness of the technological labor process, and the differences between stages are derived from which worker functions are replaced by the means of labor. Ilyushechkin identified four "type-stages" of development of technology and the productive forces based on it: "1) primitive hand-held stone, bone and wooden tools, based on the use of only human muscle power, 2) hand-held metal and wooden tools and means of labor, based on the use of the motor power of not only humans, but also domestic animals, wind and water flows, 3) machine technology, which objectified not only the motor, but also the working function of man, and 4) environmentally friendly automatic technology, objectifying the motor, working and control-logical functions of the worker". [11] They correspond to four stages of development of productive forces and four formations: primitive communal, estate-class, capitalist and communist.

Despite identifying a distinct Asiatic mode of production, Krylov was close to the first two authors. He also identified four formations: the primitive communal system, the secondary formation, capitalism (or tertiary formation), and socialism. The main characteristics of the secondary formation are the predominance of natural, rather than material, factors of production in the structure of productive forces and, consequently, the prevalence of personal dependence in exploitative relations. From Krylov's perspective, the Asiatic, ancient, and feudal systems form three successive stages in the development of the secondary formation; simultaneously, these social stages are stages in the development of human freedom[12]. This same rule applies to all formation stages.

Kobishchanov, Ilyushechkin, and Krylov sought to establish a linear-stage formation approach. However, despite their efforts, they were forced to acknowledge that significant territorial differences exist within the stages of the socio-economic formations. Therefore, regional-territorial characteristics and cultural uniqueness

11 Ilyushechkin V.P., Teoriya stadiynogo razvitiya obshchestva (istoriya i problemy) [Theory of Stage Development of Society (History and Problems)], Moscow, 1996, p. 205.
12 Krylov V.V., Proizvodstvo. Vlast'. Sobstvennost'. Fursov o Krylove [Production. Power. Property. Fursov on Krylov], Moscow, 2024, p. 216-232, 238-250.

must be taken into account in the overall picture of human development. Kobishchanov, within the framework of the great feudal formation, and Ilyushechkin, within the framework of the estate-class formation, believed it necessary to distinguish distinct regional civilizations. Krylov, however, emphasized the differences in the historical paths of the East and West within the framework of the secondary formation. Furthermore, Krylov fruitfully studied theoretical issues of the development of the capitalist formation and concluded that, as a world system, it is also spatially heterogeneous in its qualitative characteristics. The stages theory of history required spatial specification. Kobishchanov and Ilyushechkin did this by introducing additional sociocultural criteria, not being satisfied with socioeconomic foundations alone.

Semionov took a different approach and decided not to deviate from socioeconomic foundations. His formation approach is distinguished by its significant originality. He took the most radical path and developed a relay-stage concept of world history, which he later renamed the global-stage concept, although the former name more accurately conveys the new content it contains. Firstly, Semionov introduced the concept of a social organism and insisted on the need to distinguish social organisms from formations. "...The history of mankind should in no case be considered as a simple sum of the histories of socio-historical organisms, and socio-economic formations - as identical stages of the evolution of socio-historical organisms, obligatory for each of them. The history of mankind is a single whole, and socio-economic formations are, first of all, stages in the development of this single whole, and not of individual socio-historical organisms. Formations can be stages in the development of individual socio-historical organisms, or they may not be. But the latter in no way prevents them from being stages in the evolution of mankind". [13]

Secondly, Semionov proposed considering diachronic and synchronous social processes in a complex manner, or, as he puts it, horizontal and vertical connections between social organisms. Horizontal or synchronous connections are the spatial interactions of societies. To describe this, he proposed a new conceptual framework, including terms such as nests, historical arenas, historical spaces, historical zones, and systems. Previous historians had neglected the importance of horizontal connections between social organisms, and if they did consider them, they didn't include them in the overall picture of humanity's formational development. For Semionov, on the contrary, this is a very important factor. According to his theory, certain formations can only emerge as a result of such horizontal interactions.

Thirdly, Semionov introduced the concept of politaristic modes of production.

13 Semionov Yu.I., Filosofiya istorii. (Obshchaya teoriya, osnovnye problemy, idei i koncepcii ot drevnosti do nashih dney) [Philosophy of History (General Theory, Fundamental Problems, Ideas and Concepts from Antiquity to the Present)], Moscow, 2003, p. 486.

The essence of these modes of production is that exploitative relations can arise not only on the basis of private property owned by individual representatives of the ruling class, but also on the basis of class-wide property, which necessarily takes the form of state property. Previously, many Marxists believed that exploitative relations were linked solely to private property relations, although Engels, in Anti-Dühring, demonstrated that this was not always the case, citing examples from ancient Eastern societies and state-owned enterprises under capitalism. Semionov raised this argument to a higher theoretical level.

Fourth, Semionov radically shattered all notions about the total number of possible modes of production and the formations that emerged from them, introducing several dozen new terms to describe them. Without dwelling on the modes of production, we will list only the formations that can be identified from Semionov's works. The criterion for distinguishing them is the primary mode of production. In the social organisms of the primitive era, he discovered two formations: primitive communist (communal) and primitive prestige one. He then identified pre-class society, which contained elements of up to six different structures, but did not form a formation. Then the class formations come: the ancient politaristic formation, the dominate-magnarian paraformation, the serval formation, the antique politaristic-magnarian formation, the feudal-townspeople formation, the medieval politaristic-magnarian paraformation, the merchant-townspeople paraformation, the absolutist politaristic formation, the nobile-magnarian formation, the state-politarian-manor formation, the orthocapitalist formation, the neo-serval paraformation, the paracapitalist paraformation, and the industrial politaristic formation (neopolitarism). [14] In total, there are sixteen formations, not counting the future communist society, the possibility of which Semionov does not question. In addition to division by dominant modes of production, formations can be further classified by types of genesis and place in human history.

Human progress is linked to a long series of formations, some of which are the property of all humanity, while others are the property of only individual social organisms. The main line of social progress looks like this. All of humanity passed through the primitive communist (communal) and primitive prestige formations. The next stage is the ancient politaristic formation, through which not all social organisms passed, although it is a typical first stage in the evolution of class society. This system was known before Semionov as the Asiatic mode of production or the ancient Eastern system. Then, among a group of Mediterranean social organisms, the serval formation (known to us as the slave-owning system) emerged from the

14 Semionov Yu.I., Filosofiya istorii. (Obshchaya teoriya, osnovnye problemy, idei i koncepcii ot drevnosti do nashih dney) [Philosophy of History (General Theory, Fundamental Problems, Ideas and Concepts from Antiquity to the Present)], Moscow, 2003, p. 441-508.

dominate-magnarian paraformation, eventually evolving into the dead-end antique politaristic-magnarian formation. After this, among a group of Western European social organisms, the feudal-townspeople formation emerged. It developed into an absolutist politaristic system, which perished as a result of revolutions and gave way to orthocapitalism. For comparison, social organisms relevant to Russian history have passed through the following formations: primitive communist formation, primitive prestige formation (ancient Slavs), nobile-magnarian (Ancient Rus'), state-politarian-manor formation (Russia from the 16th to the first half of the 19th centuries), paracapitalist paraformation (Russia from the second half of the 19th to the early 20th centuries), industrial politaristic (neopolitarism) (USSR), and again paracapitalist paraformation (modern Russia).

When looking at the main scheme of humankind's progressive development, one can see that Semionov essentially demystified Hegel. Where the German philosopher saw inexplicable leaps of the world spirit from one people to another, Semionov discovered a complex chain of social interactions. Despite its daunting complexity, his relay-stage concept allows us to describe both the progressive development of humanity as a whole and specific variants of its regional development that deviated from the main road of progress or never followed it at all. The integrity of human history is combined with its pluralism in time and space. These are the latest ideas in the socio-economic formation approach in Russian scholarship.

Today, the socio-economic formation approach to history is in crisis, at least in the republics of the former USSR. Although over one hundred and fifty years have passed since the appearance of Marx's first stage-formation schemes, the problem of constructing a generally accepted concept of human development remains far from being resolved. In the 1930s, with the advent of the five-stage socio-economic formation scheme, it was believed that a solution had been found. But it soon became clear that this was an illusion. This fact was initially recognized by a small circle of professional researchers, and later disseminated to a wider public. However, the search for new solutions did not intensify, even after the ideological factors that had hindered it ceased to be effective. Many contemporary Marxists still regard the five-stage formation scheme as a viable approach. This is especially true among social activists and promoters of Marxism.

Even more telling is that over the past quarter century, no new ideas have been advanced within the socio-economic formation approach. Ilyushechkin, Kobishchanov, Krylov, and Semionov formulated their theories back in the 20th century. There has been no broad discussion among Marxist historians about their views on world history. Of course, this can be attributed to the general crisis of historical science and the influence of postmodernism, which rejects grand narratives and orients historians toward small-scale themes that fragment the picture of history into

mosaic segments. However, for Marxist historians, this cannot be an excuse. The global picture of human development has traditionally played an important ideological and theoretical role in Marxism. Although it describes the past, the function of this description is subordinated to prognostic tasks. We answer questions about the unity of humanity, the reality of progress, and its universal significance, thereby peering beyond the horizon of capitalism and demonstrating the necessity of a communist society. Therefore, the further development of the socio-economic formation approach is our urgent task.

# The trinity of Marxism

Mikhail B. Konashev

Various events between the second half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 21st century, especially the 20th century, were directly or indirectly related to Marxism, a significant part of which, starting with the Great Russian Workers' and Peasants' Revolution in October 1917, became key, and had a huge impact on the course of world history and changed humanity and the entire world. Due to these changes, the victories and defeats of Marxism, the question has repeatedly arisen about what is Marxism, what can be called Marxism or attributed to Marxism, and what is not. In this regard, and first of all, the question of the historical significance and historical role of Marxism was raised, the problem of its essence, truth and purpose, the reasons for its ascent, stagnation and descent and its achievements and failures, victories and defeats arose. Nowadays, when capitalism has entered its final stage and its degradation, decline and decay that lead to innumerable disasters and tragedies, and threaten the very existence of humanity, these issues and this problem have become more urgent than ever. Without searching for answers to these questions and attempting to solve this problem, it is difficult, or rather impossible, to count on the further development of Marxism and on solving the task that was objectively set by the evolution of capitalism itself, and subjectively by the classics of Marxism, and on achieving their intended goal. That is why it is so important for everyone who is sincerely interested in this, and has conducted relevant

research, who has doubted and reflected, to provide answers to these questions and solve this problem. The preliminary results of one such attempt, such a study, are summarized briefly in this article.

## Marxism as an objective reality

Marxism exists as an objective reality and at the same time as an ideology, as a theory in a broad sense, including philosophy, and practice, i.e. as revolutionary action to transform reality and humanize man and the world, to create a human being and a human world. In these three hypostases or types, Marxism appears to an outside observer and researcher, including the Marxist one, and represents an organic unity, a trinity that is also the unity of Marxism as an object, subject and instrument of research, including an instrument of Marxist self-exploration, i.e. a means of one's own self-knowledge and self-transformation. At the same time, the trinity of Marxism also means that in each of these three hypostases, i.e. in Marxism as an ideology, as a theoretical activity, and as a revolutionary practice, revolutionary practical activity is always present explicitly or implicitly as a starting point, an initial basis, and at the same time as the ultimate goal, of course, the moral, humanistic essence. It was in Marx's youthful essay on choosing a profession, then in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and all other works of Marx and Engels, as well as in their correspondence. Deviation from it or any damage to it, even more so, even partial and temporary rejection, inevitably leads to a violation of the trinity of Marxism, its integrity and to the deformation, destruction and ultimately to the death of Marxism.

In all these guises, Marxism is superficially diverse and contradictory – classical Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, Trotskyism, Maoism, Eurocommunism, etc. This diversity is not some annoying misunderstanding, not an accident, but ***an objective and natural*** pattern determined by the cultural, ideological, political, social, natural and other diversity of the existence and development of Marxism in its three mentioned hypostases in different countries, the diversity of the evolution of societies in these countries, social classes, political and other institutions. In other words, the diversity of the ideology, theory and practice of Marxism is a derivative of the diversity of economic, political, cultural and other diversity of human evolution and humanity. It is also natural and, ultimately, progressive in a variety of ways, meaning and forming branches of the biological tree of evolution.

Moreover, in all these guises, Marxism is not a fixed set of truths and immutable rules of action, but a permanent and contradictory process, evolution, which has its own separate stages and directions, including ascending (progressive), descending (regressive) and dead-end branches, as well as periods of stagnation.

## Marxism as a process

In addition, it should be borne in mind that in the trinity of Marxism and in Marxism as an organic and occasionally even harmonious, but at the same time contradictory unity, the trinity and the essential identity of its parts is a relative, not an absolute moment, that is, the moment that is achieved over and over again in the process of its development, origin and then the resolution of one contradiction and the origin of another: the resolution of the previous contradiction creates the basis for the origin and development of a new contradiction and, thus, for a new, higher stage of development.

At the same time, according to Hegelian and Marxist dialectics (and logic), as in every contradiction, there is a leading side of the contradiction of Marxism as a triune organic whole. In Marxism, the main thing is the method and the subject of action, in particular the method and the subject of research. The complexity and inconsistency of Marxist cognition (research) and on its basis, i.e. on the basis of the obtained result of cognition of reality, including the result of self-knowledge, cognition of the subject of cognition and action, is combined with the complexity and inconsistency of Marxist ***revolutionary action***, with its originality and with the new theoretical assumptions and conclusions caused by this action, sometimes unexpected and even at first glance contradicting previous theoretical conclusions, with a radical transformation of theory. If, for example, as a result of a Marxist study of reality and revolutionary practice, it is proved that at this particular historical moment it is necessary to fight for reforms, then it is necessary to fight for reforms, for their most complete and radical version to be adopted, and then for this particular option to be implemented in the most necessary and possible form by the ruling classes, the ***upper classes*** under the pressure of the proletariat and the oppressed, exploited workers of the ***lower classes***. If, as a result of the rejection of reforms, or their blocking, emasculation, as a result of the crisis of politics, economics and the prevailing ideology, a revolutionary situation has matured, and both the proletariat and its party are ready for revolution, then a revolution must be carried out. If the former Communist party, as it unfortunately was in the history of the revolutionary movement and the creation of socialism, of socialist construction, has exhausted its revolutionary potential, its abilities as a proletarian vanguard, or, worse, has degraded and outlived itself, as happened with the CPSU, it is necessary, if possible, to fight for its transformation again to the vanguard party, for its revival. But if such a revival or transformation is impossible, it is necessary to fight for the creation of a new genuinely Marxist, genuinely revolutionary, genuinely communist party, and, perhaps in a new, unexpected form, or create something else instead.

According to classical Marxism, the subject of Marxist revolutionary action is the proletariat, which can, and sometimes should, enter into alliances with other op-

pressed and exploited classes and social groups. The complexity and inconsistency of the subject is also threefold: first, the complexity and inconsistency of the proletariat itself; secondly, its vanguard, whether it be a revolutionary party or another revolutionary organization, and the interaction of the proletariat and its vanguard; and, finally, the interaction of the proletariat with other oppressed and exploited classes and social groups. There is no unity in Marxist theory and journalism on all these issues, and disputes do not stop.

**Violation of the trinity of Marxism and its consequences**

It is obvious that the failures and defeats of Marxism are primarily and mainly related to the violation of the trinity of Marxism. It is equally obvious that each such violation of the trinity of Marxism had, has, and, unfortunately, can and will have its own specific historical causes, social and other foundations and circumstances, as well as some common features, some kind of patterns. Each of these specific historical reasons, as well as each general reason, requires a separate thorough study and presentation, based on all known, or at least the most significant and important facts and arguments. Such a presentation would necessitate a very long paper, which is not possible in the course of this article. Moreover, in general, the thesis of the trinity of Marxism and the components of the trinity is not even a scientific hypothesis in the strict sense, but only an assumption that requires detailed justification and proof, a separate thorough and in-depth study, and only then an equally detailed presentation. Nevertheless, it is possible and necessary to name at least some of these reasons and circumstances, and the real contradictions that gave rise to them. This will be done in the next section about deviations from genuine Marxism, its deformation and distortion, and, finally, about the actual replacement with something else that only bears the name of Marxism, or claims that this something is Marxism. Almost all the examples will relate to the history of Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet Russian Marxism, but corresponding similar cases can, if necessary, be easily cited from the history of Marxism in any other country where Marxism originated, existed and exists in one form or another and to one degree or another, as well as from the history of international, world Marxism and the revolutionary movement.

## Marxism deviated and deformed

The violation of the principle of the trinity of Marxism reveals itself most of all in distorted, deformed, inauthentic and therefore not revolutionary Marxism. As such, this violation of the trinity of Marxism exists in the three main types of Marxism known from history: reformist or opportunist and revisionist Marxism, in state or official Marxism, and finally, although to the least extent and temporarily,

even in genuine (authentic) or revolutionary Marxism. In addition, in some cases in an extreme form, this violation exists in ultra-revolutionary, ultra-radical false Marxism, i.e. in pseudo-Marxism. Marxism can also be divided according to another principle - the relationship to classical Marxism - into orthodox or dogmatic Marxism, vulgar Marxism and creative (critical) Marxism, which at the same time is revolutionary Marxism. All of these types of Marxism, with the exception of one, were not, strictly speaking, Marxism, or Marxism as such, to varying degrees, and therefore can be attributed to Marxism or defined as Marxism to varying degrees. Full-fledged and genuine Marxism was and remains only revolutionary Marxism, in which all three components of the triune Marxism are always represented in an organic, living and developing unity, although in different ways and to varying degrees in relation to each other. In all other types of Marxism, the principle of its trinity is violated and is not respected to one degree or another, and in pseudo-Marxism it is de facto completely absent, eliminated as unnecessary.

At the same time, of course, all these types are directly and simply, or rather indirectly and complexly related in their origin to classical or initial Marxism. Hardly anyone would dispute that this statement refers to the origin of Stalinism in the USSR. Moreover, not only bourgeois anti-communist authors, but also some of those who identify themselves as Marxists, directly derived Stalinism from Leninism, primarily in order to blame Leninism and classical Marxism for the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s. By doing so, they sought and are striving to ***prove*** that Marxism as a whole is an immoral and inhuman doctrine. But even they should know that coming ***after*** something doesn't always mean ***coming out of that something***. In post-Soviet Marxist literature, it has been irrefutably proved more than once that philosophically, politically and morally, Stalinism was and remains in its modern forms the opposite of Leninism, and Stalin is the opposite, the alter ego of Lenin. Some authors even insisted and insist that Stalin's actions deliberately accelerated Lenin's demise.

The logical error ***after this means because of this*** (the relevant Latin locution is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*), in which the cause-effect relationship is identified with a temporal sequence, is generally characteristic of ideology, theory, and, as a result, practice of all other types and varieties of Marxism, from Maoism to Eurocommunism, and in particular pseudo-Marxism. The latter, louder and more annoying than all the others, constantly and aggressively declares that it is the real, non-bourgeois, only revolutionary Marxism, although in fact it is the Marxism of an ultra-left, ultra-revolutionary phrase and the ***de facto*** Marxism of a very dangerous provocation.

With all the diversity of deviated Marxism, it has some common features, or characteristic, essential features that have long been noted by both Marxist and

non-Marxist authors, and are generally well known. As a rule, these features are attributed to one of these Marxisms, which is the subject of study, description or criticism. But it is important to bring them together and note how really common it is that distinguishes all these types of Marxism from their original source, classical Marxism, and from revolutionary Marxism. Most importantly, these features are common, distinctive, so to speak, generic features of state Marxism, which took place precisely in countries where Marxism became the official ideology, which bourgeois ideologies and propagandists have always deliberately called communist, and the ideologies and propagandists of some of these countries, primarily the USSR, from a certain historical moment, called the countries of ***real socialism***.

State or official Marxism was or is a state ideology, and had or has an official name, such as Marxism-Leninism in the USSR, Juche in the DPRK. In most cases, such Marxism can also be called, and is being called, ***national*** Marxism or Marxism with national specificities, Marxism painted in national colors.

The main and characteristic features of state Marxism has long been well-known and has been listed more than once by both Marxist authors and various kinds of anti-communists to varying degrees. The first and main feature of such Marxism is that it is a state and mandatory ideology, including ***theory*** in a broad sense. The word ***theory*** has to be put in quotation marks, because, strictly speaking, it was either not a theory at all, or it can be attributed to such a stretch. First of all, therefore, in many, if not most cases, state Marxism was vulgar Marxism. Stalinism, Maoism, Titoism, Castroism (Castroism and Castrism, also Fidelism), Hoxhaism (also Enverizm) – all these are varieties of vulgar Marxism, or simplified and simplifying Marxism. All these varieties of Marxism can and are defined as vulgar Marxism, because they all share, albeit to varying degrees, the same basic common features: infallibility, the exclusion of the possibility of inaccuracy or insufficient evidence of individual theoretical positions and conclusions, theory as a whole; the ***sanctification*** of the truth and effectiveness (power) of theory, primarily its practical power and significance, by the authority of its creators, the founders of Marxism, the leaders of the proletariat; simplification, often significant and sometimes excessive, of the main provisions and conclusions of theory and philosophy, as well as the historical (past) practice of the original (classical) Marxism; the immutability and the rigidity of theoretical positions and theory in general, their mandatory recognition and mandatory ***directive adherence*** to them, especially in practice.

These features of ***vulgar Marxism***, and not only when it was state Marxism, led to the fact that, as a number of authors note, initially revolutionary classical Marxism in some cases turned into dogmatic Marxism, into a dogmatic theory and dogmatic ideology that promises and guarantees the masses the inevitability and inescapability of the demise of capitalism and accordingly, full “confidence in the

final victory", and in this respect it was similar to religion.

The term ***vulgar Marxism*** itself has been used since the beginning of the 20th century to criticize the corresponding varieties of Marxism and, above all, to criticize the theoretical positions that dominated the Second International, primarily the ***orthodox Marxism*** of Karl Kautsky. The first representatives of ***vulgar Marxism***, as well as subsequent ones, believed that the economic base of society determines its superstructure in a mechanistic, one-sided way, and the determination of the superstructure itself, as well as the development of the base, economy and capitalism as a whole, are automatic processes obeying the objective laws of capitalist development, which in fact do not depend on conscious human actions, the activities of the proletariat, and it was clearly a fatalistic interpretation of historical materialism.

The ***vulgar Marxism*** inherent in the theorists of the Second International, according to some authors, was based on the concept of Marxism as a social science, largely independent of philosophy, the essence of which was the desire to separate the scientific content of Marx's theories about capitalism, i.e. his political economy, from his philosophy, including the philosophy of history and, most importantly, from his dialectics, and its foundations and origins which are the dialectics of Hegel. This interpretation of Marxism made it possible to combine it with such fashionable and prevailing academic philosophical trends at that time as neo-Kantianism and positivism.

The realization, embodiment, process and results of the ***construction of socialism*** in a ***single country*** according to the plan and under the leadership of this Marxism had corresponding common features and aspects. The party of the avant-garde, including the union of ***romantics***, idealists and humanists, guided by high purpose and high morality, turns into a "religious sect", according to Stalin's famous phrase, into the "Order of the sword", and at the same time into a "government institution", into one of, or rather, into the main key institution of the state. The latter is confirmed by the collapse of the USSR: as soon as the institution of the party was eliminated, even if not as it could and should have been, the entire state collapsed. All major decisions in the party and the state are made not by the party congress, not by the party as a whole, but by a small group of people, not always even coinciding with the Politburo of the Central Committee or other similar supreme executive body in the CPSU or in another Communist Party, and the main governing body is not an elected, but an appointed Central Committee secretariat. Thus, the CPSU lived and acted not according to the Party's Charter, in particular, not according to the principle of democratic centralism, but according to the unspoken principle of "appointment" (L.D. Trotsky's term), which was not discussed or adopted at any party congress. The party ceased to be the party of the proletariat and the working people as a whole, who in the party and, consequently, in the state played the role of

performers and extras, the notorious "cogs", only approving prepared and actually already made decisions, not controlling anything, and, thus, ceased to be the revolutionary vanguard. The proletariat and the working people, not to mention the rest of the Soviet citizens, the rest of the adult and capable population, were excluded from active political and social life, from government, about the necessity of which in the first stage of communism (=socialism) Lenin wrote in *The State and the Revolution*. That is why, first of all, the state did not wither away, as the theory of classical Marxism suggested, but strengthened, and degraded in the revolutionary, communist, and Marxist sense, especially in the late 1980s. As a result, by 1991, the Soviet workers no longer had a truly communist party of their own, but a party that remained communist only in name and was actually a party of the ***nomenklatura***, some of whom still remained faithful to inherited ideals and norms, but in their Stalinist, vulgar interpretation. A much smaller part of the party tried to renew and revive the party as a Marxist, communist organization (***the Marxist platform in the CPSU***), but the most active part of the party and state ***nomenklatura***, which possessed real levers of power and controlled state institutions, was already guided by capitalist, private-property and anti-communist values and interests. Supported from the outside, this part, using all the means available to it, including traditional lies, deception, provocations and violence for capitalism, gained the upper hand, committing a counter-revolution with the passive and partly active consent and partial support of those misled by it.

At all stages of the evolution of early Soviet communism (=socialism), including the phase called ***real socialism***, Marxism was and remained state Marxism. The prerogative and right, the very opportunity to be a Marxist and engage in Marxism, to develop it in theory and practice, to think and act according to Marxism, were possessed only by people officially admitted to it, appointed by party authorities. In other words, practicing Marxism became an exclusively state activity, a special profession, and Marxists, whether they held party or government positions, such as an instructor or propagandist for the regional committee, a professor at a university or institute, were a narrow, relatively closed and privileged caste. Thus, Marxism ceased to be a free activity of people committed to its ideals, moral and practical norms and the ***ultimate*** goal. It had ceased to be a living, developing and creative Marxism. Figuratively speaking, from a certain historical moment onwards, it was already only a pathetic semblance of Marxism, its substitution and imitation, dead Marxism.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that it was state Marxism that became dead, and genuine Marxism never died at all, although it went through difficult, tragic times, and was always reborn and fought for its future, for the future of Soviet citizens, and for the future of all mankind. In this regard, it was extremely danger-

ous to state Marxism and state Marxists, ***the priests of the Marxist parish*** and therefore was subjected to the same and sometimes more severe persecution than any manifestation of anti-communism. Therefore, it is no coincidence that state Marxism died quietly and shamefully, definitively and irrevocably, along with the demise of ***real socialism***, in particular, with the demise of the USSR. Quite by chance, when it died, it transformed into various kinds of ideologies of ***national patriotism***, including Putinism, during and as the new ***old***, restored and secondary, peripheral oligarchic (***nomenklatura***) capitalism was formed on the ruins of ***real socialism*** and at the expense of these ruins, its material heritage and even some reinterpreted elements of socialist ideology and culture. It is also no coincidence that genuine Marxism, on the contrary, has survived and continues to live and operate in completely new, unusual conditions, when it has to confront in theory and in practice not only the former state Marxism, which was easily and naturally transformed in Russia, which was popularly called Erafia (a disparaging name for Russia, formed from the full pronunciation in Russian of the abbreviation of its official name, the R. F., i.e. the Russian Federation), first into Yeltsinism, and then into Putinism, and former state Marxists, many of whom, having ***seen the light***, easily became ideologists of the new system, and some even joined its ruling class, the notorious ***ruling elite***, but also to all other vulgar Marxisms and Marxists, in particular, post-Soviet Stalinism and Stalinists, who received fertile breeding ground for their incarnation in the form of the ***charms*** of the new Russian capitalism.

## Authentic Marxism

From the recognition of the fact of the inevitable and natural, objective, though also subjective, diversity of Marxism and the dialectical contradiction inherent in it, which is the essence of its evolution, and from the assertion that only revolutionary Marxism was and is genuine Marxism, a complex and seemingly intractable problem inevitably, naturally and objectively arises, has arisen in the past and will arise in the future: which Marxism, which ***variety*** of it is true? What kind of Marxism, what kind of ***variety*** of it should be guided in practice? In other words, in spite of this multiplicity and diversity of Marxism, or, conversely, because of this multiplicity and diversity, what is the essence of Marxism?

There is only one answer to these and other similar questions: with regard to Marxism, its maxim is true, of course, that unity is in diversity, but still the main thing in the truth and morality of Marxism as a science (theory) and practice is in genuine, real progress towards the goal, towards the liberation of man and the humanization of him and the world. In this promotion, the end does not justify the means, but, on the contrary, the means must match the goal. Moreover, both should be verified, as far as possible, by a complete and true, albeit relative, historically

concrete embodiment of the original ideal, that is, by the extent to which in the real world, in reality itself, the liberation of man and the transformation of the inhuman world into a human world have already taken place.

However, in this verification, it is necessary to proceed not only from the goal, from the ideal, but also from the existing and available real circumstances and opportunities, the real means of achieving the goal, the embodiment of the ideal. This seemingly simple and banal truth, known to all well-read Marxists, and the strict, impeccable adherence to a concrete historical approach, are often ignored, forgotten, or, worst of all, deliberately discarded. In research on a particular subject, or just in discussions about a particular subject, a particular historical process, or a specific historical situation, or even about a single fact, the truly Marxist method, dialectic, and a specific historical approach are not used at all, or are used in a simplified and sometimes caricatured form. To a living, complex and contradictory reality, they do not even apply a theory, even if it was once true and is only mostly true today, but was created in different conditions and reflects other circumstances and another era, but an ossified, moreover, often ***sacred*** and untouchable dead dogma, a well-written, mechanical scheme. In other words, in theory and in practice, they follow not the spirit, but the letter of Marxism. The result is, at best, a simplified and distorted picture of reality, and at worst, only an extremely primitive, vulgar one that leads the subject of the action into dangerous and sometimes disastrous delusions, focusing on and following which can lead and, unfortunately, almost always leads to tragic consequences, or even to almost absolute defeat, to a fatal catastrophe.

The collapse of the Second International is usually cited as a classic example of such a course, due, among other things, to the fact that the leaders of the parties that were part of it were guided by an inadequate, class-conciliatory theory, in particular the theory of K. Kautsky's ultra-imperialism, which did not fully reflect or reflected, but with significant distortions, the real state of affairs, the state of capitalism, its contradictions, and most importantly, did not reflect the contradictions and causes, as well as the specific interests of the ruling classes, which led to the First World War. Another example, and probably still a lesson, may be the defeat of Marxism in Chile in 1973, about which and the reasons for which much has been written. Finally, the most important example is the defeat of Soviet Marxism and the destruction of the USSR, about which more books and articles have probably been published by now than about any other defeat of Marxism.

By the way, some people may not be aware that even in the Soviet Union, despite the mandatory official framework of so-called Marxism-Leninism, it was written more than once that in genuine Marxism, what is important is the spirit, not the letter. That is why it is so critically important to protect, preserve and develop this spirit in every possible way. And this, in turn, is possible only through the

preservation and development of Marxism as a triune whole in specific historical conditions and depending on the tactical and strategic tasks facing each proletariat and its vanguard, working as a whole in each specific place, in each specific country, in each region and in the world as a whole.

No one is guaranteed against mistakes and defeats, both temporary and those that end in the virtual complete defeat and destruction of Marxism as a theoretical and practical revolutionary activity. The real social and political struggle, including the class struggle, necessarily includes both theoretical and ideological struggle, and the struggle of values, especially moral ones, and has always been and will always be not an easy stroll along *Nevsky Prospekt*, as one of the classics of Russian literature wrote, but a difficult and severe test, often in accordance with the expression "all or nothing". Part of this struggle will undoubtedly be the struggle against the ***criticism*** of the thesis of the trinity of Marxism, in particular, most likely, attempts to prove that there was no trinity even in the original, classical Marxism, and that Marxism as a whole is a one-sided, narrow, utopian and inhuman doctrine. But often and very often in the past, this struggle for all the revolutionary subjects of Marxism, in a certain sense, was also, in the present and, of course, will remain in the future, a difficult and at the same time wonderful process of creativity, of creation, in which, more precisely, through which a person liberates himself, makes himself and others become free and happy, becomes a genuine person, reasonable and humane.

## In lieu of a conclusion: The material foundations of Marxism, its diversity and its evolution

Of course, according to both the letter and the spirit of classical and revolutionary Marxism, it would be necessary to substantiate all of the above and explain at least the main vicissitudes of Marxism, the peculiarities of its development, the origin of its diversity, and the main, essential contradictions of its evolution. And it should be explained in a Marxist way, through an explanation of the material foundations of Marxism, the presence and change of objective and subjective circumstances and conditions in which and through which its development took place, primarily economic, as well as political and cultural features in the broadest sense of the word. As mentioned above regarding the causes and contradictions of deviations in the development of Marxism, such consideration requires a separate thorough study and presentation, which goes beyond the scope and objectives of this article. Of course, much has already been done in this regard, and the results of this work can be presented as an explanation, if not complete, comprehensive or exhaustive, but still quite acceptable and convincing. But the presentation, even a brief one, of these results is also the subject of a separate and large-scale article. Therefore, we

will name only some of the most basic, from our point of view, and to some extent obvious versions of the available explanations, which consist of those concepts and theories that try to understand and explain what real socialism really was.

Of such concepts, the concept of early socialism is probably the most correct and most reflective and correctly explains the nature and very essence of real socialism. According to this concept, communism originated in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, was created as a result of the collapse of the old society, existed and began to develop at its lowest, or in other words, the initial, early stage. According to Marx and Lenin, this communism is not only incomplete and imperfect, but also bears a number of features and disadvantages, "birthmarks" of the society from which it emerged as a result of the resolution of the contradictions inherent in this previous society in a revolutionary way. This leads to a simple logical conclusion, confirmed by history and historians who study this real socialism, this stage of real communism: the lower the level of development of the productive forces and industrial relations of this previous society, the worse and less developed capitalism was in it, and the more this capitalism and its contradictions and negative features were exacerbated by the legacy of the past, remnants of feudalism, and in some cases, such as on the outskirts of the Russian Empire and pre-feudal societies, the weaker, more backward, underdeveloped, and incomplete early communism was, so to speak, including culturally, and the more difficult and long the path of development it had to go through before, as some authors suggested in the era of ***developed socialism***, it would develop on its own, adequate to its essence and the purpose of its development, its ideal, the more difficulties and contradictions, the later it would be able to achieve its goal, the highest stage, communism proper.

Paradoxical as it may seem to some, the history of the emergence, initial formation and ascent, and then the relative stagnation, subsequent decomposition and destruction of Soviet communism fully and irrefutably confirms this concept of early socialism. Accordingly, the negative features of Soviet Marxism, both state-sponsored and genuinely, revolutionary, are due precisely to the fact that early socialism emerged and developed in the Soviet Union for almost 70 years. The illiteracy of the majority of the working people and the entire population, the lack of culture, and "Asiaticism", as Lenin put it, in almost all spheres of public life demanded, among other things, an understandable, accessible, almost visual, ***splinter*** or ***poster*** Marxism, while corresponding to the ideas and aspirations of the broad masses of the people, and not just the revolutionary intelligentsia and the revolutionary part of the proletariat. An evidence-based example of this is the origin of the Proletkult and Lenin's dispute with the *Proletkult* members, or the fact that the very idea of NEP as a necessary, temporary, but rather long retreat in the economy of the created Soviet socialist society was at first not understood and not accepted even by Lenin's clos-

est associates, and part of the party, including Stalin, *de facto* never accepted it at all. Then there was a lot more, including the notorious "Short Course in the History of the VKPb", and later in the post-war period of the 1950s and 1970s, among other things, textbooks for party schools and textbooks on social sciences for universities, the "CPSU Program" of 1961 and the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism". The latter, apart from all its obvious and undoubted advantages, according to a number of authors, was copied from the Christian commandments by F. Burlatsky, on behalf of an instructor or someone from the staff of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and according to the version replicated in the Russian part of the Internet, it was written on behalf of Elizar Ilyich Kuskov, who was then the deputy secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

At the same time, not only the underdevelopment of the economy and culture, as well as the productive forces in general, but also the tasks of their accelerated development, including technology, as well as the nature of production and its management, especially in such a huge country, objectively required centralization, which, due to the listed internal and external conditions, could not but be extremely bureaucratic and harsh, involving, if necessary, violence against not only the former ruling classes and their accompanying strata, and not only in relation to the entire peasantry, but also to some extent to the main social basis and driving force of the revolution and the construction of socialism, the working class.

Based on the above, the following assumption can be made: the more fully and faster real communism develops, the more fully and adequately revolutionary Marxism, both theoretical and practical, will develop in their constant organic interaction. At the same time, theoretical Marxism should always be the leading party in this mutual connection (it is also a contradiction), and the true and original goal of Marxism should never be lost, should not fade into the background, or be replaced by correct, but particular and sometimes opportunistic goals, the achievement of which is necessary, but only as a solution to current problems, tactical tasks. Moreover, the true and original goal of Marxism should in no case be replaced by goals and objectives that were actually borrowed from capitalist development, and, ultimately, in fact, from counterrevolution.

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# *Empire* refuted

Sungur Savran

*2025 was the 25th anniversary of the publication of **Empire**, arguably the most important and certainly the most popular of all the books by Antonio Negri over his long career as a thinker of the left, as well as of his co-thinker of his later years, Michael Hardt.[1] A quarter of a century is surely a time span that is appropriate to do a reality check, so to speak, on a book about the world system of capitalism, or, to put it in stricter terms, a confrontation between the very ambitious theoretical project to explain what the authors consider a new stage in the development of the capitalist mode of production, on the one hand, and the historical movement itself, on the other. So, in planning for this issue of **Revolutionary Marxism**, we decided to submit **Empire** to the judgment of history on the basis of incontestable evidence that has emerged in this quarter of a century.*

*However, when we sat down several months later to write up this overview on how **Empire** fared in explaining what was to come in the future when it was written back in 2000, we realised that, in order to assess its merits and failures in the light of the actual historical development in the quarter of a century since the book saw*

1 Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

*the light of day, we needed to explain to the reader what the main contentions of the authors of the book were. We also realised that a reality check alone would not suffice to properly criticise and put in its place this frivolously ambitious book. For even without a confrontation with historical development that we intended to submit the book to, all the weaknesses and dead-ends of the theoretical edifice of* ***Empire*** *were clearly visible when it was first published back in 2000. Moreover, a simple confrontation with the empirical development of this quarter of a century could not suffice to get across to the reader the fatal weaknesses of this much-vaunted book. A full-scale rebuttal on* ***both*** *the theoretical and empirical planes was necessary.*

*Fortunately, we had, in earlier days, already done the theoretical job that was needed. We had criticised, in all essentials, the theoretical edifice constructed by Hardt and Negri back in 2002 in our native Turkish[2] when the translation of the book appeared in that language.[3] However, we never had the time, in those years, to also write this piece up in English so as to reach out to a wider, this time international audience. (Even this little bit of experience should teach something important to those who work on issues of theory in countries where English is the medium of communication. They usually do not have an inkling of how their counterparts living and working in other climes are at a disadvantage in reaching international audiences even if they are privileged enough to be able to write on complex and subtle matters in English. The latter have to do double-shift, so to speak, if they wish to be in unceasing conversation with their own society and at the same time address international audiences.)*

*We had the chance of making up for this to a certain extent by publishing, in 2004, a full-scale refutation in English of the liberal theory of globalisation, which was the rage in intellectual circles both on the right and on the left at the turn of the Millenium.[4] The article did not go into the specific ideas of Negri and Hardt, but since, as we shall see in a moment, Empire is nothing but the replica of the liberal-bourgeois theory of globalisation couched in pseudo-Marxist and authentically postmodernist terminology, the argument in that 2004 article provides an introduction to a critique of the theory advanced in* ***Empire****. This was necessarily done within the limits of an article of reasonable size. The full-scale argument that we have developed with respect to the concept and the process of so-called globalisation can, unfortunately, only be inspected in our Turkish-language book on the*

2 Sungur Savran, "'Alternatif Küreselleşme' mi, Proleter Enternasyonalizmi mi?": *İmparatorluk*'a Reddiye", *Praksis*, No. 7, Summer 2002.

3 Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri, *İmparatorluk*, Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları: 2001.

4 Sungur Savran, "Globalisation and the New World Order: The New Dynamics of Imperialism and War", in Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky (eds.), *The Politics of Empire. Globalisation in Crisis*, London: Pluto Press, 2004.

*question, first published in 2008.*[5]

*Our position was, to the best of our knowledge, unique in that we not only rejected the almost universal hallucinatory reverie on the left as well as on the right that the process of globalisation was triumphantly marching, Juggernaut-like, into a future with novel features, or, in other words, was "irresistible and irreversible" (Negri and Hardt's judgment in the very first paragraph of the Preface to the book) but took issue with other main tenets of that theory. We refused to bow to the universally accepted twin propositions, namely the postulation of the disappearance, or at least the erosion (the latter being closer to Negri and Hardt's position), of the sovereignty of nation-states, thus giving birth to a "smooth world" (Negri and Hardt) and the allegation that all this flowed form the new technology that was quickly taking over. These three propositions (loss of national sovereignty, technological determinism and irreversibility) may be characterised as the* ***unholy trinity*** *of globalisation theory, to which all writers on the left and right subscribed. There were of course lone dissenting voices such as Paul Hirst*[6] *on the left and Dani Rodrik*[7] *from within the mainstream who disagreed on this or that aspect, but, as far as we can ascertain, we were the only writer who refused the entire trinity of globalisation.*

*Not only, we pointed out, was globalisation not marching forth in unstoppable fortitude, but on the contrary, the contradictions between a world economy becoming ever more internationalised and a system of multiple nation-states, each equipped with mechanisms to intervene in the flows of capital, goods and money to a greater or lesser extent, this contradiction, we pointed out, would inevitably explode the system from within, leading to a crash of immense proportions. (From the Tequila Crisis all the way to the Asian Crisis, all failures of the system had some connection to those contradictions.) Hence, far from being irreversible, globalisation was a very fragile process. This prognosis was entirely confirmed by the so-called "Global Financial Crisis" of 2008, itself followed by what we have been calling, along with other fellow Marxists such as Michael Roberts, Anwar Shaikh and our frequent co-author E. Ahmet Tonak, a new "great depression".*

*The only thing that was not an ideological ploy in the globalisation debate was* ***globalism****. The "ism" immediately suggests that this was not a statement of fact but rather a fundamental element within the overall strategy of attack by the international bourgeoisie (the imperialist strata of that class leading the pack, of course) to disarm and defeat the international working class, by converting the immense pools*

5 Sungur Savran, *Kod Adı Küreselleşme. 21. Yüzyılda Emperyalizm* [Code Name Globalisation. Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century], 3rd Edition, Istanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2022.

6 Paul Hirst et al., *Globalisation in Question*, 3rd Edition, London: Polity Press, 2015.

7 Dani Rodrik, *Has Globalization Gone Too Far*, Washington DC: Institute for International Economics, 1997.

*of dormant labour power around the world into a unified international industrial reserve army of labour. Of course, the entire web of commodity chains that formed the basis of this operation was also perforce a constitutive element of the same process. In other words, "globalism" was part and parcel of the neoliberal strategy of crisis resolution adopted by the international bourgeoisie—it was the international dimension of that very strategy. The myth of the unholy trinity of globalisation was only the ideological buttress to convince friend and foe that this was not an assault but a sea change in the international system based on inescapable objective grounds.*

*It was within the framework of this special conceptual framework that we launched our full-scale critique of* ***Empire*** *back in 2002.*

*We now leave the reader tête-à-tête with this wholesale critique of* ***Empire****, here presented for the first time in English. It is at the end of this article that we will draw the inevitable conclusions of the judgment of practical historical development on that book. In reading the* ***Post Scriptum*** *placed at the end, the reader will see how damning the historical judgment of practical development has been for that book, which is of no use whatsoever for anyone since the above-mentioned "Global Financial Crisis" of 2008, which set in motion a process called "deglobalisation", ended the hallucinatory romance of the postmodernist left with a new world of* ***Empire****.*

One of the most pressing dimensions of the "globalisation" debate from a Marxist perspective concerns the stance to be adopted towards the nation and the nation-state at the beginning of the 21st century. This is such a difficult question, both in terms of its theoretical foundations and its political-programmatic aspect, that in Turkey and around the world, the majority of the labour movement, the anti-globalisation movement and the socialist left are far from even correctly formulating the issue, let alone adopting the appropriate political approach. To argue, as the nationalist left does, that the only left-wing option in the face of "globalisation" is to "defend the nation-state" is to have learned nothing from the lessons of the 20th century. But if the problem were limited to this, the solution would be easy. Unfortunately, a number of currents on the left, while rejecting the "nation-state option", fail to grasp the issue in its subtle distinctions and complexities, to properly situate the categories of nation and nation-state in relation to "globalisation" and consequently commit serious theoretical and political errors on the issues of imperialism and internationalism.

The extreme form of such errors is, of course, a policy of neutrality between imperialism, implementing its "globalisation" strategy, and the nationalist political

currents or nation-states that oppose it. This neutrality will supposedly save face for the party in question and avoid embarrassment in the face of the "enlightened" democratic public opinion so as not to be seen as "dinosaurs".[8] To the extent that this policy means not taking sides between the oppressor and the oppressed and not fighting against the powers at the centre of the reproduction of the world system, it is suicidal for socialists. But the attitude I want to focus on here is not primarily this approach adopted by currents that believe "globalisation" is a good thing.[9] The main problem is that even some intellectuals and circles who, from a Marxist perspective, view "globalisation" as a capitalist class offensive, face serious difficulties in this era in terms of theoretically addressing issues such as nation, nation-state, imperialism, and internationalism. Two striking types of emphasis occasionally emerge among these circles. One is an approach which argues that, in the period we are going through, virtually nothing can be done at the nation-state level to solve the problems of the working class and labourers. This is, in other words, a stance that holds that struggles at the nation-state level have no value, not even as a first step, for the ultimate and comprehensive solution of the problems of the working class and the labouring masses. The second holds the position that Marxists should now oppose capitalism, rather than imperialism, in an unmediated manner. This position sometimes even reaches the point of an approach that completely excludes the concept of "imperialism" from Marxist discourse.

In short, in the face of international capital's "globalisation" offensive, even after setting aside left-wing liberalism and left-nationalism, there are very serious differences within the Marxist left itself on a number of issues. The relationship between anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism depends on a correct understanding of the relationship between "globalisation" and imperialism. Understanding the relationship between the question of the nation-state and internationalism correctly depends on a proper theorisation of the structure that the "globalisation" strategy is currently attempting to create in the world. Thus, seeing "globalisation" as a capitalist offensive that must be fought against, but not seeing the nation-state as grounds for emancipation is not, on its own, enough to resolve the theoretical and political problems that arise under present circumstances.

Hardt and Negri's book *Empire*, a book that has had a major impact in Turkey

8 Of course, an even more extreme position is possible: that of openly supporting imperialism against the nation-state that it is having an armed conflict with. The most striking example of this occurred during the Kosovo War: a number of movements and intellectuals who considered themselves "left-wing" openly supported NATO. I do not believe these can be considered as a part of the left.

9 I have criticised this approach since the 1991 Gulf War, both in practical political struggle and in various texts. For an example, see Sungur Savran, *Avrasya Savaşları* [Eurasia Wars], Istanbul: Belge, 2001, pp. 35-62 and 126-139.

and around the world, is of great importance in this context. The reason for this can be stated quite simply. Hardt and Negri have two fundamental theses regarding the character of the era and of social and political struggles. First, they argue that with "globalisation", imperialism has come to an end, with a new era, which they themselves call "Empire", opening. Second, they contend that in the era of Empire, local struggles will yield no results, and hence struggles must necessarily be global in nature. And they defend all this in the name of revolution, in the name of "the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communists" (413)[10], as they put it in the book's final sentence. *Empire* is a book that has been published and republished numerous times all around the world. If a book that speaks in the name of revolution and communism can become so popular at the beginning of the 21st century, in the very ideological conjuncture we are all familiar with, there must be certain reasons for this. So, if we dwell on *Empire*, it is not because of its "appeal" but because of its huge sales, of the warm response shown to these "communist" authors by bourgeois circles, the enthusiastic reception given to them by the left, the typical nature of its theses, and the fact that it reflects the spirit of the times and that it is an expression of the *zeitgeist*.

## 1. A Gallery of Oddities

When considered within the context of present circumstances, *Empire* has been met with a very peculiar reception. In 2000, as soon as the first edition was published by the university press of Harvard University, by far the most prestigious university in the United States if not the world, it began to sell like hotcakes. The paperback edition was released in 2001. In July 2001, it received high praise from some of the heavyweights of the English-speaking bourgeois press, including the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine in the US, and the *Observer*, the Sunday edition of the *Guardian*, in Britain.[11] Given all this, it is hardly surprising to find *Empire* displayed alongside Stephen King's horror novels in airport book stalls! The book went through numerous printings. The English-language copy I have is the seventh edition, published in 2001. Interest in Turkey appears to be similarly high. The Turkish copy I acquired some time ago is the third edition.

It must be admitted that this situation is somewhat unexpected in itself. But there is something even more surprising. The book we are talking about is not exactly

10 Hereafter, throughout the text, references to *Empire* will be given in parentheses with only the page number referred to. References will be to the following English-language edition: Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

11 Alex Callinicos, "Toni Negri in Perspective", *International Socialism*, No. 92, Autumn 2001; John Bellamy Foster, "Imperialism and 'Empire'", *Monthly Review*, 53 (7), December 2001.

child's play. In fact, we ought to be more explicit: we are dealing with a book that will challenge even the most ambitious intellectuals, let alone the masses at large. Its references start with the ancient Hellenic and Roman worlds, pass through Machiavelli and Montesquieu, and extend to Richard Falk and John Rawls in the present day. It is defined by an interdisciplinary approach that spans economics, international law, psychoanalysis, and the entire postmodernist canon. Imagine yourself in the shoes of someone who, despite not having read much in the social sciences and philosophy, hears praise for the book, becomes curious, and picks it up. Just looking at some of the chapter and section titles is enough to intimidate anyone: "biopolitical power", "the ontological drama of *Res Gestae*", "subaltern nationalism", "the boomerang of alterity", "virtualities", "*Finis Europae*", "Telos", "*posse*", etc., etc. No wonder the Turkish publishers included it in their "Hard-to-read books" series! (The book is heavy in terms of its volume too, with 412 pages in Turkish and 472 in English).

This paradox needs to be explained. The secret to the explanation lies in the ideological and political climate of the period. If we address the political aspect first, the movement known as "anti-globalisation" is of great importance here. Hardt and Negri's book was published in 2000, that is, immediately after Seattle protests (November-December 1999), but it was written before that landmark action. In this respect, its timing was extremely fortunate. Seattle and the actions that followed it can be interpreted as directly confirming a number of the book's theses in the real world. At least three characteristics of these actions show a striking correspondence to the approach presented in *Empire*. First, these actions brought together protesters of many different types, from trade unionists to environmentalists, from Catholics to anarchists, from militants belonging to revolutionary parties in imperialist countries to members of peasant organisations in Third World countries. This seems to fit perfectly with Hardt and Negri's concept of the "multitude". Secondly, the movement's seemingly international character, without any apparent national divisions, is also a development in line with *Empire*'s perspective. Thirdly, the absence of central structures in the organisation of protests from Seattle to Genoa in 2001, and the almost chaotic nature of the arrangements, seem to fit the network-style organisation highlighted by Hardt and Negri. This is the primary reason for the popularity of *Empire*. We will return later at length to the deceptive nature of this kind of coincidence between theory and practice.

Not only the emergence of the "anti-globalisation" movement, but also the different ideological, political and organisational tendencies within it, are important for understanding the foundations of *Empire*'s popularity. Here, it can be said that different currents, which do not necessarily overlap and may eventually develop in entirely different directions, find their own tendencies theorised in certain as-

pects of *Empire*. British Marxist Alex Callinicos (2001), drawing particularly on Antonio Negri's autonomist past, sees groups such as the Black Bloc or *Tutte Bianche* (the All Whites), some violent, some civil disobedience-oriented, following a line of "direct action" based on conflict with security forces, as *Empire*'s main interlocutors. (I believe this observation suffers at the least from one-sidedness.) Beyond this, it is clear that a powerful current rejecting centralised organising and disciplined work would find appealing aspects in *Empire*'s idea of network-style organisation. Another trend is particularly strong among youth: within the "anti-globalisation" movement, there is a widespread youth demographic that avoids concrete political struggles and organising in individual countries, especially their own, but militantly participates in actions directly targeting international institutions (the IMF, the WTO, the World Economic Forum, etc.). Hardt and Negri's idea that struggles have no meaning if they are limited to a local perspective and that the struggle must be waged directly against the "global" system will of course be very appealing to them. Finally, and most importantly, the ideas of *Empire* provide a series of extremely important arguments for the reformist wing that has emerged from the split within the "anti-globalisation" movement. As is well known, the approach of ATTAC, which has become the organisational centre-piece of the movement, particularly in Europe, can be summarised as an alternative globalisation counterposed to liberal globalisation. This is precisely the thesis defended by Hardt and Negri in sophisticated language and with eminently conceptual tools. In this case, it should come as no surprise that the concept of "Empire" is used in many issues of the Porto Alegre bulletin "*other-words*", distributed on the internet, as if it were a common concept of the entire left or the "anti-globalisation" movement.

The ideological aspect of the matter is linked to a point that has reflections in the "anti-globalisation" movement, but carries weight in a certain manner independently of it. *Empire* is a book that brings together and systematises all the theories of "total renewal" developed over the last two or three decades on the left, whether based on Marxist concepts or on an explicit rejection of Marxism. In the world of academia and intellectuals, heavily influenced by fashion, the book is highly appealing in this respect to anyone who eagerly follows the trends of the day. Among these theories, even those that were once expressed in terms closer to classical Marxist concepts (consider, for example, the Regulation School on post-Fordism) have become more "up-to-date" and appealing when placed under the umbrella of postmodernism. Conversely, the acceptance, albeit with certain qualifications, by writers who feel "the irresistible lightness of being communist", of even the "end of history" type of theses advanced by explicitly anti-Marxist writers such as Francis

Fukuyama will reassure some in terms of renewal.[12] Especially when all this bears the signature of Antonio Negri, who is not only a respected name in the field of theory within Western Marxism, but who has also lived under the repression of the Italian bourgeois state for years due to his involvement in social struggles! Let us not rush, though. We will return to this aspect later. Let us first see how *Empire* brings together all the theories of "total renewal".

## An encyclopaedia of "Total Renewal"

We are all aware that since at least the early 1990s, a series of new theories that move with the times, so to speak, have come to dominate the social sciences, arguing that the nature of capitalism has changed completely, that nothing is the same as it used to be, and that the problematics or paradigms of the old era must be completely jettisoned. It would certainly be easy to compile a long catalogue, but let us make our task easier by pointing out that some of these theories are decisive in character. The leading theories in this comprehensive "renewal" approach are: globalisation, postmodernism, post-Fordism, and the information society (or post-industrial society). These theories are accompanied, in terms of method, by the predominance of the concept of "civil society", and, in terms of historical stage, by theories concerning the closure of the age of the decisive nature of class struggle, the end of imperialism, and even the passing of capitalism. *Empire* is like an encyclopaedia of "total renewal". With one exception (which we will discuss shortly), it fully accepts all of the aforementioned theories (some implicitly). In essence, although it has some original aspects, the book can also be seen as a systematic compilation of all these theories.

Written in the language of Marxist theory, *Empire* is like a catalogue of new concepts and theories that depart from the cornerstones of that theory. Reviewing some of the entries in this catalogue or encyclopaedia may give readers unfamiliar with *Empire* an idea of the concepts and theories Hardt and Negri propose to abandon, which include: imperialism (20), the labour theory of value (54), the law of value (402-404), variable capital (206), dialectics (251), proletarian internationalism (75), the wage labourer as the basis of the proletariat (77-78), capitalist domination (373), the weak link (82) etc. In contrast, today's fashionable theories and concepts form the building blocks of the book: globalisation, the end of imperialism, post-Fordism or Toyotism, postmodernism, the information society (or informatisation) (293 ff.), the post-industrial society (298), networks (306 ff.), the "new public sphere" (79), the end of history (373), etc.

12 This is what they have to say of Fukuyama: "When Francis Fukuyama claims that the contemporary historical passage is defined by the end of history, he means that the era of major conflicts has come to an end." (189)

What distinguishes Hardt and Negri from the most extreme examples of "total renewal" theoreticians is their characterisation of all this change as a "passage ***within*** the capitalist mode of production" (xiii, emphasis ours) and their emphasis on the continuation of capitalist exploitation (43). Furthermore, as emphasised above, the ideas of revolution and communism continue to exist, at least at the level of discourse. Finally, although one of the defining concepts of *Empire* is "multitude", the concept of the "proletariat" also comes up from time to time. But its content has changed completely.

All the exceptions aside, in the light of all this, I think it is somewhat easier to understand why *Empire* is popular.

## The prison and the university

Since the authors explicitly acknowledge *Empire*'s intellectual debt to postmodernism, particularly to Michel Foucault and the duo Gilles Deleuze/ Félix Guattari, any discussion of kinship in this regard would be pointless. In contrast, the extent to which the book has been influenced by the post-Marxist school is more ambiguous. The ideas mentioned in the footnotes regarding the duo Ernesto Laclau/Chantal Mouffe, the leading representatives of this school, confuse rather than enlighten the reader. Let us first read footnote 26 in the chapter entitled "The Limits of Imperialism":

> It is particularly important to give credit where credit is due today, when we seem to be confronted with numerous versions of historical revisionism. Poor Gramsci, communist and militant before all else…; poor Gramsci was given the gift of being considered the founder of a strange notion of hegemony that leaves no place for a Marxian politics. (See, for example, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe...). We have to defend ourselves from such generous gifts! (451).

Isn't it clear that the authors find the concept of hegemony, surely a central one for Laclau and Mouffe, one that gives their book its title, "strange"? So, far from feeling close to the post-Marxist school, the authors take such a harsh stance that they seem to despise it. But wait, don't jump to conclusions just yet. Now we move on to the section titled "Resistance, Crisis, Transformation." Here, the authors say the following about "new social movements": "The various analyses of 'new social movements' have done a great service in insisting on the political importance of cultural movements against narrow economic perspectives that minimize their significance." (276)

Right here, a footnote enlightens the reader about who conducted these "analyses". After a name that is of no interest to us here, the following comment is inser-

ted: "The most influential text for the political interpretation of 'new social movements' along these lines is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* etc." (459)

Isn't it odd that Laclau/Mouffe, who possess a "strange notion of hegemony", have done "a great service" in analysing the "new social movements", which, it may be added, stand in an organic relationship to the very concept of hegemony? Is it possible that these two ideas belong to the same author?

In fact, other such contradictions also catch the eye in the book. For example, an entire section ("Cycles", 237-239, see also footnote 13 to the Chapter on "World Order", 437) is devoted to emphasising how Giovanni Arrighi's theory of long-term cycles prevents us from understanding "a rupture of the system, a paradigm shift" (239), but in footnote 5 to the "Preface," the same author is cited as one of the writers who, "[a]lthough they do not use the term 'Empire'", are "oriented in this direction" (415). Or a book that says we should throw away with "no hesitation" "the numerous shelves of our libraries that are filled with analyses of totalitarianism" which "should today be regarded only with shame" (421) also uses the concept of totalitarianism with great nonchalance when discussing Giorgio Agamben's concept of "naked life" (366).

There may be an explanation for such contradictions. Perhaps these two authors, residing in two different countries (the US and Italy), have not always carefully read chapters or sections penned by each other. In that case, Negri, who had experienced the debates between Italian Communist Party theorists attempting to make Gramsci the father of "civil society" in the face of objections from revolutionary theorists, may have wished to record his indignation at Laclau and Mouffe's abuse of Gramsci. In contrast, Hardt, who is a generation younger than Negri and American, and who may have been dazzled by the success of Laclau and Mouffe when he began his theoretical career, may have found it meaningful to speak highly of them. It is impossible that Negri, a former Italian communist, did not feel strongly that the concept of totalitarianism was a Cold War tool. But in the liberal environment of American academia, it may be normal for Hardt to find this concept much more "scientific".

Perhaps so, perhaps not. My aim is not to speculate, but to emphasise what a strange collaboration this book is the product of. Antonio Negri was one of the most important theoreticians within Italian Marxism in the 1970s. During and after the "hot autumn" of 1969, when Italy was shaken with massive strikes, he was one of the important theoreticians of the far left (which was very powerful at the time), to the left of the reformist Italian Communist Party. Along with other theorists in this field (Mario Tronti, Sergio Bologna, etc.), he was a representative of a school of thought known as *operaismo* (workerism). When the militant actions of the

working class began to decline in the mid-1970s, Negri became the theoretician of autonomist groups that prioritised clashes with the police and "direct action" in the face of the trade union bureaucracy's conservatism. After this bout of street clashes, when the Red Brigades' individual terrorism began to shape the political environment, Negri was subjected to an attack by the Italian state, which was already pursuing a "strategy of tension" under the influence of the deep state. He was arrested in 1979 and imprisoned for four years without trial. In 1983, he was elected member of parliament from the Radical Party, which had included him on its list out of solidarity, and was released from prison due to his parliamentary immunity. However, realising that his immunity would be lifted, he fled to France. He returned to Italy in the late 1990s and began serving his sentence in Rebibbia Prison. As far as can be ascertained, he is now only subject to a curfew, meaning he is not allowed to leave his home at night.[13]

Foucault characterises institutions such as schools and universities, alongside those such as prisons, lunatic asylums, and barracks as disciplinary institutions. There is an undeniable grain of truth in this, but it is also important not to overlook the significant differences between Italian prisons and American universities in other respects. We do not know much about Michael Hardt's life and political interests. But what we do know is meaningful in itself. While Negri was being forged in the great class struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Hardt was still a child. It is clear that his development took place as a member of a generation whose theoretical universe was marked by post-Marxism and postmodernism. The fact that he works at a highly prestigious American university (Duke University) shows, in itself, the kind of pressures he lives under. (Yes, the university really is also a disciplining institution!) The topics he studies and the journals he writes for clearly show his tendencies. In today's America, "literary studies" departments, along with those of "cultural studies", serve as bastions of postmodernism in universities, and the journal *Social Text*, where Hardt usually publishes his articles, is one of the main outlets of postmodernism. His performance at a panel in New York City indicated for us that Hardt belongs to a very different social typology from Negri. Although the most important thesis of *Empire* is that imperialism is over and has been replaced by "Empire", when in front of an audience full of socialists and confronting another skilled panellist (the late Peter Gowan) who questioned his theses, Hardt saw fit to say that "*Empire* does not negate imperialism". Although the book frequently refers to Samir Amin, a theoretician who takes an approach contrary to its own theoretical framework[14], Hardt found it palatable to contend during that panel

13 In his above-mentioned article in *International Socialism*, (see footnote 11), Alex Callinicos provides a good summary of Negri's political life and its impact on his theory.

14 Foster, article cited, footnote 1.

that attempts to "pit his own work against" the approaches of thinkers such as Samir Amin were misguided. It is impossible not to think that for such people, ideas are not revolutionary tools but career ladders!

Hardt and Negri argue that Empire has a hybrid structure. The same can be said of *Empire* in terms of its intellectual and cultural lineage.

## The speculative philosophy of the age of speculative capital

*Empire* is a book that embodies many of the negative features of postmodern thought. In this universe where everything is relative, where the eye of the beholder is more decisive than the object being scrutinised, language games take the place of vigorous thinking. The art of rhetoric becomes a cover for the abolition of the laws of logic. Allusion, innuendo, and analogy take the place of inquiring into causality. To assert something is sufficient in itself. No need to explain.

Let me try to explain what I mean through a few examples. A series of fetish concepts of postmodernism, such as decentralisation and deterritorialization, are presented as a most important characteristic of the category Empire, as opposed to European-style imperialism. Empire is always an open-ended, deterritorialized, flexible category that can expand infinitely. Hardt and Negri link this directly to the Jeffersonian federalist approach that was decisive in the founding of the United States. The question that must now be asked is: What is the connection? There is an association and an analogy is drawn. But beyond that analogy what kind of relationship exists between the constitutional understanding that was the product of the 18th-century American revolution, with its unique circumstances, and the 21st-century Empire, a product of entirely different conditions, that may enable the reader to better understand what is being said? Is it because America has been the strongest national entity since World War II and remains so during the period of Empire? Or, if the informatisation of production has completely eliminated the importance of attachment to place, leading to deterritorialization, what does the American constitutional system have to do with this? This remains unexplained. And when it remains unexplained, it leaves behind a series of questions.

Another instance concerns the claim that proletarian internationalism has become obsolete. In the subsection "The Refrains of the International," Hardt and Negri formulate an extremely sharp proposition on this subject: "Today we should all clearly recognize that the time of such proletarian internationalism is over." (50) I recommend that anyone wishing to decipher Hardt and Negri's style of argumentation carefully read the entire passage preceding and following this sentence. In that passage, taken in its entirety, it is explained, on the basis of propositions true or false, how proletarian internationalism was a reality in the past. The following section attempts to reveal how certain concrete actions in the 1990s failed to become "in-

ternationalised." The fact that such a sharp proposition can be put forward without being grounded in any general trend, but only by referring to specific events, is a perfect example of association taking the place of argument!

*Empire* is also an extremely irresponsible book. The claim is grandiose: two self-declared communists argue that a new era has begun in the history of capitalist society, upon the heels of the age of imperialism. The opening of new stages in the history of capitalism is a matter of colossal significance that will have decisive effects on the communists' strategy and tactics. Consider Lenin: when World War I broke out, amidst all his political work, he first studied Hegel (in order to acquire the philosophical tools to grasp the world situation in its totality), then shut himself away in the library for six months to collect concrete data to identify the new trends in capitalism, and only then wrote his rightly famous book, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. He filled his book with statistics to prove that the new era was one profoundly characterised by monopolies or export of capital. However, based on this concrete data (and, of course, drawing on the work of J. A. Hobson, Rudolf Hilferding, and Nikolai Bukharin on imperialism before him), he concluded that capitalism had entered a new historical stage.

For Hardt and Negri, however, facts are unimportant. For instance, referring to a few articles is sufficient to proclaim the overriding importance of "informatisation" and services. They are not concerned that there are major debates even about the definition of the concept of services, or that the statistics used by the (mostly bourgeois) proponents of the theory of so-called "information society" (or "post-industrial society") raise very serious questions. For example, the outlandish claim that Empire is a decentred system is not supported by any concrete evidence. The empirical aspect of the issue is of no interest to Hardt and Negri. Faced with the fact that the US is almost undeniably the "centre" of the world system, it does not even occur to them to empirically investigate the question of the extent to which, for example, the IMF or the WTO, NATO or the UN can act independently of the US. Another example: they put forward the theoretical concept of post-Fordism totally uncritically (without having recourse to any evidence).

Indeed, the flow of *Empire* is based not on a metabolic relationship between theory and the real world, but on a relationship between theory and theory. Empire is, in a sense, not the theory of the world we live in, but the theory of theories. Take, for example, the current change in the phenomenon of sovereignty. The subsection "United Nations" (3-8) seems like an ideal starting point for discussing this issue. The reader might hope that it will address the real-world consequences of individual nation-states delegating certain powers to a higher authority, even if on the basis of the persistence of their own national sovereignty. After all, we are only at the beginning of the book, in the first chapter. However, Hardt and Negri address

the question of the place of this concrete institution of the concrete world within the transformation of sovereignty by examining ***not*** the institution itself, but the ideas of its intellectual father, Hans Kelsen. They conclude that the contradictions arising from this create a dynamic towards overcoming the sovereignty of nation-states, and then... develop the issue on the basis of two separate theoretical variants, referring to Locke and Hobbes. And the United Nations section comes to an end at this point! It is not just the postmodernist method of placing all thought within an "intertextual" orbit at play here, thereby reducing theory to thinking about theory.

It is also a caricature of Hegel's method, which examines the world as an unfolding of the stages of the development of the Spirit. It is not national sovereignty or Empire that is examined, but their concepts. Postmodernism revives speculative philosophy. But it explicitly rejects the dialectic[15] that gave Hegel the entire power of his philosophy! (251).[16]

## The Limits of Critique

What has been written so far should not be read as unfair to *Empire*, especially to a historic figure like Negri. *Empire* should be seen, in a way, as a very useful book. As mentioned above, it has systematised, under a postmodernist umbrella, countless theories claiming that the world has changed completely over the last two or three decades, bringing clarity to all these theories. After *Empire*, there is no middle ground. That is to say, one cannot, for instance, use the concept of "globalisation" uncritically and at the same time insist on the Marxist concept of imperialism. While defending all these theories, *Empire* has also exposed them.

Let me try to explain what I mean through an historical analogy. After Piero Sraffa's book *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*[17] was published in 1960, a major debate began in the field of Marxist value and capital theory: some claimed that Sraffa's theoretical framework refuted Marxist theory, while others argued that Sraffa's contributions nourished Marxist value theory, helped it overcome its contradictions, and thus propelled it forward. A final group of theorists

15 "Having achieved the global level, capitalist development is faced directly with the multitude, without mediation. Hence the dialectic, or really the science of the limit and its organization, evaporates." (237)

16 This kind of infatuation with pure theory, oblivious to material facts, is strangely combined with an empiricist reasoning that attempts to leap to theoretical conclusions based on very partial facts and independently of the establishment of a theoretical framework. As an example of this second methodology, which remains secondary to the dominant speculative style, one could cite the overly generalised conclusions drawn from isolated political struggles as proof of the end of proletarian internationalism, as already mentioned in the text.

17 Piero Sraffa, *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

argued that Sraffa's own theory was flawed, that Marxist value theory was robust and internally consistent, and that a synthesis of the two theories was impossible in any case. In 1977, a Sraffian author, Ian Steedman, published a book entitled *Marx After Sraffa*.[18] His book was a typical example of criticising Marx without understanding him at all, but it had one merit: it laid bare the antagonism between the system of Sraffian economics and Marx's critique of political economy. After Steedman, the debate simplified, the Marx plus Sraffa option disappeared from history, and the question became Marx ***or*** Sraffa. It is at least possible to hope that Hardt and Negri will have the same effect in the debates on "globalisation," post-Fordism, and postmodernism.

Secondly, *Empire* is underpinned by considerable intellectual erudition. From political and legal theory to ancient Rome, it is a journey through a vast theoretical landscape, extending from the entire series of milestones of European political thought to the labyrinths of postmodernism. This book teaches Marxists not only what they should not do (speculative philosophy, theory by association, etc.), but also reminds them (if that were necessary) how much ground they must cover in their struggle against postmodernist thought.

What has been written so far should make it clear that a truly comprehensive critique of *Empire* cannot be accomplished within the confines of a single article. Therefore, we must carefully delimit the topics we wish to take up in the remainder of this article. The two main topics we shall address are the main characteristics of ***capitalism qua world system*** today and, based on these characteristics, the nature of ***the existing dynamics in terms of overthrowing the system***. The first topic, which involves examining the objective structures of capitalism as it has crystallised through processes of class struggles, entails scrutinising Hardt and Negri's theses on "globalisation", imperialism, the nation, and the nation-state. The second topic, which centres on class struggles and the revolutionary programme, concerns the authors' theses on the proletariat, the "multitude", and internationalism.

One reason for this limitation is that *Empire* addresses present-day capitalism not only as a world system but also in its other aspects, namely changes in the sphere of production (themes such as "informatisation", post-industrial society, post-Fordism etc.) and changes in the mode of social domination (the transition from a disciplinary society to a control society, bio-political production, etc.). Each of these contains theses that must be carefully addressed and refuted.

The second reason for this limitation is the diversity of Hardt and Negri's intellectual sources. Faced with an intellectual horizon stretching from Machiavelli and Spinoza to Foucault and the duo Deleuze/Guattari, but also encompassing Piore and

18 Ian Steedman, *Marx After Sraffa*, London: New Left Books, 1977.

Sabel and the Regulation School, only collective work can yield comprehensive results. Finally, Negri is a thinker who has spent nearly forty years examining profoundly the tradition of European political thought and subjecting Marx's thought to a particular interpretation. To properly and thoroughly evaluate certain aspects of *Empire*, it is necessary to examine Negri's previous work in greater detail.

Of course, all this does not form an insuperable barrier in the way of understanding and criticising the main theses of *Empire*. The reason for this has been stated above. What is more decisive in *Empire* than Negri's intellectual history is the systematisation of the theories of "total renewal" developed by others to date. The topics we will address are thus limited to these.

## 2. From "Globalisation" to Empire

Hardt and Negri's central original thesis can be summarised as follows: "Globalisation" reduces the power of nation-states, without eliminating it entirely; but the importance of political power does not diminish, as is sometimes argued. "Globalisation" leads to the concentration of sovereignty in a series of different focal points within a hierarchical structure; Empire is the name given to this complex structure. Nation-states, or any single nation-state, are no longer the centre of imperialism; power is exercised in a dispersed and fragmented manner. Therefore, the struggle between imperialists is now a thing of the past. The distinctions between North/South, periphery/centre, First World/Third World have also lost their meaning. This means that we have also left the age of imperialism behind. "Imperialism is over" (xiv) because the cornerstone of imperialism is the sovereignty of nation-states. "What used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary manner, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and post-imperialist" (9).[19]

The entire architecture of *Empire* is built on this principle. But even in this principle, the slipshod nature of Hardt and Negri's thinking reveals all its weaknesses. Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," because he believed that it was not necessary to define or even describe the act of "thinking". Hardt and Negri say, "globalisation, therefore empire"... but they do not say a single word to their curious readers about what "globalisation" is, this dreadfully controversial concept! Yes, in the "Preface", there are certain affirmations such as "the primary factors of production and exchange—money, technology, people, and goods—move with increasing

19 If one pays close attention to the language used, it can be seen that we are faced with a good example of what was said above under the heading of "speculative philosophy". Hardt and Negri argue that it is not ideas but the real world that has changed. For this, there must be a new legal fact and a new reality of power. But they speak of a "notion of right" and an "idea of power".

ease across national boundaries" (xi) – the kind of shallow observation that could appear in a daily newspaper article, but there is no clue as to why a development signalled by a quantitative change of the "increasing ease" type should have led to a qualitative change and ushered in a completely new era in the history of capitalism.

In other words, the "globalisation" that forms the basis of the book is a "non-concept" to use Hardt and Negri's terminology. (One can already foresee how serious the consequences of this must necessarily be for authors who advocate an "alternative globalisation".) While it is very doubtful that the third entity in the series "money, technology, people and commodities" is able to cross borders with "greater ease",[20] let us assume for a moment that this proposition is correct. The question is: what makes this possible? The bourgeois theory of "globalisation" claims that technological development is at its core. From a Marxist perspective, this is technological reductionism; if international capital had not liberalised the flows of commodities, money and capital within the framework of the neoliberal offensive that began in 1979, new technology could not have facilitated these flows on its own. If technology on its own could have done the job, what need would there be for the World Trade Organisation or the IMF? Why would all the capitalist states of the world, primarily the imperialists, come together in the WTO and engage in round after round of negotiations to liberalise trade?

Hardt and Negri render "globalisation" incomprehensible, like an opaque black box, so we must proceed symptomatically, inferring from their other statements whether their understanding of this concept is based on technological reductionism. The first proposition we encounter is extremely unfortunate for our authors: according to them, "globalisation" is an "irresistible and irreversible" (17) development. It is easy to see that this proposition is almost Siamese twins with the technological reductionist explanation of "globalisation". If "globalisation" is a product of neoliberalism (and new technologies merely facilitate it), then it is clear that class struggle against the neoliberal strategy is a form of "resistance" and that if this struggle succeeds, there will be a reversal of "globalisation". But if new technology in the spheres of production, circulation and communication now automatically leads to "globalisation", then "globalisation" is, of course, inevitable. In other words, our postmodern theorists have fallen into the technocratic trap of bourgeois theories at the very first step.

Secondly, Hardt and Negri defend the idea that "globalisation" has caused a decline in the sovereignty of nation-states. There is neither evidence nor explanation for such a controversial claim. It seems that on this issue too, the authors do not consider that remaining captive to the liberal "globalisation" literature poses a

20 We remind the reader that this article was composed in 2002, and so we are not even hinting at Trump's immigration policy here [note added in 2025].

problem. Claims about the weakening, or even (though Hardt and Negri explicitly state they do not agree with this) the demise of the nation-state, are the source of major misconceptions about the crucial characteristics of 21st-century global capitalism. Due to space constraints, I cannot go into detail here about this issue, which I have examined in its various dimensions before in Turkish.[21] However, as this concerns the essence of Hardt and Negri's argument, we must briefly touch upon two dimensions of the issue.

On the one hand, contrary to what Hardt and Negri believe, the process of "globalisation" has not created a "smooth world" (xiii and 332). The proposition that "[t]he establishment of a global society of control that smooths over the striae of national boundaries goes hand in hand with the realization of the world market and the real subsumption of global society under capital" (332) is incorrect. The "realisation" of the world market (or, more accurately, its integration) has been based on the fragmentation defined by national borders (and sometimes supranational borders such as those of the EU). The reason for this is that, regardless of the extent to which neoliberal policies are adopted, each nation-state, due to the very nature of statehood, forms a specific sub-sector within the world market with its national currency, public finance, class relations regime (unions, labour laws, etc.) and general economic structure. The idea of a "smooth" world market, one without the fractures of these sub-sections, once again conjures up the spectre of inevitability, as it plays into the hands of imperialism (or Hardt and Negri's *Empire*) by spreading the illusion that there is nothing left to fight for.

On the other hand, even more importantly, the nation-state is still the arena where class power resides and is defended. ***The power struggle between classes is still fought at the national level***. Of course, if tomorrow, say, the proletariat in Argentina or Turkey were to seize power and move towards dispossessing the bourgeoisie, countless forces, primarily the US and the EU, will attempt to overthrow this power through economic, political, and even military means. But this does not change the fact that the nation-state is the first rung on the ladder of class power. Because the struggle of the imperialists will now be against ***a state with an army*** on a territory of definite borders. (There is no need to call this a nation-state. The concept of the nation-state is a construct of nationalism, which has dominated political discourse for the last two centuries. None of the existing states are, in fact, states that can truly be called nation-states).[22] If this is the case, then it is completely meaningless to say

21 Sungur Savran "Küreselleşme mi, Uluslararasılaşma mı?, (1)" [Globalisation or Internationalisation? Part 1"], *Sınıf Bilinci*, No. 16, November 1996 and "Küreselleşme mi, Uluslararasılaşma mı? (2)", [Globalisation or Internationalisation? Part 2", *Sınıf Bilinci*, No. 17, April 1997.

22 See Sungur Savran, "Bankalar ve Bayraklar: Uluslararasılaşma Çağında Milliyetçilik", ["Banks and Flags: Nationalism in the Age of Internationalisation"] *Sınıf Bilinci*, No. 12, March 1993.

that the nation-state has lost its importance. There is nothing new in the intervention of other capitalist states and imperialists against successful revolutions. From the Paris Commune to the October Revolution, from Vietnam and Korea to Sandinista Nicaragua, the entire history of capitalism is full of examples of this.

Beyond the theses of inevitability and the end of the nation-state's sovereignty, we know that Hardt and Negri put forward a third thesis, arguing that imperialism has ended with "globalisation". We need to discuss this issue in more detail. Nevertheless, it is useful to draw an interim conclusion at this point. Four years before the publication of *Empire*, in an article written in Turkish in 1996,[23] the author of these lines argued that the liberal theory of "globalisation" has three fundamental characteristics: the claim that "globalisation" renders the nation-state meaningless; the idea of inevitability; and the end of the era of imperialism. Hardt and Negri's understanding of "globalisation" fits this description perfectly. Isn't that striking?

## In what sense has imperialism come to an end?

When Hardt and Negri's thesis that imperialism has come to an end is seriously examined, three fundamental arguments emerge: the end of the hierarchical order between nations and countries, the end of the distinction between the "outside" and the "inside" from the perspective of capitalism, and the end of competition between different imperialist states.

Hardt and Negri adopt a stance that can at best be described as frivolous regarding the antagonism between oppressor and oppressed nations within the world system. They argue that the Third World has ceased to exist (19). Since the 1980s, countless prophets have proclaimed the end of the Third World.[24] The authors do not even refer to this literature. Yet it is now common knowledge that the world we live in today is woven with even greater inequalities between nations than the world before the so-called era of "globalisation". For example, when considering the differences between countries such as the United States or Germany, where more than half of the population struggles with health problems caused by "obesity," and Malawi, where 70% of the population faces acute hunger, if we were to follow *Empire*, it would be necessary to say that there are "no differences of nature, only differences of degree".[25] Such a characterisation may be accurate in terms of height and weight figures, but ultimately it mocks the concepts of "quantitative"

23 "Küreselleşme mi, Uluslararasılaşma mı? (1)", article cited (see n19).

24 As far as I can ascertain, Nigel Harris (*The End of the Third World*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) deserves the dubitable honour of being the first to address this issue.

25 This is what they have to say, word for word: "This is not to say that the United States and Brazil, Britain and India are now identical territories in terms of capitalist production and circulation, but rather that between them are no differences of nature, only differences of degree." (335)

and "qualitative" (and people suffering from hunger)! When the US bombed Afghanistan, which is two hundred times poorer (with a national income of $160 per capita compared to the US's $32,000), these figures can be arranged on a quantitative scale, but to say anything beyond that is a joke! The "Third World" was, from the outset, a flawed concept derived from a flawed theory. After the worlds labelled "First" and "Second" in that theory were overhauled completely, it became a rather shapeless theoretical concept.[26] But it still makes sense as a political concept pointing to a reality. Because in the language of millions, even billions of people, "Third World" means countries under the yoke of imperialism. And, in this sense, it certainly continues to exist. Yes, it has fragmented: South Korea and Angola, Brazil and El Salvador, Turkey and Yemen, have become completely different in terms of their socio-economic structures. But in terms of being subjected to imperialism, there is still a common feature among these countries (even if the style of subjugation is different in different cases). In other words, the uppercase "Third World", a product of a distorted theory, may have come to an end; but the lowercase third world is still agonizing in misery. Say "the third world is no more" as much as you like. The third world continues to exist as the world of those who rejoiced on the occasion of 9/11!

Hardt and Negri's second argument is that, in terms of the expansion of capitalism, the distinction between the "outside" and the "inside" has come to an end; in other words, the whole world has become capitalist. The argument presented in the chapter "The Limits of Imperialism" on this subject is extremely peculiar. The argument is, characteristically, once again "intertextual", relying on the reading of theories of imperialism rather than the examination of the developments in the character

26 It is not a question of making a detailed critique of the "Three Worlds" theory here. In summary form, it may be said that the central core of this theory was based on the theses that the Soviet Union was a "social imperialist" country and, moreover, that it was the main rising imperialism against the United States. Within a decade or two of the theory's grand proclamation, first the Soviet Union's failure to even lift a finger in the face of the "camp" shift that took place in Eastern Europe in 1989, and then its own collapse in 1991, would shatter both theses. Naturally, after this major change, almost no one remained to defend this ingenious theory. Meanwhile, let us also point out the following: when Hardt and Negri say that "the winds are blowing where the Second World used to be" (19), they are clearly falling into the trap that many people fall into today. According to "Mao Zedong Thought", the "Second World" at that time did not comprise the countries referred to as "socialist countries". (Today, the phrase "the winds are blowing in its place" clearly refers to those countries.) This "second world" consisted of the secondary powers of both the capitalist and the "socialist" blocs (primarily Europe on both sides of the Berlin Wall). In other words, imperialist Western Europe was also part of the "Second World". It is impossible to say that today the winds blow there! On the contrary, this group of countries is blowing like the wind with the European Union! On the other hand, the Soviet Union itself was the rising power of the "First World". It is normal for young people to make this mistake. From the perspective of an old hand like Negri, who fought in a country where the Maoist movement was very powerful after the Cultural Revolution, this forgetfulness can be seen as a symptom of a general "amnesia" regarding Marxism itself.

of imperialism. The importance of the "outside" in terms of imperialism is explained entirely by relying on Rosa Luxemburg's theory of imperialism.[27] However, as has been repeatedly demonstrated by many Marxists, primarily Bukharin,[28] despite all her theoretical and revolutionary sophistication as a Marxist, Luxemburg's theory of imperialism is based on an argument that is fundamentally flawed by a profoundly underconsumptionist error.

This is where the peculiarity of the matter emerges. When Hardt and Negri first address the issue of the necessity of an "outside" for capitalism, they do not hesitate to add the following footnote:

> The following argument raises the specter of underconsumptionist theories, which argue that inability to consume all the commodities produced is capitalism's vital flaw and will necessarily lead to collapse. Many Marxist and non-Marxist economists have convincingly argued against any idea that the capitalist tendency to produce too much or consume too little will be catastrophic. (449)

I have underlined the phrase "convincingly" myself. This means that Hardt and Negri, like many of us, believe that the underconsumptionist theory has been "convincingly" refuted. But the entire argument about the "outside" is based on this theory! Today, the world has, in its entirety become capitalistic, so there is no outside left. In other words, capitalism has exhausted its ability to transfer its internal contradictions to the outside through imperialism. However, if Lenin's theory,[29] which is based on much more solid foundations than Luxemburg's underconsumptionist theory of imperialism, had been taken as the basis, it would have become clear that when examining the world as a whole, it is not the inside/outside distinction that is decisive, but the struggle for the division of the world resulting from competition between imperialists. In this regard, there is no difference between the beginning of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, because the fifth point of Lenin's classic definition of imperialism is precisely "the completion of the division of the world among the imperialists". If anything, the beginning of the 21st century, on the contrary, bears the stamp of a renewed wave geared towards the division of the world. The workers' states born of the revolutions of the 20th century had become partially detached from the world market, but as a result of the capitalist restoration process that began at the end of the century, a new cauldron of struggles

27 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, London: Routledge, 2003.
28 Nikolai Bukharin, *Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital*, K. J. Tarbuck (ed.), New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
29 V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Collected Works*, v. 22, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977.

over the world economy was once again set in motion.

However, the main problem is that the division of the world by imperialist capital and states may no longer be important from Hardt and Negri's perspective, for their third pillar is precisely the proposition that competition between imperialist states has ended. Negri expressed the importance of this thesis in an interview with the left-liberal British magazine *New Statesman* as follows: "The great change is the impossibility of war between civilised nations".[30] Typically, the argument is put forward, but no evidence from the real world is presented to substantiate it. Here, too, the evidence is "intertextual". After Luxemburg, the authors will refer to a second witness who is extremely important for revolutionary Marxists. "… through his political re-elaboration of the concept of imperialism, Lenin, more than any other Marxist, was able to anticipate the passage to a new stage of capital beyond imperialism and identify the place (or really non-place) of emerging imperial sovereignty." (232) It must be admitted that the attribution of the thesis that imperialism has come to an end while capitalism continues to exist (i.e., the entire idea of Empire replacing imperialism) to the chief theoretician of imperialism is a "dazzling" theoretical argument! We would all be ready to pay our tribute to Hardt and Negri for this masterly coup. Except that this "dazzling" argument is a hoax. It is one of the most glaring examples of distortion and revision in the history of Marxist theory.

Those familiar with the theory of imperialism know that the major difference between Karl Kautsky and Lenin on this question lies in the former's prediction of an ultra-imperialist phase in which all imperialists could reach a permanent peace agreement, as opposed to Lenin's view that competition between imperialist capitals and conflict between imperialist states were inevitable. Within the framework of this debate, with his intellectual rigour that always rejected facile wholesale argumentation, Lenin could not help but emphasise a subtle detail. The trend ***is*** towards a single worldwide trust (Hardt and Negri's "decline of competition" and "growth of monopolies"), but capitalism and imperialism will inevitably collapse before this is achieved. It is on the basis of this strand in Lenin's thinking that Hardt and Negri ground their thesis that imperialism has come to an end at the beginning of the 21st century. But this is to turn Lenin into a Kautsky! For Lenin explicitly linked the realisation of the "ultra-imperialism" stage to a precondition: a single world trust. Yet today, there are competing monopolies of the US, of Europe and of Japan in the world. To claim that Lenin was a proponent of ultra-imperialism independently of this precondition is intellectual dishonesty. Hardt and Negri would have been far

30 "Civilised" nations! How painful it is to see Negri using the same language as his fellow citizen Berlusconi! This quote is from Callinicos's *International Socialism* article (see footnotes 9 and 11 above).

more honest if they had said, "Kautsky was right, Lenin was wrong." Because "Empire" is indeed the new name for the ultra-imperialist stage imagined by Kautsky. Here, we discover the dark and scheming side of *Empire*. Although Hardt and Negri are the contemporary representatives of Kautsky's theory, they point to Luxemburg and Lenin as the pioneers of their own idea. This is because the book has not yet abandoned revolutionary rhetoric. Who can deny that Kautsky is not a particularly good reference for this kind of rhetoric?

The attentive reader will recall that Hardt and Negri vehemently opposed the attribution of the pioneering role of the concept of "hegemony" to Gramsci in this era of historical revisionism. Why should Lenin be denied the same attitude? A theorist has seen appropriate to title his work *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Then comes along a duo of authors who bestow upon him the role of pioneer of the idea that there now has come ***a stage higher than imperialism within capitalism***. If Lenin were alive, I have no doubt he would respond to this gift offered to him by saying: "No, thank you!"

## 3. Pure revolution or proletarian internationalism?

The end of imperialism and the beginning of the era of Empire has, from Hardt and Negri's perspective, an extremely important consequence in terms of social and political struggles. The meaning of all kinds of local struggles has now disappeared. In one of the best sections of the book, the authors, adopting an orientation contrary to their postmodernist bent in other areas, emphasise that local struggles based on "identity" politics can play into the hands of the "imperial machine" (44-46). However, pointing to such a danger is one thing; an absolute rejection that leads to condemning all struggles based on place and locality in a wholesale manner is another. The fundamental proposition of *Empire* in terms of contemporary social and political struggles today is in line with the latter approach. In short, Hardt and Negri's approach to this issue can be summarised as ***the need for struggle to be global in an unmediated manner***. The programmatic goal accompanying this general proposition (and expressed in rather vague terms) is the ***struggle for an alternative globalisation***.

We know that Hardt and Negri call the social subject they see as the bearer of this programme of struggle the "multitude". The authors sometimes use this social category interchangeably with the proletariat. This proletariat is different from Marx''s doubly "free" wage labourer. According to the authors, today the proletariat encompasses all strata that are subject to capitalist discipline in one way or another, whether under the wage-form or otherwise, and which are "within" capital and keep it afloat (52-53 and 402). It is clear that this kind of class definition contains some highly debatable points, but we will not delve into this issue given the limits we

have set for ourselves above: we will continue to confine our subject to the characteristics of ***capitalism qua world system*** and the struggle against it.

## The "multitude" as a revolutionary subject

Hardt and Negri believe that the multitude possesses a "revolutionary nature" and is an "uncontainable force" (394). The reasoning they develop "to confirm this hypothesis" is the most pathetic, nay grotesque, part of *Empire*, even as the book is riddled with numerous other flaws. To demonstrate the revolutionary potential of the multitude, the authors first advance the highly controversial thesis that the multitude "produces autonomously and reproduces the entire world of life" (395). However, this is followed by the following passage: "One might object at this point, with good reason, that all this is still not enough to establish the multitude as a properly political subject, nor even less as a subject with the potential to control its own destiny." (395). To counter this very valid objection, the authors first resort to the heights of speculative philosophy, claiming that the multitude inevitably contains a "telos" (395); then, descending to the real world of the working and labouring masses, they ask once more: "How can the actions of the multitude become political? How can the multitude organize and concentrate its energies against the repression and incessant territorial segmentation of Empire?" (399). Now we are back to square one. The authors make a second attempt to resolve this problem. "The only response we can give to these questions is that the action of the multitude becomes political primarily when it begins to confront directly and with an adequate consciousness the central repressive operations of Empire" (399). But this "only response" is not an answer, it is a ***tautology***: both the subject and the predicate of this sentence say the same thing, because this is the definition of politics (at least revolutionary politics)! Hardt and Negri sense that they cannot resolve the difficulty and return to the question: "This task for the multitude, however, although it is clear at a conceptual level, remains rather abstract. What specific and concrete practices will animate this political project?" (399-400). The issue has not been clarified even at a conceptual level, but the authors themselves ask the second and correct question, wanting to move to the concrete level. Their answer is pathetic: "We cannot say at this point." (400) End of the argument. An admission of helplessness!

Those who do not believe that Hardt and Negri's argument, presented to justify their claim that the multitude is an "uncontainable force", is so hollow can read the passages in the book mentioned above and decide for themselves. What concerns us in this picture is not the questions the authors ask and ***cannot*** answer. Because, in our view, there are no answers to those questions. What concerns us is this: why is it so difficult to explain the revolutionary potential of the category "multitude," which encompasses the international working class, labourers, and all the oppressed

of this world who are subjected to the constant exploitation and oppression of the imperialist-capitalist world system? Our answer is neither abstract nor speculative: *Empire*, with its conceptualisation that leaves all national power centres outside the picture, has itself eliminated the possibility of discovering the dynamics of the revolutionary potential of the world's working and oppressed masses. The imperialist-capitalist world system is a whole; but this whole still bears the stamp of national class divisions and nation-states. Therefore, the yoke upon the oppressed masses, as well as the struggle they will wage against this yoke, do not arise in relation to imperialism in an unmediated manner. The working class of each country begins with partial or total struggles against the power of the bourgeoisie of their own country. Imperialism is materialised and takes concrete shape within the existing nation-state system. Therefore, the ***unmediated*** power struggle against imperialist capitalism can only be waged against the individual bourgeois states within the existing nation-state system.[31] The struggle against imperialist capitalism as a system will necessarily pass through the mediation of nation-states. Those who ignore this mediation will be abstracting from the ***concrete*** conditions of the exploitation and oppression of the masses and will therefore be unable to discover the ***concrete*** dynamics of insurrection and revolution.

Of course, in the imperialist era, the world system is not limited to nation-states, and therefore the forces that the revolutionary struggle of the workers and oppressed of any country should target are not limited to nation-states. In the era of imperialist mega-capital, known as multinational corporations, which is the main socio-economic force behind neoliberalism and the strategy of "globalisation",[32] some of the functions of the bourgeois state have begun to be shared with a series of international organisations (alongside the IMF-World Bank-World Trade Organisation triad, the UN, NATO, the OSCE and a number of less important organisations). Consequently, these organisations can confront the masses at every stage of the struggle. The masses' response should be to fulfil the requirements of the struggle against these organisations, either within individual countries or through international action.

The basis for the existence of the "anti-globalisation" movement is also a product of this specific structure of contemporary world capitalism. It should be noted that the "anti-globalisation" movement has organised two types of action since Seattle. Those that can be described as "anti-globalisation" in the narrow sense are directed against international organisations that guide the totality of world capitalism at a real (WTO, IMF, NATO, etc.) or symbolic (World Economic Forum, i.e. Davos) level. The other type of action, inspired by Seattle but as a matter of fact targeting

31 The EU is an original case: here, the struggle will be waged both against individual nation-states and against the EU as a state in formation or a proto-state.

32 See Savran, "Küreselleşme mi, Uluslararasılaşma mı? (1)", article cited (see n19).

a single bourgeois (imperialist) state under construction is the struggle against the EU. The actions in Nice, Gothenburg, Genoa, Laeken, Barcelona and Seville all fall into this latter category. As can be seen, it is possible to situate the "anti-globalisation" movement in terms of classical imperialism theory and explain the basis of its originality without resorting to mystification.

This explanation also allows us to emphasise the following crucial fact, which the explanation provided by *Empire* fails to do: if "anti-globalisation" actions do not develop in conjunction with the concrete class struggle and the efforts for the liberation of all oppressed people in individual countries, they are ultimately doomed to failure. Because even at the beginning of the 21st century, the seat of power in the imperialist system is still the nation-state, which is also the seat of armed force.

Before leaving this point behind, it would be useful to address a possible objection. The following might be asked: "Doesn't the existence of organisations such as the IMF, the WTO or NATO show that we have indeed moved to a new structure of sovereignty, as Hardt and Negri describe?" The answer is simple: such an inference is based on, or creates, the illusion that these organisations are ***neutral*** vis-à-vis different nation-states. The IMF, the WTO, and NATO are instruments of power used by imperialist countries, primarily the United States. They are instruments of domination over the Third World, which Hardt and Negri have decided to abolish. Therefore, for example, as the IMF grows stronger, the domination of the United States, the EU, and Japan over the Third World does not diminish, it increases! In other words, a situation without the IMF, say in the 1930s, compared to today, is a situation where formally independent countries (such as Latin America and Turkey in the 1930s) have more room for manoeuvre than today. It is more instructive to put it the other way around: As the IMF's dominance increases, the United States (and, secondarily, other imperialist nation-states) wield an increasing ability to politically interfere in the internal affairs of formally independent countries. The logical endpoint of such a development is international colonialism.[33] Thus, the inclusion of these international organisations in the picture does not, contrary to what Hardt and Negri believe, distance the current development from colonial imperialism, but rather brings it closer![34]

## Proletarian internationalism

Hardt and Negri completely misunderstand proletarian internationalism: "prole-

33 This concept can be applied in a narrow sense to many examples today, primarily Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. See Savran, *Avrasya Savaşları, op. cit.,* particularly pp. 93-95.

34 I did not find Hardt and Negri's identification of imperialism with colonialism (a point also addressed by G. Balakrishnan in his article "Virgilian Visions" [*New Left Review*, new series 5, September-October 2001] worthy of criticism in the main text of this article. This is because contemporary imperialism is not moving away from colonialism, but rather moving closer to it. Therefore, the distinction that must be made between these two concepts becomes secondary in this debate.

tarian internationalism", they contend, "was anti-nationalist and therefore transnational and global". (74) Let us set aside the anachronism of the concept of "global." But from Marx's emphasis on the national form of the proletariat's struggle for liberation to begin with to Lenin's prioritisation of the national question, the entire foundation of classical Marxist theory and politics contradicts Hardt and Negri. Organisationally, too, with the exception of the First International, all Internationals were built on national sections. So, contrary to what the authors say, it is not "transnational" but "international". A whole world lies in the difference between these terms.[35]

Since we are discussing the contemporary world, it is useful to briefly place this issue in the context of the general structure of imperialism. With a trend that began as early as the 19th century, it is clear that later in the age of imperialism, the development of productive forces has entirely transcended the borders of individual countries (just consider satellites). Intertwined with this, it is indisputable that capital has created a single world economy and world politics. Therefore, it is an axiom of Marxism that a classless society, which should be superior to capitalism in terms of productive forces and culture, can only be established on a world scale. However, it is one thing to say that socialism and communism can be achieved on a world scale, i.e. that a classless society can only be established worldwide, and quite another to ignore the fact that the victory of revolutions must be secured in individual countries. A transnational internationalism is meaningless because it ignores the national form of class power. This much we have already established.

However, in the era of imperialism, another development, "overdetermines" internationalism, to use a concept popular with many. Since the nation-state has appeared on the historical stage, all nation-states, almost without exception, have had a structure in which one oppressor nation subjugated one or more oppressed nations. But this relationship was, by its very nature, regional. With the era of imperialism, the antagonism between oppressor and oppressed nations becomes a structural feature of the world system. No political issue can now be concretised without taking this relationship between nations into account. That is why, in Lenin's words,

> *The social revolution can come only in the form of an epoch in which are combined civil war by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries and a whole series of democratic and revolutionary movements, including the national liberation movement, in the undeveloped, backward and oppressed nations.*[36]

35 Hardt and Negri's "transnational" internationalism is, even morphologically, a contradiction in terms.

36 V. I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", *Collected Works*, v. 23, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 69, emphasis in the original.

It is useful to add a proposition from another one of Lenin's works: "Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will never live to see it."[37] Here, we are confronted with the consequences of Hardt and Negri's rejection of dialectics, which leaves them deprived of the category of mediation. While they posit an unmediated (i.e., "pure") opposition between Empire and the masses, Lenin, that great representative of proletarian internationalism, links the defeat of imperialism by social revolution to a series of mediations; this is why internationalism is not "transnational". For the proletariat of the oppressor nations to unite with the proletariat of the oppressed nations, the proletariat of the oppressor nations (and the masses they lead) must inspire confidence in the proletariat and broad masses of the oppressed nations. In other words, internationalism does not mean closing one's eyes to the fact of nations, but rather the liberation of oppressed nations.[38]

## 4. Political Conclusions

Our discussion of empire can serve as a starting point for finding our way on the political map of opposition movements against imperialism, which today has adopted the offensive of "globalisation" as a strategic approach. In this concluding section, I propose to discuss the issue on two levels: at the level of the "anti-globalisation" movement and at a more general level.

It seems appropriate to begin with Hardt's (2002) essay on Porto Alegre.[39] In this article, Hardt identifies two tendencies within the "anti-globalisation" movement: the tendency that aims to oppose globalisation by strengthening the nation-state, and the tendency that seeks to create an alternative that is itself "global" (what Hardt calls "democratic globalisation"). It is abundantly clear that Hardt (and, of course, Negri) would support this second tendency. The analysis in this article should have demonstrated that the political stances against "globalisation" cannot be limited to these dual outcomes. A third position is possible and exists: one that opposes "globalisation" as a whole, aims to dismantle the imperialist system worldwide, but does not ignore the relationships between individual nations and the importance of nation-states. The first two positions converge in terms of reformism in relation to this third position: the nationalist solution aims to create a partial barrier against the tide of "globalisation" by strengthening existing bourgeois states, while the second does not oppose "globalisation" but only aims to reform this system through certain

37 V. I. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up", *Collected Works*, v. 22, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 356, emphasis in the original.

38 Sungur Savran, "Globalizm, Milliyetçilik, Enternasyonalizm" [Globalism, Nationalism, and Internationalism], *11. Tez*, No. 12, 1992.

39 Michael Hardt, "Today's Bandung?", *New Left Review*, new series 14, March-April 2002.

changes. In contrast, the third approach aims to lay the foundations for another international civilisation by ending the rule of capital through the struggle of the large oppressed masses, primarily the working class (based on alliances that vary in line with the concrete conditions in each individual country), defeating the power of the international bourgeoisie and the class offensive called "globalisation". This third tendency is a concrete reality within the "anti-globalisation" movement. It may be weaker than the other two, but it is strong enough to make its presence felt. Unlike narrow nationalist tendencies and the conciliatory "democratic globalisation" tendency based on civil society organisations, classical proletarian internationalism is embodied in this current. Which current will prevail within the movement depends on concrete political and organisational developments.

Once we grasp this three-cornered structure, it becomes clear why we have been using quotation marks when referring to the "anti-globalisation" movement since the beginning of this article. This is because a section within the movement aims only to soften the system through partial demands such as the Tobin tax[40], dialogue with the World Bank and other summits of the system, etc. Therefore, it is not correct to label the entire movement as "anti-globalisation". Of course, it is even more incorrect to label the movement as an "anti-capitalist movement", as some currents do.

While on the subject of the "anti-globalisation" movement, we should also briefly mention that *Empire*, written before Seattle, appears to have been confirmed in some respects by the events of Seattle and afterwards, as we noted in the introduction to this article. This "confirmation" is only superficial; what actually happened was a fortunate coincidence between a book and a historical conjuncture. As will be recalled, the appearance of "confirmation" emerged on three levels: the movement's

40 The "Tobin tax" takes its name from a proposal made in 1972 by James Tobin, the famous American Keynesian economist who advised John F. Kennedy in the 1960s. (Tobin passed away last March.) The proposal is for each country to levy a small tax on international capital movements. The organisation ATTAC, first established in France and now spread throughout Europe, has made this proposal a cornerstone of its fight against "globalisation". Even the organisation's original French name is based on this tax: *Association pour la taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens* (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Benefit of Citizens). It is highly ironic that the Tobin tax is presented and perceived as a measure against "globalisation". The original aim of its creator, Tobin, was to promote the development of free trade by bringing stability to international currency markets. In other words, the tax is only against speculation; it fully supports "globalisation" as a whole. In the words of Paul Krugman ("Missing James Tobin", *New York Times*, 12 March 2002), a widely read American economist today, Tobin conceived of this tax as "a way to encourage free trade by ensuring that countries could open their markets [to the outside world] without exposing themselves to the disruptive movements of 'hot money'" Irony knows no bounds: the "anti-globalisation" movement began in Seattle with a fight against the free trade imposed by the WTO. Yet today, one of its most important elements has become one of the central slogans of a movement developed to encourage free trade!

indirect international character; its unification of different social, political and ideological groups; and its reliance on a loose, federalist, "network" style of organising. The first two are directly related to the character of the "globalisation" offensive. This offensive targets the workers and oppressed of every region and nation-state, thereby creating the material basis for the formation of a formidable international coalition to confront it; also, by ruthlessly removing obstacles to capital in all areas from labour to the environment, it has provoked the emergence of a broad spectrum of socio-political forces standing in its way. The third feature actually relates to a current weakness of the international left and the working-class movement: a series of factors, from the neoliberal offensive to the collapse of the bureaucratic workers' states, has destroyed the idea of centralising and strengthening organising and movements on the left and among the working masses in general, which is why the "anti-globalisation" movement initially emerged with a fragmented and scattered structure.

But all three elements had to be temporary in the face of the reality of life; indeed, developments have clearly demonstrated this, even though less than three years have passed. First and foremost, as outlined above, the national and regional power structures of the bourgeoisie are of great importance in terms of the struggle, and the movement is becoming increasingly mediated. One example of this is the gradual separation of the anti-EU wing of the movement. Another example is the decision of the World Social Forum, established in Porto Alegre, to organise separate social forums for each continent. Secondly, it has been clear even since Seattle that all social and political forces were not, from the outset, a classless, indistinguishable, homogeneous mass as implied by the concept of "multitude", one of the key concepts of Empire. Trade unions, turtle lovers and anarchists came together, but their aims and methods were different. To mention just one or two examples, while Seattle was generally known for its frontal opposition to the WTO-IMF-World Bank triad (among these "frontal opponents" there were, of course, revolutionaries who wanted these organisations abolished and reformists who advocated for their reform), just four months later, concerning the action in Washington D.C., American trade unions limited their main activity to visiting the nation's capital before the action to pressure the US government against China's accession to the WTO!

Another example can be drawn from the actions at EU summits: a by now traditional feature of these actions is that on one of the two days of protests, usually peaceful marches are held around much milder slogans with the participation of trade unions (Genoa and Gothenburg being exceptions), while on the other day, much more radical "anti-globalisation" groups stage demonstrations that also feature clashes. Such differences were not very pronounced in Seattle, but they have become increasingly evident over time.

Finally, the demands for a tighter level of organising and centralising of the struggle led the movement to gradually move away from network-style arrangements towards classic centralised forms of organisation. Today, forums are emerging that are structured across all countries and continents, with crystallising working methods and binding political texts. The contrast between the spontaneous activism of Seattle and the current picture could not be more striking. Forums can still be democratic. To be surprised by this is only for those who believe that organising efforts and centralisation must necessarily be undemocratic. Unfortunately, today's crystallisation and structuring have become a means for the reformist tendency emerging in the leadership of "alternative globalisation" to establish hegemony over the mass movement. At this point, groups that fetishise "network" style organising and support the ban on political parties participating in forums organisationally, "in order not to stifle the initiative of civil society organisations", thus find themselves supporting reformist social democratic parties that can represent themselves through the unions or the municipalities they control that have become almost part of the system, while excluding revolutionaries who are weaker in mass organisations.

## Mapping the opposition to imperialist capitalism

The objective structures of world capitalism in the imperialist era have led to the emergence of different tendencies of opposition to imperialist capitalism on the left. At the end of the 20th century, the deepening internationalisation of capital and the collapse (or at least the decline) in different manners of experiences of a socialist nature, confined within restricted borders, led to an increase in the number of these tendencies. In Turkey, liberalism and nationalism, the two poles that have shaped the EU debate within the ruling classes, also give the impression that a pro-EU left liberalism and, in stark contrast to it, a chauvinistic left bourgeois nationalism have exhausted the possible "left" alternatives in the face of "globalisation". Fortunately for us, there are options beyond this dichotomy, both of which contribute to the reproduction of bourgeois hegemony in different ways. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, opinions in this area are not very clear. The problem essentially revolves around the triangle of imperialism, nationalism and internationalism. To clarify the issue, it needs to be addressed on two levels.

At the first level, there is the perception that opposing "globalisation" in general, and the EU in particular, is tantamount to opposing historical progress, and the concern that such opposition will inevitably lead to nationalism. At this level, a clear distinction cannot be made between Marxist internationalism and "globalisation". Hardt and Negri's concept of "alternative, democratic globalisation" is influential in this context. However, as pointed out above when criticising the silence of the

*Empire* authors on the subject of "globalisation", this process is not the "inevitable" result of technological developments, but rather the integration of the world on the basis of the "free market" that is, with the aim of removing obstacles to the international movement of capital. Therefore, "globalisation" is not a neutral concept in the struggle between classes. There can be no alternative globalisation for the oppressed. The alternative for the oppressed is certainly not nationalism. It is, in classical terms, internationalism.

At the second level, again out of a concern to escape nationalism, there is a tendency to replace internationalism with an approach that is completely indifferent to national issues. Here, the alternative may no longer be called "globalisation". (When the problems of the two levels overlap, this also can come about.) But the alternative is formulated in a way that has no connection whatsoever with the power structures known as nation-states. From here, it is possible to make the leap to rejecting the concept of "imperialism": since nationalists have made the struggle against "imperialism" a fetish in their discourse, then internationalists should not oppose imperialism in any way. This may stem from a conscious reasoning, or perhaps from a psychological reaction to the repugnance felt towards the nationalist left, which tends to ally itself with the most repressive and reactionary tendencies in various countries (in some places with the military, in others with fascists, in still others with anti-Semites). But the result is the same: the theoretical and political concept of proletarian internationalism, "imperialism", is being abandoned to the nationalists. Internationalists then can only oppose capitalism in an abstract and indirect way.

It should be emphasised that these tendencies do not arise from the influence of this or that theoretical current. The dynamic behind these tendencies is the objective structure of the imperialist world system and the polarisation it creates in countries under imperialist domination; it is into the void created by this dynamic that the influence of studies of the kind of *Empire* can nestle. The importance of the book we are criticising stems from the fact that it is the most influential of such works.

These are errors that are fraught with serious political implications. The cover of the Turkish edition of *Empire* bears a caption reading, "The Communist Manifesto of the Twenty-First Century." This is not merely a simple advertising gimmick by the publisher. It summarises the opinion of one of today's most eye-catching left-wing thinkers, Slavoj Žižek, on Hardt and Negri's book. Žižek is Slovenian by origin. In other words, he is a thinker who was born, raised and educated in what was federal Yugoslavia. We must assume that he knows that type of country well and is sensitive to its problems. In an article written after NATO's Kosovo War, Žižek adopted a stance that maintained an equal distance from imperialism and Yugoslavia. Neither Marx and Engels, nor Lenin, Trotsky and other second-generation Marxists ever

remained neutral between these two categories of countries simply because those countries that were under the yoke of 19th-century Western capitalist great powers or the 20th-century imperialist powers were badly governed.

This truth remains valid in the 21st century: internationalism is predicated on the liberation of oppressed nations. Socialism will only achieve the fusion of nations by providing guarantees to oppressed nations and, moreover, by doing everything possible to achieve not just formal but real equality between oppressed nations and others. Marxism is a comprehensive theory and practice of emancipation not only from class oppression but from all other forms of oppression. Therefore, its programme must respond to the needs of the liberation of all the oppressed throughout history, from women to young people, from races despised and denigrated to nations oppressed and pillaged.

## *Post Scriptum*

*We now pass on to the judgment that a quarter of a century has passed on **Empire**. Perhaps no book has been so swiftly and so completely refuted by the march of history. We will keep this post scriptum very short so as to make everything simple and clear. This aims to prevent the fans of Negri and Hardt from evading issues by taking refuge in irrelevant argumentation. We wish to force everyone to look the naked truth in the face. With this purpose, we will proceed on the basis of several key words, which in fact say it all. We will nonetheless offer a few paragraphs for each so as to make clear what is at stake under each rubric.*

## *Deglobalisation*

*Not only has globalisation been dealt a severe blow by the 2008 "Global Financial Crisis", but an entire process of changes at the level of the world economy been set in motion, which many experts in the field have summed up under the general appellation of "deglobalisation". We have treated this question as the basis of the rise of fascist movements around the world in the aftermath of the storming of the Capitol by MAGA hordes on 6 January 2021. We cannot go into the connection between deglobalisation and fascism here, in an article already very long, with a long introduction and a Post Sciptum. However, we provide in that article the objective economic indicators which show that almost on all fronts the so-called process of globalisation has been reversed.*[41]

*We need to be very blunt: what happens to the dictum that globalisation is "irresistible and irreversible" when merely in the space of at most two decades (say between the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the "Global Financial Crisis"*

41 "The Meaning of the Storming of the Capitol", *Revolutionary Marxism 2021*, pp. 89-92.

*in 2008) the entire edifice that was variously called "globalisation" or "the Washington Consensus" collapses in great pandemonium and din? Can anyone take seriously a book declaring something that is going to collapse on its own in the space of eight years as "irreversible"?*

## *Tariffs*

*The reader will remember that the theory of globalisation rose on the premise that nation states had become powerless to intervene in any significant processes and national sovereignty had dwindled to the degree of becoming irrelevant. This was true of trade flows, which were becoming ever freer, as well as finance and productive capital flows. Let us take the most salient of the three, free trade. Today the whole world is convulsed by the high customs tariffs that Donald Trump is imposing on many countries, "friend" and foe alike. And this did not have to wait for the second term of Trump, but has its roots in his policies during his first term in office. However, even more importantly, tariff and non-tariff barriers did not have to wait for Trump in order to come on the agenda of the world economy. To quote from our comments on deglobalisation in* ***Revolutionary Marxism 2021,***

> *[t]here can be no doubt whatsoever that world trade fell headlong immediately after the onset of the depression. The average ratio of imports to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by 18 per cent in the first three years of the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s while the damage was much higher in the Third Great Depression [i.e. the present crisis] when the decline was 31 per cent in three years.*[42]

*So, there is a spontaneous element at work in all countries during the depression as well. It is not only Trump, nor is it only reciprocal punitive measures. Protectionism is a generalised tendency.*

*The question here is this: How is it that in a world in which national units have lost their sovereignty, all governments, not only Trump's but also the Chinese and others can resort to these discretionary measures in order to control their trade flows? Once again, refutation from the empirical world in the most blatant fashion.*

*Gone is the Washington Consensus. Gone is the age of the erosion of the sovereignty of nation states. Gone is the "smooth world" of Negri and Hardt or The World is Flat of Thomas Friedman,*[43] *the glitz hunter columnist of the New York Times,*

42 Ibid, p. 90.

43 Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat, A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005. In his *The Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus, 1995), the great Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm had recounted the story of "The Short Twentieth Century 1914-

*keeping good company with the "communists" Negri and Hardt.*

## *ICE*

*If we were writing during Trump's first term, this rubric might have been labelled "the wall", the wall that Trump was trying to build on the US-Mexican border. Now, of course, it is ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement service of the Department of Homeland Security, which goes hunting for undocumented migrants in US cities, also indiscriminately attacking longtime established immigrants, most of whom now have been naturalised, and even American-born US citizens. And lately it has started killing, in cold blood and among American-born US citizens!*

*What happened to the proposition of Negri and Hardt, who, as if uttering the most trustworthy statement for now and forever say, again on the first page of their preface "the primary factors of production and exchange—money, technology, people, and goods—move with increasing ease across national boundaries." The authors are defining an era, a stage in the history of capitalism. And yet it will take only sixteen years for this sentence to become an idle phantasy! The US-Mexican wall was an insult on this more than naïve view of what was happening in the world.*

*And it was not only the wall. It was almost around the same time, in 2016, that after a deluge of immigrants in the summer of 2015, from all around Western Asia (the so-called Middle East), that Europe started to form concentration camps in the shape of countries around the Union, Morocco to the west, Tunisia and Libya to the south, Turkey to the east, and lately an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Italy to set up camp in Albania. How have national frontiers become meaningless, when not only ICE but also Frontex, in its own manner, kills those trying to migrate to a promised paradise?*

*This is not the age of the free circulation of labour but the age of racism and exclusion.*

## *Venezuela*

*Declaring the end of imperialism in a world full to the brims with inequalities, exploitation and oppression is either a shameless or alternatively a shameful act. Since Maduro was abducted on 3 January 2026 the Word "imperialism" is in everyone's mouth. And this is only the beginning. What else to add, when the president of the most powerful imperialist country in the world, Trump, declares himself the "Interim President of Venezuela"?*

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1991", which is the subtitle of the book. By this token, it seems Friedman has accomplished the feat of narrating the "extremely short history of the twenty-first century". According to his analysis, the history of our century will have come to an end as early as 2008! Much ink spilled for nothing! Best-selling rubbish!

## *Greenland*

*According to Negri and Hardt, perhaps the most distinctive feature of Empire as opposed to imperialism is the absence of any possibility of competition or conflict (9) between distinct nation states that Lenin and his followers consider to be "imperialist countries". For Empire is the diffusion of sovereignty throughout a multitude of organisations, national and international. Gone are Lenin's days. Although they do not say this, as we have shown above, they subscribe to the "ultra-imperialism" of Karl Kautsky.*

*Lo and behold though! The skirmishes that started during the first term of Trump over the differential contributions of member states to the military capacity of NATO in financial terms and the diversity of attitudes to be adopted vis-à-vis the Russian Federation have now turned to projects of land grabbing and open threats among what we would call imperialist countries. Alongside Venezuela, Trump is threatening Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, and it will probably only be a matter of time until he returns to the project of gobbling up Canada as the 51st state of the Union.*

*Is this anything but competition and conflict between nation-states? In fact, there is very little precedent in peacetime regarding what Trump is planning to do to Greenland in the annals of modern history, excepting Hitler's seizure of other European countries' territory.*

## *From solitary confinement in the prison of the bourgeoisie to voting for imperialist Europe*

*We are now leaving behind the theoretical aspect of* ***Empire*** *and turning to a single aspect of Negri's politics. In 2005, during the referendum over the European Constitution, he militated for a "Yes" vote. This is how he explained his vote to* ***Le Monde****: "I am deeply opposed to liberalism, but I am even more against all forms of nationalism. One can once more give Europe a real momentum against liberalism, on one condition: by saying no conclusively to a Europe of nations and yes to a European federalism."*[44]

*One can see here in action the entire logic of* ***Empire****. "Empire is better" Negri and Hardt say, compared to the past, for it does away with cruel regimes of modern power (43-44). This is opting for liberalism in the age of neoliberalism and globalism. The reader can benefit from reading what the Europe Negri voted for in 2005 looks like in 2025 in the article by our comrade Burak Saygan in the current issue*

44 Brigitte Salino, "Il faut dire définitivement non à l'Europe des nations", June 11 2005, *Le Monde,* https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2005/06/11/il-faut-dire-definitivement-non-a-l-europe-des-nations_661042_3246.html

*of **Revolutionary Marxism**.*

## *Summing up*

*Probably no book has been so thoroughly refuted by practical life as **Empire**. The authors have set out to give systematic form to the entire literature on what was considered to be a new stage in human development and every main pillar of the edifice constructed came off at the seams in no longer than eight years.*

*The loyalty Negri and Hardt fans have demonstrated to their idols despite this clear and complete refutation is phenomenal. No less scandalous is the insistence that Negri was a Marxist all the way until his passing away. Negri abandoned all the concepts and propositions that could, somehow, justify his being a follower of Marx. The authors of **Empire** constantly speak "from our postmodern perspective" (64) or "our postmodern intellectual world" (xvii). Negri has even abandoned the proletariat, which was the life spring of his view of modern history and the source of inspiration of his militancy in the 1970s, in favour of a diffuse and amorphous mass called the multitude. Whatever his theoretical mistakes may have been in the 1970s and those intermingle with self-sacrificing militant combat, it is his escape to France right into the arms of a city suffused and permeated with the decadence of postmodernism that changed Negri forever. The author of these lines was carrying out postdoctoral research in that city and is, therefore, familiar with, and abhorred, the intellectual climate of the time first-hand. This was the city that Perry Anderson was to call "the capital of European intellectual reaction" in a 1984 book of his.[45] This is where Negri was won over to postmodernism and liberalism.*

*We are face to face with a very strange phenomenon nowadays. Even the most Leninist of Marxists may speak of the powers that be as "the empire". It is an urgent task to prevent the confusion that we risk. Do not call any power "empire". Empire has been refuted by history. There is no such thing as "empire". What exists is spelled out: i-m-p-e-r-i-a-l-i-s-m.*

45 Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 32.

# The liquidation of the dialectic: Antonio Negri's immanent ontology and the eclipse of revolutionary mediation

Volkan Sakarya

## Introduction

Beginning in the 1960s, Louis Althusser launched a decisive intervention against both Hegelian-humanist Marxism and Stalinist mechanistic determinism, arguing that, despite their opposition, both remained trapped within Hegel's model of simple contradiction and expressive totality, in which the social whole is conceived as the expression of a single internal essence.[1] His project was aimed to establish a scientific materialism,[2] grounded in the concepts of overdetermination and the relative autonomy of distinct levels of the social formation.[3] Yet Althusser's own recourse to structural causality and determination in the last instance reintroduced determinist tensions that cut against the anti-essentialist thrust of overdetermination, thereby reopening rather than resolving the problem of totality and contradiction.[4]

1 Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, London: Verso, 2005, pp. 87–128, 197–203.
2 Ibid., pp. 87–128, esp. pp. 101–104, 111–113.
3 Ibid., pp. 202–207.
4 John Grant, "Multiple Returns: Althusser on Dialectics", in Andrew Chitty and Martin McIvor (eds.), *Karl Marx and Contemporary Philosophy*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 221–235, esp. pp. 223–224, 228–229.

It is precisely in this contested terrain—marked by the crisis of Western Marxism after 1956, the bureaucratic sclerosis of the Italian Communist Party (Pci), and the student and worker uprisings of the late 1960s—that Antonio Negri radicalizes the anti-dialectical impulse along a sharply divergent trajectory. Whereas Althusser displaces the subject through a scientific anti-humanism while preserving a conception of structural complexity, Negri rejects not only Hegelian dialectics but structure as such, replacing it with an ontology of unmediated subjective productivity.[5]

In *Marx Beyond Marx*, written at the culmination of the 1970s cycle of struggles, and theoretically situated within the passage from *operaismo* to *autonomia*, Negri reconstructs Marx as a theorist of immanent, self-valorizing living labor. Drawing initially on the workerist analysis of class composition developed within *operaismo*, revolutionary agency is located in the changing technical and social organization of labor rather than in party mediation, with struggle understood as preceding and conditioning capital's command. Class conflict thus appears as the dynamic force reorganizing accumulation rather than as a reaction internal to capitalist contradiction. With the transition toward *autonomia*, this emphasis expands beyond the factory to encompass diffuse forms of social cooperation, where students, precarious workers, and marginal subjects are reconceived as participants in generalized social labor. Antagonism increasingly loses a determinate institutional and organizational anchoring, as the real subsumption of labor under capital transforms the entire social terrain into a social factory. The analysis thereby prepares a shift from a strategic account of class struggle toward an ontology of immanent productive subjectivity whose creative power precedes and exceeds mediation, progressively displacing contradiction and determinate negation as organizing catego-

5 After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Marxist theory increasingly divided into objectivist and subjectivist deviations, a split identified by Peter Hudis, who criticizes objectivist currents such as the Systematic Dialectics school while classifying autonomist thinkers like Antonio Negri as subjectivists for privileging human forces opposing capital's logic (Peter Hudis, *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013, pp. 9–10). Yet describing Negri as subjectivist requires clarification regarding the agency in question. Negri does not restore the classical humanist subject but draws on Deleuze's notion of pre–individual singularities. For Deleuze, transcendental events consist of "impersonal and pre–individual singularities" distributed across a transcendental field rather than grounded in empirical individuals (Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, pp. 100–103, 109). Negri mobilizes this ontology to conceptualize the multitude not as a unified people or aggregate of individuals but as a multiplicity acting in common without fixed identity (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York: Penguin Press, 2004, pp. xiv, 99–100, 105, 225). Accordingly, subjectivity designates a biopolitical productivity grounded in pre–individual forces, displacing the dialectical opposition between individual and collective in favor of a constitutive ontology of *potentia* (Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, trans. Michael Hardt, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, pp. 63, 194–195, 226–227).

ries of Marxist analysis.[6]

For Negri, even Marx's materialist inversion of Hegel remains compromised: by translating class antagonism into contradiction and contradiction into synthesis, Marx can be read, in Negri's account, as reproducing a reconciliatory logic and thereby attenuating the immediate force of proletarian antagonism. Negri thus rejects not only Hegel's system but dialectical movement as it is structured around negation as determinate process, contradiction as generative, and the negation of the negation as historical mechanism.[7]

Here the intellectual conjuncture is crucial: Negri's Spinozist turn both responds to the theoretical impasses of structural Marxism and engages the contemporary French debates around Foucault, Deleuze and the critique of sovereignty.[8] The conceptual shift is systematic. It collapses contradiction into a binary opposition between affirmative life and reactive command; replaces determinate negation with continuous positivity; and dissolves stratified social levels into a flat plane of immanence. Antagonism is thus reinterpreted as an ontological separation between productive being and external limitation rather than as an internal *contradiction* within structured relations. In so doing, Negri abandons the mechanisms through which Marx analyses crisis, restructuring and the determinate conditions for capital's supersession: capitalist power is recoded as an external apparatus of capture imposed upon an always-prior cooperation.[9]

In the biopolitical phase of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Negri develops the core elements of an ontology of immanence by drawing on Foucault's account of biopower and Deleuze's notion of control, arguing that production has expanded beyond the factory into the full reproduction of social life. Here, the distinction between economic production and political constitution is progressively dissolved into a single field of immanent activity, prefiguring the later claim that the cooperative capacities of living labor already constitute a material, productive common.[10] In

6 Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan and Maurizio Viano, New York: Autonomedia, 1991, pp. 149–150, 162, 182.

7 Ibid., pp. 41–48, 54–58, 149–150, 163, 189; Timothy S. Murphy, *Antonio Negri: Modernity and the Multitude*, Cambridge: Polity, 2012, pp. 62, 68, 105–107, 112, 116.

8 Murphy, *Antonio Negri: Modernity and the Multitude*, pp. 9, 126, 132.

9 Alex Callinicos, *The Resources of Critique*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, pp. 121, 130, 140–148, 206.

10 Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty–First Century*, trans. James Newell, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, esp. pp. 106–107, 116, 146; Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini, London: Continuum, 2003, pp. 29, 190, 243. Although *Time for Revolution* brings together texts composed at different moments of Negri's intellectual development, its citation here is not intended to designate a strictly bounded chronological phase. The volume's juxtaposition of earlier formulations with later reflections allows key problematics—immanence, constituent power, the critique of mediation, and the redefinition of revolutionary

this stage, the emphasis on immanent creativity and the self–valorisation of living labor further consolidates a tendency already present in *Marx Beyond Marx*, intensifying the occlusion of the mediating role of institutions, state coercion, and the hierarchical asymmetries that structure capitalist reproduction.

With the subsequent globalist turn—articulated above all in *Empire*, *Multitude* and *Commonwealth*—these commitments are elevated into a comprehensive ontology of the contemporary world–system. Confronting a conjuncture shaped by the neoliberal counter–revolution, the dismantling of Fordist[11] welfare states, and the rise of US–centered financialization, Hardt and Negri treat the new modalities of domination as evidence that sovereignty has dissolved into a decentered, deterritorialized network of power, and they propose the multitude as the privileged subject of antagonism, displacing the historically determinate proletariat.[12] However, this globalist architecture inherits and amplifies the flat ontology already present in the biopolitical phase: it collapses stratified determinations of imperialism, state violence and uneven development into a single plane of immanence, thereby mistaking conjunctural reconfigurations of capitalist control for ontological transformations and obscuring the causal efficacy of territorially anchored institutions, mediating structures and systemic asymmetries.[13]

Negri's *Declaration* situates organizational transformation within a broad strategic shift, examining how emerging social movements confront the structures of *Empire* by creating new forms of collective subjectivity and networked resistance. He identifies these struggles as both materially grounded and innovatively organized, rejecting traditional party hierarchies in favor of horizontal, participatory models capable of disrupting imperial governance. In doing so, Negri links digital–era communicative capacities to the capacity for sustained, transnational insurgency

subjectivity—to emerge in condensed and retrospective form. It is therefore cited to illuminate the conceptual consolidation underlying Negri's biopolitical framework in the period leading into *Empire*, rather than to suggest that all arguments discussed belong to a single moment of composition.

11 In this article, the concepts of Fordism and post–Fordism are not treated as independent periodizing categories or as empirically exhaustive models of capitalist development. They are mobilized strictly because Antonio Negri presupposes them as background coordinates within his theoretical architecture. That is, these concepts enter the analysis only insofar as they function as immanent assumptions of Negri's argument, structuring his claims about the transformation of labor, production, and subjectivity. Accordingly, Fordism and post–Fordism are used here in a minimal, instrumental sense, not to advance a general theory of capitalist stages, but to critically reconstruct the internal logic and limits of Negri's own theoretical positions.

12 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. xii, 22–24, 29, 41, 52–53, 61–63, 160, 302, 364–366.

13 Alex Callinicos, "Toni Negri in Perspective," in *Debating Empire* (epub version), ed. Gopal Balakrishnan, London: Verso, 2003; Ellen Meiksins Wood, "A Manifesto for Global Capitalism?", in *Debating Empire*.

against global capital's command.[14]

Finally, in the late organizational phase marked prominently by the publication of *Assembly*, Negri attempts to resolve the perceived limitations of spontaneous horizontality by reconfiguring the relationship between leadership and mass movements. Acknowledging that the cycle of struggles beginning in 2011 effectively disrupted power but failed to secure lasting transformation, he proposes an inversion of the classical revolutionary model, arguing that strategy must be appropriated by the multitude while tactics are relegated to leadership.[15] This concept of tactical leadership is intended to serve the expansion of the common without solidifying into sovereign authority, thereby avoiding the supposed traps of the Leninist party. Yet, this strategic reversal rests on the ontological premise that the multitude has already developed the requisite cognitive and cooperative capabilities through its daily productive life, thereby tending to render external political mediation unnecessary rather than strictly abolishing it.[16]

Consequently, the call for new non–sovereign institutions obscures the necessity of handling the unevenness of class consciousness and the persistence of structural antagonisms. By treating organization as the direct expression of an existing ontological power rather than a mechanism for processing contradiction, the theory sidesteps the material problem of how to dismantle the coercive apparatus of the state. Ultimately, this approach maintains the binary between an affirmative social productivity and a reactive political order, preventing a dialectical grasp of how revolutionary agency is forged through the determinate negation of capitalist relations.

What disappears, in this cumulative process, is the core of Marx's materialist dialectic[17]: stratified determination; objective contradictions internal to valoriza-

14 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, New York: Argo–Navis, 2012, pp. 2–4, 66–67.
15 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 18.
16 Ibid., pp. 42–45, 291–315.
17 Hailed by Slavoj Žižek as "the *Communist Manifesto* for our time", Hardt and Negri's *Empire* argued that decentralized global sovereignty had superseded the nation–state and classical imperialism. They claimed the United States no longer functioned as a distinct imperial center and that imperialist wars had been replaced by internal "police actions" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. xiv–xv, 189). Subsequent geopolitical developments, however, challenged this thesis: the US–led invasion of Iraq and post–9/11 unilateralism demonstrated the continued coercive centrality of the nation–state (Atilio A. Boron, *Empire and Imperialism: A Critical Reading of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri*, London: Zed Books, 2005, pp. 8–9). Boron argued that *Empire* obscured the reality of the United States acting as a "lonely superpower" engaged in traditional domination (Ibid., p. 11), while Giovanni Arrighi emphasized the persistence of North–South inequality and the absence of global convergence ("Lineages of Empire," in *Debating Empire*). The endurance of state violence thus exposed not merely empirical misjudgment, but a theoretical limitation rooted in the abandonment of materialist dialectics, which prevents Empire from grasping state power, uneven development, and core–periphery antagonisms (Boron, *Empire and Imperialism*, p. 118). In *Declaration*, Hardt and Negri celebrated the 2011 cycle of struggles—Arab Spring, Indignados, and Occupy—as

tion; determinate negation; mediating forms such as value, state, party and law; and a grounded conception of collective agency. By dissolving these determinate structures into an undifferentiated productivity of life, Negri constructs a framework in which transformation is ontologically guaranteed yet strategically indeterminate, unable either to explain capitalism's resilience or to specify the organizational forms and mediations through which subjects might actually dismantle it. Against this ontology of affirmative immanence, Marx's non-teleological, contradiction-driven dialectic—with its insistence on stratification, negativity, mediation and determinate conditions of praxis—remains indispensable for grasping capitalism's structural dynamics, crisis tendencies and the conjunctures in which transformative agency can be articulated, organized, and rendered historically effective. In what follows, I will reconstruct Antonio Negri's theoretical trajectory as a systematic liquidation of Marxist dialectics. After a brief presentation of Negri's project and its conceptual stakes, the article will trace his development through five interconnected phases—*operaismo* and *autonomia*, the Spinozist turn, the biopolitical synthesis, the globalist architecture of *Empire–Multitude–Commonwealth*, and the later organizational writings. I will show how, across these phases, Negri progressively replaces Marx's stratified, contradiction-driven, mediation-dependent agentic materialism with an ontology of immanent, affirmative productivity. What is at stake here is therefore not a merely interpretive disagreement but an ontological necessity internal to Negri's framework itself. Once reality is conceived as an uninterrupted field of productive immanence, determinate negation loses its explanatory function, mediation appears as an external constraint rather than a constitutive relation, and strategy becomes theoretically underdetermined. The political consequences that follow in Negri's work are thus not contingent errors but logical effects of an ontology in which differentiation cannot stabilize into structured contradiction. In this sense, the critique developed here does not oppose Negri from an alternative political preference but reconstructs the internal limits generated by the very ontological premises of his project.

The core of the article will be organized around four interrelated dimensions of this displacement. First, I will analyze the loss of stratification, that is, the pro-

horizontal movements rejecting leadership and representation (Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, pp. 5, 30). Yet their rapid dissipation revealed the limits of this horizontality. Critics such as Jodi Dean argued that the rejection of the party–form left the multitude unable to consolidate power, producing fragmentation on the left alongside consolidation on the right (Jodi Dean, *Crowds and Party*, London: Verso, 2016, pp. 9, 22, 158-160). Even in *Assembly*, where Hardt and Negri proposed a revised organizational model by redistributing strategy and tactics, this conceptual reversal ultimately fails to address the material need for durable organization. (Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. xv, 19, 228). The defeat of the Arab Spring and the exhaustion of Occupy thus revealed the strategic limits of the multitude in confronting state power and global imperialism.

gressive erasure of depth and distinct levels of determination (structures/mechanisms, events, experiences as well as economic, political, ideological structure/mechanisms), which in Marx's materialism are crucial for explaining how different structures interact and how crises emerge. Second, I will examine the erasure of negativity and contradiction: how Negri's celebration of living labor as pure *potentia* displaces real contradictions (such as necessary and surplus labor, or capital's dependence on and antagonism to labor) in favor of a continuous, affirmative productivity that leaves no place for determinate negation. Third, I will investigate the under-theorization of mediation and organization, showing how party, state, law, and other institutions cease to appear as necessary condensations of class relations and instead become mere reactive obstacles to an already-given immanent cooperation. Fourth and finally, I will explore the abstraction of subjectivity: the way Negri's concepts of living labor, multitude and the common detach revolutionary agency from the determinate structures and contradictions that condition, enable and limit its effectiveness.[18]

Throughout these four sections, the argument will unfold as both an immanent and a transcendental critique, and each of the four dimensions will be read in terms of these two critical registers. By immanent critique I mean a form of criticism that

18 In critiquing Negri, this study reconstructs the ontological structure of Marx's materialist dialectics through four immanent principles already operative within Marx's method rather than imposed externally. The first concerns the distinction between essence and appearance and the intransitive reality of material conditions irreducible to immediate experience, captured in Marx's claim that "all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided" (Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume III, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 37, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998, p. 804). This orientation is reinforced in Lenin's defense of objective reality independent of consciousness (V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio–Criticism*, in *Collected Works*, Volume 14, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, p. 130) and in Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism, where surface forms conceal underlying value relations (Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, in *MECW*, Volume 35, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996, p. 83). The second principle identifies contradiction and determinate negation as the real motors of historical change, exemplified by the antagonism between necessary and surplus labour as a generative mechanism of capitalist crisis (ibid., pp. 225–27, 239, 307, 645). The third emphasizes totality, understanding capitalism as a stratified whole in which economic, political, and ideological levels retain relative autonomy while remaining mutually mediated (Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *MECW*, Volume 28, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986, p. 40), a point classically formulated by Lukács as the primacy of the standpoint of totality (Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, London: Merlin Press, 1971, p. 27). The fourth principle concerns transformative agency as the unity of theory and practice, exemplified by Lenin's conception of the party as mediation between spontaneous consciousness and revolutionary knowledge (V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, in *Collected Works*, Volume 5, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, p. 375). These principles together express the rational kernel of Marx's scientific method, evident throughout *Capital* (Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, p. 19), and demonstrate that stratification, contradiction, mediation, and grounded agency remain indispensable to any coherent communist project.

starts from within a thinker's own concepts and claims, taking them seriously on their own terms and showing how they generate internal tensions, inconsistencies or performative contradictions. In Negri's case, such an immanent critique will, for example, highlight how the thesis that "there is no outside" of capital sits uneasily with a strategic politics of exodus, or how the ontological primacy of cooperation conflicts with the empirical persistence of coercive, hierarchical structures.

By transcendental critique I mean something different from a moral or external denunciation: it is an inquiry into the conditions of possibility of a given type of practice or theory. In this context, a transcendental critique asks which ontological and methodological conditions must be in place for any coherent communist project to be thinkable and practicable at all. This involves questions such as: What kinds of structural stratification are minimally required to make sense of exploitation and crisis? What role must real contradiction play if revolutionary transformation is to be more than a voluntarist hope? What forms of mediation and organization are necessary for dispersed struggles to become a determinate force capable of confronting and transforming state and capitalist power? What conception of subjectivity and agency is needed for collective actors to act effectively on the structures that condition them?

The article's central claim is that Negri's immanent ontology of life and power fails at this transcendental level. By dissolving stratification, contradiction, mediation and grounded agency into a single, flat plane of immanent productivity, his framework removes the very categorical conditions under which revolutionary transformation can be theorized and practiced. At the same time, the immanent critique will show how Negri's own most celebrated innovations—living labor as pure *potentia*, the multitude, the common and exodus—contain tensions that point back toward the very dialectical categories he seeks to overcome.[19]

19 Contrary to Antonio Negri's own position, which interprets Leninism as a historically specific organizational form corresponding to a determinate phase of class composition—most notably the professional worker of the pre–Fordist era—this reading treats Leninism as a transcendental precondition of anti–capitalist politics, a meta–strategic necessity that persists as long as capitalism itself endures (Antonio Negri, *Factory of Strategy: Thirty–Three Lessons on Lenin*, trans. Arianna Bove, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, pp. 9, 51). On this account, Leninist organization cannot be reduced to the immanent political expression of a given technical composition of labor; rather, it functions as a constitutive intervention through which political consciousness is introduced "from without", mediating the structural gap between immediate economic interests and the formation of revolutionary subjectivity (Paul Le Blanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1990, pp. 59–60). Leninism thus operates as a meta–strategic logic that interrupts the spontaneous drift of class struggle toward economism or reformism, transforming the working class from a merely empirical economic category into a grounded political agent capable of grasping the social totality as a structured ensemble of relations (Alan Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony: Political Practice and Theory in the Class Struggle*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 26–27). From this perspective, the party appears not as an external apparatus im-

## The Genesis of Negri's Thought: From *Operaismo* to Immanence

Antonio Negri's theoretical project, examined at the requisite level of philosophical and political–theoretical rigor, is a systematic attempt to reconstruct Marxism by grounding it not in the contradiction-driven dynamics of capital accumulation but in an ontology of immediate antagonism. In this framework, antagonism ceases to function as a contradiction mediated through stratified levels of social determination—economic, political, ideological—and emerges instead as a direct, ontologically self-sufficient force expressing the immanent productivity of living labor. Negri's often-repeated thesis that "all Marxist categories are categories of communism" follows from this gesture, which reframes communism not as the determinate negation of capitalism—a negation that passes through and preserves capital's socialization of production while abolishing its exploitative relations—but as a constituting praxis whose ontological priority precedes and exceeds the structures of capitalist command.[20] Across his trajectory, Negri rejects stratified or hierarchical models of social organization, replacing them with a monistic conception wherein productive cooperation functions as both the enabling condition and the continuous substance of domination. This ontological axiom persists across analytically distinguishable yet interconnected phases, each reconfiguring its conceptual vocabulary and political referents while preserving the primacy of *living labor* and the immediate creativity of collective subjectivity.

***Operaismo* and *Autonomia* (1961–1979):** This inaugural phase develops within Italy's postwar industrial conflicts and the long boom of Fordist capitalism. In the 1960s and 1970s, the rapid expansion of the automobile and steel industries, the concentration of workers in large factories such as FIAT Mirafiori, and the authoritarian structure of the Italian workplace generated intense struggles over wages, the pace of work and union representation.[21]

*Operaismo* is marked by a shift from strategic class analysis toward the ontological elevation of working-class initiative. It advances what first appeared as a methodological inversion: capital is reconceived not as the autonomous driver of historical development but as a reactive force responding to workers' prior initiative.[22] Living labor displaces capital as the central category; the law of value is

posed upon the class, but as a negatively mediated truth–procedure that organizes consciousness, strategy, and action in a layered form, enabling the class to transcend its immediate determinations and actualize its historical agency.

20 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 161, 163.

21 Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, pp. 46–47, 119.

22 Alberto Toscano, "Chronicles of Insurrection: Tronti, Negri and the Subject of Antagonism,"

reinterpreted not as an impersonal mechanism regulating social production through abstract equivalence but as an antagonistic dynamic shaped by proletarian struggle.[23]

*Autonomia* extends these insights into practice in the conjuncture of the long 1968 and the crisis of the Italian party-union system, promoting workers' self-organization against the mediating role of unions and communist parties, and linking factory struggles to new movements of students, feminists and precarious youth.[24] The same Copernican inversion underpins Negri's *Crisi dello Stato–piano* (1974), which interprets Fordist planning and the Keynesian welfare state as reactive *dispositifs* of the planner–state, designed to contain the wage demands and disruptive practices of the mass worker. The state appears here not as a neutral arbiter of social needs but as an apparatus of command whose rationality is continually destabilized by class antagonism.[25]

In *La forma Stato* (1977) and *Proletari e Stato* (1976), Negri radicalizes this line of argument by rejecting Gramscian notions of hegemony in favor of an emphasis on direct antagonism. The state–form is treated as a material condensation of capitalist relations of production rather than a merely juridical or political superstructure, and the crisis of parliamentary and reformist strategies is interpreted as evidence that only the autonomous and continuous initiative of the proletariat can open a constituent process beyond the planner–state.[26]

In *Marx Beyond Marx*, drafted in the late 1970s against the backdrop of global crisis, stagflation and the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, Negri's reading of the *Grundrisse* pushes this tendency to the limit by elevating living labor from a socially determined category within capitalist relations to an autonomous ontological force intrinsically capable of self-valorization—a capacity to generate value independently of capital's command.[27] This early critique of mediation does not yet entail its categorical abolition; it necessitates a "redefinition of the theme of mediation" where antagonism is no longer "mediated by delegation or by being delayed

in *The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics,* eds. Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano, Melbourne: re.press, 2009, pp. 117–119.

23 Antonio Negri, "Marx on Cycle and Crisis," in *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects* (1967–83), London: Red Notes, 1988, pp. 24–45.

24 Wright, *Storming Heaven*, pp. 152–155.

25 Antonio Negri, "Crisis of the Planner–State: Communism and Revolutionary Organization," in *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects 1967–83*, pp. 46–74.

26 Antonio Negri, "Proletarians and the State" and "Toward a Critique of the Material Constitution" in *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy*, trans. Arianna Bove, Ed Emery, Timothy S. Murphy & Francesca Novello, London: Verso, 2005, pp. 136–139, 206–208, 215–216.

27 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 162–163, 188–189.

into the future", but implies "direct appropriation".[28] It proposes alternative forms that reject the abstract standpoint of the theoretician and the vanguard party in favor of the concrete standpoint of the working class's struggles in the factory, where worker control must emerge within the reality of the working class.[29] The ontologization of immediacy emerges only gradually, generating a growing tension between the strategic demands of ongoing struggles and the increasingly metaphysical framing of antagonism.

This shift can also be read as a theoretical displacement of a historical impasse. The defeat and fragmentation of collective worker organization did not simply produce new concepts; it reconfigured the ontological horizon within which political agency could be imagined. The retreat from mediation corresponds to a retreat from institutions capable of stabilizing antagonism, while the affirmation of immanent productivity translates the experience of strategic blockage into a philosophical principle. What appears as an ontological discovery is therefore inseparable from a historical transformation in which the crisis of organization becomes rearticulated as the primacy of constituent power.

**The Spinozist Turn (1980–1988):** This phase supplies the metaphysical apparatus that allows Negri to translate strategic assertions about working-class initiative into claims about the structure of being, and it is decisively shaped by the defeat of the Italian extra-parliamentary left in the context of the strategy of tension and state repression. The closing of the 1970s sees the exhaustion of the mass worker cycle, the normalization of emergency legislation, and Negri's own arrest and imprisonment on charges of armed insurrection.[30] In this context of organizational disintegration and carceral isolation, Spinoza's distinction between *potentia*—the immanent productive power of being—and *potestas*—constituted authority as reactive limitation—becomes the template for reconceiving social antagonism.[31] Class struggle is recast: no longer a conflict between determinate, historically constituted social forces positioned within structured relations of production, it becomes a primordial confrontation between being's productive self-expression and its external limitation by command.[32]

Spinoza's ontology is grounded in the univocity of being, where God is not a transcendent creator but a single substance identical with Nature (*Deus sive Nat-*

28 Michael Ryan, "Epilogue," in Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, p. 206.
29 Pierre Lamarche, Max Rosenkrantz, and David Sherman, "Reading Negri: An Introduction," in *Reading Negri: Marxism in the Age of Empire*, (epub version), Chicago: Open Court, 2011.
30 Murphy, *Antonio Negri: Modernity and the Multitude*, pp. 5, 21.
31 Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, pp. 190–191.
32 Murphy, *Antonio Negri: Modernity and the Multitude*, pp. 11, 21.

*ura*). Consequently, individual things are not distinct substances but finite modes expressing infinite power without degradation.[33] This immanence necessitates a strict parallelism between mind and body, where knowledge ascends from the inadequacy of imagination to intuitive science, which grasps the singular essence of things *sub specie aeternitatis*.[34]

This framework underpins an ethics defined by power rather than moral judgment. The essence of every mode is *conatus*, the striving to persevere; virtue is equated with the power to act. Ethical life involves organizing encounters to maximize active joy and transform passive affections into active emotions through reason.[35]

Politically, this materialist conception extends to the state, where natural right is coextensive with power. Democracy emerges as the absolute form of government because it preserves the multitude's natural freedom through the composition of powers rather than the surrender of rights.[36] Crucial here is the distinction between *potentia* (constitutive power) and *potestas* (constituted authority). Whereas *potestas* imposes static command from above, *potentia* signifies the dynamic, immanent capacity of the multitude to create social forms from below, preventing the total alienation of power into a transcendent sovereign.[37]

Although Spinoza's metaphysics maintains internal differentiation among modes, attributes and complex causal series, Negri's appropriation progressively flattens this complexity, privileging the continuous, affirmative flow of productive life. Resistance acquires ontological priority, while domination appears as secondary capture. Historically specific antagonisms—rooted in determinate modes of production, particular class formations, concrete institutions—are absorbed into a universal metaphysics of immanent productivity, strengthening Negri's systematic grounding while generating limits concerning contradiction, mediation and strategic agency.[38]

**Biopolitics and the *Multitude* (1989–1999):** This phase executes a synthetic

33 Baruch Spinoza, *Complete Works*, trans. S. Shirley, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002, pp. 224–226; Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. M. Joughin, New York: Zone Books, 1990, p. 48.

34 Spinoza, *Complete Works*, pp. 225, 267–268; Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza,* p. 296.

35 Spinoza, *Complete Works*, pp. 310–312, 334–338; Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 273.

36 Spinoza, *Complete Works*, p. 752; Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, pp. 191–192.

37 Ibid., pp. 191–192; Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*, trans. Maurizia Boscagli, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 24.

38 Pierre Macherey, "Negri's Spinoza: From Mediation to Constitution," in *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri, Volume Two: Revolution in Theory*, eds. Timothy S. Murphy and Abdul–Karim Mustapha, London: Pluto Press, 2007, pp. 20–23.

appropriation of post-structuralist theory under the conditions of post-Fordist restructuring and neoliberal globalization. The 1980s and 1990s are marked by the defeat of organized labor in the core countries, the rise of flexible specialization, just-in-time production and the global integration of finance; at the same time, new forms of feminized, migrant and service labor proliferate. Negri integrates Deleuze's virtuality with Foucault's analysis of power yet consistently reinterprets both through ontological affirmation.[39]

Gilles Deleuze's philosophical trajectory is most succinctly characterized by what he termed transcendental empiricism, an approach that seeks to think the conditions of real experience without recourse to transcendence, representation, or dialectical negation. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze advances an ontology of pure difference and affirmation, grounded in univocity: being is not divided into higher and lower regions, nor structured by negation, but is said in one and the same sense of everything that exists, with difference itself constituting the internal differentiation of being rather than its opposition to identity.[40]

This ontological commitment leads Deleuze to reject dialectics in favor of multiplicity, singularity, and immanence. The transition to political philosophy occurs through his meeting with Félix Guattari. In *Anti–Oedipus*, they posit that "desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it", thereby liberating desire from psychoanalytic lack and redefining it as a productive force coextensive with the social field.[41] Power, causality, and becoming are no longer conceived as mediated through contradiction or structural totality, but as *immanent*

39 Negri, *Time for Revolution*, pp. 230–233. Read in this broader context, Antonio Negri's trajectory is deeply shaped by problematics drawn from Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, particularly the reproduction of power, the notion of "power within" and the concern that resistance may reproduce domination. From Foucault he adopts the critique of the repressive hypothesis, conceiving power as productive, diffuse, and immanent rather than centralized, which encourages suspicion toward revolutionary forms liable to reintroduce discipline or bureaucracy. From Deleuze and Deleuze–Guattari he draws an ontology of immanence, a rejection of transcendence, a critique of molar organization, and the warning against internalized micro–fascisms. These influences converge in Negri's rejection of bureaucratic mediation, vanguardism, and party organization, alongside his marginalization of Trotskyist strategies as inherently prone to hierarchical relapse. The outcome approaches a post–structuralist anarchist orientation in which power appears omnipresent, organization becomes structurally suspect, and emancipation is sought in expanding immanent autonomy rather than mediated political strategy. Although this framework intensifies the critique of domination as productive and internalized, it constrains Negri's ability to theorize durable collective organization without equating it with bureaucratic regression, a tension visible from *Autonomia* through *Empire*.

40 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 35– 36.

41 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 26.

processes of differentiation and productive desire operating across a flat ontological field.

Negri repeatedly acknowledged that Deleuze's theorization of the plane of immanence provided the metaphysical groundwork for reconceiving Marx's notion of labor as immediately social and cooperative, bypassing the mediations of value and exchange.[42] In *The Politics of Subversion*, Negri draws on Deleuze's conception of desire as productive to argue that revolutionary subjectivity should be understood as an open multiplicity rather than a unified class identity. This Deleuzian shift leads Negri to redefine the subject not as a stable class identity, but as a "collective singularity" operating through productive mechanisms. Consequently, the revolutionary subject emerges as the "socialized worker" whose existence within the plane of immanence bypasses the crisis-state's mediations to assert a purely autonomous constituent power.[43] Moreover, Negri's *Insurgencies* adapts Spinoza's and Machiavelli's concept of constituent power—filtered through a Deleuzian ontology of immanence—to describe the multitude's capacity to continually re-found democracy from below.[44]

It is precisely this affirmative, anti–dialectical ontology that Negri appropriates and reworks in his attempt to reconstruct Marxism. Deleuze's philosophy offered Negri a way to theorize subjectivity, productivity, and resistance without returning to the classical, self–identical subject of modernity. In *Marx Beyond Marx*, Negri explicitly mobilizes Deleuzian categories to displace the dialectical centrality of contradiction in Marx, reinterpreting the *Grundrisse* as announcing not a contradiction internal to capital that demands mediation, but a radical separation between capital and living labor, where working–class subjectivity emerges autonomously as constituent power.[45]

Parallel to this Deleuzian infusion, the appropriation of Michel Foucault's thought constitutes the second pillar of Negri's theoretical reconstruction. Foucault's intellectual development is famously marked by methodological shifts that Deleuze himself systematized as a movement from Knowledge (Archaeology) to Power (Genealogy) and finally to Subjectivity (Ethics). Foucault revolutionized political thought by displacing the model of juridical sovereignty with an analysis of a "microphysics of power" that permeates the entire social body, arguing that power

42 Negri, *The Politics of Subversion*, pp. 127–131.

43 Ibid., pp. 133–136.

44 Negri, *Insurgencies*, pp. 1, 24–25, 327–332; See also: Charles T. Wolfe, "Materialism and Temporality: On Antonio Negri's 'Constitutive' Ontology" in *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri: Volume Two: Revolution in Theory*, pp. 209–218 (for a discussion of Deleuze's influence on Negri's concept of constituent power).

45 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 57–58, 150, 189.

is not merely repressive but productive.[46] He famously characterized the modern era by the emergence of biopower, observing that "the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death".[47]

Negri's *Insurgen*cies reinterprets Foucault's genealogies of power as a prehistory of the multitude's autonomous institutions, transforming disciplinary and biopolitical *dispositifs* into terrains of constituent struggle.[48] In *Empire*, he adopts Foucault's concept of biopower but inverts its normative valence, presenting biopolitical production as the very source of revolutionary potential.[49] Finally, *The Politics of Subversion* reframes Foucault's analytics of dispersed power as evidence that contemporary capitalism has no transcendent command, only immanent networks that can be subverted from within.[50]

Negri appropriates these Foucauldian analytics to modernize Marxist theory, arguing that the capitalist real subsumption of society dissolves the boundary between the economic and the social. Negri contends that Marx anticipated Foucault, claiming that the "theory of surplus value breaks down the antagonism into a microphysics of power".[51] However, Negri fundamentally transforms Foucault's framework. While Foucault defined biopolitics as the mechanisms through which "basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy",[52] Negri reinterprets this concept from a perspective of resistance. Rather than viewing biopower solely as a regulatory apparatus imposed from above, Negri posits a "biopolitical production" from below, where the social cooperation of the multitude becomes the *site* of constituent power and revolutionary potential.[53]

Where Foucault theorizes biopower as productive power operating through normalization, discipline and subject-constitution, Negri reconceives life itself not as the constituted object of regulatory techniques but as the ontologically prior, irrepressible productive substance from which power must continually extract value.[54] The increasing socialization of production under post-Fordism—through communication, affective labor and knowledge production—is interpreted less as capital's

46 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage Books, 1995, pp. 26–27.
47 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 1990, p. 138.
48 Negri, *Insurgencies*, pp. 27–28, 323–334.
49 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 22-25.
50 Negri, *The Politics of Subversion*, pp. 140-144, 159.
51 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, p. 14.
52 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 1
53 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 25; Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 94.
54 Alberto Toscano, "Always Already Only Now: Negri and the Biopolitical," in *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri, Volume Two: Revolution in Theory*, pp. 118, 120.

successful subsumption of new domains than as empirical confirmation of living labor's hegemony.[55] Deleuze's concept of virtuality, initially developed to theorize differential potentiality and the event, is redeployed to articulate the multitude's allegedly immeasurable creativity operating on a plane of immanence conceived as pure, unmediated productivity.[56] This synthesis ontologizes specific tendencies within post-Fordist restructuring, elevating institutional reconfigurations into transhistorical predicates of being, while leaving issues of stratification, contradiction, mediation and transformative agency analytically underdeveloped.[57]

***Empire* and Its Discontents (2000–2011)**: Systematized across *Empire*, *Multitude* and *Commonwealth*, this phase extends the ontology of immanent productivity to planetary scale in response to the consolidation of US-led neoliberal globalization, the formation of the European Union, and the post-Cold War claim that history has reached its liberal-capitalist telos.[58] Hardt and Negri claim that sovereignty has been transformed: no longer concentrated in territorially bounded nation-states, it has allegedly become decentered, distributed across deterritorialized networks of biopower and communicative control.[59] What distinguishes this formulation is not merely a new description of global power but a transformation in how contradiction itself is conceptualized. In classical Marxist theories of imperialism, expansion intensifies uneven development and concentrates antagonism. In Negri's account, by contrast, antagonism becomes diffused across a smooth global space in which no structural center can condense contradiction. The disappearance of imperial hierarchy therefore coincides with the ontological dispersion of conflict. Rather than explaining the reorganization of domination, Empire risks translating the spatial extension of capital into the attenuation of contradiction itself. The result is a theoretical landscape in which conflict persists everywhere yet nowhere acquires the determinate form required for strategic orientation.

Historical events such as the 1999 NATO aggression in Yugoslavia, the US–led 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, as well as ongoing inter-state rivalries and structural-adjustment programs, show that territorially organized state power retains decisive force, contradicting the thesis of smooth,

55 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State–Form*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, pp. 10–11.

56 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 357–359.

57 Alex Callinicos, "Antonio Negri and the Temptation of Ontology," in Timothy S. Murphy and Abdul–Karim Mustapha (eds.), *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri, Volume Two: Revolution in Theory*, pp. 183–185, 191–196.

58 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press, 1992, pp. xi–xii.

59 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. xi–xv

fully deterritorialized rule.[60] Absent a stratified framework distinguishing levels of determination—between the real subsumption of labor, the persistence of territorial state forms and new control mechanisms—the theory risks collapsing empirical asymmetries, hierarchies and inequalities into an undifferentiated flat ontology of immanence.[61]

The multitude is recast as a planetary agent whose Spinozist productivity and Deleuzian virtuality exceed mechanisms of capture. Yet this framework obscures the continued efficacy of imperialist states, borders and military-financial infrastructures. Rather than disappearing, these structures persist as stratified mechanisms that condition the uneven distribution of mobility, violence, and accumulation. The language of planetary immanence risks translating historically specific relations of domination into abstract circulation, thereby weakening the analytical distinction between systemic constraint and cooperative potential. As a result, antagonism appears generalized but loses determinate localization, making it difficult to explain why conflict intensifies in particular regions and institutional forms. What is displaced is not domination itself but its structural mediation, which continues to organize global hierarchy beneath the rhetoric of networked multiplicity. Consequently, the multitude's expansiveness can only be sustained theoretically by downplaying the enduring causal powers of geopolitical and economic apparatuses.

In *Commonwealth* (2009), this theoretical trajectory culminates in the elevation of the common—encompassing both the natural environment and the collaborative social production of human subjects—to the ontological foundation for a new political constitution. Hardt and Negri argue that the traditional frameworks of the republic, modernity, and capital consistently obstruct and corrupt this shared wealth. Consequently, they contend that the common is expropriated equally by the private ownership of capitalism and the public ownership of the socialist state, necessitating a transition to an altermodernity based on the multitude's capacity for collective self–government.[62] However, by presuming that an alternative global society can arise organically from these immanent capacities without direct confrontation with the coercive apparatus of the state, *Commonwealth* reinforces the previously identified flat ontology. The strategic problem of political power is once again dissolved into a biopolitical metaphysics of spontaneity, leaving the concrete institutional

60 Boron, *Empire and Imperialism,* pp. 3–11; Sungur Savran, "Lenin mi, Kautsky mi? 'Yeni' emperyalizm teorilerinin Lenin reddiyesi üzerine", *Devrimci Marksizm, no: 1*, Istanbul, 2006, pp. 59–61.

61 Wood, "A Manifesto for Global Capitalism?," in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Debating Empire,* (epub version).

62 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. viii–ix.

mediations required to dismantle capitalist command dangerously undertheorized.[63]

**Organization and Its Aporias (2012–2023):** This phase confronts the central difficulty that haunts the earlier developments: if immanent cooperation constitutes the ontological ground of social production, how can it crystallize into durable, strategically effective organization? The uprisings of the early 2010s—against the background of the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, massive bank bailouts and austerity—appeared briefly to validate Negri's ontology of spontaneous cooperation and horizontalism. Movements such as the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and the Spanish Indignados adopted forms of assembly-based decision-making, encampments and networked coordination that seemed to prefigure the multitude's productive democracy.[64]

Drawing theoretical lessons from these encampments, Hardt and Negri argue that the traditional revolutionary model must be overturned by assigning strategy to the multitude while restricting leadership to purely tactical roles. This tactical leadership is envisioned merely to serve the productive movements without crystallizing into sovereign authority, representing an "inversion of the political relationship" that explicitly attempts to bypass the need for a vanguard or the Leninist party–form.[65] Building upon their earlier analyses of biopolitical production, they contend that contemporary capital operates primarily through the extraction of value from autonomous social cooperation, implying that the everyday production of the common already endows the multitude with the necessary cognitive and organizational capacities for self–rule.[66]

Yet their rapid dissipation, leaving structures of domination largely intact, revived Marx's and Lenin's concerns about durability and mediation. In *Assembly*, Hardt and Negri propose exodus—the construction of alternative institutions of the common operating outside and against capitalist relations—as the organizational form adequate to immanent power's productivity.[67] Nevertheless, the tension between ontological continuity and strategic discontinuity remains unresolved. While immanence allegedly provides the perpetual energy of collective subjectivity, effective strategy requires precisely what this ontology tends to exclude: determinate rupture, institutional mediation, organizational hierarchy and the concentration of forces—the very elements Negri's flat ontology systematically rejects.[68]

63 Callinicos, "Antonio Negri and the Temptation of Ontology", pp. 183–185.
64 Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. 238, 275.
65 Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, p. xv, 18–19.
66 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 349.
67 Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. 275, 288–291.
68 Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony*, pp. 316, 322.

## Loss of Stratification

In Marx's dialectical materialism, social reality constitutes a stratified totality in which distinct levels of determination possess their own causal powers, temporal rhythms, and operative logics, while remaining internally related through mediation and reciprocal conditioning. This stratification is not merely a methodological device but an ontological condition for scientific materialism, the basis for explaining capitalist social relations as a differentiated, contradictory whole. Marx famously insists that appearance and essence do not spontaneously coincide: "all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance of things directly coincided with their essence."[69] Precisely because the phenomenal form of social life diverges from its underlying determinations, a scientific theory is required to penetrate beyond immediacy. Scientific, materialist dialectic is thus not an optional supplement to workers' experience but the condition for grasping the real mechanisms that structure and mystify that experience.

Marx's method operates through a systematic distinction between levels of social reality that do not immediately coincide. At the most immediate level lies the phenomenal surface of everyday economic life—the observable forms of price, wage, profit, interest, and market competition that present themselves directly to individual experience.[70] Beneath this surface, social relations unfold as determinate historical processes, shaped by specific conjunctures, institutional configurations, and the strategic interventions of contending classes within particular phases of capitalist development.[71] Yet these historical processes themselves arise from and are governed by deeper structural relations—the value–form, class exploitation rooted in the separation of direct producers from means of production, the law of value regulating social labor allocation, and the contradictory tendencies inherent to capital accumulation, including the tendency of the profit rate to fall—that do not appear directly but must be grasped through theoretical abstraction.[72]

This differentiated structure of capitalist social relations enables Marx to identify what he terms necessary illusions: the fetish–character of the commodity, which makes social relations between people appear as relations between things,[73] and the

69 Marx, *Capital, Volume III*, p. 804.

70 Ibid., p. 817.

71 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 11, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979, p. 103. Marx emphasizes that "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."

72 Marx, *Capital, Volume III*, pp. 209–258, 804. Marx distinguishes between "the actual movement" of capitalist production and "the phenomenal forms in which they appear on the surface."

73 Marx, Capital, Volume I, pp. 81–94. The entire section on "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof" explicates how "a definite social relation between men... assumes, in their eyes,

trinity formula of wages–profit–rent, which naturalizes exploitation by presenting each factor of production as independently generating its own revenue.[74] These are not mere errors of perception but systematic distortions produced by the forms in which underlying relations of exploitation and domination manifest themselves at the level of immediate experience.[75] Moreover, this stratified analysis allows Marx to locate contradictions internal to the capitalist mode of production—above all, the contradiction between the socialization of production and the private appropriation of its results[76]—that cannot be resolved through reforms or adjustments within the system's own reproductive logic but point toward its necessary transformation.[77]

From this perspective, revolutionary theory cannot be reduced to a description of workers' immediate interests. Because the form of appearance diverges from essence, the long-term, collective interests of the proletariat are not transparently given in everyday consciousness. They must be scientifically articulated. As Marx puts it, "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas", since those who control the material means of production also control the means of mental production.[78] The implication is straightforward: without a scientific critique of capitalist social forms—without a materialist dialectic capable of distinguishing essence from appearance—the working class remains confined to the ideological horizon generated by capital's own forms of domination. A dialectical, scientific theory is therefore indispensable, not as an external moral commentary, but as the systematic articulation of the real, long-term, collective interests that are objectively inscribed

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the fantastic form of a relation between things."

74 Marx, *Capital, Volume III*, pp. 814–831. Marx critiques the Trinity Formula wherein "capital—profit (profit of enterprise plus interest), land—ground–rent, labour—wages" appears as "an enchanted, perverted, topsy–turvy world, in which Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre do their ghost–walking as social characters and at the same time directly as mere things."

75 Marx, *Capital, Volume I*, p. 87. Marx states: "The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities." See also *Marx, Capital, Volume III,* p. 817, where Marx argues that the phenomenal forms reproduce themselves spontaneously as common forms of thought while concealing the underlying relations of exploitation that generate them.

76 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976, p. 490. Marx and Engels identify the fundamental contradiction: "The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions."

77 Marx, *Capital, Volume I*, pp. 750–751. Marx writes: "Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."

78 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW), Volume 5*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976, p. 59.

in the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production yet obscured at the level of immediacy.

Lenin radicalizes this stratified ontology by insisting that contradictions manifest unevenly at each level, requiring strategic discernment rather than mechanical application of principles. In *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin draws explicitly on Marx's separation between appearance and essence to argue that the spontaneous movement of the workers "by itself" generates only trade-union consciousness, i.e. an awareness of the need to bargain over the sale and purchase of labor-power, not a scientific understanding of capitalism as a totality.[79] Class political consciousness, he insists, "could only be brought to them from without", from outside the sphere of "purely economic struggle", through the intervention of socialist theory and political organization.[80] This much-contested formula becomes intelligible only against Marx's insistence that science is necessary precisely because essence does not coincide with appearance. If the workers' immediate experience were already a transparent expression of the structural mechanisms of capital, there would be no need for scientific socialism as "the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement".[81]

For Lenin, then, the revolutionary party functions as an epistemological mediation linking fragmented empirical experiences, actual dynamics of struggle, and real structural mechanisms of domination and state power, transforming dispersed perceptions into systematic strategic knowledge. Organization is not an external add-on but the institutional means through which the working class acquires reflexive knowledge of a contradictory totality that exceeds its immediate experience. Revolutionary agency emerges as doubly determined: shaped by structural contradictions yet irreducible to them, as collective agents theoretically grasp the mechanisms structuring their conditions, strategically exploit contradictions, and through coordinated practice transform the structural ground itself. In this sense, the scientific character of materialist dialectic is inseparable from the role of revolutionary intellectuals who, rooted in proletarian struggle, nonetheless operate at a level of abstraction and totalization that the spontaneity of everyday experience cannot attain.[82]

79 Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, pp. 375–376, 384–385.

80 Ibid., pp. 384–85, 422.

81 Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, in *Marx and Engels*, *Collected Works, (MECW), Volume 24*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989, p. 325.

82 Negri interprets the Leninist party as a centralized epistemic authority subordinating collective subjectivity to privileged knowledge. Yet Lenin's conception grounds the party not in infallible knowledge but in an organizational form where political orientation is continuously tested through debate and collective judgement. Scientific socialism aims to disclose structural relations underlying appearances but remains fallible and open to revision through practical struggle—a field of

This stratified architecture operates through laminated systems, where emergent properties at higher levels presuppose yet irreducibly exceed their lower–level conditions. In Marx's analysis, the economic level generates surplus value through exploitation, yet this mechanism becomes socially efficacious only through juridical property relations and political enforcement—levels possessing their own causal density. The wage–form, for instance, simultaneously operates as an economic category (price of labor–power), a juridical institution (contract), and an ideological mystification (equal exchange). Collapsing these levels into univocal immanence eliminates precisely the analytical space where contradictions accumulate, displace across registers, and generate conjunctural crises exploitable through strategic intervention.

Antonio Negri's trajectory progressively dismantles this stratified ontology through conceptual displacements culminating in a radically flat ontology of immanent productivity. Marx's distinctions—between essence and appearance, substance and form, objective contradiction and subjective initiative—are progressively collapsed into a flat, univocal plane. The result is a transformation of Marx's multi-level architecture into an ontology of productive life that weakens the mediations and differential determinations through which Marx and Lenin render exploitation and revolutionary agency intelligible.

The trajectory begins in *operaismo*'s interpretation of Italy's postwar factory struggles. Tronti's celebrated Copernican revolution asserts that capital is reactive to working-class initiative: "We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to reverse the problem, change direction, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class".[83] Negri radicalizes this into an ontological claim by repositioning Marx's law of value—not as an impersonal mechanism of real abstraction, but as a field immediately determined by class initiative rather than by structural valorization requirements.[84]

This produces a threefold displacement of Marx's ontology. At the empirical level, phenomenal forms of struggle are treated as transparent expressions of autonomous class power rather than as symptoms requiring mediation. At the level of actual processes, antagonism becomes the primary determinant of development rather than being shaped by deeper mechanisms. At the level of real determination,

collective learning rather than epistemic dictatorship. Negri's reading, shaped by post-structuralist suspicion toward epistemic mediation, recodes centralized organization as knowledge-power reproduction rather than strategic coordination, risking conflation of historically specific bureaucratic deformations with the theoretical structure of the party–form itself.

83 Mario Tronti, "Lenin in England" (1964), cited in Wright, *Storming Heaven*, p. 64.

84 Negri, "Marx on Cycle and Crisis" pp. 24–45.

the mediation between concrete labor and abstract labor is loosened. For Marx, the transformation of heterogeneous labors into abstract labor-time is a real abstraction mediated through exchange and the money-form.[85] By narrowing these mediations, Negri blurs the differentiation between structural mechanism and subjective initiative, eroding the distinction between objective constraint and agency.[86]

*Marx Beyond Marx* marks the decisive rupture. Negri reads the *Grundrisse* as announcing the exhaustion of the law of value and of measure in advanced capitalism; as labor becomes socialized and cooperatively organized, labor-time allegedly ceases to serve as the measure of wealth.[87] He treats Marx's conditional "Fragment on Machines"—describing a potential contradiction—as an accomplished tendency.[88] This tends to collapse the distinction between concrete and abstract labor, even though abstract labor is a real abstraction constituted by the value-form through exchange and property relations.[89] Technical socialization of labor does not by itself dissolve the value-form, which persists as long as production remains mediated by value relations. By running together empirical cooperation, actual integration, and real form-determination, Negri weakens the stratified structure explaining exploitation as a form-determined social relation. Digital capitalism does not abolish the law of value but intensifies its operation by reorganizing abstraction through data extraction, algorithmic coordination, and platform-mediated circulation, whereby unpaid social activity is continuously translated into measurable value relations. What appears as the dissolution of measure is instead a displacement of measurement into infrastructural and algorithmic forms that extend the real abstraction of value beyond the immediate labor process while preserving exploitation as a form-determined social mediation.

The Spinozist turn renders this compression systematic. In *The Savage Anomaly*, Spinoza's distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* becomes the template for reinterpreting capital–labor relations: living labor appears as ontologically primary productive power, capital as reactive command.[90] Spinoza's univocal ontology reduces room for distinct levels of determination. Thus, Marx's differentiation between economic structure, political form, and ideological representation tends to collapse into a polarity between productive life and parasitic command; relatively

85 Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, pp. 46, 81–82.
86 Murphy, *Antonio Negri: Modernity and the Multitude*, pp. 107–108.
87 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 144–48, 151–154.
88 Marx, *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft of 1857–58) [Grundrisse]*, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW), Volume 29*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987, pp. 90–92.
89 Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 153.
90 Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, p. 191.

autonomous mechanisms—state, law, ideology—lose density and appear merely reactive.[91]

This monism underpins the biopolitical synthesis, where distinctions between biopower and biopolitics are reconfigured. Drawing on and inverting Foucault, Negri treats life and living labor as ontologically primary substance, whereas biopower appears as a capture of this immanent productivity.[92] Domination becomes a temporary blockage of constituent power.[93] This erases the distinction between base and superstructure and reinterprets immaterial labor as immediately social, displacing value-form mediation.[94] Yet capitalist sociality operates through real abstractions—value, money, capital—not through immediate cooperation.[95] Treating sociality as immediate risks dissolving the structural gap that explains why exploitation persists.

The globalist phase universalizes this flat ontology. *Empire* posits that sovereignty is now decentered and deterritorialized, forming an immanent global network.[96] This sits uneasily with Lenin's insistence that capital's international content and national form constitute an irresolvable contradiction only communism can overcome.[97] Under neoliberalism this contradiction intensifies, as geopolitical rivalries and state power persist.[98]When the international/national contradiction is rendered theoretically invisible, the tension driving imperialism and shaping possibilities for revolutionary solidarity is likewise rendered invisible at the level of theory.

*Multitude* extends the flattening to collective subjectivity, presenting the multitude as immediately self-organizing and self-conscious.[99] Yet Marx and Lenin insist that consciousness requires mediation across levels: empirical experience must be linked to actual processes and real mechanisms through theory and organization. Without this, strategic knowledge cannot emerge. Hardt and Negri tend to sidestep the problem Marx and Lenin theorize how a working class constituted through capitalist relations acquires knowledge of mechanisms structuring its existence and

91 Negri, *Insurgencies*, pp. 325–333.
92 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, p. 139; Negri, "The Constitution of Time," in *Time for Revolution*, p. 29.
93 Toscano, "Always Already Only Now: Negri and the Biopolitical", p. 112.
94 Hardt and Negri, *Labor of Dionysus*, pp. 10–13.Formun ÜstüFormun Altı
95 Marx, *Capital, Volume I*, p. 186.
96 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp.166–90, 332–36.
97 V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, *in Collected Works, Volume 22*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964, pp. 266–68, 303.
98 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 26–31, 183–210.
99 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, pp. 99–100, 336.

organizes to transform them.[100]

The flattening culminates in the concepts of the common and exodus. The common is treated as an ontologically autonomous source of value once liberated from capital.[101] Yet it is historically produced within the value-form structured by commodification and property relations.[102] Exodus and desertion tend to replace determinate negation with affirmative withdrawal.[103] As Daniel Bensaïd argues, a politics lacking strategic comprehension of the state's material density risks devolving into melancholic resistance incapable of dismantling constituted power.[104] Refusing institutional mediation can leave the multitude disarmed before state power and capital.[105]

*Assembly* treats organization as a constructive process that emerges from struggles, adopts the common as both foundation and goal, and is tied to the strategic capacities of the multitude; leadership is limited to tactical execution, while constituent power is developed through the creation of new institutions from within social cooperation.[106] This forecloses the Leninist insight that organization must mediate between empirical struggles, actual processes of class formation, and real structural mechanisms. By treating political significance as already fully immanent within cooperation, Hardt and Negri's framework logically implies that no external organizational form is required to grasp contradictions across levels or to coordinate strategic interventions.[107] This narrows the institutional space within which strategy can become materially effective.

Marx's and Lenin's stratified realism insists that revolutionary agency arises from the intersection of empirical, actual, and real determinations. Only by comprehending capitalism as a differentiated, contradictory totality—wherein real mechanisms generate processes that manifest in empirical forms, and where appearance systematically diverges from essence—can strategy become materially possible. In this sense, Marx's famous dictum that, had essence and appearance coincided, "all

100 Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, pp. 384–85, 422.

101 Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. 139–42.

102 Moishe Postone, "Capital and Temporality", in *The Marx Revival: Key Concepts and New Interpretations, ed. Marcello Musto,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, pp. 166–168.

103 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 212.

104 Daniel Bensaïd, *La Politique comme art stratégique*, Paris: Syllepse, 2011, p. 41; cited in Razmig Keucheyan, *The Left Hemisphere: Mapping Critical Theory Today*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London: Verso, 2013, pp. 252–254.

105 Wood, "A Manifesto for Global Capitalism?" in *Debating Empire*, (epub version).

106 Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. 41–42, 237.

107 Ibid., pp. 279–80.

science would be superfluous" [108] is at once an epistemological and a political thesis: it grounds the necessity of a scientific, materialist dialectic and of revolutionary intellectuals who, armed with that dialectic, are able to lead workers' struggles beyond the immediacy of trade-union demands toward the conscious, collective construction of a post-capitalist society in which the free development of each becomes the condition for the free development of all.[109]

So, Marx's scientific method is predicated on a stratified ontology that rigorously distinguishes between the real generative mechanisms of capitalism—such as the value–form and the organic composition of capital—and the actual events or empirical appearances that manifest on the surface of society, such as price fluctuations or wage contracts. This distinction allows Marx to critique political economy for confusing the "visible, merely external movement" with the "true intrinsic movement" of social production, thereby naturalizing historically specific relations of domination.[110] True revolutionary change, in this framework, is not merely a redistribution of sensible qualities or a shift in discourse, but the transformation of the underlying, unactualized causal powers and structural constraints that generate social reality, a process Marx describes as the "economic law of motion of modern society".[111]

In contrast, Negri, appropriating Gilles Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, attempts to ground the possibility of counter–factuals and resistance in the concept of the virtual defined not as a structural potential but as a fully real, yet non–actual, dimension of immanence.[112] For Negri, the virtual signifies an immanent constituent power opposed to constituted power without mediation or determinate negation; yet once stratified reality is replaced by a univocal plane of immanence, the real collapses into the actual. From a Marxist perspective, unrealized possibilities must instead be understood as real but inactivated generative mechanisms embedded in value–relations, class structures, and the material organization of production, whose effects may remain blocked or deferred. When ontological depth disappears, absence can no longer indicate the latent operation of such mechanisms, and contradictions lose causal efficacy beyond empirical appearance. A flat ontology thus

108 Marx, *Capital, Volume III*, p. 804.

109 Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, p. 506.

110 Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume III*, London: Penguin, 1981, p. 313; cited in Richard Marsden, *The Nature of Capital: Marx after Foucault*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 185.

111 Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1*, London: Penguin, 1976, p. 92; cited in Grant Banfield, *Critical Realism for Marxist Sociology of Education*, London: Routledge, 2016, p. 18.

112 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 208; David Bright, *Exploring Deleuze's Philosophy of Difference: Applications for Critical Qualitative Research*, Gorham, ME: Myers Education Press, 2020, p. 7.

reduces mechanisms to events and transforms reality into expressive surface, so that the Deleuzian virtual denotes differential productivity rather than determinate structural power, converting real potentials into mere non–appearance and restricting transformation to recomposition within capitalist immanence, leaving emancipation rhetorically affirmed yet ontologically indeterminate.[113] Because Negri's ontology lacks the vertical depth to distinguish between the exercise of a power and the structural endurance of that power, his conception of "permanent revolution" risks devolving into an endless flux of variations that cannot account for the persistence of the state or the specific generative mechanisms that must be dismantled to effectuate a transition from capitalism.[114]

Consequently, while Marx situates change in the dialectical transformation of deep structures that exist independently of their immediate actualization, Negri's reliance on the virtual collapses the distinction between being and becoming, stripping critical theory of the ontological traction necessary to explain how a new social order can be not just imagined as a counter–factual possibility, but materially constructed through the determinate negation of the existing mode of production.

Negri's framework generates its own immanent contradiction at this point. His account of Empire as a totalizing, decentered apparatus of capture tacitly relies on distinguishing multiple registers of power—juridical, financial, military, communicative—that operate with different logics and temporalities. Yet a univocal ontology of immanence provides no basis for such distinctions. The analytical vocabulary Negri requires to describe contemporary domination thus exceeds what his flat ontology can supply.

In practical terms, this flattening of social reality leads to a dangerous political illusion. By treating the networked surface of contemporary capitalism as the whole truth, Negri's framework encourages activists to mistake changes in the style of management (e.g., the gig economy, flexible work, algorithmic management) for a disappearance of the structure of domination. When we cannot distinguish between the empirical flexibility of a delivery app and the deep, rigid legal and property relations that back it, we are left fighting symptoms rather than causes. A transcendental critique reveals that without recognizing these deep, stratified layers of state power and ownership, resistance remains trapped on the surface, endlessly rearranging the furniture inside the prison of the value–form rather than dismantling the prison itself.

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113 Alan Norrie, *Dialectic and Difference: Dialectical Critical Realism and the Grounds of Justice*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 205.

114 Miguel Vatter, "Legality and Resistance: Arendt and Negri on Constituent Power," in Timothy S. Murphy and Abdul–Karim Mustapha (eds.), *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri, Volume Two: Revolution in Theory*, pp. 63–70.

## Neglect of Negation

Negri's intellectual project constitutes a sustained expulsion of negativity, contradiction, and rhythmic causality from the architecture of Marxist critique. This trajectory toward an ontology of pure affirmation unfolds across *operaismo* and *autonomia*, the Spinozist and biopolitical writings, globalist collaborations with Hardt, and his later organizational writings. It is not incidental but the organizing structural principle of his system: at each stage Negri eliminates contradiction as generative motor of transformation, substituting an ontology in which living labor's positivity appears as a self–expansive force whose creative overflow precedes and overwhelms domination. This marks a decisive divergence from Marx's dialectical materialism, where real contradiction—structural antagonism internal to social relations—constitutes the generative mechanism of historical transformation.

For Marx, contradiction designates the unity of opposed moments that mutually require and negate one another. The conflict between necessary labor (labor–time required to reproduce labor–power) and surplus labor (unpaid labor appropriated as surplus value) exemplifies this logic: capital depends on extracting surplus value, yet this extraction generates antagonism, crises, and the material conditions for capital's supersession.[115] By affirming labor's autonomous productivity as a self–sufficient ground, Negri abandons determinate negation—the historically conditioned process through which contradictions generate qualitative transformation. Negativity becomes merely an external constraint, never an internal motor of development.[116]

Crucially, materialist dialectic must grasp absence not as a mere void, but as a real, unactualized potential acting as a generative mechanism within the social totality. This negativity is the motor of the rhythmic cycles of accumulation and crisis, manifesting most decisively in the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—a concrete expression of the central contradiction between the increasingly social character of production and its private capitalist appropriation. These crises are not accidental ruptures on a plane of immanence but are the structural symptoms of a system at war with its own foundations. Consequently, the transition to communism requires the negation of the negation: it is the determinate resolution of this specific antagonism, actualizing the human self–realization and species–powers that are currently negated by the alienation inherent in value–production. By flattening this stratified negativity, Negri obscures the very dynamic through which the absent potential of unalienated life exerts the pressure that necessitates revolutionary rupture.

In a stratified Marxist ontology, contradiction emerges because structures, gen-

115 Marx, *Capital, Volume I*, pp. 226, 243.

116 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 188–189; see also Toscano, "Chronicles of Insurrection: Tronti, Negri and the Subject of Antagonism", pp. 115–116.

erative mechanisms, events, and empirical appearances operate on different levels, each with distinct causal powers and temporalities. Structural relations produce mechanisms whose effects appear only partially in events and are frequently misrecognized at the empirical level, generating tensions between social reality, its operations, and its appearances. These disjunctions interact unevenly, allowing contradictions to accumulate across levels and reappear as crises and ruptures that propel historical change rather than continuity. For Lenin, this layered negativity becomes politically decisive: contradictions between structural determination and lived experience require conscious intervention to transform dispersed antagonisms into revolutionary rupture. Negativity names the non–coincidence between objective conditions and subjective capacities, a gap intensified by crisis and uneven development. Organization, strategy, and theory function as determinate negations that translate structural contradiction into conscious transformative praxis.

This trajectory begins with *operaismo*'s transformation of the contradictory unity between labor and capital into a unilateral assertion of labor's ontological autonomy. In Marx, the necessary labor/surplus labor relation operates as a real structural antagonism, producing crisis when internal strains erupt.[117] Negri converts this relation into pure affirmation: the working class becomes the primary, self–initiating source of development, while capital becomes a reactive force seeking to contain labor's autonomous self–valorization. The dialectical relation of mutual constitution dissolves; labor is recoded as *potentia*, compelling capital's continual restructuring. Crisis appears not as rupture generated by internal contradictions but as overflow of creative labor.

Negri's reading of the *Grundrisse* intensifies this displacement. In the "Fragment on Machines," Marx identifies a contradictory tendency: as production becomes socialized and knowledge–intensive, labor–time becomes inadequate as measure of value, yet capital remains dependent on it, deepening rather than resolving contradiction.[118] Negri reinterprets this future–oriented contradiction as an already accomplished transformation, presenting living labor as an immeasurable, constitutive force that renders the law of value obsolete and makes capitalist command purely parasitic.[119] Immeasurability here dissolves contradiction into affirmative expansiveness, evacuating the negative content of the value–form and the mechanisms of determinate negation.

What is foreclosed in this move is the problem of conscious planning. The general intellect, as it actually develops under capitalism, remains subordinated to the blind, ex post coordination of the value form—its cooperative and cognitive poten-

117 Marx, *Capital, Volume I,* pp. 239, 748–751.

118 Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *MECW Volume 29*, pp. 91–92.

119 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 140–148.

tials realized only through market mechanisms after the fact. To treat this as already actualized constituent power is to mistake a historically prepared possibility for an accomplished tendency. The general intellect can become a self-conscious, purposively organized force only through the negation of capitalist relations, not within them. Capitalism produces the conditions for such a transformation, but those conditions remain latent potential until the value form itself is consciously superseded.

The Spinozist turn supplies the metaphysical foundation for eliminating negativity. In Spinoza, Negri finds a univocal substance (*potentia*) whose expansive self–expression encounters only external limitation (*potestas*), never internal contradiction. This ontology excludes determinate negation and recasts contradiction as accidental obstacle rather than generative mechanism.[120] Capital becomes a parasitic external limitation upon life's prior productivity, rather than a contradictory social relation constituted through exploitation. History loses the structured antagonisms that generate crisis and transformation, while labor loses its negative dimension that renders transformation necessary and possible.

The biopolitical and globalist phases universalize this affirmative logic. Through Foucault's biopower and Deleuze's plane of immanence, Hardt and Negri posit life as ontologically cooperative and prior to command.[121] Within this flattened field, capital's rhythmic causality—the determinate sequence of crisis, devaluation, and restructuring—dissolves into a continuous flow of creativity. As Toscano notes, Negri treats "social cooperation's productivity as ontologically prior", and "exploitation" as mere command, thereby eclipsing the mediations through which capital appropriates cooperation as surplus value.[122] *Empire* projects this ontology onto the global scale, dissolving the asymmetries constitutive of imperialism into a smooth network and recasting antagonism as immediate confrontation between an affirmative multitude and a reactive Empire.

This trajectory culminates in Negri's organizational and strategic concepts. For Lenin, organization is contradiction's institutional condensation, necessary where contradictions do not resolve themselves through objective unfolding.[123] For Hardt and Negri, by contrast, organization and mediation are not rejected as such, but leadership and vanguardist centralization tend to appear as distortions of immanent self–organization; they privilege horizontal, networked forms and adopt a critical stance toward democratic centralism and the party–form.[124] Expelling negativity from organization, Negri abandons the understanding of capitalism as a contradic-

120 Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, pp.186–194, esp. pp. 191–192.

121 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 22–30, 62.

122 Toscano, "Always Already Only Now: Negri and the Biopolitical", pp.113–121.

123 Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony,* pp. 326–332.

124 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, pp. 100–108, 217; Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. 18, 267.

tory totality whose negations generate crises and emancipatory openings.

The concepts of the common and exodus complete this liquidation. The common is framed as ontologically prior productive wealth—communication, knowledge, affects—merely captured by *Empire*.[125] These risks mistaking a potential outcome of communist struggle for a pre–existing substance. Capitalism does not simply parasitize a pure cooperation; it constitutes cooperation in a historically specific form through value–form abstraction and the wage relation.[126] Flattening this distinction erases the gap between technical socialization and capitalist social form–determination. What disappears with this flattening is precisely negativity: the determinate contradiction between living labor and capital, mediated by value, which renders the common not an already given plenitude but a field structured by antagonism and compelled reproduction.

Exodus appears as the practical correlate of this ontology. If the common is ontologically prior, liberation consists in "taking leave while constituting"—deserting command structures and creating new commons.[127] Yet without a theory of negativity capable of grasping the state as the concentrated form of class power, such withdrawal displaces rather than resolves the antagonism embedded in the value relation. This strategy evades the problem of confronting concentrated state power—legal, military, and police—which stabilizes global hierarchies. Withdrawal is mistaken for subversion, bypassing the Leninist problem of dismantling the bourgeois state; revolution is recast as flight and ethical self–fashioning rather than seizure and transformation of political power.

Exodus also contradicts Negri's own claim that real subsumption leaves "no more outside".[128] If there is no outside, the multitude cannot simply exit; the concept presupposes an exterior space that the theory denies, and it cannot explain capital's capacity to recapture lines of flight or to repress new commons. In this sense, the common and exodus together imagine communism as spontaneous overflow of life's creativity—ontologically assured yet strategically indeterminate. By dissolving contradiction, determinate negation, and institutional mediation, Negri renders invisible the mechanisms through which revolutionary subjects are forged and strategies developed. What remains is a politics of affirmation that celebrates creative potential while disarming the multitude before capital's concentrated institutional power, state violence, and structurally reproduced exploitation.

In *Declaration and Assembly* , Hardt and Negri's organizational proposals are

125 Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. viii, 140–142, 152–153; Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 62.
126 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, pp. 349–350.
127 Negri, "Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo", in *Time for Revolution*, p. 260; see also Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. 152–53, 177.
128 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 186.

also marked by a deeper ontological refusal of negativity, which has characterized Negri's trajectory since the 1970s. By grounding constituent counter-power entirely in the immanent productivity of cooperative life, they systematically exclude the role of determinate negation—those moments in which diffuse antagonism must be concentrated, organized, and directed against specific coercive institutions. Leadership, strategic centralization, and confrontation with the state's repressive apparatus are reframed as distortions of democratic immediacy rather than as necessary mediations for dismantling entrenched power. Consequently, the multitude's horizontal assemblies and networked forms are imagined as capable of persisting and expanding without engaging the negative work of rupture, leaving their politics of affirmation strategically exposed when faced with organized repression.[129]

Marxian negativity names a determinate relation of contradiction and negation through which historically specific social forms can be abolished and transformed, presupposing ontological depth, mediation, and structural endurance beyond immediate appearances. Negri's Deleuzian differentiality replaces this with an immanent field of differences on a flat plane of being, where antagonism becomes ontological excess rather than determinate negation. Resistance is thus reduced to variation within capitalism rather than a mediated rupture with its generative mechanisms, weakening any ontological account of durable domination or material transformation. In this Deleuzian framework, capitalism is understood not as a contradictory totality but as an axiomatic system of decoded flows that displaces its limits through reconfiguration rather than resolving internal contradictions.[130] Consequently, anti–capitalist struggle is conceptualized not as a confrontation with structural antagonisms, but as the generation of lines of flight intended to deterritorialize the socius and escape the apparatus of capture through affirmative creation.[131] This recasts revolutionary transformation as a contingent act of fleeing the axiomatic—an exodus—rather than a determinate negation that abolishes the value–form from within.[132] Anti–capitalist possibility is consequently grounded in a Deleuzian virtuality of non–empirical petites perceptions, from which diachronic and synchronic differentiality are said to emerge outside determinate epistemic frameworks.[133] By

129 Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. xv, 90, 256; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, pp. 5, 107.

130 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus*, pp. 230–246

131 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 472–473.

132 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus*, p. 239; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 472.

133 See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 208–214, where the virtual is defined as fully real yet non–actual and grounded in differential relations irreducible to negation; and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 26–28, 111–117,

contrast, Marx's unobservable structures do not move through imperceptible differences but through objective contradictions and determinate negations that drive historical change.[134]

Concretely, this refusal of negativity disarms movements the moment they face repression. If we believe, as Negri suggests, that the system is merely a reactive shell that we can simply exit or ignore through creative affirmation, we are left strategically naked when the state deploys its police, courts, and armies—powers that are not merely reactive but actively destructive. The tragedy of movements like the Occupy/Gezi protests[135] illustrates this: they successfully created temporary zones of affirmative common life, but because they lacked a strategy for the determinate negation of the state power confronting them, they were swept away. The immanent contradiction here is stark: by ignoring the negative no of the state in favor of a pure yes to life, the politics of exodus paradoxically leaves the existing order intact and operative. A transcendental critique of the absence of determinate negativity shows that when contradiction is reduced to mere difference within a flat field of immanence, resistance loses its transformative force. If antagonism is not grasped as a structured contradiction rooted in the value–form and class relations, struggle can only reconfigure what already exists. Deprived of the moment of negation that makes supersession possible, resistance remains confined to rearranging relations within the prison of capital rather than dismantling its structural foundations.

## Under–theorization of Mediation

In Marxist dialectical materialism, mediation is the indispensable mechanism through which the social whole's internally contradictory moments are articulated into determinate unity, enabling the movement from fragmented particularity to structured totality and rendering systematic transformation intelligible. Mediation

where desire and resistance are theorized through molecular flows, non–representable intensities, and pre–conscious micro–perceptions rather than determinate structural contradictions.

134 Negri argues that dialectical negation—especially Leninist politics—reproduces the capitalist logic it seeks to overcome, since power actively produces subjects rather than merely repressing them, trapping negation-based struggles within the relations they oppose. Antagonism is reinterpreted not as dialectical opposition aimed at state power but as the multitude's autonomous productivity exceeding capitalist command. Exodus thus bypasses confrontation to construct cooperative spaces beyond capital. Marxist critics respond that this leaves structural mechanisms of domination intact, making autonomous practices vulnerable to reabsorption: domination can only be overcome by confronting and dismantling its institutional structures.

135 The Gezi Park protests of 2013 began as a localized environmental demonstration against urban redevelopment but rapidly expanded into a nationwide uprising against authoritarian governance, police violence, and neoliberal restructuring in Turkey. Despite their mass participation and inventive forms of horizontal solidarity, the protests lacked an organized strategy capable of confronting and negating state power, leading to their eventual suppression.

is not a passive link between pre–given terms but the active process through which contradictions are organized, concentrated, and made strategically legible.[136] The value–form itself functions as a fundamental mediation, transforming qualitatively heterogeneous individual labors into socially validated, quantitatively commensurable abstract labor through generalized commodity exchange.[137] Political institutions likewise develop localized resistance into organized class struggle capable of confronting state power. Mediated interactions across economic, political, and ideological levels translate dispersed antagonisms into manifestations of systemic crisis, allowing the identification of strategic vulnerabilities within capitalism's contradictory totality.

For Lenin, this dialectical understanding of mediation necessarily extends into political praxis, where revolutionary strategy involves the concentration and interpretation of contradictions through specific organizational forms—above all the revolutionary party—which actively mediate between spontaneity and systematic revolutionary consciousness.[138] By synthesizing dispersed experiential knowledge and theoretically analyzing structural mechanisms of accumulation and state power, the party transforms fragmented consciousness into comprehensive revolutionary consciousness capable of grasping the social totality and intervening strategically.[139] Mediation thus becomes the condition of possibility for coherent transformative agency; without it, revolutionary practice collapses into spontaneist adventurism or passive economism.[140]

Negativity renders mediation necessary because contradictions emerge unevenly across ecological, economic, political, and ideological layers, each governed by distinct causal powers and temporal rhythms. Though internally related, these layers interact asymmetrically: ecological limits disrupt accumulation, economic

136 Capitalist social reality unfolds across relatively distinct but internally related layers—economic, legal, political, and ideological—each governed by its own specific causal rhythms, temporalities, and forms of efficacy. These layers do not stand in a relation of simple correspondence or symmetrical determination; they intersect and interact through uneven, asymmetrical relations in which developments at one level are mediated, refracted, or displaced at others. The economic does not mechanically dictate the legal or the political, nor do ideological forms merely mirror material relations; rather, causal influence circulates through complex, non–linear pathways within an open system. Within this configuration, institutional mediations are crucial: it is through institutions that economic constraints are juridically codified, political strategies are organized, and ideological forms are stabilized or contested, enabling interactions between layers to acquire durable social and historical effects.

137 Marx, *Capital, Volume I,* pp. 51–94.

138 V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," in *Collected Works, Volume 38,* Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, pp. 359–60. see: Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*?, especially pp. 347–521 (cf. section II, "The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social–Democrats", pp. 373–397).

139 Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, pp. 384–85, 422.

140 Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony*, pp. 135, 142–144.

crises displace tensions into political struggle, political forms reorganize ideology, and ideological stabilizations feed back into material practice. Mediation names the practical and theoretical process that connects these heterogeneous tendencies, enabling dispersed rhythms to be grasped as a determinate concrete totality rather than as isolated crises.

Antonio Negri's trajectory systematically dismantles this dialectical framework of mediation. From *operaismo*'s initial methodological inversion—which ontologically posits an autonomous, self–valorizing labor confronted by a merely reactive capital—fundamental mediating institutions of capitalist exploitation (the wage–form, commodity exchange, money, the state) are increasingly conceived as secondary impositions on a prior productive cooperation, rather than as constitutive structures of capitalist social relations.

This dissolution proceeds gradually. In the late 1970s, Negri still acknowledged that antagonism required organizational articulation; the question was not whether mediation was necessary, but what forms it should take. The subsequent Spinozist reconstruction, however, eliminated the conceptual space for this question by recasting every institutional form as a reactive limitation on productive immanence—thereby converting a strategic debate about the kind of mediation into an ontological rejection of mediation as such. The party– form is recoded as a distortion of living labor's immediate self–valorization, an artificial separation between spontaneity and organization that betrays rather than enables revolutionary transformation.[141] Marx's mediating structures—above all the value–form as real abstraction—are recast as parasitic apparatuses that merely drain an already autonomous cooperation.[142] This abandons Marx's insight that capitalism constitutes social interdependence itself through impersonal, mediated forms operating as real abstractions.[143]

This rejection of mediation finds metaphysical foundation in Negri's Spinozist monism, where being is a single, univocal, immanent substance—*potentia* as pure affirmative productivity—while mediating structures of representation, institution, and command appear as mere *potestas*, external limitations upon an unlimited creative flow.[144] Within such a univocal ontology, excluding stratification and

141 Antonio Negri, "Archaeology and Project: The Mass Worker and the Social Worker," in *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects 1967–83*, pp. 102–115.

142 Hardt and Negri, *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form*, p. 282. For the specific critique of the value-form as an empty mechanism of command, see Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 147–148: Negri, *The Savage Anomaly,* p. 140.

143 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, pp.144–171; see also Moishe Postone, "Rethinking *Capital* in Light of the *Grundrisse*," in *Karl Marx's Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later*, ed. Marcello Musto, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 130.

144 Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, pp. 190–191, 199.

relative autonomy of distinct levels, mediation becomes conceptually impossible. Institutions cease to appear as condensations of structured antagonism requiring strategic analysis and instead appear as distortions imposed on an immanent productivity requiring liberation rather than transformation.[145]

The biopolitical turn intensifies this dissolution by fusing production, communication, and affect into an undifferentiated continuum where cooperation is primary and power merely reactive appropriation.[146] By collapsing Marx's distinction between economic base and political–ideological superstructure—while still theorizing their mediated interaction—this framework eliminates the stratified architecture that makes mediation necessary, as the mechanism through which contradictions at different levels are concentrated and made available for intervention.[147]

The *Empire* trilogy universalizes this dissolution. Empire abolishes international mediation by dissolving nation–states and geopolitical hierarchies into a smooth, deterritorialized biopolitical space where power is "both everywhere and nowhere".[148] This erases imperialist antagonisms that Marxism and Leninism locates in uneven development, inter–state competition, and violent enforcement of global divisions of labor.[149] *Multitude* abolishes political mediation by theorizing a planetary subject whose agency flows directly from biopolitical creativity, requiring no organizational concentration or institutional mediation.[150] This leaves no means to translate diffuse antagonism into focused rupture capable of confronting the condensed contradictions of the modern state.[151]

*Commonwealth* deepens this by declaring the ***law of value*** obsolete and collapsing the economic sphere into an immediate expression of cooperative life.[152] This obscures mechanisms through which exploitation and social domination persist by abstract structures via intellectual property, finance, platforms, and data extraction—mechanisms operating at the level of real abstraction even as appearances change.[153] *Assembly* derives organizational form from immanent social cooperation, criticizing sovereign and representative hierarchies, although it does not reject leadership, coordination, or institutional structures as such. Instead, it seeks

145 Macherey, "Negri's Spinoza: From Mediation to Constitution", in *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri, Volume Two: Revolution in Theory*, pp. 19–20.
146 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 23–24, 62; Negri, *The Politics of Subversion*, p. 183; Negri, *Time for Revolution*, pp. 72–73.
147 Toscano, "Always Already Only Now: Negri and the Biopolitical", pp. 112–113.
148 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 190, 332–333.
149 Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, pp. 273–276, 281–285.
150 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude,* pp. 99–100, 146–147.
151 Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony*, pp. 316–317, 321.
152 Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. 132–139.
153 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 30.

to reconfigure them as non–sovereign, tactical, and subordinated to the strategic self–organization of the multitude.[154] But this still eliminates the epistemological and organizational stratum where revolutionary consciousness is forged from fragmented experience, where local perceptions of exploitation are connected to structural analysis and coordinated action.

In *Declaration* and *Assembly*, although Hardt and Negri do not reject organizational mediation as inherently hostile to democracy, they criticize centralized, sovereign forms of organization by insisting that the refusal of leadership must not be confused with a refusal of organization and institution. They argue that movements require durable organizational forms to articulate disparate struggles into coherent counterpowers, inventing new mechanisms subordinated to the strategic capacities of the multitude. In *Declaration*, Hardt and Negri present contemporary movements as already possessing the organizational capacities they require, embedded in horizontal networks of communication and affect that can simply be federated without any mediating apparatus capable of synthesizing strategy across terrains and temporalities in the sense of a centralized and strategically directive instance. By construing the forms of occupation, encampment, and networked coordination as sufficient in themselves, the text bypasses the Leninist question of how to concentrate and escalate force against a strategically central target. This reading of productive cooperation as self–organizing by default leaves unaddressed the necessity of mediating between different sectors, rhythms, and scales of struggle through durable forms of strategic concentration and therefore leaves the multiplicity of movements vulnerable to dissipation once the initial conjuncture of mobilization passes.[155]

In *Assembly*, Hardt and Negri reject leadership, representation, and the autonomy of the political, maintaining that strategy must remain immanent to social cooperation and that institutions should operate as horizontal, non–sovereign forms without vertical command, reducing organization to coordination rather than concentrated authority.

From a Leninist standpoint, this weakens revolutionary capacity by dissolving the distinction between constituent energy and the organized apparatus required to confront class rule. Spontaneous self–coordination replaces strategic centralization, while the rejection of a vanguard form removes the instruments—party, united fronts, centralized councils—necessary to unify dispersed struggles into decisive force. Without organs capable of binding decisions at the level of the totality, the multitude cannot match the coherence of the bourgeois state.

The common and exodus carry this dissolution of mediation to its political con-

154 Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, pp. xi–xv, 6, 18, 38.
155 Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*, pp. 11–13, 89–92.

clusion. If productive cooperation is ontologically self–sufficient, then the strategic labor of translating dispersed resistances into coordinated force—building alliances, sustaining organizations across defeats, concentrating power at decisive points—becomes superfluous. Exodus follows the same logic: rather than seizing and transforming the mediating apparatuses through which class power is exercised, it proposes circumvention, substituting a spatial metaphor of flight for the organisational problem of dismantling institutional power from within.

The immanent difficulty is visible in Negri's own organizational writings. Having theorised cooperation as ontologically prior and institutions as reactive capture, he nonetheless calls for the invention of new counter–institutions capable of sustaining struggle over time. Yet his framework offers no explanation of why self–organizing cooperation would need such invention, nor how non–sovereign forms could acquire the binding force necessary to coordinate action across competing temporalities and interests. The demand for institutional novelty thus presupposes precisely the gap between spontaneous cooperation and strategic effectiveness that his ontology denies.

Marxian mediation names the process through which structural contradictions become politically intelligible and strategically organized, linking lived experience to underlying mechanisms and enabling intervention at the level of the social whole. It is not an external imposition but the means through which antagonisms acquire determinate organizational form. Negri's Deleuzian framework rejects mediation in this sense, privileging immanent circulation where power and resistance appear immediately coextensive, dissolving antagonism into continuous movement and leaving no mechanism capable of synthesizing dispersed conflicts into a force able to confront the mediated power of the capitalist state.[156] This displacement is rooted in a fundamental ontological divergence: while Marx grasps capitalism as a contradictory totality of internal relations—in which the essence of labor and capital is constituted reciprocally by the value–form—Negri appropriates the Deleuzian logic of the assemblage (*agencement*), characterized by the exteriority of relations. By replacing the organic, dialectical whole with a contingent arrangement of discrete singularities, Negri posits a social ontology where components retain their autonomous identity independent of their structural articulation. This move fundamentally erodes the rationale for determinate negation; if relations are merely external, the revolutionary task is no longer the rupture of a constitutive internal bond, but simply a rearrangement or withdrawal from a system that ostensibly fails to define the subject's ontological core. Marx's dialectic, by contrast, grasps internal relations as asymmetric and tendential—neither pluralist juxtaposition nor monist identity, but

156 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, esp. pp. 26–28, 109–117.

structured contradictions with determinate directional force.

By abolishing mediation in the sense of durable, strategically centralized articulation across economic, political, organizational, and international registers, Negri's project renders capitalism's multi–layered totality invisible, leaving only an ontological dualism between productive immanence and reactive capture. Without mediation, contradictions cannot be strategically located, coherent strategy cannot be built from dispersed resistances, and emancipatory transformation cannot be constructed through organized practice. The mechanisms translating theory into organized force—parties, unions, councils, international organizations—disappear as illegitimate within this framework not because coordination is denied, but because binding strategic concentration is treated as inherently sovereign. Negri's communism thus becomes ontologically guaranteed yet strategically indeterminate, dissolving the mediating mechanisms through which collective subjects might forge themselves into effective revolutionary agents capable of confronting, dismantling, and superseding capitalism's institutionally concentrated and territorially organized structures of domination.

On the ground, this absence of mediation in the strategic and organizational sense specified above explains the flash mob character of so many contemporary uprisings. We see immense explosions of spontaneous energy—millions in the streets—that dissipate as quickly as they emerge because there are no mediating institutions (parties, councils, durable organizations) to capture that energy and convert it into sustained political leverage. Negri's theory posits that the multitude can organize itself through horizontal networks without transcendent mediation; reality tells us that without the durable mediation of structured organization, these movements are bound to dissipate. A transcendental critique confirms that mediation is not a bureaucratic obstacle to be removed, but the necessary mechanism that allows a movement to survive the night and govern the morning.

## Abstraction of Subjectivity

In the classical tradition of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the relation between collective subject and social structure is not an external opposition between two independently existing entities but an internally mediated unity in which each moment both presupposes and transforms the other. History emerges neither as mechanistic unfolding of structural necessity nor as spontaneous eruption of unconstrained invention, but as the determinate outcome of a dialectical interaction in which subjects transform structures by passing through, rather than bypassing, their internal contradictions: theoretically grasping structural tensions, organizing collective capacities to exploit them at points of vulnerability, and constructing new social forms

that resolve these contradictions through practical supersession.[157] Agency is thus doubly determined: neither pure voluntarism nor mechanical economism, but an emergent capacity forged within the mediated, contradictory interaction of subjective initiative and objective structural determination.

Engels formalizes this through a stratified ontology in which economic, political, and ideological levels possess relative autonomy and distinct causal rhythms within an overdetermined totality. Lenin extends this into a theory of revolutionary praxis in which the party functions as the indispensable organizational mediation concentrating fragmented, localized struggles into a strategically coherent force. By theoretically grasping real structural mechanisms—the law of value, accumulation imperatives, state contradictions condensing class antagonisms—that remain invisible to spontaneous consciousness, the party enables intervention within a differentiated totality.[158] Agency here is mediated intervention within a structured, contradiction–driven, multi–levelled whole: a historically conditioned yet causally efficacious capacity to transform objective conditions by exploiting systemic vulnerabilities generated by internal contradictions.

Grounded agency arises from the articulation of heterogeneous causal rhythms—economic accumulation, political decision, ideological reproduction, and institutional stabilization—into a structured whole defined by asymmetrical relations rather than linear determination. Institutions mediate these rhythms by translating structural mechanisms into organized practices, simultaneously constraining action and opening determinate pathways for transformation. Agency is therefore grounded precisely because subjects act within real limits: transformative capacity emerges through intervention within, and against, the conditions that shape practice, not from an imagined autonomy outside them.

Antonio Negri's trajectory dismantles this architecture theorizing the reciprocal determination of subject and structure. Across *operaismo* and *autonomia*'s inversion, the Spinozist reconstruction, the biopolitical synthesis, the *Empire* trilogy's planetary universalization, and *Assembly*'s organizational reflections, Negri eliminates stratified structures, contradictory determinations, and mediating articulations that make grounded agency intelligible. The result is a theory of pure immanence in which subject and structure collapse into an undifferentiated continuum, dissolving the terrain—levels, mediations, contradictions—upon which revolutionary praxis operates. Agency becomes ubiquitous yet ungrounded: present everywhere as im-

157 Sean Creaven, *Emergentist Marxism: Dialectical Philosophy and Social Theory*, London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 139–141.

158 Sean Creaven, *Marxism and Realism: A Materialistic Application of Realism in the Social Sciences*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 30–31, 65–66; Alan Shandro, *Lenin and the Logic of Hegemony*, pp. 316, 326–329.

mediate expression of ontological productivity, yet strategically ineffective because it no longer acts upon structured contradictions providing determinate leverage. Agency is transformed from mediated intervention at strategic points into pure expression conceived as immediate, affirmative overflow.

This begins with *operaismo*'s inversion of the capital–labor relation, where Marx's contradictory unity—each pole presupposing and negating the other—is replaced by a unilateral assertion of labor's priority, with capital recast as reactive to labor's autonomous initiative.[159] Agency no longer emerges from determinate structural antagonisms but appears as pre–social productivity floating above the contradictions that condition revolutionary possibility. This intensifies in Negri's reading of the *Grundrisse* in the phase of *autonomia*, where the wage is treated not as a form–determined social relation mediated by the law of value but as an "independent variable" of immediate political struggle.[160] The proletariat shifts from a historically determinate class located in specific relations of production to a metaphysical power whose potency precedes structural constraints, converting grounded agency into abstract creativity detached from determining structures.

This abstraction receives metaphysical sanction in the Spinozist phase, where a monistic ontology of *potentia*—life's immanent productive power—dissolves structural determinations into expressions of a single substance.[161] In this framework, contradictions cannot function as internal tensions generating determinate transformation; they appear only as external obstacles to an unlimited creativity. The biopolitical synthesis extends this collapse by declaring "life is work", thereby dissolving the historically specific mechanism of exploitation into undifferentiated productivity characterizing all vital activity.[162] Mediation disappears as a category, contradiction becomes unintelligible, and transformation is reconceived as spontaneous overflow rather than organized negation of contradictory structures.

In Negri's late Spinozist and early biopolitical trajectory, this ontological elevation of living labor leads directly to the loss of grounded agency. By treating the multitude as an immediately cooperative subject whose productive capacities are ontologically given, rather than as a class–structured collectivity situated within determinate relations of exploitation, Negri displaces the terrain of antagonism from historically specific social formations into an undifferentiated plane of life itself. In *The Politics of Subversion*, for example, contemporary production is presented as the continuous creation of the social by living labor, a process whose motor is com-

159 Toscano, "Chronicles of Insurrection: Tronti, Negri and the Subject of Antagonism", pp. 119–120.
160 Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, pp. 131–133.
161 Callinicos, "Antonio Negri and the Temptation of Ontology", pp. 169–173.
162 Negri, *Time for Revolution,* pp. 29, 176.

munication and knowledge, and whose political task—despite Negri's own claims to the contrary—effectively becomes the expansion of this cooperation rather than strategic confrontation with the institutions that organize exploitation.[163] In this move, agency is no longer grounded in positional antagonism but in an abstract vitalism, making political organization a matter of expressing immanent capacities rather than contesting and restructuring material social relations.

The *Empire* trilogy universalizes this dissolution of grounded agency, replacing imperialism's hierarchical, territorial architecture with allegedly deterritorialized networked sovereignty, while elevating the multitude to an immediately creative subject whose agency derives from ontological cooperation rather than determinate positions within exploitative relations.[164]

Throughout the organizational phase, in *Declaration* and *Assembly*, Hardt and Negri's refusal of hierarchical crystallization thus neglects the dialectic between form and content in revolutionary organization: form can ossify, but without form, content dissipates. Their model underestimates the role of strategic centralization in enabling tactical decentralization, a balance Marxist and Leninist theory treats as decisive for sustaining mass initiative over time. Moreover, by privileging assembly as perpetual process, they sidestep the moment when constituent power must harden into counter–power, risking co–optation or exhaustion. In the absence of such grounded agency, transparency becomes opacity, as the visibility of multiplicity masks the inability to act decisively against entrenched structures.

Across these phases, the categorical conditions for grounded transformative agency—structural determination providing conditions and constraints, contradictions generating vulnerabilities, organizational mediation concentrating forces, agentic strategic intervention exploiting conjunctural openings—are progressively eroded. What remains is a monistic ontology where agency appears omnipresent as life's creative expression yet nowhere strategically effective, because it is severed from structured antagonisms, strategic mediations, and organizational concentrations through which resistances crystallize into revolutionary force. In classical Marxism, freedom is grounded through collective recognition of structural necessity and organized capacity to transform it. In Negri's reconstruction, freedom becomes an ungrounded ontological essence, unable to actualize itself as effective transformation because it has been detached from the structures it must confront, the contradictions it must exploit, and the organizational forms through which potential becomes rupture.

The common and exodus complete this abstraction. By treating the collective subject as ontologically given in cooperative life rather than forged through po-

163 Negri, *The Politics of Subversion*, pp. 116–118.
164 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. xii–xv, 62, 332–336.

litical struggle across fragmented conditions, Negri renders the process of subject–formation invisible. If the multitude is already constituted, it need only withdraw rather than undergo the transformative confrontation through which, in Marx's account, the proletariat constitutes itself as a class for itself—a qualitative leap that productive cooperation alone cannot deliver.

At this point it becomes necessary to recover a materialist and non–essentialist conception of human nature that Negri's ontology systematically suppresses. The Marxian tradition never treats human nature as a fixed metaphysical substance or a teleological essence, but as an ensemble of emergent, species–specific causal powers—linguistic capacity, cooperative labor, embodied need, vulnerability, creativity, learning, suffering, ethical responsiveness—that are historically mediated yet irreducible to capitalist forms[165]. Far from grounding a static anthropology, this conception explains why exploitation wounds, why domination generates resistance, and why collective agents can acquire strategic knowledge of the structures that constrain them. By refusing any account of these determinate capacities and recoding subjectivity as a pre–individual, indeterminate flux of *potentia*, Negri evacuates the very material basis upon which revolutionary agency depends.[166] This evacuation is reinforced by Negri's Deleuzian appeal to pre–individual singularities, where subjectivity is dispersed into impersonal intensities and differential relations prior to any determinate form of agency. In this framework, political transformation is grounded not in mediated capacities and structured antagonisms but in the immanent self–variation of desire and life, thereby displacing the material conditions through which collective subjects can act strategically against enduring structures of domination.[167] A realist, non–essentialist human nature does not reintroduce the essences Negri rejects; rather, it restores the stratified conditions of intelligibility for contradiction, mediation and grounded agency, revealing why transformative political practice cannot arise from an ontology that dissolves the subject into pure immanence.[168]

In political practice, treating the multitude as an already–uniting ontological force glosses over the real, messy divisions that fragment the working class—racism, nationalism, and competition for wages. Negri's abstraction invites us to assume a solidarity that does not yet exist, effectively telling us that the hard work of political construction is already done by the economy itself. This generates a performative contradiction: by celebrating a unity that is theoretically given but empirically

165 Creaven, *Marxism and Realism*, pp. 75–76.
166 Callinicos, "Antonio Negri and the Temptation of Ontology", pp. 193–194.
167 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 208–214; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti–Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 26–28, 109–117.
168 Creaven, *Marxism and Realism*, pp. 88–89.

absent, activists are relieved of the difficult, concrete task of building solidarity across differences. Real agency requires not the celebration of a metaphysical subject, but the strategic forging of a political one from the fractured realities of daily experience. A transcendental critique makes clear that without acknowledging the structured contradictions that divide the class, unity cannot be presupposed as an ontological fact but must be produced through determinate political mediation. It is only through such mediation that grounded agency emerges—an agency situated within real relations of production, capable of reflexively grasping its conditions and strategically transforming them. Otherwise, resistance remains trapped at the level of affirmation, deprived of the material anchoring and organizational density required to generate its own effective coherence.

## Conclusion: Restoring the Dialectic – Toward a Stratified, Negative, and Mediated Praxis

Negri's theoretical trajectory, across its distinct yet connected phases, performs a single invariant operation: the progressive flattening of the stratified, negative, mediated and agentic ontology through which Marx and Lenin grasp capitalism as a contradictory totality. What changes in vocabulary or philosophical reference conceals a structural continuity: the erosion of layered causality, determinate negation, organizational mediation and grounded agency.

**Immanent and Transcendental Failures:** These six phases disclose both immanent and transcendental failures. Immanently, Negri's own categories undermine one another through performative contradictions his ontology cannot admit without dissolving itself. If production is immediately coextensive with life and life is everywhere productive without mediation, exploitation's specific mechanism—the appropriation of surplus labor through the wage relation—becomes inexplicable. If cooperation ontologically precedes command, the historical emergence, persistence, and adaptive capacity of command become mysterious. If organization is always distortion, resistance can never consolidate into durable counter–power. The most affirmative claims—the autonomous productivity of the common, immediate self–organization of the multitude, liberatory exodus—collapse because they eliminate the structural contrasts and tensions through which political meaning, causation, and strategic possibility become determinate.

Transcendentally, by eliminating stratification (levels with distinct causal powers), negativity (contradiction as generative mechanism), mediation (organizational articulation of contradictions), and grounded agency (structured capacity to transform conditions), Negri removes the categorical preconditions of any coherent communist project capable of actualizing revolutionary transformation. Communism, rigorously understood as the "real movement which abolishes the present

state of things"[169] requires: the analytic capacity to identify contradictions and vulnerabilities; the theoretical ability to mediate between levels of the social formation; the organizational capacity to build institutions translating needs into projects of collective liberation; and the political capacity to sustain struggle across defeats, repression, and reorganization while preserving institutional continuity and strategic learning.

Without these capacities, the communist project loses its material grounding and collapses into ontological optimism: faith that life's productivity must eventually overflow all limits, that cooperation must defeat command through sheer excess, that the multitude must outgrow capital's capture—without a rigorous account of how, when, through which organizational forms, and under what determinate conditions this overflow could produce revolutionary transformation rather than merely recurrent resistances cyclically absorbed, commodified, or repressed.

This study's dual intervention articulates the precise nature of this failure. By systematizing the performative contradictions identified in the immanent critique and the ontological deficits revealed by the transcendental critique, this analysis establishes a distinctive theoretical conclusion: Negri's project does not merely overlook specific political realities, but systematically liquidates the categorical conditions—stratification, mediation, and determinate negation—required for any intelligible revolutionary strategy. The central contribution of this inquiry is thus to demonstrate that his flat ontology is not a liberation of Marxist theory, but a methodological blockage that renders the transition from resistance to organized communism structurally unthinkable.

A concluding observation sharpens the dual critique further: Negri's flat ontology is not merely a theoretical error but the philosophical crystallization of a specific historical conjuncture—the apparent horizontalization of capitalist relations following the defeats of the 1970s. What presents itself as ontological transformation is the phenomenal form of an increasingly abstract domination. Negri does not generalize from history; he absolutizes a historical appearance into a transhistorical principle, short-circuiting the distinction between conjunctural form and structural necessity that any coherent revolutionary theory must maintain.

This liquidation generates what might be termed a politics of perpetual preparation—movements endlessly readying themselves for ruptures that never crystallize into durable transformation. The problem is not insufficient militancy but structural incapacity: without mechanisms translating conjunctural openings into institutional consolidation, each uprising becomes pedagogical spectacle rather than material conquest. Historical comparison proves instructive: the Bolshevik seizure of power

169 Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 49.

succeeded not through spontaneous overflow but through years of patient organizational construction, theoretical clarification of state–form contradictions, and strategic preparation enabling decisive intervention when objective crisis and subjective readiness momentarily aligned. Negri's framework systematically excludes the organizational density, theoretical rigor, and strategic patience this historical precedent demonstrates as indispensable.

**Political and Theoretical Stakes:** The broader implication is that Negri's philosophy, despite its radical rhetoric and affirmation of creativity, destabilizes the conceptual foundations of emancipatory politics by rendering invisible or inert the very mechanisms through which emancipation could proceed as determinate transformation. By flattening the social world into a univocal plane, he makes it impossible to analyze systematically how crises arise from internal contradictions, how states reproduce class power through law, currency, fiscal policy, and coercion, how imperialism operates via unequal exchange, debt, and military enforcement, how debt disciplines entire populations, how technopolitical infrastructures (surveillance, algorithms, platforms, financial networks) reinforce domination through specific configurations, and how movements might convert local ruptures and episodic protests into durable institutions that accumulate power, coordinate action, and ultimately dismantle and replace state power and capitalist relations.

The very categories Marx and Lenin treat as indispensable—stratification, determinate negation, mediation, grounded agency—are systematically recoded not as enabling conditions but as obstacles to life's immediate expression, residues of transcendence to be eliminated rather than forms to be strategically deployed. The cumulative result is not an expanded communist horizon but a radically impoverished one: a framework capable of inspiring insurrectionary moments yet structurally incapable of building the patient, disciplined, strategically intelligent organizational forms through which those moments could crystallize into revolutions that dismantle capitalism and construct communism.

What is at stake, therefore, is not a rejection of Leninism, nor a simple repetition of its twentieth–century organizational forms, but a historically conscious reaffirmation of the party as a necessary mediating instance within capitalist social formations. Leninism, properly understood, does not reduce revolutionary politics to rigid centralism or administrative command; rather, it articulates the insight that capitalist society is structured through real abstractions and uneven determinations that cannot be confronted through spontaneity alone. The party emerges in this tradition not as an external authority imposed upon struggle, but as a collective instrument through which dispersed experiences, partial struggles, and fragmented forms of consciousness are mediated into a coherent strategic orientation.

Under contemporary conditions—marked by platform capitalism, financialized accumulation, algorithmic governance, and intensified imperial hierarchies—the distance between immediate experience and the real mechanisms of exploitation has not disappeared but has grown opaquer. This deepening opacity reinforces, rather than diminishes, the necessity of organized mediation. To defend the party today is therefore not to defend a fixed historical model, but to affirm the enduring need for durable organizational forms capable of sustaining memory across cycles of struggle, coordinating action across uneven terrains, and producing strategic knowledge of capitalist contradictions. Such forms must undoubtedly adapt to new conditions, incorporating lessons from democratic experimentation, mass movements, and new forms of social cooperation; yet adaptation does not imply dissolution.

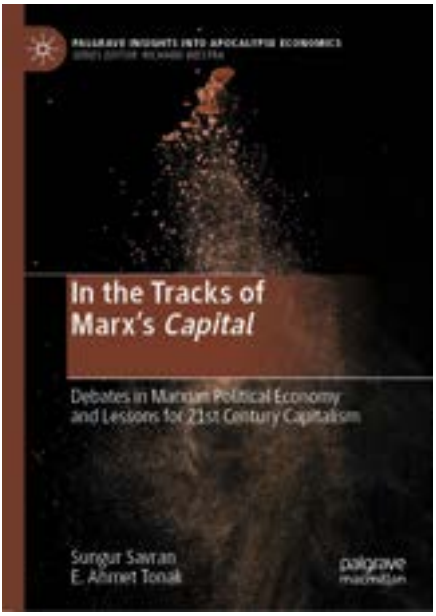
In this sense, the party functions neither as a transcendent command nor as a substitute for mass activity, but as a historically situated mediator between structure and agency. Far from negating autonomy, it enables collective autonomy to become effective by grounding it within a stratified social reality marked by contradiction, mediation, and determinate political praxis.

**Affirmation of Dialectical Materialism's Necessity:** For these reasons, this reconstruction reaffirms the categorical necessity of Marxist and Leninist depth ontology—grounded in layered causality (multiple levels with distinct powers and rhythms), structured antagonism (real contradictions as generative mechanisms), determinate negation (specific processes through which contradictions rupture existing forms), and practically mediated agency (transformative capacity operating through organizations that concentrate contradictions, read conjunctures, and coordinate interventions).

What this encounter with Negri ultimately reveals is the irreplaceability of stratification, negativity, mediation, and grounded agency for any rigorous and viable communist project. To reconstruct these categories after their Negrian dissolution is to reclaim the instruments needed to move dialectically from spontaneity to strategy, from protest to power, from expressive energy to structural transformation. It is to recover Marx's and Lenin's insight that freedom arises not from abolishing necessity in the abstract, but from its concrete, organized transformation: emancipation requires not the dissolution of institutions, but their revolutionary reconstruction; not the rejection of organization, but its reconstitution so that coordination is preserved while domination is abolished; not denial of contradiction, but its strategic exploitation; not mere celebration of creativity, but the arduous building of mediating forms through which creativity becomes effective power.

This dialectical understanding—structurally rigorous, politically militant, or-

ganizationally strategic—is the ultimate stake of the critique and the positive theoretical gain yielded by a comprehensive confrontation with Negri's philosophically rich, conceptually sophisticated, yet ultimately self–undermining ontology of immanent affirmation.




*In the Tracks of Marx's Capital: Debates in Marxian Political Economy and Lessons for 21st Century Capitalism,*
Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak, 2024, Palgrave Macmillan.

# The continuing relevance of Marx's *Capital*[1]

Charles Post

Karl Marx labored for twenty-five years on his analysis of the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production. For Marx, this was not merely an intellectual enterprise, but a political one—to provide a rigorous historical and theoretical ex-

1 The article "The Continuing Relevance of Marx's Capital", a review of Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak's book In the Tracks of Marx's Capital, was originally published in *Spectre* journal, https://spectrejournal.com/the-continuing-relevance-of-marxs-capital/, and is here being reproduced with the permission of its author.

planation of why capitalism was a fundamentally unreformable social system based on exploitation, accumulation, and competition, and was doomed to periodic crises that make hopes of reforming the system utopian. While Marx prepared only the first volume of Capital for publication, his friend and comrade Friedrich Engels edited his extensive notes for the second and third volume. Their pupil, Karl Kautsky, prepared the fourth volume, *Theories of Surplus-Value*, after Engels' death. Despite never finishing his work, *Capital* and *Theories* remain the highpoint of Marx's scientific achievements. Marx not only settled accounts with the classical political economists (in particular, Smith and Ricardo) but provided an analysis of the necessary relations and processes of capitalist society. Despite numerous, and often deliberate, misrepresentations by purported friends and foes alike, Marx's arguments in *Capital* have remained the focal point of the continuing debates on the origins, dynamics, and future of capitalism. For those working in Marx's tradition, *Capital* is neither a mere "historical text" applicable only to one phase in the history of capitalism, nor a sacred text that must be defended blindly. Instead, it continues to inspire theoretical and ***empirical*** research on capitalism as a distinct form of social organization.[2]

It is in this context that Sungur Savran and E. Ahmet Tonak's collection of essays, *In the Tracks of Marx's Capital*, present an excellent and timely contribution to our understanding of Marx's work, especially as capitalism remains mired in depressed profitability and stagnant accumulation since the 2008 global financial crisis. The two Turkish economists, longtime comrades and collaborators, have made important contributions to Marxist analysis over the last four decades. Savran participated in the debates on Sraffa's neo-Ricardian critique of Marx's value theory in the 1980s, along with Anwar Shaikh and the late Ernest Mandel, while maintaining political and intellectual activity in Turkey despite state repression.[3] Tonak, who studied at the New School for Social Research with Shaikh and coauthored the seminal *Measuring the Wealth of Nations: The Political Economy of National Accounts*, has taught and published extensively in both the United States and Turkey.[4]

This collection of essays (many previously unpublished in English) is a vigorous defense and elaboration of Marx's method, theory, and ability to explain the concrete history of capitalism. The essays are grouped into four sections on different

2 Clearly, it is not possible to cite the enormous literature shaped by Marx's Capital, but we can highlight the contributions of economists like Anwar Shaikh and Michael Roberts, historians such as Robert Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood, and theorists of the working class (Howard Botwinick), gender (Lise Vogel), and racial oppression (W. E. B. DuBois).

3 Ernest Mandel and Alan Freeman (eds.), *Ricardo, Marx, Sraffa: The Langston Memorial Volume*, London: Verso, 1984.

4 Anwar M. Shaikh and E. Ahmet Tonak, *Measuring the Wealth of Nations: The Political Economy of National Accounts,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

aspects of *Capital.* The first section contains six essays discussing *Capital*'s place in the history of economic theory and Marx's own theoretical and political evolution. There, they defend a Hegelian reading of *Capital* against more mechanical interpretations (Althusser, Analytic Marxism) that are unable to grasp either the historicity of capitalism or its turbulent laws of motion. The second and third sections provide a rich theoretical and empirical case that Marx's analysis is not limited to one "stage" or "type" of capitalism but allows us to grasp the basic dynamics of the system throughout its history. Four essays ***operationalize*** the categories of *Capital* demonstrating, counter to the claims of David Harvey and others, that Marx's value theory is not too "abstract" to explain the concrete historical reality of capitalist development. Using the methods he and Shaikh developed to convert national income accounts into Marxian categories, Tonak and his collaborators explore "profit on alienation," the net social wage, the exploitation of unproductive workers, and the relative vulnerabilities of capitalist economies to crises of profitability. Finally, four essays deploy *Capital* to analyze such diverse aspects of twenty-first century capitalism as the production of surplus value by digital platforms like Facebook, the reorganization of work through lean production, contemporary imperialism, and the roots of the current capitalist crisis.[5]

In Tonak's lucid essays discussing the *Grundrisse*—the notebooks Marx drafted between 1857 and 1858 in preparation for *Capital*—and in Savran's introduction of the three volumes of *Capital*, the authors argue that Marx's "scientific theory that explains the mechanisms through which the modern economy works" emerges from a "critique of political economy" (33). Put another way, Marx's contributions to economic theory emerge through an engagement with—and transcendence of—the works of Smith, Ricardo, and the classical tradition in economics. Smith, Ricardo, and their contemporaries attempted to produce a *scientific* account of modern society that "did not make do with the outward manifestation" of capitalist social relations (59), unlike those whom Marx labelled "vulgar economists" (the founders of "neo-classical economics") who idealized the workings of the market. However, Marx located the limits of the classical tradition in their treatment of capitalism as an "eternal form of production" (40) that was "adequate to human nature" (63).[6]

5 For reasons of space and because the disagreements between Marxists and neo-Ricardians are no longer a central focus of Marxian and radical debate, I will not discuss Savran's brilliant critiques of the neo-Ricardian economists. The decline of neo-Ricardian influence took place, in large part, because the neo-Ricardian theory of capitalist crisis, in which worker militancy produces a "profit squeeze," is clearly inadequate to explain the current crises of profitability after forty years of working-class retreat.

6 Brenner and Wood make a similar criticism of the classical traditions, in particular Smith's account of the origins of capitalism. Robert Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism" *New Left Review* I/104, July-August 1977, p. 25-92; Ellen

Only by historicizing capitalism as a social form with an origin and possible endpoint could Marx resolve the varied contradictions in the classical tradition on the nature of value, the origins of profit, the dynamics of accumulation, and the determinants of crises of profitability.

Savran and Tonak also convincingly argue that Marx's critique and transcendence of classical political economy in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* was only possible because of his critical appropriation of Hegel's dialectical method. While the German idealist viewed human history as the increasingly seamless unfolding of the "absolute spirit," Marx, the militant materialist, rooted the dialectic in contradictory social production and reproduction as a whole. Only by understanding the contradictory nature of capitalist social relations in their totality could Marx grasp the ***possibility*** of the transcendence of this social form. As other, Hegelian-influenced readings argue, Tonak and Savran point to how Marx's materialist dialectic of essence and appearance allowed him to move beyond a simple debunking of erroneous theories, but to grasp why capitalism appears as "an indispensable technological factor of the production process in all forms of social organization," rather than a historically constituted "relation of production" (77). Capitalist social relations subordinate the direct producers to the dominance of the commodity, producing "commodity fetishism"—the inversion of subject and object that makes the social interdependence of producers necessarily appear as the interactions of commodities. By grasping the duality of capitalist production—as both a concrete labor process and an abstract valorization process—Marx can explain why all social relations under capitalism, including the relationship between capital and labor, appear as relationships between abstractly equal commodity-owners without resorting to notions of "false consciousness" and ideological manipulation.

The section on *Capital* ends with a lucid clarification of Marx's distinction between productive and unproductive labor. While Savran and Tonak's main targets were the neo-Ricardian economists, this essay is essential to those attempting to navigate debates between Marxist and autonomist feminists over the place of "domestic labor" under capitalism.[7] Beginning with a specification of productive labor in general—labor that produces goods and services rather than that which distributes them among individuals or reproduces the relations of production—they argue, first, that capitalist productive labor is labor-power purchased with surplus-value (rather than revenue—the personal income of capitalists) and, second, that it produces commodities that contain surplus-value. From this perspective, all workers

Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, Part I.

7 Paula Varela, "Social Reproduction in Dispute: A Debate Between Autonomists and Marxists" *Spectre* 4, Fall 2021: https://spectrejournal.com/social-reproduction-in-dispute/.

producing ***both*** "material" goods (including transport and storage as phases of the production process) and "immaterial" services that add value (private education, health care, food preparation, and personal grooming) are productive workers. Not only are nonwage laborers (peasants, the self-employed, paid and unpaid domestic laborers) ***unproductive*** in this sense, so are waged and salaried workers in the finance, insurance, and real estate industries. So are store clerks in their role of ensuring that goods are not taken without payment, as are the vast majority of state employees. In a later essay, Tonak makes the case that while unproductive, nonsupervisory workers (clerical workers, state employees, and so on) do not produce surplus value, they are exploited because they sell their labor power to capital and are forced to perform surplus labor like other workers. Put simply, the working class includes *both* productive and unproductive wage workers under the command of capital.[8]

The section on "operationalizing *Capital*" begins with an essay on the concept of "profit on alienation" (POA) by Tonak. To explain the noncorrespondence between the masses of surplus-value and profits under capitalism, Shaikh identifies a secondary source of profits under capitalism—POA.[9] Although Shaikh insists that without surplus labor there would be no profits under capitalism, some of his critics see POA as a concession to Piero Sraffa's neo-Ricardian theory of value.[10] Tonak, following Shaikh, defines POA as profit that "arise from transfers between the circuit of capital and other institutions or spheres of social life, including households and the state" (167) . Along with coauthor Alper Duman, he produces a careful, empirical measurement of two key sources of POA in Turkey—the sale of public land and other assets to private investors and the interest on consumer loans to workers. The essay is a very original contribution to the discussion of neoliberal "privatization" and to the growth of working-class debt. It also begins to identify the ***limits*** on POA in a capitalist society—the process of transformation of state assets and means of production into capital, and the depression of wages below the socially determined value of labor power in a given society. Both have clear limits: on the one hand, the confining of state owned enterprises to unprofitable lines of production and the rapidly disappearing noncapitalist forms of production; and on the other, the need to insure the reproduction of the "special commodity," labor power.

8 This insight raises serious doubts about Nicos Poulantzas's claim that the productive-unproductive labor distinction was the boundary between the "new petty bourgeoisie" and the working class in Nicos Poulantzas, "Productive and Unproductive Labor: The New Petty Bourgeoisie and the Working Class" in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1978.

9 Anwar Shaikh, *Capitalism, Conflict, Crises,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 208–12.

10 Michael Roberts, "Real Capitalism: Turbulent and Antagonistic, But Not Imperfect" *International Socialism* 2, no. 152, 2016: https://isj.org.uk/real-capitalism-turbulent/.

Tonak, together with Shaikh, first addressed the "social wage"—capitalist state welfare spending—in debates with "profit squeeze" theorists in the late 1970s and 1980s who claimed that workers' successful struggles on one hand against the intensification of production ("speed-up"), and on the other to increase real wages and social benefits, led to falling profits in the 1970s.[11]

Tonak returns to this issue in a study of the net social wage in Turkey since 1980. As he and Shaikh found in the 1980s for the United States and other parts of the global North, the net social wage—the difference between the taxes paid by workers (both productive and unproductive) and welfare payments—in Turkey are ***negative***. In other words, taxation on the working class is greater than state expenditures on social reproduction. Thus, the ***net surplus-value*** available to capital in the form of taxation *increases*, acting as a countertendency to the falling rate of profit. As a result, social welfare austerity increases the rate of surplus value both through increasing the mass of surplus value available to capital, and exacerbating labor-market competition as workers' meagre "social safety net" is unraveled, allowing capitalists to depress wages and intensify production. In the final essay in this section, Tonak provides a new analysis of input-output networks, which measure the exchange of intermediate goods among firms, to specify the centrality of different branches of production and distribution in a given national economy. The relative weight of these sectors allows them to analyze why some branches—finance, housing construction, real estate, and so forth—are more susceptible to the impact of falling profits than others.

The final section on "*Capital* in the 21st century" begins with Tonak's insightful essay on how the digital sector—in particular, web platforms like Facebook and Google—produces surplus-value. Against those who argue that the profitability of these sectors invalidates Marxian analysis of capitalism, Tonak notes that digital platforms buy means of production such as software and hardware and purchase the labor-power of software engineers, coders and the like, who then produce a digital "environment for social interaction" (260) to users without charge. These users, as independent producers, create "content" (including their consumer preferences) that is then sold to advertisers. Savran's lengthy analysis of lean production—the hyperfragmentation of tasks, work intensification, and "just-in-time" inventories—as the "highest stage of Taylorism" draws on the work of both Harry Braverman and the labor intellectuals around *Labor Notes* to analyze how the reorganization of production over the past four decades has attempted to whet capital's appetite "for surplus-value by constantly pushing up the pace of work…forcing the limits of

11 Shaikh and E.A. Tonak "The Welfare State and the Myth of the Social Wage" in *The Imperiled Economy*, Book 1, ed. R. Cherry, et al., New York: Union for Radical Political Economy, 1987.

what is humanly possible" (305).[12] Tonak's pathbreaking essay on imperialism as "moribund competitive capitalism" provides a powerful alternative to most Marxist theories that view the global uneven and combined development of capitalism as the result of "unequal exchange," "superexploitation," or "monopoly"—explanations that are both theoretically and empirically flawed.[13] Drawing on Shaikh's theory of ***real capitalist competition***, Tonak argues that imperialism and the division between the global North and South is the historical product of competition.[14]

In the final essay in this section, "The World in Crisis: The Twilight of Capitalism," Savran and Tonak bring together varied themes explored throughout the volume. First, they navigate the various mainstream and Marxian explanations of capitalist crises. In a lucid explication of three of the most important alternatives to Marx's theory— "creative destruction" (Schumpeter), "underconsumption," or lack of effective demand (Keynes, Sweezy) and "profit-squeeze" (neo-Ricardians)—Savran and Tonak elaborate their numerous logical and historical shortcomings. In the place of these inadequate explanations, they defend Marx's theory of crisis—the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—while acknowledging powerful countertendencies to this law, such as increasing the rate of exploitation, the export of capital to less developed regions, and so on. Marx insisted that periodic crises of profitability were a necessary consequence of capitalist accumulation and competition and the rising organic composition of capital. Second, Savran and Tonak, expanding upon Savran's arguments in the earlier "*Capital*: The Book of Communism," outline how capitalism at the dawn of the twenty-first century has created the objective conditions for a global transition from crisis-ridden capitalism to a democratic, collectivist social order—that is, socialism. Specifically, they highlight

12 Savran cites Parker and Slaughter's Choosing Sides, but does not draw on Kim Moody's more explicitly Marxist work on this topic, in particular Moody's seminal *Workers in a Lean World*. Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter, *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept*, Boston: South End Press, 1988; Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy*, London: Verso, 1997. Most likely written before the global COVID-19 pandemic, Savran does not address the moves away from "just-in-time" inventorying and other aspects of lean production. Kim Moody, "The End of Lean Production… and What's Ahead" *Labor Notes* May 2, 2024, accessed April 29, 2025, https://labornotes.org/2024/05/end-lean-production-and-whats-ahead; Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

13 I drew heavily on an earlier version of Tonak's essay. Charles Post, "Explaining Imperialism Today: An Alternative Analysis," *Spectre* 7, 2023, p. 54–69, https://spectrejournal.com/explaining-imperialism-today/.

14 Shaikh, *Capitalism*, Chapters 7-11. Savran, in his essay on lean production, uses the term "monopoly capital" several times. In personal correspondence, Savran explains that he agrees with Shaikh and Tonak that competition intensifies in the "imperialist epoch" of large-scale, capital-intensive production, but insists on a "rigid distinction between the levels of abstraction in the first and third volumes of *Capital*." S. Savran to C. Post (email) April 25, 2025.

how the dominance of cooperative labor processes, the socialization and internationalization of production, the centralization of the means of production, and the application of science to production all make socialism possible.

This brilliant collection of essays could easily be criticized for its failure to take into account a variety of issues, in particular the impending capitalist ecological crisis.[15] In a volume that is already over four hundred pages in length, one can understand why many issues would not be discussed. However, there are two important problems with Savran and Tonak's insightful analyses. First, the authors focus solely on the ways in which capitalism creates a ***potentially*** revolutionary subject—the working class. Their emphasis is solely on the ways in which, in the words of Kim Moody, capitalism "pushed together" workers through the creation of a cooperative labor process and the internationalization and socialization of production.[16] However, they do not address how capitalist accumulation and competition pull apart the working class. This is especially unfortunate given that one of their co-thinkers, Howard Botwinick, has deployed Shaikh's analyses of competition and accumulation to demonstrate how capitalism constantly produces and reproduces ***heterogeneity*** among both capitalists and workers.[17] A clearer discussion of the ***contradictory*** impact of capitalist development on the working class would have further insulated Savran and Tonak's arguments against common accusations that Marx envisioned an ***automatic*** transition to socialism.

Second, and of greater consequence, is Savran and Tonak's embrace of a "productive forces" theory of history. The author's embrace Marx's famous formulations in the 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that argues there is a ***transhistorical*** tendency for the development of the "material forces of production"—tools, instruments and methods of production.[18]

However, there are a number of reasons Marxists should jettison the histori-

15 This is unfortunate because a classical Marxian understanding of capitalist accumulation and competition provides a more robust theoretical underpinning for contemporary discussions of capitalism and the "metabolic rift" than theories based on notions of monopoly and the like.

16 Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, Chapter 7.

17 Howard Botwinick, *Persistent Inequalities: Wage Disparity Under Capitalist Competition*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018.

18 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, available at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm. The crises of any form of social labor are the result of the development of the forces of production coming "into conflict with the existing relations of production"—class relations. The resulting crisis makes possible a social revolution which creates new relations of production that allow the continued development of the productive forces. Clearly, Tonak and Savran reject the conclusion, shared by both pre-1914 "orthodox Marxists" like Kautsky and Stalinist "communists," that the development of the productive forces across history makes the victory of socialism "inevitable."

cal narrative in the 1859 Preface. First, there are significant questions about the scientific status of the Preface. As the Marxologist Arthur Prinz has argued, the Preface was not intended to be a codification of Marx's social theory, but an attempt to evade Prussian censorship by de-emphasizing class struggle as the "motor of history."[19] Even more importantly, the productive forces thesis projects the historically specific dynamics of capitalism onto all of human history and is historically inaccurate.[20] As Savran and Tonak demonstrate convincingly, capitalist crises are rooted in the contradiction between the development of the productive forces (the rising organic composition of capital) and capitalist productive relations (the rate of profit). Capitalist crises appear as the growth of the relative surplus population and the overproduction of both means of production and consumption.

By contrast, crises in ***precapitalist*** modes of production arise from the overall stagnation of the productive forces in these societies. While there is evidence of ***episodic*** development of the objects and instruments of production before capitalism, usually corresponding to the movement of these societies to new frontiers or the introduction of new crops, the relationship between lords and peasants (organized locally as in feudalism or centrally in various tributary modes) prevents the systematic reinvestment of surpluses in improved methods of production characteristic of capitalism. Precapitalist crisis results from falling labor productivity and appears as absolute shortages of foodstuffs and population collapse.

Finally, there is no necessary tendency for these crises to be resolved through the appearance of new, more productive forms of social labor. The general crises of feudalism in the fourteenth century had diverse results—the recharging of classical feudalism in Eastern Europe ("the second serfdom"), and the emergence of a legally free peasantry secure in their possession of landed property as long as they paid relatively stable rents to local lords and taxes to the centralized monarchy (Absolutism). Only in England did capitalism emerge, as the result of the historically contingent ability of the peasantry to end serfdom and the lords to impose commercial-capitalist ground rent on their tenant-farmers, who, in turn, were compelled to specialize output, introduce labor-saving methods of production, and accumulate capital in order to "sell to survive." In other words, the crisis of any given mode of production can give rise to a ***variety*** of solutions—not all of which enhance the productivity of human labor.

These criticisms, we hope, highlight the importance of Tonak and Savran's central argument: that *Capital* provides a firm theoretical basis for understanding and

19 Arthur M. Prinz, "Background and Ulterior Motive of Marx's 'Preface' of 1859*," Journal of the History of Ideas* 30, no.3, 1969, p. 437–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/2708568.
20 This argument is based on Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism and The Origins of Capitalism: A Longer View,* London: Verso, 2017.

analyzing capitalism as a ***historically specific form of social labor***. Unlike all previous forms of human society, capitalism's dynamism is rooted in the ***unique*** capacity of its social relations of production to foster the near continuous development of the productivity of labor through improved means and methods of production. Capitalism's unique dynamism is also the root of its ***necessary*** crises as the increasing capitalization of production leads to declining profitability. The necessity of crisis means that any concessions and reforms wrested from capital by mass, militant workers' struggles are at best transitory and will be attacked whenever profits decline. Capitalism also produces a social class—the working class—that has both the objective social power and potential interest in transcending this mode of production and initiating a transition to a classless and stateless society based on the democratic and collective appropriation of human productive capacity. At the same time, *Capital* provides us with tools to grasp the ***historical*** survival of capitalism. For Marx, there was no "final" economic crisis of capitalism. ***Capital*** outlines the way in which capitalism can produce the conditions for renewed profitability and accumulation—the massive destruction of fixed capital and human labor. Nor is the victory of workers' struggles for socialism guaranteed. Capitalism spontaneously produces fetishized forms of consciousness among both capitalists and workers, and also generates tendencies that divide workers amongst themselves. It is only through workers' collective self-activity and self-organization—through mass struggle and independent class organization—that workers can achieve their self-emancipation.