



A Free Retriever's Digest

An internationalist Articles Selection & Review

Vol. 2 Issue #5

October – November 2018

October 15, 2018

Contents

From the Editor (2)

Selected Articles & News Feeds (3)

August 13 – October 7, 2018 (week no.'s 33 – 40)

On the Bookshelves (11)

'Lenin's Testament and the Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg'

'A Happy Future is a Thing of the Past'

Documents of the historical Communist Left (13)

Two Articles from 'Kommunist' (April 1918) – CWO Introduction

How to understand 'May 1968' in France? (15)

The significance of the struggles from 1966 to 1972 (Part 1)

With special Attention (24)

Reader's notes on internationalist press releases

An Invitation to a Discussion (26)

Reply to an appeal for an internationalist meeting

Proletariat, Xenophobia and Lumpenization (27)

A discussion of the causes for the upsurge of right wing populism

Class combativity in the Middle East (30)

'Échanges et Mouvement' on the mass revolt in Iraq

A perfect Storm (32)

'Nuevo Curso' on the upcoming economic recession

Print edition €4,-

From the Editor

Thursday, October 18, 2018

L.S.

With this issue *A Free Retriever's Digest* continues to cover a relatively wide scope of subjects:

The section devoted to texts of the historical communist Left features the CWO's introduction to the fourth and last part of its English translation of the **revue 'Kommunist'** (number 1, April 20, 1918), issued by the left fraction of the Bolshevik party around Bukharin, Radek, Smirnov and Ossinsky. This introduction provides valuable background and an introduction to a text on the state of the revolution, and to a withering review of a book on the transition period. The texts themselves are available on the ICT's website and in *Revolutionary Perspective* no. 12.

An article series that attempts to draw up the tableau of the workers' and students' movement of **May 1968** has started in '*Controverses*' nr. 5 (May 2018). Its first part, included here in an abridged English translation, criticizes common explanations of the events and tries to lay the foundation for a coherent explanation.

The continued section **With special Attention** presents our notes on the echoes within the milieu of the communist Left to the unfolding political crisis in Germany; and on the apparent lack of response to an appeal for an internationalist meeting, apropos of recent massive revolt in the Middle East. The latter topic is continued by a positively critical reply, and a translated article from '*Échanges et Mouvement*' on this summer's revolt against the absolute penury in Iraq.

Two articles by the Spanish blog *Nuevo Curso* continue our effort to make their most important contributions (as far as we can see) available to the English reader. The first one relates a discussion about the causes and significance of so-called '**identity politics**' for the rise of (right-wing) populism, which has inspired comrades of *Workers' Offensive* to write an extensive article on the Black Panther movement. The second article attempts to summarize **the international situation** in face of an accumulation of contradictions and antagonisms, threatening an aggravation of capitalism's barbarism – but not without some reason for hope.

Last but not least, some attention is paid to two interesting new book titles and, of course, our selection of recent press articles has been included as well.

Internationalist regards,

Henry Cinnamon

A Free Retriever's Digest aims at presenting publications that are relevant for discussions within the internationalist milieu in general, and among the groups and circles who claim adherence to the international communist left(s) in particular. It intends to provide comments and a space for discussion.

Readers are invited to send in notifications of publications by e-mail, abstracts and reviews of relevant books, articles or texts, and presentations at discussion meetings. Contributions should be written in English and may not exceed 3,000 words. Included bibliographical references and internet links should be exact.

Articles and contributions express the views of their authors. Publication is at the discretion of the editor. They may be freely adopted if correctly quoted with source reference. A notification thereof is highly appreciated.

Web blog: <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com>. e-mail address: afreeretriever@gmail.com.

Selected Articles & News Feeds

August 13 – October 7, 2018 (week no.'s 33 – 40)

The international Situation

Editorials and main articles by internationalist groups

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Title: | No War But the Class War | Week 33 |
| | Published on: | August 17, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | CWO | |
| | Web link: | http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-08-17/no-war-but-the-class-war | |
| | Subject: | Cooperation and regroupment of revolutionary minorities; the CWO and the Anarchist Communist Group (ex-Anarchist Federation) | |
| | Genre: | Broadsheet main article | |
| | Length (words): | 1,551 | |
| | Remarks: | Aurora No. 44, Summer 2018; A3, 2 pages;pdf available for free download | |
| 2 | Title: | Criticità e paradossi di un contesto imperialistico in crescente fibrillazione | Italian
Week 35 |
| | Published on: | August 27, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | Gianfranco Greco (IOD) | |
| | Web link: | http://www.istitutoonoratodamen.it/joomla34/index.php/internazionale/44-internazionale/462-fibrilla-il-capitale | |
| | Subject: | Criticism and paradoxes of an imperialist context in growing fibrillation | |
| | Genre: | Analysis | |
| | Length (words): | 3,144 | |
| | Remarks: | "The particularity of the phase we are experiencing concerns, in particular, the "minefield" of energy supply where Germany is carrying out, together with Russia, the project of the "North Stream 2" pipeline that should guarantee, from 2019, about 2,020 billion cubic meters of Russian gas to Germany and from Germany to Europe." | |
| 3 | Title: | Tormenta perfecta | Spanish
Week 35 |
| | Published on: | August 31, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | Nuevo Curso | |
| | Web link: | https://nuevocurso.org/tormenta-perfecta/amp/ | |
| | Subject: | The conditions for a new recession and a sharpening of antagonisms are maturing | |
| | Genre: | International situation, summary article | |
| | Length (words): | 1,375 | |
| | Remarks: | An English translation can be found on page 32. | |
| 4 | Title: | Are We Going Back to the 1930s? | Week 36 |
| | Published on: | September 6, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | CWO | |
| | Web link: | http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-09-06/are-we-going-back-to-the-1930s | |
| | Subject: | The historical situation compared to a period of counterrevolution | |
| | Genre: | Editorial of <i>Revolutionary Perspectives</i> #12 (Summer 2018) | |
| | Length (words): | 3,580 | |
| | Remarks: | The journal of the CWO, issue #12 appeared on August 8, 2018. | |

5	Title:	China's Silk Road to imperialist domination	Week 36
	Published on:	September 7, 2018	
	Author(s):	Gordon (ICC)	
	Web link:	http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201809/16572/china-s-silk-road-imperialist-domination	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	6,281	
	Remarks:	"The following article is one of several through which we plan to deal with the rise of China and its consequences for imperialist relations worldwide" (Introduction)	
6	Title:	US Power and the New Course Towards War	Week 38
	Published on:	September 17, 2018	
	Author(s):	Jock, 21 July 2018 (CWO)	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-09-17/us-power-and-the-new-course-towards-war	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	8,808	
	Remarks:	<i>Revolutionary Perspectives</i> #12 (Summer 2018)	
7	Title:	The Rise of New Communist Forces and the Fight for the International Party	Week 39
	Published on:	September 27, 2018	
	Author(s):	Robin, Sept. 2018 (IGCL)	
	Web link:	http://igcl.org/The-Rise-of-New-Communist-Forces	
	Subject:	New political minorities orienting themselves on the communist Left	
	Genre:	Editorial article	
	Length (words):	2,303	
	Remarks:	<i>Revolution or War</i> #10, September 2018	
9	Title:	¿Cuándo estallará la Tercera Guerra Mundial?	Spanish Week 39
	Published on:	September 30, 2018	
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/cuando-estallara-la-tercera-guerra-mundial/	
	Subject:	"When will World War III break out?"	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	3,600	
	Remarks:		

The Crisis of the EU (3)

Difficulties for the bourgeoisie; Migrants & Refugees, the Trade War with the USA

1	Title:	Bericht zur nationalen Lage Deutschlands (Frühjahr 2018)	German Week 34
	Published on:	August 26, 2018	
	Author(s):	Weltrevolution (ICC), February 1, 2018	
	Web link:	http://de.internationalism.org/content/bericht-zur-nationalen-lage-deutschlands-fruehjahr-2018	
	Subject:	The national situation in Germany	
	Genre:	Report extracts	
	Length (words):	4,349	
	Remarks:		

2	Title:	Brexit Mess: A ruling class in Disarray	
	Published on:	September 9, 2018	Week 36
	Author(s):	Car (ICC)	
	Web link:	http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201809/16575/brexit-mess-ruling-class-disarray	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,709	
	Remarks:		
3	Title:	70 years of the NHS: Beware the capitalist state bearing gifts	
	Published on:	September 9, 2018	Week 36
	Author(s):	Alex, Sept. 8, 2018 (ICC)	
	Web link:	http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201809/16577/70-years-nhs-beware-capitalist-state-bearing-gifts	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	2,023	
	Remarks:		
4	Title:	Crisis interna y «renovación» de la burguesía europea	Spanish
	Published on:	September 19, 2018	Week 38
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/crisis-interna-y-renovacion-de-la-burguesia-europea/	
	Subject:	"Internal crisis an "renovation" of the European bourgeoisie"	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,983	
	Remarks:		
5	Title:	Fachflüchtlinge gesucht	German
	Published on:	September 20, 2018	Week 38
	Author(s):	Wildcat	
	Web link:	https://www.wildcat-www.de/wildcat/101/w101_fachfluechtlinge.html	
	Subject:	"Skilled refugees wanted"; the refugees and immigration question in Germany and Europe.	
	Genre:	Background article	
	Length (words):	3,485	
	Remarks:	Publication from Wildcat nr. 101, Winter 2018. Actualizations on this issue in Wildcat Nr. 102 (October). The latter's presentation (Sept. 27, 2018) can be found here: https://www.wildcat-www.de/aktuell/a110_wildcat102.html	

Inter-imperialist conflicts and 'trade wars'; nationalism and 'the national question'

Near and Middle East; Ethiopia

1	Title:	El «milagro» etíope	Spanish
	Published on:	August 29, 2018	Week 35
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/el-milagro-etiope/amp/	
	Subject:	What is behind the 'miraculous peace' in Ethiopia?	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,267	
	Remarks:		

2	<p>Title: Trotskyism and the war in Syria</p> <p>Published on: August 30, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Ergosum, August 2018 (ICT)</p> <p>Web link: http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-08-30/trotskyism-and-the-war-in-syria</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 5,281</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Week 35
3	<p>Title: Trade Wars: The obsolescence of the nation state</p> <p>Published on: September 9, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Amos (ICC)</p> <p>Web link: http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201809/16576/trade-wars-obsolescence-nation-state</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 2,107</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Week 36
4	<p>Title: Antinationale Schriften III</p> <p>Published on: September 25, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Nelke (Gruppe Soziale Befreiung)</p> <p>Web link: http://swiderstand.blogspot.de/2018/09/25/antinationale-schriften-iii/</p> <p>Subject: TOC and a chapter on Zimbabwe</p> <p>Genre: Presentation of a new pamphlet</p> <p>Length (words): 4,022</p> <p>Remarks: The pamphlet can be ordered via booklooker.de at €5,- per copy (postal frays included). A5, 124 p. Series: „Schriften zum Imperialismus“</p>	German Week 39
5	<p>Title: Marxism and the National Question</p> <p>Published on: September 27, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Robin, July 2018 (IGCL)</p> <p>Web link: http://igcl.org/Marxism-and-the-National-Question</p> <p>Subject: The evolution of positions on the national question with the historical communist Lefts; Rosa Luxemburg vs. Lenin</p> <p>Genre: Synthesis; Discussion</p> <p>Length (words): 3,695</p> <p>Remarks: Basic points apropos of some statements on Catalan separatism within the internationalist milieu (CWO, Robin Goodfellow). Can also be read on the AFRD blog.</p>	Week 39

Lessons from recent struggles

Greece, France, UK, USA

1	<p>Title: Greece: Austerity's unexpected allies</p> <p>Published on: April 25, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Pavlos Roufos</p> <p>Web link: http://column.global-labour-university.org/2018/04/greece-austeritys-unexpected-allies.html</p> <p>Subject: Greece: the Syriza/ANEL government as zealous apostles of austerity</p> <p>Genre: Summary article on continued austerity. Attacks fostering class resistance</p> <p>Length (words): 3,740</p> <p>Remarks: PDF version available. A presentation of the author's new book '<i>A Happy Future is a Thing of the Past</i>' and a meeting announcement can be read on page 12.</p>	Week 17
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2	Title:	Beware False Friends!	
	Published on:	August 20, 2018	Week 34
	Author(s):	CWO	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-08-20/beware-false-friends	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,194	
	Remarks:	Aurora No. 44, Summer 2018, Bulletin of the CWO	
3	Title:	Syriza 2018: a Blast from the Past	
	Published on:	August 23, 2018	Week 34
	Author(s):	Dyjbas, 23 August 2018 (ICT)	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-08-23/syriza-2018-a-blast-from-the-past	
	Subject:	Greece	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,387	
	Remarks:		
4	Title:	Rapid Assessment of The Spring 2018 Defeat of the Railway Workers in France: Trade Union Unity Is not The Unity of the Working Class but its Division and Dispersion	
	Published on:	September 27, 2018	Week 39
	Author(s):	RL, July 2018	
	Web link:	http://igcl.org/Rapid-Assessment-of-The-Spring	
	Subject:	France: the railway and public sector strike	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	5,065	
	Remarks:	With the IGCL leaflet of March 28, 2018	
5	Title:	On capitalist restructuring in the SYRIZA-ANEL times: It is not humanitarianism, it's capitalist restructuring, stupid!	
	Published on:	October 3, 2018	Week 40
	Author(s):	Assembly for the Circulation of Struggles (Skya, Athens)	
	Web link:	https://skya.espiv.net/2018/10/03/nohumanitarianism_en02102018/	
	Subject:	Greece	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	9,085	
	Remarks:		

Workers' Struggles and Protests

Prisoner's Strike (USA); Haft Tapeh (Iran); Jasic strike (China); Granada public transport strike (Spain); Pension reform protests (Russia)

1	Title:	Prison Strike Statement to the Press, August 28, 2018	
	Published on:	August 28, 2018	Week 35
	Author(s):	Amani Sawari (Prison Strike Media Team)	
	Web link:	https://libcom.org/news/prison-strike-statement-press-august-28-2018-28082018	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,789	
	Remarks:	Outside media representative of 'Jailhouse Lawyers Speak'	

2	<p>Title: Iran: Two weeks of strikes by the Haft Tappeh sugar workers</p> <p>Published on: August 31, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Mike Harman</p> <p>Web link: https://libcom.org/news/iran-two-weeks-strikes-haft-tappeh-sugar-workers-31082018</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 93</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Week 35
3	<p>Title: New US Prison Strike Takes us to the Dark Heart of Capitalism</p> <p>Published on: September 3, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Ergosum, 29 August 2018</p> <p>Web link: http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-09-03/new-us-prison-strike-takes-us-to-the-dark-heart-of-capitalism</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 2,941</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Week 36
4	<p>Title: Prison Strike Updates, week four</p> <p>Published on: September 11, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Libcom news</p> <p>Web link: https://libcom.org/news/prison-strike-updates-week-four-11092018</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 1,993</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Week 37
5	<p>Title: Manifestación de los trabajadores de Metro Granada</p> <p>Published on: September 21, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Liga Emancipación</p> <p>Web link: http://emancipacion.info/2018/09/21/manifestacion-de-los-trabajadores-de-metro-granada/</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 970</p> <p>Remarks: English translation by CWO: The Struggle of the Metro Workers of Granada (Oct. 01)</p>	Spanish Week 38
6	<p>Title: Jasik workers organize in China</p> <p>Published on: September 26, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Bob McGuire (N&LC)</p> <p>Web link: https://newsandletters.org/jasik-workers-organize-china/</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 756</p> <p>Remarks: From the September-October 2018 issue of News & Letters</p>	Week 39
7	<p>Title: Against Pension "Reform" in Russia</p> <p>Published on: October 7, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Krasnoyarsk Marxist Workers' Group, October 6, 2018</p> <p>Web link: http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-10-07/against-pension-reform-in-russia</p> <p>Subject: Mobilizations against the pension reform in Russia</p> <p>Genre: Appeal to organize and struggle for workers' demands</p> <p>Length (words): 943</p> <p>Remarks: English machine translation from https://vk.com/club74128436</p>	Russian Week 40

Discussion Topic: Identity Politics

Proletariat, Xenophobia and Lumpenization

1	<p>Title: The Dead-End of Racial Identity Politics</p> <p>Published on: October 13, 2017</p> <p>Author(s): E.S., Workers' Offensive</p> <p>Web links: https://www.workersoffensive.org/single-post/2017/10/13/The-Dead-End-of-Racial-Identity-Politics; https://intransigence.org/2017/10/09/the-dead-end-of-racial-identity-politics/</p> <p>Subject: Critique of racial identity politics</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 2,455</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Week 41, 2017
2	<p>Title: Proletariado, xenofobia y lumpenización</p> <p>Published on: August 15, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Nuevo Curso</p> <p>Web link: https://nuevocurso.org/proletariado-xenofobia-y-lumpenizacion/amp/</p> <p>Subject: The proletariat, xenophobia and lumpenization</p> <p>Genre: Analysis</p> <p>Length (words): 1,243</p> <p>Remarks: A commented English translation can be read on page 27 and on the AFRD blog.</p>	Spanish Week 33
3	<p>Title: The Black Panther Party and the Glorification of the Lumpenproletariat</p> <p>Published on: August 26, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): K.J., Workers' Offensive</p> <p>Web link: https://www.workersoffensive.org/single-post/2018/08/25/The-Black-Panther-Party-and-the-Glorification-of-the-Lumpenproletariat</p> <p>Subject:</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 4,483</p> <p>Remarks: Translation in Spanish with a comment by Nuevo Curso (Sept. 9, 2018): https://nuevocurso.org/panteras-negras-exaltacion-del-lumpen-e-identitarismo-racial-en-eeuu/</p>	Week 34
4	<p>Title: ¿Volverán los saqueos a Argentina?</p> <p>Published on: September 3, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Nuevo Curso</p> <p>Web link: https://nuevocurso.org/volveran-los-saqueos-a-argentina/amp/</p> <p>Subject: "Will the lootings come back in Argentina?"</p> <p>Genre:</p> <p>Length (words): 1,541</p> <p>Remarks:</p>	Spanish Week 36
5	<p>Title: Quotation, Paraphrase, and Plagiarism: An Exchange</p> <p>Published on: September 4, 2018</p> <p>Author(s): Pavlos Roufos</p> <p>Web link: https://brooklynrail.org/2018/09/field-notes/Quotation-Paraphrase-and-Plagiarism-An-Exchange</p> <p>Subject: An exchange with Libcom editors apropos of a critique of identity politics</p> <p>Genre: Polemic; clarification</p> <p>Length (words): 839</p> <p>Remarks: "Libcom claims that I misrepresented their arguments against Angela Nagle in my article, "The Aggressiveness of Vulnerability." Something like that is always possible and mistakes should be corrected. This is not such a case."</p>	Week 36

Discussion Topic: Organization Question

Proletarian internationalism and (the need for) "the international communist party"

1 Title: **What is the Party ? (Nuevo Curso)**
 Published on: September 27, 2018 Week 39
 Author(s): Nuevo Curso, March 18, 2018
 Web link: <http://igcl.org/What-is-the-Party-Nuevo-Curso>
 Subject: Organization question
 Genre: IGCL introduction; Translation by IGCL
 Length (words): 3,027
 Remarks:

2 Title: **What Relation between the International Party and its Local Organizations?**
 Published on: September 27, 2018 Week 39
 Author(s): IGCL; P (Fla.)
 Web link: <http://igcl.org/Correspondence-392>
 Subject: Organization question
 Genre: Correspondence
 Length (words): 2,917
 Remarks:

3 Title: **Some Comments and Observations on the ICT Text**
 Published on: September 27, 2018 Week 39
 Author(s): RL, August 2018 (IGCL)
 Web link: <http://igcl.org/Some-Comments-and-Observations-on>
 Subject: Organization question
 Genre: Comments on the ICT text "[On the Future International](#)" (June 22, 2018); discussion
 Length (words): 2,885
 Remarks:

Discussion Topic: Climate Change

1 Title: **Climate change, capitalism, and Trump**
 Published on: August 27, 2018 Week 35
 Author(s): Franklin Dmitryev (N&LC)
 Web link: <https://newsandletters.org/climate-change-capitalism-trump/>
 Subject:
 Genre: Presentation to the Chicago Local of 'News and Letters Committees'
 Length (words): 4,823
 Remarks:

2 Title: **Capitalism and climate change: more evidence of the growing disaster**
 Published on: September 9, 2018 Week 36
 Author(s): Duffy, Sept. 7, 2018 (ICC)
 Web link: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201809/16578/capitalism-and-climate-change-more-evidence-growing-disaster>
 Subject:
 Genre:
 Length (words): 2,380
 Remarks:

On the Bookshelves

'Lenin's Testament and the Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg'

A documented essay by Louis Janover

Presentation by the publisher:

» There is obviously no will of Lenin, let alone a will of Rosa Luxemburg. However, the last notes of a Lenin concerned about his succession were not collected under this title by chance. The fate of the revolution seems to depend only on the choice of a successor. There is nothing like it in Rosa Luxemburg, whose heritage only speaks to us of past, present and future class combats. There is no resonance in this field between the thoughts of the two authors, and Louis Janover seeks to highlight this by emphasizing the incompatibility of two conceptions of human emancipation and socialism. Lenin's will denies an ethic that traverses the whole work of Rosa Luxemburg and still serves us today as a principle of judgment.

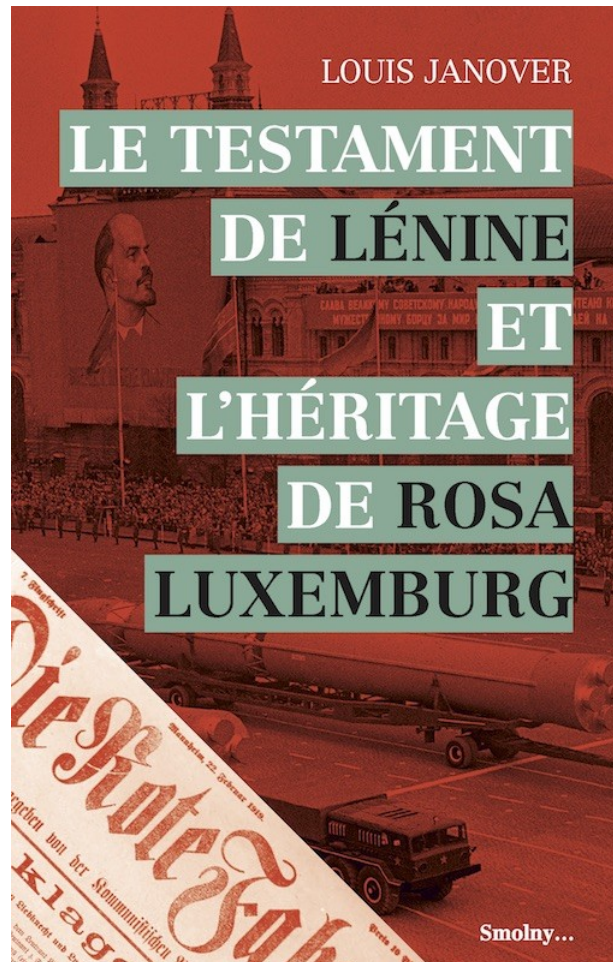
Notes, articles and extracts from speeches by *Lenin*, *Max Eastman*, *Léon Trotski* and the *PCF Central Committee* (1923-1925) on the one hand, and by *Rosa Luxemburg* (1918-1919) on the other, complete this essay. «

About the author:

Louis Janover (1937), a member of the surrealist group in the 1950s, has collaborated with Maximilien Rubel on the publication of Karl Marx in the *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* and in the *Études de marxologie* until 1994. Author of several essays, including *La révolution surréaliste* (Klincksieck, 2016) and *La Tête contre le mur. Essay on the anticommunist idea in the 20th century* (Suliver, 2000), he is co-author with Miguel Abensour of *Maximilien Rubel, pour redécouvrir Marx* (Sens & Tonka, 2008) and of the preface to Alexander Berkman's book, *Le mythe bolchevik* (Klincksieck, 2017).

Table of Contents:

- 1) *Foreword* (M.G., I.J. & E.S.)
- 2) *Lenin's will and the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg* (Louis Janover)



3) **Texts:**

- Last speech given by Lenin to the Communist International (Lenin)
- Lenin's will
 - Letter for the next Party Congress
 - Continued notes - December 24, 1922
 - Continuation of notes - December 25, 1922
 - Supplement to the note of 24 December
 - Continuation of notes - December 26, 1922
- Since the death of Lenin/ III. Lenin's will (*Max Eastman*)
- About Eastman's book "Since the death of Lenin" (*Trotsky*)
- Resolution of the C.C. of the P.C.F.
- A duty of honour (*Rosa Luxemburg*)

- Order reigns in Berlin (Rosa Luxemburg)
- Our programme and the political situation (Rosa Luxemburg)
- What does Spartacus want? (Rosa Luxemburg / Spartakusbund)

Title:	Le testament de Lénine et l'héritage de Rosa Luxemburg
Language:	French
Published by:	Éditions Smolny, September 27, 2018 info@collectif-smolny.org
	ISBN : 978-2-9528276-7-6. 144 pages, 12 x 19 cm, €10,-
Author(s):	JANOVER Louis
Genre:	Documented essay

'A Happy Future is a Thing of the Past'

The Greek Crisis and Other Disasters

Presentation by the publisher:

» Since 2010 Greece's social and economic conditions have been irreversibly transformed, a result of austerity measures imposed by the European troika and successive Greek governments. These stringent restructuring programmes were intended to make it possible for Greece to avoid default and improve its debt position, and to reconfigure its economy to escape forever the burden of past structural deficiencies. Eight years later, none of these targets have been met. If the programmes were doomed to fail from the start, as many claim, what were the real objectives of such devastating austerity?

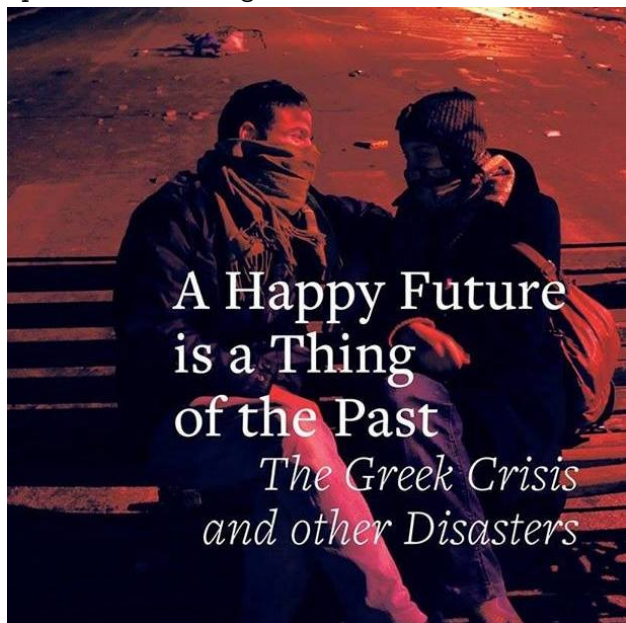
Pavlos Roufos answers this key question by setting the story in its historical context. Analysing the creation of the Eurozone, its 'glorious' years, and today's threat to its existence, he locates the development and management of the Greek crisis in

terms of both the particularities of Greek society and economy and the overall architecture of the monetary union. He also illuminates the social movements that emerged in Greece in response to the crisis, focusing on what both the crisis managers and many of their critics presented as a given: that a happy future is a thing of the past. «

About the author:

Pavlos Roufos has been active in Greece's social movements since the 1990s and has written on Greece and the economic crisis for the *Brooklyn Rail* (New York) and *Jungle World* (Berlin). He has worked as a film editor and is currently a researcher on German economic policy at the University of Kassel.

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The Greek crisis: A talk with Pavlos Roufos

Saturday, November 24, 2018

7 – 10 PM

The Base, 1302 Myrtle Avenue

Brooklyn, New York 11221.

This presentation is sponsored by [Prometeo collective](#) and the [Intransigence](#) journal.

Documents of the historical Communist Left

Two Articles from 'Kommunist' (April 1918) – CWO Introduction

» With the publication of these two articles we are completing our translation of the first issue of *Kommunist*, the journal of the “proletarian communists” or left communist faction of the Bolshevik Party in the Spring of 1918. We have already published articles by Radek, Bukharin and Ossinsky in our last three issues [of *Revolutionary Perspectives*] and all can be found on our website. Here we turn our attention to a final review by Bukharin, and an economic analysis of the state of the Russian Revolution in April 1918 by one of the least well-known of the *Kommunist* contributors. (CWO) «

Georgii Ippolitovich Oppokov (1888–1938) took the nomme de guerre Afanasi Lomov (although in some sources he is referred to as *Georgii Lomov*). A member of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee and the Supreme Council of National Economy (Vesenkha), he also became Commissar for Justice in the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). In the Central Committee he and Ossinski condemned the idea of a separate peace with Germany as a “peasant petty bourgeois peace” as early as January 1918. Like other Left Communists he voted against accepting the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. In the debates he was the only Left Communist who openly declared that the Revolution could still survive without Lenin. When the Treaty was finally signed he, along with Bukharin, Bubnov and Uritsky, resigned all his government and party posts.



Lenin, in *A Serious Lesson and a Serious Responsibility*, picked through the voting records of the leading Left Communists to demonstrate their inconsistency over the peace with Germany. The

following passage highlights (in a rather tendentious way) Lomov's role in the many votes that took place at this time.

On February 17, 1918, when the question was put: who is in favour of a revolutionary war? – Bukharin and Lomov “refused to vote on the question as put”. None voted in favour. That is a fact!

On the question of whether to “refrain from resuming peace negotiations until the German attack becomes sufficiently (sic!) evident and its influence upon the German working-class movement becomes clear”, Bukharin, Lomov and Uritsky, of the present contributors to the “Left” paper, voted in favour.

On the question, “Should we conclude peace if a German offensive becomes a fact and a revolutionary upsurge fails to eventuate in Germany and Austria?” – Lomov, Bukharin and Uritsky – abstained.

Later, in the 1920s, Lomov became for a time a member of the Left Opposition and like most prominent Bolshevik leaders of 1917 was arrested in June 1937 during the Great Purges. He was sentenced to death and shot on 30 December 1938. He was posthumously “rehabilitated” after the death of Stalin in 1956.

His “*Economic Notes*” are of interest in two important aspects. The first is his prescient statement that the second peace of Brest-Litovsk is the boundary between the offensive period and that of the gradual retreat of the revolutionary wave.

This was a basic position of the Left Communists but stated here with extraordinary boldness (which seems typical of the author). Lomov was right to recognise that the “heroic period” or “offensive” of the Revolution ended in March-April

1918. For him and other Left Communists the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was not buying the revolution a “*perdyshka*” or breathing space, but was likely to put the young Soviet republic under the domination of German imperialism. In the latter point they turned out to be wrong, but there is no question that March 1918 saw a turning point in the revolution. It coincided with Brest-Litovsk but was not a consequence of it.

Until March 1918 the Bolsheviks had based all their plans on the self-activity of the working classes but by March 1918 the economic disaster which the soviet republic had inherited from the Provisional Government was becoming overwhelming. Lomov points to this later in his article when he writes,

We have no intention of denying the dilapidation of the economy. We know and do not hide the fact that in our industrial South, of all the metallurgical plants, there are only the Petrovsky soviet factories that work, while others are stopped or in the process of doing so; we know that coal mining plants in Russia are in a catastrophic situation; we do not deny all the disorder in the railways, etc.

Whilst the Bolshevik right wing wanted to undermine worker initiative, the Left wanted to carry on with it, which is why Lomov is so contemptuous of all the attempts to increase production by resorting to capitalist methods. The adoption of one-man management, bringing back some of the old managers etc, did not spell the end of the revolution but – coupled with a brutal civil war which drained the proletariat – set in motion a chain of circumstances which led to the workers’ revolt of 1920-1.

The other point of interest is to note that this Left Communist document was a document of its time. Until the Russian Revolution few saw that the nationalisation of production was not a step towards socialism. Nationalisation is rather one of the most blatant forms of state capitalism which does not do away with the capital-wage labour relationship. This was a lesson the working class learned after 1918 as a result of that Russian experience but in 1918 it was still equated with a step towards socialism.

The second document is *Bukharin’s* withering review of a book by a leading member of the *Left*

Socialist Revolutionaries, who until this point were supporters of the October Revolution, and had joined the Council of People’s Commissars. In fact *Vladimir Evgenievich Trutovsky*, (1889-1937) was People’s Commissar for Local Government until he resigned along with the other SR Commissars in March 1918 as a protest against the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Bukharin’s comments are not really a review since he hardly tackles the main subject of Trutovsky’s work (the transition to socialism). Instead he targets Trutovsky’s poor knowledge of Marxism and his ill-judged remarks based on it. Like so many anti-Marxists down the years he seems to have been content to repeat erroneous platitudes. As such he is an easy target for Bukharin’s withering scorn.



This raises the question of why Bukharin bothered to review the book at all. Was it to fill the final pages of the issue of the magazine or was it to demonstrate that the *Kommunist* group, for all their shared rejection of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Left SRs, wanted to demonstrate that on essentials they were still loyal Marxist members of the Bolshevik Party? We can only guess. Like the surviving Left Communists, Trutovsky perished in Stalin’s Purges in the 1930s.

Jock (CWO), Thursday, September 27, 2018

The full article, including the two annotated texts “*Economic Notes*” (by Lomov) and “*Review: Trutovsky, The Transitional Period*” (by Bukharin) can be found on the ICT website: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-09-27/two-articles-from-kommunist-april-1918>

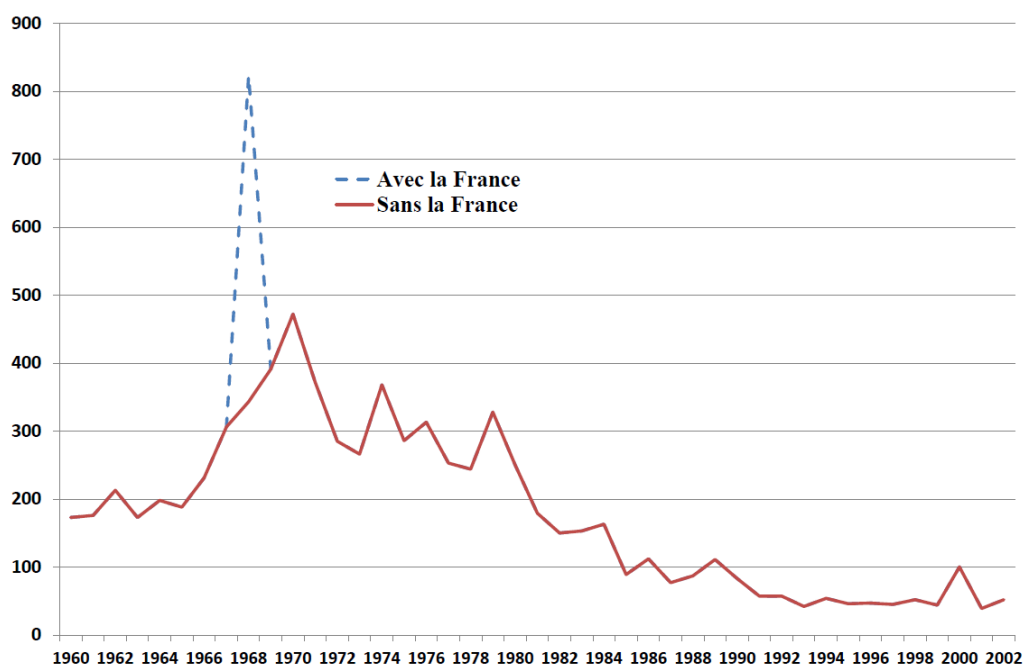
How to understand 'May 1968' in France?

The significance of the struggles from 1966 to 1972 (Part 1)

» The struggles of May-June 68 in France have been part of a general wave of labor disputes and protests of various kinds (student claims, protests against the multiple wars in the world, a search for different values and ways of life...) that flourished from the second half of the 1960s until the beginning of the 1970s. All these conflicts expressed the accumulated tensions in society after two decades of very vigorous growth that jostled all the ideas and structures in place. They manifested to the highest degree the contradictions between the rapid development of the productive forces and the obsolete nature of the superstructures that coordinated them: economic, political, ideological, legal, family, cultural, moral super-structures, etc. These blatant inadequacies are at the basis of the explosion and the radical character of all these movements, not in the sense of an exit from capitalism – a perspective that was shared only by a very small minority at that time – but in the sense of challenging old structures that are not adapted to the new realities of the post-war period. The article “*The significance of the struggles from 1966 to 1972*” tries to draw up its tableau. Its first part is devoted, on the one hand, to the critical discussion of explanations commonly put forward to understand these events and, on the other hand, to lay the foundations of a coherent alternative explanation. « (From the presentation of *Controverses* No. 5, May 2018)

The full version of this article has first been published in French on the *Controverses* website on May 11, 2018: [La signification des luttes de 1966 à 1972](#). Hereafter we present an abridged version by the author.

Intensity of labor disputes in the world



Graph 1: Intensity of labor disputes in the world (Source: [Perry and Wilson](#), I.L.O., 2004)

From the second half of the 1960s to 1972, we witness the rise of a wave of labor disputes in the world that would culminate in 1970. Like all large-scale social revolts, they have emerged spontaneously and have surprised everyone, both by their massive character and their radical nature. To these struggles of waged labor various kinds of protests have superposed themselves – just as massive and radical – from the student youth, in opposition to the wars in the Third World, in search of other values and ways of life... and this throughout the same period and in all four corners of the world.

What have been the causes of all these movements?

1. Have they been the product of an international economic crisis and/or a generation conflict?
2. Did they express a desire to overthrow capitalism and/or a desire to better benefit from growth or to live it differently?
3. What balance sheet can be drawn up from this? Did they impose a new, even a potentially revolutionary social course, or were they only a jolt in the counterrevolution that had crushed the workers' movement following the failure of the revolutionary attempts in opposition to the First World War?

These are the questions this contribution proposes to address by starting, in this first part, with a discussion of the thesis that May 1968 was the product of a global economic crisis and a capitalism on the verge of bankruptcy.

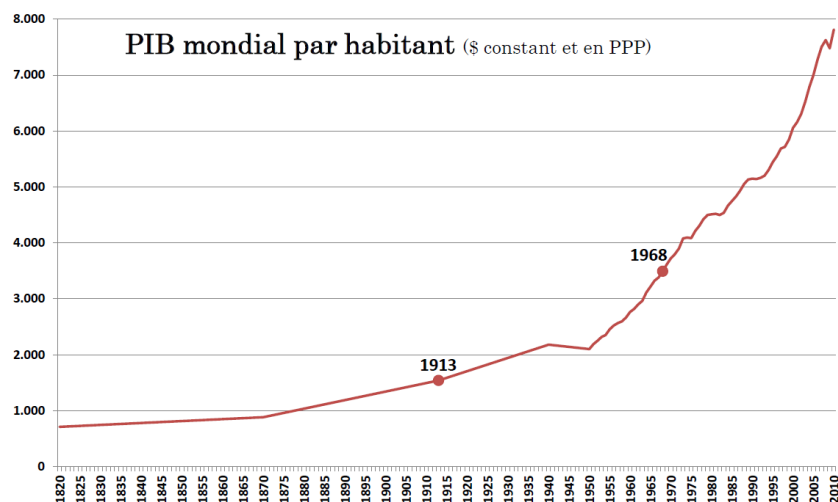
The return of crises?

This thesis was the key idea behind the resurgence of a component of the Communist Left at that time, that of interpreting such a social conflagration as “...the first major response of the working class to a process of *acute crisis* of the capitalist system.”⁽¹⁾

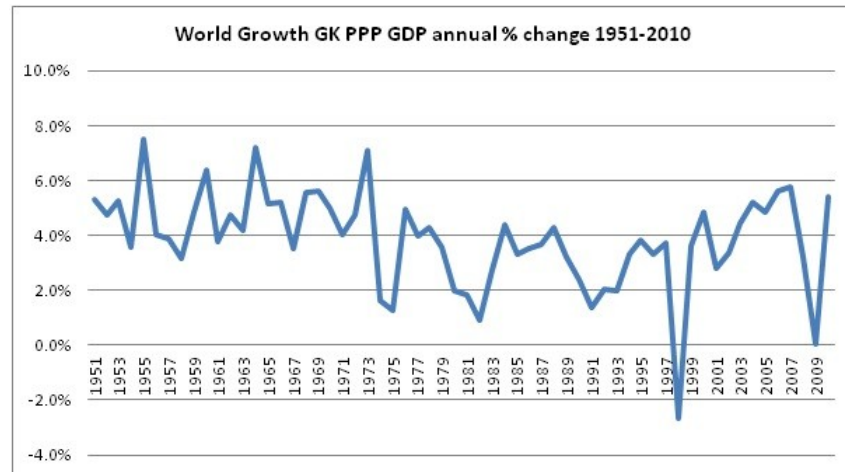
Crisis or prosperity?

However, all the data are unambiguous: this wave of social conflicts has unfolded not in a context of “acute crisis” but in one of full prosperity. If there have indeed been some oscillations due to the cyclical nature of capitalism, there has been no real economic crisis before 1974-75,⁽²⁾ the growth rate has been between 4% and 6% during the post-war period until 1973, as shown in the three graphs below for the world (A. Maddison) and for France:

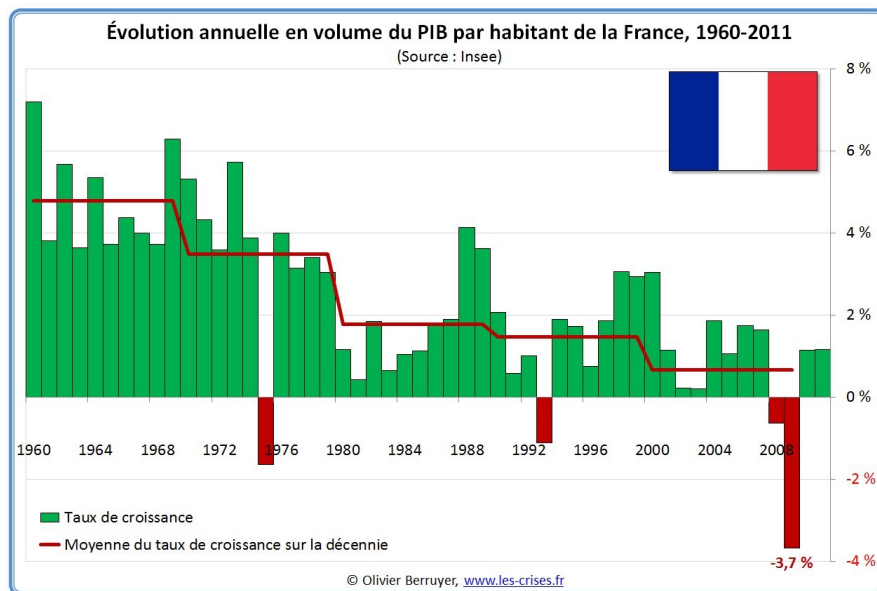
- 1) [Révolution Internationale n°3](#), 1969, p. 48. This group – with the same name as its publication – would constitute the motor pole of what in 1975 has become the actual *International Communist Current* (ICC).
- 2) With the exception of the USA, who knew a [recession from 1970 onward](#).



Graph 2: Global GDP per inhabitant



Graph 3: World Growth GK PPP GDP annual % change 1951 - 2010



Graph 4: Annual evolution in volume of GDP per inhabitant of France, 1960 – 2011 (Source: Insee)

The economic slowdown and crises have been posterior to this wave of struggles, so it cannot result from a “context of global economic exhaustion” ⁽³⁾ where “the specter of crisis and total collapse hovers over the whole society.” ⁽⁴⁾ To continue to claim this, while world GDP per capita has since doubled again, while China has changed its status from an underdeveloped country into a major power... is to hold a purely ideological discourse unrelated to the facts. To distort reality to make it correspond to one’s desires is not doing the work of Marxism but is a profession of faith.

3) [Révolution Internationale n°2](#), MC, 1969 & [n°470](#). ([Against the lies about May '68!](#) Bmc April 28, 2018)

4) [Révolution Internationale n°2](#), *La crise monétaire*, 1969.

Unemployment or full employment?

Would this wave of struggle then have been a reaction to a “threatening unemployment [which] is becoming more and more worrying every day. (...) Several sporadic strikes have the issue of maintaining employment and of full employment as a direct cause?” ⁽⁵⁾

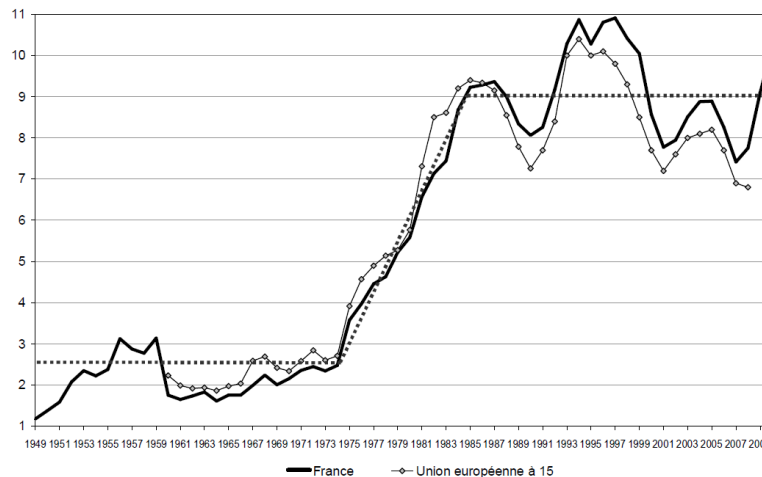
Let us recall this evidence that, in the course of capitalist functioning, and even in periods of full growth, there are always companies that fail, obsolete sectors that are threatened and companies that need restructuring. The 1960s were no excep-

5) [Révolution Internationale n°2](#), MC, 1969 & [n°470](#).

tion to this rule, as they were characterized by unprecedented growth, which implied inevitable changes and rationalizations and therefore technical unemployment and redundancies. The sectors most concerned were the textile industry overturned by the arrival of synthetic fibers; the steel industry, an industrial sector undergoing restructuring throughout Europe at that time and coal

mining with competition from oil. Finally, the post-war baby boom generated an increase in the number of young people entering the labor market. Despite all this, the unemployment rate remained below the 1950s and fluctuated only slightly in a context of full employment until 1975:

Unemployment rate, European Union, France



Graph 5: Unemployment rate, European Union, France (Source: Michel Husson, [La France du travail](#), IRES 2009 : 29.)

And for good reason, alongside these sectors undergoing restructuring, others such as electricity, chemicals and the automobile industry heavily engaged personnel (24% more jobs in the automobile sector between 1962 and 69).

Strikes around the issue of employment have therefore always existed, including in the 1950s and 1960s. It is thereby not surprising that some conflicts in 1968 in France crystallized around this question... but, it is quite a different thing to claim that this wave of struggles responded to a generalized rise in unemployment following “a world economic situation that is deteriorating” and to “a process of acute crisis of the capitalist system” (ibid). Nothing could be further from the truth, as full employment is such that, lacking manpower, European countries will ‘import’ it massively. Thus, in France, the number of foreigners doubled between 1954 and 1975 with the call for Portuguese, Spanish and North African workers.

It was this full employment that would be the driving force behind the strike movement at that time, since there was not yet a reserve of unemployed people permitting to put pressure on the wage workers.

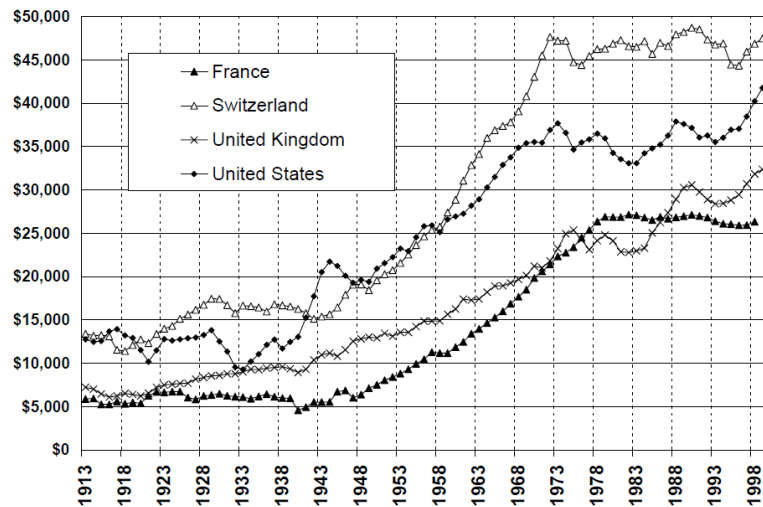
Decrease or increase in real wages?

Could it then have been an attack on real wages that would have driven this wave of strikes: “At the end of 1967, the economic situation in France began to show signs of deterioration. (...) Concurrently, with un-employment and under its direct pressure, wages tend to fall and the standard of living of the masses deteriorates.”⁽⁶⁾ This affirmation of 1969 is still repeated today⁽⁷⁾ while the average real income in France has multiplied by 5 (five) between 1945 and 1978 and stagnates before and after these two dates, something never seen in the entire history of France and the other developed countries:

6) [Révolution Internationale n°2](#), MC, 1969 & [n°470](#).

7) [International Revue n°134](#), Fabienne, July 2008.

Average real income USA, UK, France and Switzerland (1913-2000)



Graph 6: Average real income USA, UK, France and Switzerland (1913-2000) (Source: Saez E., 2004, [Income and Wealth Concentration in a Historical and International Perspective](#))

Such a denial of reality is totally foreign to the Marxist method, which has to rely on objective data to give them meaning and not imprint an ideological schema corresponding to a militant wish at the cost of being in contradiction to the facts.

The workers' and students' movement

A commonplace of the dominant ideology consists in being silent about or minimizing the workers' dimension of the revolts of that time and, if it speaks of it, in presenting it as a French singularity. Unfortunately, some in the communist Left are open to such a vision.⁽⁸⁾ Once again, the facts totally invalidate these judgments since the social

explosion of May-June 1968 in France was part of an overall movement of labor disputes in the world that had clearly been rising since 1965 (see the first graph of this contribution).

A course open to the revolution?

What about this other affirmation on the general perspective opened by this wave of struggles, namely that the deepening of crises would see "*proletarian struggles become more radical until they lead to world revolution?*"⁽⁹⁾ Obviously, such an idea was more of a voluntarist posture than a rigorous Marxist analysis.

Admittedly, after the wave of the second half of the 1960s, social conflicts have remained at a significantly more vigorous level during the 1970s than during the post-war period, but they decreased dramatically (by a factor of six) throughout the 1980s to reach a very low level until today! Such an involution in social conflict should have motivated serious self-criticism. Instead, those who trumpeted the "*opening of a course to revolution from 1968 onward*" persisted in the same ideological posture by declaring that the 1980s would be decisive for the future of humanity: "*In the decade beginning today, the historical alternative will be decided: either the proletariat will continue its offensive, continue to paralyze*

8) "On the one hand, the student revolt hit nearly all the countries of the Western Bloc and even affected in a certain way the countries of the Eastern Bloc. On the other hand, **the massive struggle of the working class which in this year, fundamentally only touched a single country, France**." ([International Revue n°133](#), 'May 68 and the revolutionary perspective, Part 1: The student movement around the world in the 1960s', Fabienne, April 2008). This idea is repeated twice in the second part of the article: "It's true that in May '68 in France there existed a situation that wasn't found in any other country, except **in a very marginal fashion**: a massive movement of the working class developing from a student mobilisation. (...) ... In fact, particular circumstances saw the proletariat in France leading **the first widespread battle** against the growing attacks launched by capitalism in crisis." ([International Revue n°134](#), Part 2: 'End of the counter-revolution and the historic return of the world proletariat', Fabienne, July 2008).

9) [Révolution Internationale n°3](#), 1969.

the murderous arm of capitalism in its death throes and gather its forces **to destroy the system**, or else it will let itself be trapped, worn out, demoralized by speeches and repression and then the way will be open for a new holocaust which risks the elimination of all human society.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Worse still, while this decade has seen a drastic

10) ‘The 80s: years of truth’, [International Revue n°20](#), 1st quarter of 1980.

decline in social conflicts by a factor of six, this organization still claims at its end in 1989 that “(...) the 80s have above all been years of development of the class struggle.”⁽¹¹⁾ A good example where the dogmatic defense of erroneous analyses borders on blindness in relation to the evidence of the facts.

11) ‘The 8th Congress of the ICC: the stakes of the Congress’, [International Revue n°59](#), 4th quarter of 1989



Victory or defeat?

If the basis of these labor conflicts, their importance in relation to the student movements and their perspective, are only based on preconceived patterns and have no connection with reality, what about the assessment of their results? Let us judge by this: “The night of May 26/27 the “Grenelle Accords” were concluded (...) Given the importance and strength of the movement, it was a real provocation: the 10% would be wiped out by inflation (which was quite high during this period); nothing on safeguards against inflation in the wage packet; nothing concrete on reduction of the working week; they talked about aiming at “the progressive return to 40 hours” (already officially obtained in 1936!); in the time scale proposed by the government it will take... 40 years! The only workers who would gain significantly were the poorest workers (dividing the working class by pushing them back to work) and the unions, rewarded for their role as saboteurs.”⁽¹²⁾

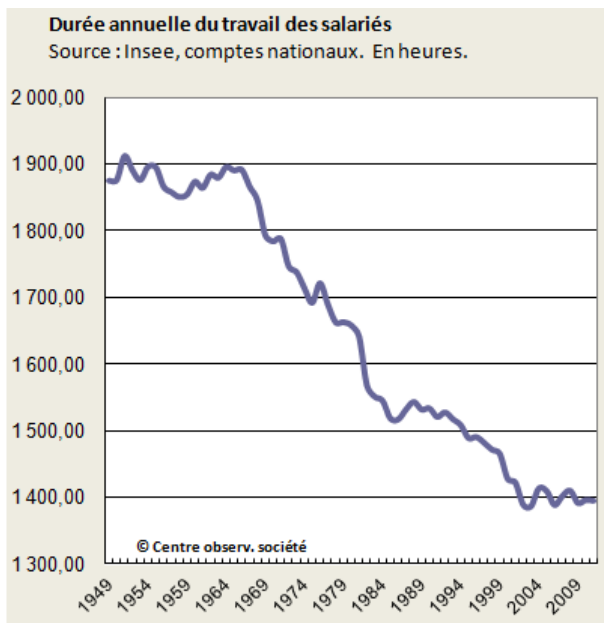
12) [International Revue n°134](#), Fabienne, 2008.

That the poorest workers have gained something significant as well as the trade unions for their role as saboteurs is absolutely true, but is it correct to say that nothing has been obtained for the waged workers in terms of working time and that inflation has annulled the wage increases?

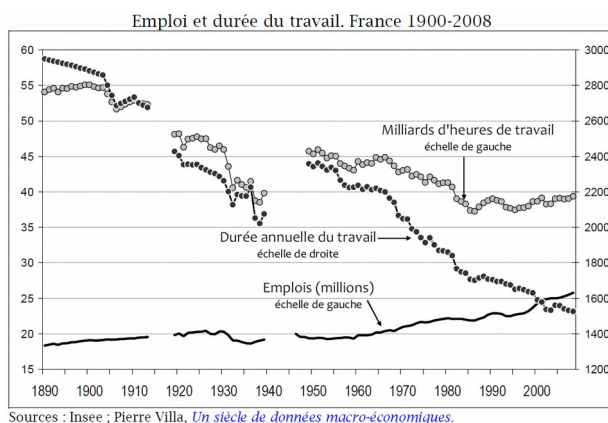
In reality, the average real income in France has been multiplied by 5 (five) between 1945 and 1978, as we have seen above. How can this be explained when inflation would reach 10% between 1975 and 1985? Precisely because the wages have well been indexed to prices, contrary to what this organization claims: “nothing on wage compensation for inflation.”⁽¹³⁾ Such ignorance says a lot about the seriousness of its “analyses”!

13) By the way, it suffices to read the Grenelle accords in order to take notice that they very well mention **real wages** (meaning: wages with inflation deducted). Apparently, either this organization cannot read, or it has not even read the accords it criticizes. This simple observation disqualifies its pretense to unveil the truth to us, as it permanently proclaims.

But that's not all! Let us look at what it claims about the evolution of working time and compare it with the real evolution. While annual working time has stagnated at around 1,900 hours since the 1930s until 1968, it will then decline by 25% in about 30 years to reach 1,400 hours, i. e. 500 hours to be worked less per year, as shown by the two graphs below:



Graph 7: Annual work duration of wage laborers, in hours. (Source: Insee)



Graph 8: Employment and work duration. France 1900 - 2008 (Source: Insee)

This evolution is structural and far from negligible... but this organization simply denies it - “nothing concrete on the reduction of working time” - with the same sovereign contempt for the facts and the search for the truth! It is particularly deceitful on her part to be ironic on the

weekly working time, by recalling that the 40 hours a week had been officially decreed in June 1936, when it ‘forgets’ to talk about the obtained fourth week of paid leave and the fact that the annual working must be considered to measure its evolution and not just the weekly duration.

Worse still, in an attempt to accredit its speech, this organization deliberately ignores other key measures of the Grenelle accords such as: wage compensation for the planned hourly reductions; payment of half of the strike days; increase of the minimum old-age pension; improvement of the family allowance scheme; ⁽¹⁴⁾ the very substantial increase in the minimum agricultural wage; abolition of age-related deductions applicable to young workers; reduction in the maximum legal working time; the reduction of the share of bonuses in the remuneration by integrating them into salaries; the negotiation of measures to ensure the necessary reclassifications, in particular in the event of mergers and concentrations of companies; the non-imposition on wage earners of the withholding tax at source regime (which Macron wants to introduce today); etc. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Reading this much more complete list, it is easier to understand why the average real income in France almost doubled again after 1968 and annual working time fell by at least 20%! And also one better understands how the prose of the *International Communist Current* is purely false when it cites only four measures of these accords, measures that would only be pure mystification or quickly annulled!

Finally, if it is correct to assert that these accords were experienced as “a real provocation” by the working class and that it has often blamed and even rejected them in many places (including the flagship factory of Renault-Billancourt), it is not so much for what they contain as for what it still hoped to obtain, particularly on the qualitative level of working conditions, a plan almost absent from these accords when it was central to the demands of the time – we will come back on this. In any case, one thing is certain: if the working class did not welcome these accords with open arms, it was not because they brought almost nothing to

14) The part of social dispenses in the GDP has doubled from 1968 to the present, passing from 12% to 24%. These are vital amounts everyday for hundreds of thousands of wage laborers, pensioners and persons with a modest income... gains that are disdainfully considered non-existent by this organization!

15) The complete text of the Grenelle accords is available [here](#).

its material conditions, but because it felt it had not gained enough... which is totally different!

A minimum of logic and consistency

On this subject and at reading the prose of this organization, the working class would only suffer attacks and defeats since the First World War. Of course, the working class has suffered attacks and defeats, but if the post-war period and May 1968 in France were economic defeats, if no real and lasting reforms have been possible since 1914 and if workers are permanently attacked, ⁽¹⁶⁾ then, logically, the current working class should be in a much worse state than at the beginning of the 20th century! However, its life expectancy has doubled since then, ⁽¹⁷⁾ its real salary has multiplied by five, its working time has been almost diminished by half, and two thirds of the population has been able to become homeowners (compared to 35% in 1955 and still less in 1914). Look for the error!

If the bourgeoisie is still able to nibble on something, it is because the working class was able to bring in gains in the course of the 20th century and it is fighting to preserve them.

The true roots

Explaining an international wave of struggles requires the ability to advance international causes, but reading those whose thesis we are discussing, they only present a meager list of purely conjunc-

tural bad news, gleaned in one country or another: they never take the trouble to validate it objectively at the international level. And for good reason, since no overall data (growth, unemployment, real wages, working time, profit rates, etc.) validates the thesis of a so-called international crisis of capitalism at the end of the 1960s.

In reality, the primary reason for this wave of social conflicts is a classic mechanism at the very heart of Marxist analysis, namely the contradictions that inevitably arise between the development of productive forces and the social relations that envelope them. And for good reason, the strength of the post-war growth during the first two decades (see graph below) was such that inevitable contradictions accumulated and exploded in the second half of the 1960s.

So there is no mystery, but only if we can get rid of a very common idea in the field of groups claiming to be Marxist, namely the idea that this type of contradictions would only occur to reveal a state of weakening of the system that supports them. Nothing is more erroneous because Marxism also conceives systemic growth crises during which tensions and readjustments are manifested between, on the one hand, all the infrastructural changes induced by economic growth and, on the other hand, the backwardness accumulated by the superstructures that coordinate them: economic, political, family, ideological, legal, cultural, moral superstructures, etc.

In other words, the workers' struggles at that time did indeed have an essential economic dimension, but not as the result of an elusive international economic crisis, but according to the following four determinations:

- a) Growing dissatisfaction with the continuing legacy of the exceptional efforts required in the immediate post-war period for reconstruction: increased weekly working hours, high ceiling on the maximum number of working hours per week, etc.
- b) Strong demands aiming at profiting better from the fruits of growth. In effect, in 1968, five million French people still lived below the poverty line, young people entered factory life at the age of 16 and worked 48 hours a week, while income inequalities increased from 1945 to 1968. Results of the struggles: the percent-

16) This is what the [platform](#) of this organization and its [pamphlet on the trades unions](#) clearly express: "Inflation, a permanent phenomenon since World War I, immediately **devours any wage increases**. (...) The struggle for reforms has become a hopeless utopia. (...) As capitalism entered its decadent phase it was no longer able to accord reforms and improvements in living conditions to the working class." (platform, §6 and §7) "Given this situation, the bourgeoisie even when it is pressurised by the most militant workers' struggles, cannot afford to grant any real reforms. It is obvious that during the last fifty years **all the struggles for wage increases have ended up with nothing**. (...) While during the ascendant period of capitalism the length of the working week effectively fell due to the pressure of workers struggles... under decadent capitalism the number of hours **has remained the same when it has not actually risen...**" (pamphlet, 'The unions in decadent capitalism')

17) If the working class would have gained nothing in May 1968, if its wages would not have increased, and its working hours did, while its indirect wages would have constantly eroded; if all social budgets, health care and social services only would have been curtailed... how can this organization explain that [average] life expectancy in France has still increased since 1968 by eleven years?

age of poor was diminished by half between 1970 and 2001 and inequalities decreased from 1968 until the early 1980s.

- c) Numerous struggles broke out to oppose the disastrous working conditions induced by the generalization of the Keynesian-Fordist mode of production after 1945: work on an assembly line and in continuous shifts (three eight-hour shifts).
- d) Finally, there are struggles against redundancies in sectors undergoing restructuring: coal, textiles, steel and shipbuilding.

Such an explanation makes it possible: (a) to be in full accordance with all the facts; (b) to rest on a solid economic foundation; (c) to restore an international dynamic and (d) to integrate the multiple dimensions of all the social movements that flourished during the 1960s, both those related to work and those of the student youth, those linked to the way of life, as well as protests against war

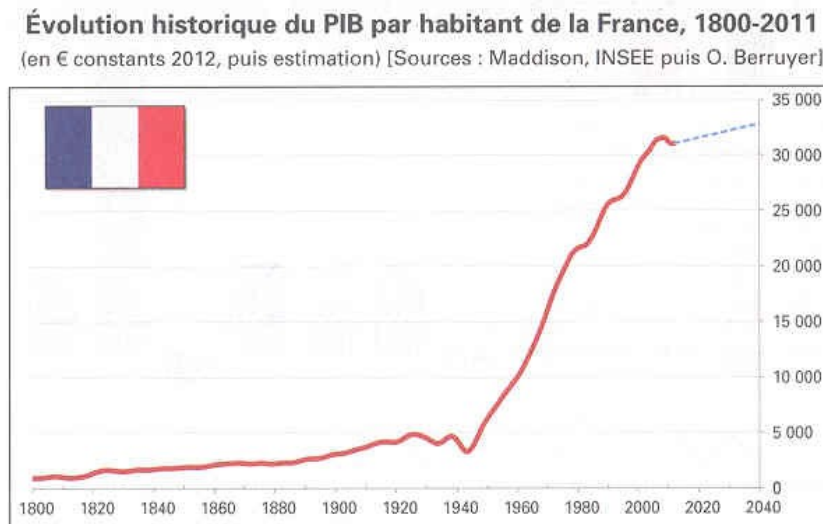
and conflicts in the Third World, etc. This is what makes it heuristic: such an analysis makes it possible to embrace and explain all the data and phenomena encountered, while the “analysis” we have discussed is in direct contradiction with the principal facts, facts that are nevertheless admitted but that it must twist, distort or discard in order to have an air of plausibility, which is characteristic of a purely ideological and idealistic approach.

End of the first part.

C.Mcl, May 2018 (Controverses No. 5)

Source: **La signification des luttes de 1966 à 1972**
– **C.Mcl.** Full version: May 11, 2018,
<http://www.leftcommunism.org/spip.php?article460>

Translation: Jac. Johanson, September 19, 2018
Proofreading: F.C., C.Mcl.
Final version: September 22, 2018



Graph 9: Historical evolution of the GDP per capita of France, 1800 - 2011 (Source: Insee)

With special Attention

Reader's notes on internationalist press releases

Echoes on the political crisis of the German bourgeoisie

A Free Retriever's Digest's modest commentary of July 9 on the disclosing political crisis of the German bourgeoisie ⁽¹⁾, or the latter situation itself, has scarcely encountered an echo – notwithstanding an extensive reply by *Fredo Corvo*, ⁽²⁾ and a continuous effort by *Nuevo Curso* to keep up with the evolution of the situation in its blog articles. Efforts to elaborate an up-to-date analysis of the situation of the central country of European capitalism seem to be sparse or even lacking in the internationalist milieu.

Against this background, the publication by the ICC's German language section, “after the latest crisis in the federal government (between the CDU of chancellor Angela Merkel and its “sister-party”, the Bavarian CSU)” of **large extracts of its most recent report on Germany** (Spring 2018) resuscitates curiosity. ⁽³⁾ Without the usual song and dance about its theory of “decomposition, capitalism's highest stage of decadence”, the ICC modestly “believes” it proposes “an analysis and a background” that “can contribute to the understanding of the current political crisis in the central country of European capitalism”.

Having analyzed the recent maneuvers about massive lay-offs by the Siemens company, probably aiming at the relocation of its gas turbine production facilities (these are located in the eastern part of Germany, notably at Görlitz) the article concludes by describing the current dilemma for the proletariat as follows:

“Without the slightest hope to be able to put capitalism in question, it will be more difficult for the “economic” struggles against exploitation to develop and, above all, to remain on a class terrain, to evade

the pitfalls of a bourgeois politicization. The situation requires therefor a proletarian politicization of the workers' struggles. In order to stop the current retreat of the proletariat, a development of the political and theoretical dimensions of its struggle is required as well.”

As a larger framework for *the imperialist stakes* implied is absent in this article, we suspect that this framework itself has become subject to the ICC's ‘internal discussion’. The presented extracts are worth while examining, but for an actualization of its analysis one has to await forthcoming articles.

In its turn, the ICT has not been particularly prolific in concretely assessing the unprecedented situation evolving in Germany either. As we understood in the course of last summer, the GIS, its affiliate group in Germany, considered it “premature” to speak of a government crisis. Apropos of the well publicized ultra-nationalist mobilizations and counter-mobilizations in Chemnitz and Köthen (Saxony), and an outburst of quasi pogromist rage against “immigrants” following street murders, and a renewed government crisis centered on the German interior minister Seehofer, ⁽⁴⁾ the GIS ultimately has issued a broadsheet with the title: **“Against racism and authoritarian formation: the problem is capitalism!”**. ⁽⁵⁾

Taking up important elements of the current situation, like the AfD's attraction of ultra-right and neo-Nazi currents and milieus, and the implication of the German Republic's “state security” organs in their rise, it rightly refutes qualifying this

1) ‘A comment on the political crisis in Germany’, blog: <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2018/07/09/a-comment-on-the-political-crisis-in-germany/> and in: ‘AFRD’ Vol. 2 Issue #4, August – September 2018.

2) Topic: *Where is Europe going?* <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/portfolio/discussion-europe/>

3) *The extracts constitute the lead article of ‘Weltrevolution’* Nr. 182, Autumn 2018, <http://de.internationalism.org/content/2800/weltrevolution-nr-182>

4) Among others, Seehofer supported spy chief Maaßen in his denunciation of a brief video-publication showing a scene of an attempted anti-immigrant street mobbing in Chemnitz. As Maaßen appeared untenable as chief of the “Bundesverfassungsschutz”, the scandal further escalated with the SPD consenting to the latter's functional promotion within the interior ministry, notably at the expense of an SPD secretary.

5) ‘*Germinal*’ Nr. 14, October 12, 2018, <http://gis.blogsport.de/2018/10/12/gegen-rassismus-und-autoritaere-formierung-das-problem-heisst-kapitalismus/>

right-wing populist party as nothing but a neo-Nazi party. Converging with the ICC in this respect, the GIS correctly demarcates its position, in continuity with the historical Italian communist Left, from an 'anti-fascist' defense of bourgeois "democracy" and from "united front" tactics, that currently are widely propagated by all shades of the bourgeois left.

Nevertheless its explication "*Fascism, Anti-fascism and the perspective of the class struggle*", while correctly rejecting any essential antagonism between bourgeois democracy and "fascism", shows some reluctance to unequivocally qualify the latter ⁽⁶⁾ as a *variety* of the dictatorial regimes of *the bourgeois counter-revolution* that have been brought to power throughout continental Europe in the wake of the *historical defeat* of the proletariat's revolutionary uprisings against the First World War, notably in the coun-

6) Perhaps in the German context more accurately designated as "national-socialism".

Silence on an appeal for an internationalist meeting

The appeal "*Towards an International Meeting in Kurdistan*" launched by "*militants in Kurdistan, Iraq*" ⁽¹⁾ that has been transmitted in several languages via '*Tridni Valka*', ⁽²⁾ appears to have obtained hardly any public response from the internationalist milieu, apart from a positive critical reply by the '*Arbeidersstemmen*' blog. ⁽³⁾ This lack of responsiveness, regardless the respective appreciations, seems to stand in some contrast to the attention paid by most internationalist groups to the upsurge of a class struggle movement in the Middle East at the turn of the year.

Besides the unconventional choice of the region proposed for an international meeting's location, perhaps this silence is (also) due to the appeal's appreciation of the recent uprisings in the region as no less than "*the new Iran-Iraq revolutionary waves*"? And/or to the formulation of certain very ambitious sounding goals, like: "*a common program for all internationalist groups*" ? Or perhaps there is some embarrassment because a well-known 19th Century pan-Slavist is figuring on the

tries that have most been effected by these movements, like Germany, Italy and Hungary.

The following passage from the conclusion of the main article ('what is to be done?') summarizes the orientation taken, and provides essential points for a discussion:

"Nationalism, whatever its form, always means subordination of the wage earners to their own bourgeoisie. A perspective against racist division and exploitation can only lie in the political struggle for the complete abolition of all exceptional laws, regulations and administrative practices directed against migrants. Or, as Karl Liebknecht put it: "*Away with the Damocles sword of expulsion! That is the first prerequisite for foreigners to stop being the predestined wage pushers and strike breakers.*" Without the defense and organization of refugees and migrants, a successful struggle for higher wages, cheaper housing, better education and health care, etc. will not be possible."

H.C., October 18, 2018

website as an internationalist? These aspects should be clarified in relation to the political criteria for discerning proletarian internationalist groups from the ultra-left of the bourgeoisie, a point that has already been raised in F.C.'s reply.

A Free Retriever's Digest thinks that the most important task for internationalist minorities lies at the level of exchanging (diverging) views and analyses on important questions in view of confronting positions by public, controversial discussion, rather than engaging in "*practical tasks related to class struggle*". In this sense it agrees to the approach employed by F.C., and wants to provide for an expression to such discussions according to its (modest) means.

As a contribution to the discussion of the dramatic situation confronting struggles in this war-ridden region, we publish an article from the French council communist group '*Échanges et Mouvement*' on the uprising in Iraq last summer: "*IRAK : les séquelles de la guerre contre Daesh*" in an English translation on page 30.

The reader can find the reply to the appeal from the militants in Iraq by '*Arbeidersstemmen*' on the next page.

H.C., October 17, 2018

1) Source:

<http://www.myinternetpages.com/meetingenglish.html> .

2) Source: <https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/towards-an-international-meeting-in-kurdistan/>.

3) Source: <https://libcom.org/news/towards-international-meeting-kurdistan-14082018>.

An Invitation to a Discussion

Reply to an appeal for an internationalist meeting

In the previous issue of *A Free Retriever's Digest* we were able to notify the aforementioned appeal for an internationalist meeting by militants in Iraqi Kurdistan. What follows is the reply provided on libcom by Fredo Corvo of the '**Arbeidersstemmen**' blog. We hope to continue corresponding with the initiators on the situation regarding the Near- and Middle East and their initiative.

» Arbeidersstemmen/Arbeiterstimmen welcomes the (...) initiative taken by militants in Kurdistan, Iraq, as an important step forward in the international workers' struggle. Arbeidersstemmen/Arbeiterstimmen with its modest resources will do everything in its power to support and advance this initiative, first of all by publicizing the call for a first meeting.

The question is how one believes to distinguish between the internationalists among the groups and individuals invited and the left-wing nationalists who use socialist, communist and anarchist verbiage to hide their participation in the imperialist war.

The call itself is neither very clear in this respect. Firstly, the formulation capitalist war, where the Communist Left, following in the footsteps of Lenin, Luxemburg and Gorter and others, spoke clearly of (inter)imperialist war: "transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war".

The final paragraph seems to equate the [brigading], the organization in armies and militias, the militarization of workers for the inter-imperialistic wars in the Middle East with the armament of the workers as a class. On the contrary, for the workers in uniform, it is first and foremost necessary to take up arms against their 'own' national oppressors and exploiters, from the Assad regime to the Ayatollah regime, from ISIS to PYD/PKK, from Erdogan to Trump, etc.

The bitter experiences of the revolutionary movements after the First World War in Russia, Germany, Hungary and Italy have taught us that it is not enough to arm the workers as a class.

The revolutionary proletariat must also present itself as a political, social and economic force in relation to the other oppressed and exploited classes. To this end, it is necessary, first of all, to open up the workplaces to workers in uniform and young unemployed proletarians, and to integrate them into production and into mass meetings.

These mass meetings discuss all the issues of the revolution and how to put production and distribution at the service of social needs. In order to coordinate mass activity, these meetings elect delegates and, where necessary, replace them with others who are more expressing the will of the workers.

In order to meet the needs of energy, water, transport and care, the workers will restart work and enter into an exchange with the farm laborers and farmers, where they exercise armed power, in order to provide the cities with food. These are tasks that may under no circumstances be placed in the hands of a state ([whatever] it calls itself), they are carried out by the mass activity of the working masses themselves. «

Fredo Corvo, 18-8-2018.

Readers are invited to send appreciations of the presented texts, questions and/or own contributions on the subject per e-mail. Meaningful correspondence is eligible for publication in a next release of AFRD.

The editor.

Proletariat, Xenophobia and Lumpenization

A discussion of the causes for the upsurge of right wing populism

» From Catalonia to the American Midwest, from “Brexiters” and Corsican separatists to Salvini and the German AfD, all over the world the petty bourgeoisie has played a leading role and has directed reactionary “revolts” under the pretext of the crisis... towards nothing. Not enough, it now enters a new and inevitable phase after the clash with reality: it has no alternative, no future to offer society. Its only option is to revitalize the fantasy of the “people”, interclassist entelechy, ⁽¹⁾ a crappy and Utopian version of the nation, now turned into a pure delirium, a *zombie* political subject.

And yet... it is succeeding or coming very close to it. The “confluence” on the basis of the closing of borders with which the German post-Stalinism of Sahra Wagenknecht ⁽²⁾ and Oskar Lafontaine ⁽³⁾ intend to “oppose” the SPD and Salvini’s discourse of security and xenophobia, which already aligns 60% of Italian opinion, have a common formula above the traditional and deceitful right-left axis: *the association between migrations and lumpenization*.

In a context in which the proletariat only exists punctually and embryonically as a political subject, in which the decomposition of social relations and work itself is rampant, the vast majority of our class feels the breath of lumpenization in its neck. It’s the first thing anyone in the neighborhood tells you. It is every parent’s fear of the evolution of their children’s environment, the abandonment of schools and the growing violence in the immediate surroundings.

The fear produced by the massive arrival of immigrants in Europe among the workers is that they will feed this process even more. Without real job opportunities, without real ties to the class – the vast majority of Syrians and Africans who have

arrived in recent years belonged to the urban or peasant petty bourgeoisie – many of them will be burned on the stakes of exclusion and lumpenization.

How does xenophobic propaganda play out? By concealing that those masses of unemployed who will be lumpenized, who will pass into the infamous circuit of the illegal economy and petty crime, are mostly already here and have a local passport since they were born: it’s themselves, it’s us, it’s the kids who hang around in the squares. By blaming some of its imminent victims for the lumpenization, xenophobia hides the responsibility of a capitalism that no longer even has the capacity to exploit us all.

Yet the internationalists don’t seem to notice. What’s more, it seems that they let come back in through the window what they had chased out of the house by the door. It is no coincidence that the same texts that define the working class as a “multi-gender, multi-national, [multi-]racial front” bless looting as expressions of the “explosive spontaneity of the proletarian element.” ⁽⁴⁾ They do not understand that the proletariat, in its

1) Entelechy: the supposed vital principle that guides the development and functioning of an organism or other system or organization (Oxford English Dictionary).

2) Der Spiegel: Sahra Wagenknecht “[Deutschland muss seine Fachkräfte selbst ausbilden](#)”

3) Die Welt (Plus): Oskar Lafontaine “Staatlichkeit gibt es nur, wenn Grenzen geschützt werden”

4) In an interesting article on social racism in the USA: *The Dead-End of Racial Identity Politics* (E.S., *Workers’ Offensive*, <https://intransigence.org/2017/10/09/the-dead-end-of-racial-identity-politics/>) we read the following passage: “The self-anointed leaders of the so-called ‘black community’ (...) are deeply embedded in capitalist production relations and therefore complicit in the reproduction of racism. These ‘black brahmins’ (...) are little more than professional poverty pimps, opportunistically riding the wave of black proletarian discontent to achieve political prominence and riches for themselves. The most recent manifestation of this phenomenon is an activist network in the United States that calls itself ‘Black Lives Matter’, which has become synonymous with the movement against racialized police violence, a clear-cut example of capitalists and their lackeys co-opting the authentic resistance of black workers. This organization (...) attempts to harness *the explosive spontaneity of the proletarian element within these social movements, which often takes the form of riots and looting*, into forms of engagement with the capitalist system that do not interfere in any way with profit-making.” According to our information, comrades of Workers’ Offensive have changed their view regarding the presumed proletarian character of ‘riots and looting’, following a discussion with *Nuevo Curso*. [Editor’s note]

process of constitution as a class, not only asserts itself “upwardly”, against the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, but against the bourgeois order as a whole. And that the lumpen proletariat, ⁽⁵⁾ that permanent threat of decomposition of one's own class “downward”, is an essential part of the forces trying to contain and dissolve it.

Why does this happen? Paradoxically many young groups remain tied in their conceptions to a manufacturing moment of class life that will not return. Others may have confused precarization with lumpenization without being able to understand either one or the other. But the fact is that most of the working class already lives in precarization and their daily fear is lumpenization.

The harshest ideological attacks that the working class is currently suffering have been cooked in the stoves of the petty bourgeoisie. On the one hand, feminism and its tireless will to break the class in two: from the “gender strikes” to the proposal of [collective] agreements [on working conditions] differentiated by gender.

On the other hand, the return of “workers’ identity politics” ⁽⁶⁾ that feeds directly on the fear of lumpenization, presenting itself as a form of resistance. Workers’ identitarianism spreads the illusory belief, nurtured for decades by Stalinism, that **nationalism** is a guarantee against lumpenization. It is this lie inherited from Stalinism, and not the end of the PCI, which pushes part of the Italian workers to let themselves be fooled by Salvini. And it is that same recipe, as easy as it is false, that makes the antifascist neo-Stalinism, interclassist and aggressive, attractive for many precarious young people. ⁽⁷⁾ It is the same murky waters in which **Iannone** [‘Casa Pound’ in Italy] ⁽⁸⁾ or **Melisa** [‘Hogar Social’ in Spain] ⁽⁹⁾ try to fish.

The “integrationist alternative” is no less dangerous for the workers. On the same sterile and divisive logic of “identities” it attempts to squeeze the exploiting migrant petty bourgeoisies in, as civil rights defenders while presenting the savage exploitation of the weaker part of the class, not as capitalism in action that threatens us all, but as racism, as outdated and irrational prejudice. By preventing the class to understand what it is confronted with, “progressism” actually feeds its division, hiding the common nature of their struggles and throwing migrant workers into the arms of exploiters with whom they share a supposed “origin”. Moreover, in reality they feed the reactionary prejudice of the “impossibility of open borders” by hiding [the] real background: the global failure of decadent capitalism.

Historically, lumpen and lumpenization have been destructive forces against the workers and their affirmation as a class, in the service of the latter’s dissolution and as cannon fodder at the disposal of the most reactionary options of each moment. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Without remembering and recognizing this, what any worker knows and experiences everyday, from the slums of Buenos Aires to the neighborhoods of Cologne, from the slums of Algiers to those of Shanghai, it will not be possible for internationalists to elaborate any useful discourse. And useful here means useful to denounce the framework, whether Neofascist or Neostalinist, xenophobic or “integrationist”. But to do so, to overcome impotence, it is necessary to distinguish first and with equal clarity precarization, which is an essential part of class life, and lumpenization that denies us and threatens us all.

Nuevo Curso, August 15, 2018

5) Nuevo Curso defines the lumpen proletariat with quotations from Marx and Engels as “a mass of declassed, excluded persons, separated from the proletariat, that thrives economically from illegal trade, criminal enterprises, begging, state or private patronage or a combination of all these.”

<https://nuevocurso.org/definicion/lumpenproletariado/>

6) The theory of “Workers’ identity politics” originates from E.P. Thompson, who substituted “work culture” for class consciousness. As a consequence, the communist program is replaced by cultural sociology and the universality of the proletariat by nationality. See: ‘Nuevo Curso’: [Identidad obrera](https://nuevocurso.org/que-es-el-antifascismo/) no es conciencia de clase. [F.C.]

7) Read “What is anti-fascism” (Nuevo Curso, December 28, 2017) <https://nuevocurso.org/que-es-el-antifascismo/>

8) See: <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/CasaPound>

9) See: [https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/madrid/2016-](https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/madrid/2016-06-05/melisa-dominguez-ruiz-hogar-social-madrid-1211894/)

Source: <https://nuevocurso.org/proletariado-xenofobia-y-lumpenizacion/>

Translation and annotations: H.C., September 13, 2018
Proofreading: F.C. October 13, 2018

This translation and our comments first appeared on the [AFRD blog](#) on Sept. 14, 2018.

[06-05/melisa-dominguez-ruiz-hogar-social-madrid-1211894/](https://nuevocurso.org/06-05/melisa-dominguez-ruiz-hogar-social-madrid-1211894/)

10) Read “Lumpenization, looting and class struggle” (Nuevo Curso, May 4, 2018) <https://nuevocurso.org/lumpenizacion-saqueos-y-lucha-de-clases/>

Some reading notes from the editor:

1. A concrete demonstration of *Nuevo Curso*'s insistence on the dangerous phenomena of lumpenization can be found in "[¿Volverán los saqueos a Argentina?](#)" ("Will the looting return in Argentina?") of last September 3. A translation into English would be welcome.
2. A demonstration of *Workers' Offensive*'s political evolution on this issue can be found in "[The Black Panther Party and the Glorification of the Lumpenproletariat](#)" of August 26.
3. *Nuevo Curso* has commented on this latter article as follows on September 9: "Yesterday we counted some leftist reactions to the maturing that is taking place within '*Intransigence*' around the discussion on the political role of lumpen and looting. It is surely the least theorized and perhaps today, the most dangerous of

the class borders in much of the U.S.A. and the Caribbean. However, last week's attempts to de-rail workers' reflection and combativeness toward looting in Argentina warns us that it is by no means a local issue. Moreover, as the following article [by *Workers' Offensive* on the Black Panther Party] warns, it is intimately linked to the global promotion of "identity politics". Today, some of the groups, militarized political expressions of the lumpen, that appear in it have deserved [the romantic praise of the Spanish newspaper 'El País'](#). Everything points to our American comrades having "touched the nerve".

H.C., September 14, 2018

Blog articles on *A Free Retriever's Digest* are open to moderated online comments for 8 weeks.

Blog address: <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/>

'Nuevo Curso' has accomplished its first year

» Today marks a year since our first entry on this blog. It has been an intense year, marked by the aggravation of the commercial war and the progress of the danger of a generalized war. A year in which, from Catalonia to the American Midwest, from "Brexiters" and Corsican separatists to Salvini and the German AfD, all over the world the petty bourgeoisie has led and directed reactionary "revolts" in the lee of the crisis - towards nothing. It has also been a year in which the working class has rehearsed its first attempts at mass strikes in Kurdistan and Iran, Tunisia and Morocco.

In this time we have published 288 blog articles, 68 definitions in our Marxist dictionary and a dozen books and pamphlets, as well as retrieved dozens of historical texts from the Spanish, Argentinean and Mexican communist left and have maintained a large news channel. But above all we have managed to be useful to what we wanted to be useful: thousands of conversations that every day, in the workplace, in the neighborhoods, in the shared flats, make sparks with exploitation, make class consciousness. More than 28,300 people have read our texts in the last year. We cannot know for how many they have been useful. [...] we hope to continue being useful to comrades who have begun organizing in places as different and distant from each other as *Granada*, *Buenos Aires*, *Miami*, *Santiago de Chile* or *Fort Myers*. And that is what makes us feel most satisfied, even proud. A year ago we decided to take up again, to resume the lost continuity of the Spanish Communist Left, without sectarianism or "group patriotism", but with determination. It seems that we are succeeding. We resume. «

Nuevo Curso, September 27, 2018

(Source: [«Nuevo Curso» cumple un año](#))



"Ideologically we don't start, we resume, because we never interrupt. We have come a very long way, from the first time men have rebelled; we are on the road, much further still. We meet the most thoroughgoing revolutionaries of old and we raise up those of tomorrow. From idea to idea, from man to man, we are the imperishable instant of the vindictive energy of the individual through history, the continuous affirmation of human demands in the face of the contingencies of the reactionary political events.

To be a man, in our time more peremptorily than ever, is to behave in a revolutionary way. We exercise our duty as men without tricks, trembles or falsehood. So, we don't start, we continue."

Munis. *We Begin*, 1966

Class combativity in the Middle East

'Échanges et Mouvement' on the mass revolt in Iraq

The *Shatt al-Arab* is the common estuary of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, more than a kilometer wide, in the proximity of Iran and Kuwait, and with Basra and Abadan as centers on the Iraqi and Iranian side respectively. In the 1950s it was still a prosperous region, not only because of the oil, but also for an incredible ecological riches, adapted to the salty sea water and the fresh water of the rivers, [surrounded by] more than 15 million palm trees and a great agricultural riches.

Three wars (Iraq – Iran 1980 – 1988, the Gulf war of 1990 – 1991 and the Iraq war of 2003), the bloody repression by Saddam Hussein in 1991, the present instability because of the Syrian conflict and the penetration of Daech have annihilated this prosperity, and have caused irreparable damages to the ecological riches as well as to the agricultural activities. Moreover this annihilation has been aggravated by important punctures of the two rivers' waters by Turkey, Iran, Kurdistan and the region of Baghdad. An inhabitant of the city of Basra sees it as follows: *"Today the canals of the city are prone to filth. The turbines of the electricity plants stand still and the city of oil survives almost without electricity and drinking water. Half of the inhabitants are without a job."*

The global climatic change has drastically aggravated the reduction of the fresh water of the river: the sea level rise has made the water table become salty to the effect that the surrounding countryside – previously swamps, fresh water sources and rich of rice and corn cultures – has become inept for any culture. Recently the government has even forbidden cultures for consumption from what is left of fresh waters.

Last summer has been particularly demanding for the populations, with average temperatures of 50 °C and electricity shortages. All electrical current from Iran has been cut off for non-payment. The wars and the consequence of degraded water quality and the desertification have caused an exodus of the population towards the surroundings of Basra, in the hope for profiting from the oil manna. The regions assures ¾ of Iraq's oil production, it's the terminal of all pipelines of the country, with numerous oil refineries.

The province has 5 million inhabitants out of 38 million in Iraq as a whole. 4 millions live in the

surroundings of Basra, the population of which has grown by 1 million migrants since 2003. These migrants live in slums with problems in the delivery, notably, of water and electricity. On September 7, 30 persons had to be hospitalized for microbe intoxication via water. The unemployment rate exceeds 30%.

The whole population in this region is of Shiite obedience, like the government in Baghdad, a fact of importance because during the revolts we will come to speak about, nobody can put forward religious motivations. In fact, because of the absence of the Shiite authorities in Baghdad, the local religious responsables assume state functions, which explains why they have been particularly targeted. The adherence to the Shiite religion in combination with the social misery among youngsters (60% of the population is under the age of 24) explains why more than 60,000 of them have voluntarily entered the army to combat Daesh. 1,580 have been killed and 3,000 have at least lost a leg.⁽¹⁾ All have hoped to gain some advantage from this engagement, but once returned home they have been totally abandoned, undergo the common situation and are all the more frustrated.

The general situation has become all the more explosive because, whereas oil activities develop, the inhabitants have almost no chance of finding a job, as the multinationals who exploit the oil prefer to hire migrants all the way from South-East Asia, who are particularly docile and underpaid.

This explains the events that have broken out, starting with a simple blockage of a refinery's entrance on July 8 by youngsters who were determined to obtain a job. The brutal repression of this picket has been the spark that has inflamed the whole region in a vast protest movement against the local Shiite power, in which thousands demonstrated every Friday against the degradation of their living conditions, corruption, unemployment and repression. Notably they have blocked *the port of Umm Qasr*, through which

1) According to the statistics of 'Hachd al-Chaabi' ("popular mobilization units"), of 20,000 volunteers from Basra province, 1,580 have been killed and 8,000 have returned wounded, of whom 3,000 have at least lost a leg. Source: *Libération*, August 28, 2018: [Mutilés de Bassora, en Irak : «J'aurais préféré aller au paradis»](#). [editor's note]

the oil exports and food imports pass, and the main road arteries, and occupied the local air port. For September 7th the local government has declared a curfew: everyone on the road would immediately be arrested. The popular explosion on this Friday has become a real *revolt*, with the arson of public buildings, of the seats of the Shiite party, the Iranian consulate, barracks of Shiite militia, Mosques and the local television station. This social explosion, bereft of every religious or ethnic question, has unleashed an all the more violent repression: more than a dozen dead, dozens of wounded and hundreds of arrests have been counted. But the Baghdad government, for whom the oil stakes remain essential and who fears the extension of the movement to the Baghdad region,

tightens the screws of repression with the establishment of a *joint command of operations* with extended powers, a recommendation to take exceptional security measures, and with severe juridical condemnations.

Échanges et Mouvement, September 2018

Source: *Dans le monde une classe en lutte*, September 2018. Free supplement to '*Échanges*' n° 163; also on-line as "*IRAK : les séquelles de la guerre contre daesh*" at: <http://spartacus1918.canalblog.com/>

Translation and annotations: H.C., October 11, 2018
Proofreading: F.C.

A perfect Storm (Continued from page 32)

Results: *Brexit could turn into another euro crisis*, not in March but in *December*, when the European summit will take place that is supposed to close [the negotiations].

Few are paying attention to *Saudi Arabia* and its growing presence from Africa to Pakistan. ⁽⁶⁾ The imperialist tension with *Iran* heated and the maximum destruction effort put into the war in *Yemen* since June, the "Salman revolution" begins to write red numbers in the kingdom's accounts. King Salman, the prince's father, has paralyzed the initial public offer (IPO) of the national oil company, *Aramco*, fearing a point of no return in the internal fractures within the Saudi ruling class that have become increasingly apparent these months. ⁽⁷⁾ The only realistic alternative for Saudi imperialism today would be to raise oil prices. It is a difficult balance because increasing production ⁽⁸⁾ to sustain Trump's Iran strategy of drowning is a condition for the USA to maintain its support for the military offensive in Yemen. The US government, aware of the temptations of Saudi Arabia, this very week recalled that its support is not unconditional and that it is "*continually being reviewed*." However, US [oil] reserves are declining and Iran's supply cuts are being more and more clearly discounted by pushing the [price per] barrel upwards. In addition, Saudi Arabia and its closest ally, the United Arab Emirates, like Venezuela, Nigeria, Iran, Russia..., have an increasingly urgent interest in raising the price

of oil as soon as possible in order to try to escape the crisis. It is very difficult not to have significant increases before the end of the year.

All the aforementioned points tell us how the conditions for a "*perfect storm*" for capital are developing, with many uncertain horizons coinciding in December. That's not good news. When we talk about the war in *Yemen*, we are talking about *8 million people on the brink of famine*. When we talk about *British capital*, we are talking about a real meat grinder with low life expectancy for workers, which is why they call it the "*shitty life syndrome*", ⁽⁹⁾ in other words, impoverishment. When we talk about *Argentina's currency storms*, we are talking about very possible basic shortages and the bankruptcy of the state in a *country where 50.1% of the urban population is without housing, access to sewage, gas or a combination of the above and a third depend on public aid for health care*. Even in seemingly triumphant *Germany*, we are talking about the fact that today all wage gains have already been eaten up by inflation. A further worsening of the crisis can only mean a brutal worsening of the proletariat's most basic conditions of existence. For us, the perfect storm is capitalism: increasingly and irretrievably a factory of misery, exclusion and social decomposition, an incubator of wars. And we have more and more glimpses of what it can become. No, capitalist barbarism is not good news, the only possible good news is that we begin to confront it.

Nuevo Curso, August 31, 2018

6) Nuevo Curso, August 29, 2018, [El «milagro» etíope](#).

7) Al Jazeera, August 27, 2018, [Report: Saudi's King Salman blocked public listing of Aramco](#).

8) To the consequence of lowering the oil price per barrel (Editor's note).

9) The Guardian, August 19, 2018, [The bad news is we're dying early in Britain](#).

A perfect Storm

'Nuevo Curso' on the upcoming economic recession

On August 10, we saw *the US attack on the Turkish economy* as a way out of a new recession. Three weeks later the Turkish lira continues to bleed out, with the dollar at over 40 pesos and interest rates of 60% in *Argentina*. The currency storm has turned into a real monsoon affecting India, Brazil, Russia and Indonesia, where, by the way, not a few Chinese capitals were taking refuge from the trade war. ⁽¹⁾

Out of the whole panorama of the old “emerging” countries, only *Mexico* is saved. The reason: the agreement reached with the USA that raises the part of the value of cars that must be added in the USA from 62.5% to 75% to avoid paying [import] tariffs. ⁽²⁾ Mexico will retain most of the auxiliary industry and the USA will recover the industrial jobs it needs, among other things, to recover some of the consumption base and profit rate for U.S. capital. Or so Trump hopes. *Canada*, up against the ropes, goes all the way to enter under the new discipline as well. The message of the renegotiation of NAFTA (the “North American Free Trade Agreement”) and the Turkish situation is clear: anyone who has positive trade balances with the USA will reduce them to US dictates or lose even more.

The example of “resistance” is *China*. A dog-faced duel in which a new wave of tariffs is imminent that would affect 200 billion [dollars] in Chinese exports to the USA. China is trying to speed up the construction of its new ‘*Silk Road*’, allied with *Russia* in a scenario that is becoming increasingly conflictive, from Pakistan to Central Asia and Europe. The balance sheet? Chinese capital is starting to fall apart at the seams. It discovers, for example, that the gap in semiconductor technology is a strategic weakness that can be very costly if the trade war continues. The Chinese planner himself is already anticipating growing risks to the giant’s economy. ⁽³⁾

None of this is good news for *Europe*. The truce reached by Juncker becomes more fragile with each American triumph. Trump did not have time to threaten again with a 25% tariff on European cars, ignoring the supposed negotiations with the EU. Fear in Brussels led the Commission yesterday to lower the bar and announce its willingness to accept a “double zero”, i.e. zero duty for any American car entering Europe if *European cars* can be sold freely there. ⁽⁴⁾ It is a proposal that the Germans were angrily rejecting less than two months ago, understanding that it was just a malicious gambit to divide an exhausted EU. ⁽⁵⁾ The German manufacturers have a market in the USA, the French, who have also just left Iran, which was their main non-European buyer, have no market. “Double zero” would have an asymmetric impact on the European automotive industry, damaging France more than Germany.

The truce between the USA and Europe is becoming increasingly fragile. Trump threatens again and the European Commission is beginning to show its willingness to accept costs that will inevitably translate into unemployment and internal conflicts.

As if that weren't enough, *Brexit* is still there. Not only does it pull down British capital, it affects the whole of Europe. Continental governments are rushing to draw up contingency plans and are battling among themselves to house the emergency infrastructure in the event of a “*hard Brexit*” in March. The stagnation and incompetence of the British bourgeoisie is such that nobody really knows anymore whether Theresa May is bluffing. Indeed, the aggressive trade policy in Africa and the latest setbacks and denials would suggest that it is not. Macron’s promise to May of trying to lead a European consensus that accepts ‘flexibility’ in the British “red lines” has neither been well received in the European Committee nor in many of the EU member states.

→ Continued on page 31.

- 1) South China Morning Post, July 30, 2018, [Hong Kong's industrialists seek safe haven from US-China trade war](#)
- 2) The Guardian, August 30, 2018, [Nafta: what is it and why is Trump trying to renegotiate?](#)
- 3) SCMP, August 29, 2018, [China's state planner warns of rising economic risks in second half.](#)

- 4) The New York Times, August 30, 2018, [Specter of Trump's Car Tariffs Forces Allies to Give Ground in Talks](#)
- 5) Nuevo Curso, June 30, 2018, [Has "German Europe" exhausted itself?](#) (AFRD blog)