



A Free Retriever's Digest

An internationalist Articles Selection & Review

Vol. 2 Issue #6

December 2018 – January 2019

December 12, 2018

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Print edition €4,-

From the Editor

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

Dear reader,

With this issue *A Free Retriever's Digest* concludes its second volume. The contributions to this edition have been grouped in three topics:

- The mass uprising in Germany 1918/19;
- The rise of populism in Capitalism's historic centers;
- The rise of proletarian militancy in Iran.

The mass uprising that put an end to the massacres of the First World War is treated in the first part of an historic summary article by Ph. Bourrinet on *the workers' councils in Germany 1918 – 1923*. It is supplemented by Anton Pannekoek's assessment of the terrible defeat in the combats of January 1919 from 'Arbeiterpolitik': "*The outcome of the struggle*".

The dilemma's of Capitalism apropos of 'Trump' and 'Brexit' are treated by C. Mcl. developing on the rarely treated question of its *productive orders*. It is the first article of a forthcoming series, with researched empirical material in graphs and tables included.

The discussion topic presents three contributions by different authors on the dynamic and perspectives of the recent upsurge of strikes and demonstrations that has evolved from *the Haft Tapeh sugar cane workers uniting their struggle with the steel workers in Khuzestan province*, and on the questions this poses to politicized minorities who take up the workers' cause. This critical, yet hopeful evolution in a crucial country of the crisis- and war-ridden Middle East region deserves due consideration.

We hope to deliver an edition with relevant material for the necessary discussions among internationalists, and thank all who have collaborated in this effort.

Looking forward to receiving your feedback,

Internationalist regards,

Henry Cinnamon

(Editor)

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

October 8 – December 2, 2018 (week no.'s 41 – 48)

Workers' Struggles in the Middle East, November 2018

Strikes and mass protests in Iran. Sugarcane and Steel workers in Khuzestan unite; Solidarity develops

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---------|
| 1 | Title: | Internationalist Voice and protests in the Middle East | Week 46 |
| | Published on: | November 13, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | Baboon | |
| | Web link: | http://en.internationalism.org/content/16599/internationalist-voice-and-protests-middle-east | |
| | Subject: | | |
| | Genre: | Reply to <i>Internationalist Voice</i> : Street protests amid the barbarity of capitalism (Jordan, Iraq, Iran...) (August 13, 2018, ICC online forum) | |
| | Length (words): | 1,878 | |
| | Remarks: | | |
| 2 | Title: | The Crisis and the Rise of Workers' Militancy in Iran | Week 47 |
| | Published on: | November 19, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | D. Sadaati | |
| | Web link: | http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-11-19/crisis-rise-workers-militancy-iran | |
| | Subject: | Actualization on the reinforcement of the workers' struggles in Iran | |
| | Genre: | | |
| | Length (words): | 2,202 | |
| | Remarks: | Follow up of Iran: Class war against imperialist pretensions (May 10, 2018) | |
| 3 | Title: | Soviets in Iran: Is a Revolution Underway? | Week 48 |
| | Published on: | November 30, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | Nuevo Curso, November 23, 2018 (AFRD translation) | |
| | Web link: | https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2018/11/30/soviets-in-iran-is-a-revolution-underway/ | |
| | Subject: | Appreciation of the reinforced workers' struggles in Iran. According to Nuevo Curso, a <i>pre-revolutionary situation</i> is ripening in Iran. | |
| | Genre: | Apropos of D. Sadaati on Iran (see entry nr. 2). | |
| | Length (words): | 2,156 | |
| | Remarks: | This translation of: Soviets en Irán: ¿Hay una revolución en marcha? , can also be read on page 36 . | Spanish |
| 4 | Title: | Which solidarity with the arrested workers of Haft Tapeh? | Week 48 |
| | Published on: | November 30, 2018 | |
| | Author(s): | Fredo Corvo, November 25, 2018 (AFRD translation) | |
| | Web link: | https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2018/11/30/which-solidarity-with-haft-tapeh/ | |
| | Subject: | How to develop the workers' struggle? Questions for a necessary discussion among internationalists. | |
| | Genre: | Discussion contribution | |
| | Length (words): | 2,428 | |
| | Remarks: | This translation of Welke solidariteit met de opgepakte arbeiders van Haft Tapeh? ('Arbeidersstemmen'), can also be read on page 31 . | Dutch |

5	Title:	Iran: Workers' Strikes and Protests Continue	
	Published on:	November 30, 2018	Week 48
	Author(s):	D.Sadaati, 29 November 2018	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-11-30/iran-workers-strikes-and-protests-continue	
	Subject:	The workers' struggle at Haft Tapeh and National Steel in Khuzestan	
	Genre:	Update article	
	Length (words):	4,052	
	Remarks:		

Social protests in Europe: The "Yellow Vests" in France

First statements by internationalist groups and authors

1	Title:	¿Qué son «los chalecos amarillos»?	Spanish
	Published on:	November 22, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/que-son-los-chalecos-amarillos/	
	Subject:	Appreciation of the "yellow vests" movement in France	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,471	
	Remarks:	What are the "yellow vests"? Latest follow up: Macron derrotado por el fantasma de la lucha de clases (December 11)	
2	Title:	«Yellow vests» in France: Interclassism is contrary to the interests of the proletarians	
	Published on:	November 22, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	PC International (Le Prolétaire), November 22, 2018	
	Web link:	http://pcint.org/01_Positions/01_03_en/181122_yellow-vests.htm	
	Subject:	Statement for proletarian autonomy	
	Genre:	Leaflet	
	Length (words):	1,947	
	Remarks:	From French. Follow up: «GILETS JAUNES» OU DRAPEAU ROUGE ? (Leaflet, December 6)	French
3	Title:	GILETS JAUNES: NI PARTICIPATION, NI INDIFFÉRENCE	French
	Published on:	November 27, 2018	Week 48
	Author(s):	Le Fil Rouge	
	Web link:	https://lefilrouge17.blogspot.com/2018/11/gilets-jaunes-ni-participation-ni.html	
	Subject:	The root causes of the movement	
	Genre:	Background article	
	Length (words):	1,935	
	Remarks:	"The recent mobilizations of the "yellow vests" simultaneously sheds light on a process of crisis and a modification of the social equilibrium. They constitute an example of the erosion of the "middle classes".	
4	Title:	Communiqué on the social revolt in France (December 2nd, 2018)	
	Published on:	December 3, 2018	Week 49
	Author(s):	IGCL, 2 December 2018	
	Web link:	http://igcl.org/Communique-du-GIGC-sur-la-revolte	French
	Subject:	Limits of an inter-class movement; how to advance the proletarian perspective?	
	Genre:	Communiqué. A call for collaboration and regroupment	
	Length (words):	2,189	
	Remarks:	English translation on <i>AFRD's blog</i> at: On the movement of the "Yellow Vests" in France	

5	Title:	The "Yellow Vest" movement: the proletariat must respond to the attacks of capital on its own class terrain!	
	Published on:	December 4, 2018	Week 49
	Author(s):	RI (ICC), 25 November 2018	
	Web link:	http://en.internationalism.org/content/16609/yellow-vest-movement-proletariat-must-respond-attacks-capital-its-own-class-terrain	
	Subject:		
	Genre:	Article	
	Length (words):	3,252	
	Remarks:	From French	

6	Title:	Les Gilets Jaunes: La crise s'approfondit	French
	Published on:	December 6, 2018	Week 49
	Author(s):	Olivier, 30 November 2018	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/fr/articles/2018-12-06/les-gilets-jaunes-la-crise-s%E2%80%99approfondit	
	Subject:	Vision on an inter-class movement	
	Genre:	Article	
	Length (words):	1,976	
	Remarks:	Translations in English and German available	

The November 1918 mass uprising in Germany and the revolutionary wave 1917 - 1923

Recent articles: historiography, documents and positions

1	Title:	Zur Novemberrevolution 1918 (I)	German
	Published on:	October 1, 2018	Week 40
	Author(s):	Ph. Bourrinet / Fredo Corvo (editor)	
	Web link:	https://arbeiterstimmen.wordpress.com/2018/10/01/zur-novemberrevolution-1918/	
	Subject:	1. Introduction. With remarks by the editor on the "double revolution"	
	Genre:	Translation of " <i>Les conseils ouvriers en Allemagne 1918-23</i> ". (<i>'Controverses'</i> Nr. 5, May 2018). Supplemented by selected historical texts and excerpts.	
	Length (words):	5,679	
	Remarks:	Documents: 3 articles by Anton Pannekoek in ' <i>Arbeiterpolitik</i> ' N° 47, 48, 52 (1918) & N° 1 (1919).	

2	Title:	Zur Novemberrevolution 1918 (II) - Von November 1918 Zirkus Busch zur Münchner "Räte"-Republik 1919	German
	Published on:	October 29, 2018	Week 44
	Author(s):	Ph. Bourrinet / Fredo Corvo (editor)	
	Web link:	https://arbeiterstimmen.wordpress.com/2018/10/29/von-november-1918-zirkus-busch-zur-muenchner-raete-republik-1919/	
	Subject:	2. Duality of power - an increasingly unequal power relation.	
	Genre:	Translation of " <i>Les conseils ouvriers en Allemagne 1918-23</i> ". (<i>'Controverses'</i> Nr. 5, May 2018). Supplemented by selected historical texts and excerpts.	
	Length (words):	5,331	
	Remarks:	Documents: 1 article by Anton Pannekoek in ' <i>Arbeiterpolitik</i> ' N° 50 (1918), 121; an article from the ' <i>Münchner Rote Fahne</i> ' N° 21, 9 April 1919; and a <i>Leaflet</i> distributed in Munich on the same day.	

3	Title:	Zur Novemberrevolution 1918 (III) - Bürgerlich-parlamentarische Demokratie oder proletarische Räterepublik? Konterrevolution!	German
	Published on:	November 19, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	Ph. Bourrinet / Fredo Corvo (editor)	
	Web link:	https://arbeiterstimmen.wordpress.com/2018/11/19/buergerlich-parlamentarische-demokratie-oder-proletarische-raeterepublik-konterrevolution/	
	Subject:	3. The constituent assembly buries the councils. The defeat of January 1919 and the killing of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.	
	Genre:	Translation of " <i>Les conseils ouvriers en Allemagne 1918-23</i> ". (' <i>Controverses</i> ' Nr. 5, May 2018). Supplemented by selected historical texts and excerpts.	
	Length (words):	7,054	
	Remarks:	Documents: Rosa Luxemburg, "Eberts Mamelucken" (' <i>Rote Fahne</i> ', 20 December 1918); extracts from her speech at the foundation of the KPD. Karl Liebknecht: "Trotz Alledem!" (' <i>Rote Fahne</i> ', January 14, 1919); 2 articles by Anton Pannekoek in ' <i>Arbeiterpolitik</i> ' Nr. 5, February 1, 1919)	
4	Title:	Die Novemberrevolution	German
	Published on:	November 9, 2018	Week 45
	Author(s):	Nelke	
	Web link:	http://swiderstand.blogspot.de/2018/11/09/die-novemberrevolution/	
	Subject:	Germany, November 1918 mass uprising	
	Genre:	Pamphlet presentation	
	Length (words):	5,928	
	Remarks:	Chapter: "Die revolutionäre Nachkriegskrise in Deutschland (1918-1923)".	
5	Title:	100 Years ago, the proletariat made the ruling class tremble	
	Published on:	November 5, 2018	Week 45
	Author(s):	ICC, November 1, 2018	
	Web link:	http://en.internationalism.org/content/16592/100-years-ago-proletariat-made-ruling-class-tremble	
	Subject:	Germany, November 1918 mass uprising	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	3,917	
	Remarks:		
6	Title:	Lest We Forget: Workers Stopped Capitalism's First World War	
	Published on:	November 6, 2018	Week 45
	Author(s):	CWO	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-11-06/lest-we-forget	
	Subject:	The November 1918 Armistice / Brest-Litovsk.	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	2,127	
	Remarks:	Aurora (Broadsheet of the CWO), No.45	
7	Title:	A Hundred Years On: Lessons of the German Revolution	
	Published on:	November 9, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	Jock, revised article with help of the GIS	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-11-09/a-hundred-years-on-lessons-of-the-german-revolution	
	Subject:	Lessons of the November 1918 mass uprising in Germany.	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	5,454	
	Remarks:		

8	Title:	100 years ago, revolution in Germany	
	Published on:	November 12, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	ICC	
	Web link:	http://en.internationalism.org/content/16595/100-years-ago-revolution-germany	
	Subject:	Two article series by the ICC on Germany in the revolutionary wave 1917 - 1923.	
	Genre:	Article listing, with a brief introduction.	
	Length (words):	874	
	Remarks:		
9	Title:	The Significance of the German Revolution	
	Published on:	November 23, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	Jock (CWO), November 21, 2018	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-11-23/the-significance-of-the-german-revolution	
	Subject:	Reflections on the CWO/ICT Public Meeting in London, November 17 2018	
	Genre:	Discussion	
	Length (words):	3,564	
	Remarks:		
10	Title:	Leçons du mouvement des conseils dans les trois révolutions : Russie, Allemagne et Hongrie, 1917-1919. (I)	French
	Published on:	November 20, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	Ph. Bourrinet	
	Web link:	http://pantopolis.over-blog.com/2018/11/lecons-du-mouvement-des-conseils-dans-les-trois-revolutions-russie-allemande-et-hongrie-1917-1919.partie-i.html	
	Subject:	Lessons of the workers' council movement 1917 - 1919	
	Genre:	Synthetic article	
	Length (words):	4,172	
	Remarks:		

Documents of the historical communist Lefts

Pannekoek on the German November uprising of 1918; Radek on the foreign policy of Soviet Russia in 'Kommunist' #2 (April 1918); the communist Left in Poland.

1	Title:	Radek on the "Defeat" of Brest-Litovsk	
	Published on:	October 29, 2018	Week 44
	Author(s):	Tinkotka (CWO)	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-10-29/radek-defeat-brest-litovsk	
	Subject:	The foreign policy of the Soviet Republic	
	Genre:	1 st Article translation from the revue " <i>Kommunist</i> " nr.2 (April 1918). With an introduction by the CWO.	
	Length (words):	4,816	
	Remarks:	Continuation of CWO's translation series from: "Moscou 1918; <i>La Revue Kommunist</i> - Les communistes de gauche contre le capitalisme d'Etat" (Smolny, Toulouse, 2011)	
2	Title:	Poland: One Hundred Years of Bourgeois Dictatorship	
	Published on:	November 8, 2018	Week 45
	Author(s):	Dyjbass (CWO)	
	Web link:	http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2018-11-08/poland-one-hundred-years-of-bourgeois-dictatorship	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	3,590	
	Remarks:		

3	Title:	Anton Pannekoek, 1918: De Duitse Revolutie	Dutch
	Published on:	November 12, 2018	Week 46
	Author(s):	Anton Pannekoek	
	Web link:	https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2018/11/12/anton-pannekoek-1918-de-duitse-revolutie/	
	Subject:	The beginning of the mass uprising in Germany, November 1918.	
	Genre:	Transcription from source.	
	Length (words):	3,360	
	Remarks:	Source: ' <i>De Nieuwe Tijd</i> ', 23e Jg., 1918, p. 509-515 (pdf facsimile available)	

The international Situation – Europe and the USA

Racism and anti-racism in Germany; The CDU changing the guard. France: More attacks by Macron government. Class relations in the USA

1	Title:	Gegen Rassismus und autoritäre Formierung: Das Problem heißt Kapitalismus!	German
	Published on:	October 12, 2018	Week 41
	Author(s):	GIS (ICT)	
	Web link:	http://gis.blogspot.de/2018/10/12/gegen-rassismus-und-autoritaere-formierung-das-problem-heisst-kapitalismus/	
	Subject:	On the racist and anti-racist campaigns in Germany (apropos of the events in Chemnitz, Saxony)	
	Genre:	Broadsheet main article	
	Length (words):	1,759	
	Remarks:	Germinal No. 14. English translation by CW0 (October 17, 2018): Against Racism and Authoritarianism: the Problem is Capitalism!	

2	Title:	Merkel: una dimision a plazos	Spanish
	Published on:	October 30, 2018	Week 44
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/merkel-una-dimision-a-plazos/	
	Subject:	The political crisis of the German bourgeoisie - Merkel's first step	
	Genre:	Update article	
	Length (words):	1,319	
	Remarks:		

3	Title:	Macron amplifie les attaques au service du Capital. Seule la lutte de classe anticapitaliste permettra de résister et de vaincre !	French
	Published on:	October 18, 2018	Week 42
	Author(s):	Parti Communiste International (Le Proletaire)	
	Web link:	http://pcint.org/01_Positions/01_01_fr/181018_attaques-macron.htm	
	Subject:	Austerity measures in France continue	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,813	
	Remarks:		

4	Title:	Contre la hausse des carburants et les taxocrates de tout bord.	French
	Published on:	November 14, 2018	Week 46
	Author(s):	G.Bad	
	Web link:	http://spartacus1918.canalblog.com/archives/2018/11/14/36866063.html	
	Subject:		
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	925	
	Remarks:		

5	Title:	Retraite le système de réversion remis en cause par le gouvernement Macron.	French
	Published on:	December 1, 2018	Week 48
	Author(s):	G. Bad, 29 November 2018	
	Web link:	http://spartacus1918.canalblog.com/archives/2018/12/01/36908717.html	
	Subject:	Pension "reform" in France	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,129	
	Remarks:		

6	Title:	Class relations in the US - a background text	Week 46
	Published on:	November 16, 2018	
	Author(s):	Angry Workers	
	Web link:	https://angryworkersworld.wordpress.com/2018/11/16/class-relations-in-the-us-a-background-text/	
	Subject:		
	Genre:	Background article	
	Length (words):	4,415	
	Remarks:		

The international Situation – South and Central America

Brazil – the election of Bolsonaro; the Migrants' March; Repression in Nicaragua

1	Title:	Que venha Bolsonaro	Portuguese
	Published on:	October 20, 2018	Week 42
	Author(s):	Fagner Enrique	
	Web link:	http://passapalavra.info/2018/10/123251/	
	Subject:	The election of Bolsonaro as president	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,600	
	Remarks:		

2	Title:	Bolsonaro Presidente	Spanish
	Published on:	October 29, 2018	Week 44
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/bolsonaro-presidente/	
	Subject:	The election of Bolsonaro as president	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	1,025	
	Remarks:		

3	Title:	La signification de l'élection de Bolsonaro et les tâches des prolétaires d'avant-garde	French
	Published on:	November 4, 2018	Week 44
	Author(s):	PCInt	
	Web link:	http://www.pcint.org/01_Positions/01_01_fr/181104_bresil-bolsonaro.htm	
	Subject:	The election of Bolsonaro as president	
	Genre:	Statement of position	
	Length (words):	2,519	
	Remarks:		

4	Title:	Marcha migrante	Spanish
	Published on:	October 24, 2018	Week 43
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/marcha-migrante/	
	Subject:	The migrant march from Central America to the US-border	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	2,469	
	Remarks:	Migration and refugee question	
5	Title:	LA TERREUR D'ÉTAT S'IMPOSE AU NICARAGUA ET ÉTEND LE CHAOS DANS LA RÉGION	French
	Published on:	October 24, 2018	Week 43
	Author(s):	'Revolucion Mundial', section of the ICC in Mexico (25 September 2018)	
	Web link:	http://fr.internationalism.org/content/9773/terreur-detat-simpose-au-nicaragua-et-etend-chaos-region	
	Subject:	Nicaragua: Terror by the Sandinists	
	Genre:	Regional	
	Length (words):	2,510	
	Remarks:		

Internationalist milieu

Internationalists in Russia; Balance sheet of an international appeal; the question of the Party

1	Title:	Les six principes du groupe marxiste de Krasnoïarsk (communiste-internationaliste)	French
	Published on:	October 15, 2018	Week 42
	Author(s):	Pantopolis	
	Web link:	http://pantopolis.over-blog.com/2018/10/les-six-principes-du-groupe-marxiste-de-krasnoïarsk-communiste-internationaliste.html	
	Subject:	The internationalist communists of Krasnoyarsk	
	Genre:	Principles	
	Length (words):	767	
	Remarks:	Revolutionary milieu in Russia	
2	Title:	Afterword - Once upon a time there was an appeal for an international meeting in Kurdistan...	
	Published on:	October 26, 2018	Week 43
	Author(s):	TRĪDNĪ VÁLKA (Class War), 24 October 2018	
	Web link:	https://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/afterword-once-upon-a-time-there-was-an-appeal-for-an-international-meeting-in-kurdistan/	
	Subject:	Negative balance sheet of an internationalist appeal	
	Genre:	Discussion, statement	
	Length (words):	1,672	
	Remarks:	Available in several languages	
3	Title:	El partido de clase a la luz de las luchas en Irán	Spanish
	Published on:	November 25, 2018	Week 47
	Author(s):	Nuevo Curso	
	Web link:	https://nuevocurso.org/el-partido-de-clase-a-la-luz-de-las-luchas-en-iran/	
	Subject:	Organization question: the proletarian party	
	Genre:		
	Length (words):	3,018	
	Remarks:	English translation by the CWO (December 5, 2018): The Class Party in the Light of the Struggles in Iran	

The Workers' Councils in Germany 1918-23 (I.)

A political-historical synthesis

'To think of emancipation', a century after the global revolutionary wave that began in 1917, is to question the very term emancipation. Who is the subject of this emancipation and who emancipates who, in a struggle that is anything but an ideological game between four walls. This emancipation has its source in the working class (manual and intellectual). It cannot be assimilated to a "struggle of the people", whose "Cause" would be national and patriotic.

'To think of emancipation' in [2018] is to look back at the great proletarian revolutionary insurrections in Russia and Germany and draw lessons from them at the beginning of the third millennium. In doing so, the revolution in Germany from 1918 to 1921 is an essential milestone, since it raised the question of the forms of organization of any revolutionary class struggle: workers councils, workers' unions, revolutionary factory organizations, factory committees or action committees. Like the Russian Revolution, it raised, but to a lesser degree - in the absence of a real takeover of power - the question of socialization of the means of production, and therefore of the abolition of the capitalist system based on profit.

The mass revolt of November 1918

As in Russia in 1905 after the defeat against Japan, and again in February 1917, the councils that emerged in Germany were the product of war, more precisely military defeats that created a power vacuum. An article by Liebknecht published after November 9, 1918 perfectly summarizes this situation of internal collapse, where the masses of workers and proletarians in uniform will rush into:

"The victory of the masses of workers and soldiers was not so much due to their impact force, but to the internal collapse of the previous system; the political form of the revolution was not only proletarian action, but flight by the ruling classes from the responsibility for the course of events as well; the flight by the ruling classes that, with a sigh of relief, left the liquidation of their bankruptcy to the proletariat, hoping in this way to escape from social revolution, whose weather lightning brings cold sweat to their foreheads." ⁽¹⁾

These councils are assemblies of workers, but also of soldiers who – as in Russia – want to put an end to the war. They are the expression of a generalized revolt of workers starving and exhausted by the mili-

tarization of daily life, which is reflected in repeated strikes in the major sectors of industry, more and more in a revolutionary spirit: strikes in April 1917 (300,000 workers in Berlin) and January 1918 (1 million strikers in the Reich). During these struggles, the imperial power and social democracy were unanimous: *"Whoever goes on strike while our armies are facing the enemy is a dog"* (General Groener). ⁽²⁾ On 31 January 1918, Ebert, leader of the SPD, told the strikers of a Berlin factory that they had *"the duty to support their brothers and fathers at the front and to provide them with the best weapons."* ⁽³⁾ He was interrupted by cries of *"strikebreaker"* and had to back

1) Liebknecht, *„Das, was ist“*, *Die Rote Fahne* Nr. 6, 21 November 1918.

2) Quoted by P. Broué, *Révolution en Allemagne 1917-23*, Éd. de minuit, Paris, 1971, p.103. The trades unions tuned in. The *Vorwärts* of 27 April 1917 launched an appeal to put an end to the strikes: *"(...) At the present hour work stops are to be avoided; preservation and security of the Reich come first. After all demonstrations by the opponents of Germany there is no doubt with politically mature people that not a diminishing but only an augmentation of Germany's capacity of resistance can bring us a rapid peace."* [From the front page article *"The Trade Unions to the Armament Workers. Work Stops are to be avoided! - A Warning Call by the Trades Unions"*]

3) Broué, id.

down quickly. The SPD had to wait until 4 October 1918 before being associated with the war effort [by participation in the government]. Appointed Chancellor of the Reich, Prince Max von Baden formed a coalition government consisting of bourgeois democrats and the social democrats, Friedrich Ebert, Gustav Bauer and Philipp Scheidemann.

However, it was the revolt of the mariners of Kiel (November 4, 1918), on the Baltic Sea, that brought about the fall of the imperial regime. Almost without a shot, the sailors seized power and received the support of the workers of Kiel who conjointly formed workers' and soldiers' councils. Gustav Noske, who would later called himself "*blood hound*" ("*Bluthund*") of the counterrevolution, was sent by Max von Baden, the new chancellor, to take the leadership of the movement and smother it quickly, before the army cannoned Kiel and reduced it to ashes.

But it is already too late, because in a few days the whole country sees the emergence of workers' and soldiers' councils. There will be 10,000. German cities are covered with red flags and human tides run through the streets singing the International. It was a kind of 'forty-eight spirit' ⁽⁴⁾, where "*everyone swam in mutual trust*", "*festivals of friendship*" were held, in short an atmosphere of "*a universal fraternization of the classes*" reigned. ⁽⁵⁾

4) Referring to the 1848 bourgeois revolutions in Europe (translator's note).

5) Broué, id.

Sometimes it was self-exaltation, where verbal radicalism hardly hid the lack of a real revolutionary project. In a city like Hamburg, *Die Rote Fahne*, the paper of the councils set up by Paul Frölich, proclaimed: "*This is the beginning of the German revolution, the world revolution! ... Long live world Bolshevism!*" ⁽⁶⁾ But in Hamburg the power of the aristocratic Senate was never questioned. The most "radical", such as Laufenberg and Wolffheim – in 1919-1920 theorists of "national-Bolshevism" – pushed for moderation, avoided any call for armed struggle, approved the idea of a National Assembly, and then suddenly declared themselves "anti-parliamentarians". ⁽⁷⁾

From the very beginning, a great political confusion dominated the councils of workers and soldiers, even among their most radical elements. In his memoirs, a radical mariner on the vessel *Helgoland* gives an idea of the level of consciousness of the workers and proletarians in uniform: "*Sign peace immediately. Send soldiers and sailors home. Appoint Scheidemann as Chancellor and Liebknecht as Minister of War*". ⁽⁸⁾

6) Paul Frölich, Rudolf Lindau, Albert Schreiner & Jakob Walcher: *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (1929), Verlag Neue Kritik, Frankfurt, 1970, p. 192.

7) Paul Frölich, *Autobiographie 1890-1921*, Science marxiste, Montreuil-sous-Bois, 2011, p. 180.

8) Quoted by Gilbert Badia, *Histoire de l'Allemagne contemporaine*, Messidor, Paris, 1987, p. 80.

Duality of powers – An increasingly unequal balance of power

On the surface there was a double power: the councils of workers and soldiers on the one hand, the new government on the other: Chancellor *Ebert*, who led a coalition dominated by socialist parties, the SPD and the "*Independent Party*", the USPD who had recently split from the former (1917). The program is clearly counter-revolutionary. Ebert declared in an aside with Prince Max von Baden that the "social revolution" evoked for him the hell of the damned: "*...I don't want it, yes, I hate it as sin*". ⁽⁹⁾

9) Prince Max von Baden, *Erinnerungen und Dokumente*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1928, p. 600.

To take the lead of the councils, the majority socialists know how to harp on the strings of unity, particularly felt in the working masses, who caress the vain hope of a "*universal fraternization of the classes*". *Karl Liebknecht* – who on 9 November refused to take part in the socialist government as a hostage – warned the 1,500 delegates of the councils of workers and soldiers who had gathered at the Busch Circus in Berlin, the day after: "*The counter revolution is already underway, it is already in action, it is in our midst!*". ⁽¹⁰⁾ Some of the soldier delegates, almost all

10) Jakov Drabkin, *Die Novemberrevolution 1918 in Deutschland*, Dietz, Berlin 1968, p. 166.

of whom were appointed by social democracy, threatened Liebknecht with their weapons...

The soldiers' councils, manipulated by the SPD, occupied the ground floor with their weapons, while the workers' councils modestly shared the gallery. Very quickly, the majority of councils fell into the hands of social democracy, which imposed its functionaries (SPD and trade unions) mostly without elections. For example, in Cologne, the local leaders of the SPD and the USPD formed a workers' council on 8 November in a meeting and by simple acclaim. The same is true in Kassel, where the council and its executive (the action committee) are formed following behind-the-scenes discussions between the two social-democratic parties and the trade unions. Sometimes councils are established that include bourgeois parties – such as the Catholic *Zentrumspartei* in the Ruhr area. When councils are elected, this is done on the basis of electoral districts, in which notables predominate. This is the case in Dresden, where the SPD almost takes the whole cake. This led to the rapid withdrawal (on 16 November) of the IKD (internationalist communists) led by *Otto Rühle*, who believed that the whole of the real movement was now in the streets and in the factories.

The pyramid of the councils is reversed: the trade unions recognized by the State, thanks to the SPD in power, see their influence increase from the bottom up, dissolving the local councils, dominated by the most radical [elements], into regional councils.

Nevertheless, in major regional centers, this takeover is not easy. The Bremen Council prohibits any meeting or demonstration in favor of the restoration of the Senate. Councils create their own armed forces, as in Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Hamburg. In Braunschweig (Brunswick) the Socialist Republic is proclaimed on 9 November, arming itself with a red guard of 1,000 members. The same applies to Bremen, where the Council Republic was formed a few days later, on 15 November. In industrial centers, embryos of red guards are formed from Halle to Berlin. In the latter city, the Spartakist attempt to create a Red Guard, called the *Union of Red Soldiers (Roter Soldatenbund)*, failed: it merely demonstrated in November and December. Liebknecht, who deals with the 'military question', relies on the police president Eichhorn, a left-wing

USPD who disposes of troops, and on the *People's Navy Division (Volksmarinedivision)*. The latter are very radical but they receive a salary. During the fighting of January 1919, after having suffered heavy losses in December against the troops of General Lequis, the sailors declared themselves "neutral" to continue receiving their pay.

The *Kingdom of Bavaria* is a special case. The sailors of the Austro-Hungarian port of Pula (Istria), who were also in revolt, arrived very quickly in Munich, where their determined presence neutralized any resistance from the Bavarian army. On November 8, the pacifist Independent *Kurt Eisner*, appointed prime minister, proclaims the Republic and the foundation of the *Free People's State of Bavaria (Freier Volksstaat)* with the support of the councils. Private property is maintained. It seeks a (very 'socialist') 'synthesis': Parliament *and* councils, as organs of a unified power. But the Spartakists (now having become communists) are in favor of boycotting the elections, as is the revolutionary workers' Council, with *Erich Mühsam* as one of its leaders. On 10 January 1919, Eisner has twelve members of the Communist Party and the revolutionary workers' Council arrested, including *Max Levien* (KPD) and *Mühsam* (anarchist). A spontaneous demonstration leads to their release. The SPD obtains the majority in the *Landtag*, and on 23 February 1919 Eisner is assassinated by a right-wing extremist while resigning. Another page opened in April 1919, very confused, that of the *Council Republic of Bavaria*, which was also quickly crushed a few weeks later, on May 1st.

As a book on 'the Communist Left in Germany' remarks, the study of a revolutionary period is not the fabrication of a new 'mythology', where parties and councils would always be 'revolutionary': "... *The "council-form" is no less a failure than the "party-form". Yet, even today, in imitation of the Leninists, councilists speak of the council as if it must always be a revolutionary council, while the latter constituted an exception within the German Revolution.*" (11)

It is this very weakness of the revolution, where radicalism is the exception at the outset, that allows the new social-democratic power to maintain a populist

11) Gilles Dauvé and Denis Authier, *The Communist Left in Germany 1918-1921*. Revised English edition, 2006, Ch. 5: *The 1918 "November Revolution"*, p. 69.

language. All power must go to the “whole people”, in short to the Nation, and is not be handed over to workers’ councils. On 13 November, the editor-in-chief of the *Vorwärts*, the central organ of the SPD, made a clear statement. The November ‘victory’ will not be that of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’; power will take the form of a ‘people’s democracy’: “Their victory will shine the brighter the clearer it is ex-

pressed that it is a victory not of violence, but of the universal democratic **people’s right**, that the workers and soldiers have won it for the **whole people**.”⁽¹²⁾

12) Friedrich Stampfer, „Die Reichsregierung und die Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte“, *Vorwärts*, Berlin, 13 November 1918. (Emphasis in the original). The article equates “proletarian dictatorship” with the rule of “violence”, referring to the “Russian chaos”. [Translator’s note].

The Constituent Assembly buries the Councils

The defeat of January 1919 and the assassination of Luxemburg and Liebknecht

The “power of the *Arbeiterräte*” (equivalent to soviets) therefore rapidly would give way to a constituent *National Assembly*, described as “democratic”. All the right-wing and central parties – whose motto was formerly “with God, for the King and the Fatherland” – proclaim themselves overnight “popular”, even “republican” and “democratic” (National German People’s Party, German People’s Party, Christian Democratic Party, German Democratic Party) and demand elections by universal suffrage.⁽¹³⁾ Since November 10, Ebert clarified the situation: as soon as possible there would be an election of a *Constituent Assembly* that would put an end to the “government of the People’s Commissars”. And in an aside with General Groener, Ebert certifies, on the same day, that it will be the end of Bolshevism.⁽¹⁴⁾

Against the election of a Constituent Assembly, which will be endorsed by the *Executive Committee of the councils* (the “*Vollzugsrat*”) that Rosa Luxemburg qualifies as a “*sarcophagus of the revolution*”,⁽¹⁵⁾ all revolutionary tendencies agree. If there

is to be a Parliament, it will be that of the councils *alone*, the true proletarian democracy against the illusory bourgeois democracy:

“The question that history has put on the agenda is: **bourgeois democracy or socialist democracy**. Because the dictatorship of proletariat is democracy in the socialist sense of the word... Without the conscious will and conscious action of the majority of the proletariat, there can be no socialism! To sharpen this awareness, to harden this will, to organize this action, we need a class organ: the imperial Parliament of the urban and rural proletariat. The convening of such an assembly of workers’ representatives, in place of the National Assembly of bourgeois revolutions, constitutes by itself an act of class struggle, a rupture with the historical past of bourgeois society, a powerful instrument of agitation of the proletarian popular masses, a first open, gruff declaration of war against capitalism. No excuses, no ambiguities – the dice must be cast. **Parliamentary cretinism was a weakness yesterday, today it is an ambiguity, tomorrow it will be a betrayal of socialism.**”⁽¹⁶⁾

ecutive of the united councils of Russia is – one may cry against it to one’s liking – certainly something different from the Berlin executive. The former is the head and brain of a tremendous revolutionary proletarian organization, the latter the fifth wheel on the wagon of a crypto-capitalist government clique; (...) the former is the living body of the revolution, the latter its sarcophagus.” (p. 160)

16) in Rosa Luxemburg, „*Nationalversammlung*“, *Die Rote Fahne* nr. 5, Berlin, 20 November 1918. Source: *Gesammelte Werke*, Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1983, Volume 4, p. 409/410. Our emphasis. In the quotation by Broué, op. Cit., the final phrases on “parliamentary cretinism” have been amputated.

13) Broué, *ibid.*, p. 169-170.

14) “The officer’s corps expects the government to combat Bolshevism, and puts itself at the disposition of the government for this.” Ebert replied favorably to this wish of Hindenburg and demanded general Groener to “transmit the thanks of the government to the Marshall.” (Quoted by Harman, op. cit., p. 81, our translation).

15) In *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*, Band II: *Die Novemberrevolution*. Malik Verlag, Wien, 1925, Ch. XIII: *Was der Vollzugsrat war*, Richard Müller relates the following esteem of the councils’ *Vollzugsrat* by Rosa Luxemburg: “The ex-

The left-wing Independents who play a typically “centrist” game, trapped between their proletarian base, sensitive to Spartakist radicalism, and their leadership propelled to government,⁽¹⁷⁾ cannot guarantee the suicide of the councils. One of the leaders of the revolutionary delegates (“*Revolutionäre Obleute*”), *Richard Müller*, president of the Berlin Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils, who had played a considerable role in the illegal strikes in Berlin’s metallurgy from 1916 to 1918, declared he was willing to risk his life to defend the councils. In his activity report presented at Circus Busch on November 19, he stated: “*We have to maintain our power, if necessary by violence. Anyone who wants the National Assembly is forcing us to fight. I declare openly: I have put my life on the line for the Revolution and I will do it again. A national assembly is a path to bourgeois rule, a path to struggle; the path to a national assembly will go over my dead body!*”⁽¹⁸⁾

The Constituent Assembly, before installing itself on February 6, 1919 in the grand theater of *Weimar*, did not pass over the ‘corpse’ of Richard Müller – ironically nicknamed “Müller the corpse” (“*Leichen-Müller*”) by his political enemies – but over that of thousands of workers, and in particular of the Spartakist leaders, like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in January 1919, and Leo Jogiches two months later.

The “suicide” of the Councils, programmed since 10 November, will be carried out in two stages by force and manipulation.

First of all, the government had to have militias, especially since the left-wing Independent Emil Eichhorn, close to Karl Liebknecht, had formed a workers’ security force within the [*Berlin*] *police headquarters* (the “*Kommandantur*”), two thirds of whom were volunteers, the other third of the police officers was allied to the Councils.⁽¹⁹⁾

On 17 November, Social Democrat *Otto Wells*, commander of the city of Berlin, and the military governor *Anton Fischer*, formed a corps of *republican soldiers*, financed by the “donations” of grand industrialists. They soon clashed militarily with the revolutionary left. Not safe enough though (because of their worker’s origin), Ebert set up the *Freikorps* (free corps) in December with the help of Noske, his “liaison officer” with the general staff. This corps of soldiers was recruited from assault troops and monarchist officers, was generously paid and soon was called the “Noske Guards”. The *Vorwärts*, like all bourgeois press, published paid advertisements to recruit “volunteers”, often from assault troops, real mercenaries in the pay of the regime.

In order for the counterrevolutionary forces to find legitimacy, the council delegates had to hand over all their powers to the government and the Constituent Assembly. The All-German Congress of Councils (dominated by SPD and trade union staff), meeting in Berlin from 16 to 21 December, gave full power to the ‘Council of People’s Deputies’. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht cannot make their voices heard. The left-wing USPD opponents only demand that the Councils have ‘their place’ in the Constitution that is to be adopted in 1919.

The way was thereby opened for the legal liquidation of the revolution, and in the first place in Berlin. Ebert uses both provocation and force. On 23 December, the government blocked the pay of the *Volksmarinedivision*’s sailors. [In reply] they sequester the SPD director Otto Wells and [subsequently] are attacked by General Lequis’ troops with cannons. The radicals surround Lequis’ troops, who have to surrender. The workers occupy the *Vorwärts* editorial bureau; for a few days it will be the seat of the *Rote Vorwärts*. Under pressure from the street and from the revolutionary, left-wing USPD delegates, the ‘People’s Deputies’ of the USPD resign on 29 December. They are immediately replaced by three SPD Deputies, including Noske. On the same day, at the eve of the KPD’s founding congress, Noske gathers the free corps for the final assault.⁽²⁰⁾ The bourgeois press, which was never

17) Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittmann Emil Barth are the three People’s Deputies from the “Independents” (USPD), in parity with Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann and Otto Landsberg (SPD).

18) Richard Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*, Band II: *Die Novemberrevolution*. Malik Verlag, Wien, 1925, Ch. IX: Demokratie oder Diktatur, p. 84; from the stenographic minutes of the meeting.

19) Chris Harman, *The Lost Revolution: Germany 1918-23* (London, 1997; Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2017.)

20) In the so-called “Dolchstoß-Prozeß” at Munich, General Groener described the agreement of Ebert with the General Staff, in October 1925 under oath as follows: “On December 29 Ebert has called upon Noske to lead the troops

banned, and the *Vorwärts* rage against the Spartakist "terrorists"; bills are glued everywhere: "Kill Liebknecht!" ("Tötet Liebknecht!").

The SPD's provocation takes place on January 4, 1919. The 'Independent' police president Eichhorn is dismissed, while Ebert and Noske inspect six extreme right-wing volunteer corps. On the next day, a crowd of 700,000 people respond to the call made by *the Independents (USPD), the revolutionary Obleute and the KPD* to demonstrate. In enthusiasm, after the *Vorwärts* was occupied by armed workers [for the second time], a 53-member tripartite joint revolutionary committee calls for a general strike on January 7, for "the power of the revolutionary proletariat" and subsequently for the "deposition of the Ebert – Scheidemann government". The Spartakist leadership, which had not been consulted on this initiative taken by *Karl Liebknecht, Wilhelm Pieck* and the USPD [leader] *Georg Ledebour*, was *against* an insurrection. The left-wing Independents, chased from the government, passed without transition from pure pacifism during the war to putschism...

While the USPD tried to negotiate with the government [twice], the tripartite Committee was showing the worst incompetence, with no real plan for a takeover of power and no real forces. The *Volksmarinedivision* remains neutral; on 9 January, a joint meeting of large Berlin factories calls for the formation of a SPD-USPD-KPD coalition government.

The result of this indecision is known. With the help of two additional social-democratic regiments, the Freikorps easily triumphed and shot at everything.

against Spartakus. On the 29th the voluntary units gathered and hence the combat could start." (Source: Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg. Gedanke und Tat*, 4th German edition, E.V.A., Frankfurt am Main, 1967, final chapter: "The path towards death", p.333.)

Contents of Part II:

- Disappearance of the councils. Formation of workers' unions and organizations of the unemployed.
- The last revolutionary uprisings: the Ruhr 1920. Red army and workers' councils.
- March 1921 – October 1923. From putschism to putschism. From the exaltation of the world revolution to the exaltation of national sentiment.

The *Vorwärts*, taken over by the Freikorps, called for the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. [After they had been assassinated at the night of 15/16 January, the *Vorwärts* claimed in its edition of January 17 that Luxemburg had been "lynched by a crowd", and that Liebknecht had been "shot dead at an attempted escape" from his armed guards, on their way to a prison.] There is no doubt that the assassinations were ordered telephonically by Gustav Noske. To the question by Waldemar Pabst, the Freikorps general staff officer, "what to do with the Spartakist leaders", Noske replied that it was "up to you [Pabst] to take responsibility for what has to be done".⁽²¹⁾

By February 1919, the total number of workers killed by the counterrevolution had already by far surpassed the death toll of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

End of the 1st part.

Philippe Bourrinet, September 12, 2017

Source: *Les conseils ouvriers en Allemagne 1918-23, Controverses No. 5* (May 2018), p. 30 ff.

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This translation includes some corrections to the French original, due to retrieval of quotations from German language sources. Insertions between square brackets are from the translators.

21) Klaus Gietinger, *Der Konterrevolutionär. Waldemar Pabst – eine deutsche Karriere*, Edition Nautilus / Verlag Lutz Schulenburg, Hamburg 2009, Dokument 5, S. 396f. [Editor's note: the article "L'hôtel Eden dans la nuit des temps" in *Controverses* Nr. 5 provides more details and sources on the treacherous assassinations of Liebknecht and Luxemburg.]

Documents of the historical Communist Left

A. Pannekoek: The outcome of the struggle (Arbeiterpolitik, February 1st, 1919)

The defeat of the communists in Berlin will, for the time being, be of decisive importance for the whole of Germany, perhaps for a long time decisive for socialism in the whole of Europe. Because it means the restoration of the reign of capital, secured by veiled military dictatorship. This may keep Ebert and Scheidemann as puppets for some time to come, as long as it seems necessary to win workers by fraud: but then they will fall. And with it the whole chimera of the "socialist" state, with which millions of proletarians were fooled for two months.

Where do the roots of the defeat of the proletariat lie? The word immaturity says nothing yet. One must know what this immaturity consisted of: for only in this way can the strength for later more successful struggles be won. If we want to summarize everything in a single formula, we can say that the legacy of the old Social Democracy brought about defeat. And the future victory will come only by shaking off this legacy.

Of course: the Social Democratic past is not solely negative. The German workers have brought a deep class consciousness from 50 years of propaganda and training. The fact that everyone knew immediately, as it were, that capital and labor face each other, and that only the overthrow of the reign of capital could bring freedom - something the masses in Russia, for example, had to laboriously learn in the revolution - has given the German Revolution a rapid pace and has caused the workers to immediately and stormily advance everywhere to the farthest positions of power. They immediately knew the goal and the front of the struggle. The fact however, that they allowed themselves to be deceived with regards to the road toward the goal, about the demarcation line, that they partly regarded the agents of capital as leaders and helpers and did not take the right action in the decisive moments, is to be attributed to the forms of struggle and thought which the old social democracy had imprinted on the masses in its time of ossification.

Not much needs to be said about the old majority party. Only limited, petty-bourgeois thinking workers - but there were and still are many - could be-

lieve that Ebert and Scheidemann would bring socialism, and that they could have done so if they only wanted to. The truth that socialism and freedom can only be fought for by the workers themselves, where they face capital itself, in the workplaces, in the streets - this truth need not even be emphasized. For the praxis of the action of the "people's deputies" must open everyone's eyes to the fact that all their action was directed only against the workers and aimed at the restoration of the old "order" and the old powers. For the proletariat they had fine words, such as socialism, freedom, etc.; but their deeds - and the same applies to the main part of all their followers, the party and trade-union officialdom - characterize them as henchmen of reaction, as devoted servants of capital. Is that strange? Restoration of the old order for them means restoration of the conditions under which they were well and good and played an important role, with the hope of reaching even higher positions. But they could not expect much improvement from a proletarian revolution.

However, it would not be fair to judge the significance of the old social democratic principles for today's struggles by the deeds of the traitors to these principles. The guardians of the genuine radical social-democratic party tradition are the independents. The independent party still has large masses of workers behind it who sincerely want socialism and reject any compromise with the bourgeoisie. Some, even among the leaders, are revolutionary, speak a revolutionary language, and thus keep the masses under their spell. What was their role? The same as before the war and during the war: they gave radical words as a substitute for radical actions. The old social democracy in its good times always used great radical words: that was its right when it had the sincere intention: we are still weak, but to the extent that we become stronger, our deeds will correspond more to it. But when action had to be taken, the worst legacy remained the words that one did not intend to follow with deeds. The extent to which the habit of the verbal protests had run into the blood of these guys was shown by chance: when during the Ebert-Haase government the Ukrainian revolutionaries complained that the German gov-

ernment let the German soldiers fight against them, the independents replied: we strongly disapprove of this; we vigorously protested against it. So, what more do you want? We have done our duty! And that was also their role during the Berlin struggles, which were decisive for the continuation of the revolution. By their verbal radicalism, they kept large masses of Berlin workers chained to themselves first, and then kept them from fighting.

If the Spartacus League had freed itself much earlier from fellowship with the Independents, the course of events might have been different. Then the smaller but reliable troop would not have been so quickly pushed into a decisive struggle. Now, of course, it exerted its influence on the whole radical Berlin working class; but it did not have the latter entirely for itself. This was already evident in the swaying of the revolutionary Obleute of the enterprises as to whether they should go along with the communists in the separation; the old devotion to the Independents held them tight. Now as the reaction advanced and wanted to eliminate Eichhorn, the masses acted in his defense, the Independents called for struggle, and the Communists entered the front ranks. But then the Independents immediately entered into negotiations with the government; they believed they were weakening Ebert, but the only effect was that they made their own masses dull, while Ebert let the reactionary units come with guns [artillery]. They raised the call for an "end to fratricide," as if the class struggle between reactionary soldiers and revolutionary workers was a fratricidal quarrel, paralyzing the workers' action; fearing the struggle, they pulled their masses out of the struggle and let the Communists bleed to death. And when Ebert had won, a "storm of protest" appeared in the "*Freiheit*", a ridiculous series of resolutions by workers' groups demanding Ebert's resignation - as if he, as if the victorious reaction would give way to the powerless words of those who had let the fighters down and thus caused the defeat! As if the world is moved by words and not by deeds, by the devotion of the whole person!

Where does this fickleness come from, this wanting-and-not-able, this conflict between word radicalism and fear of action? Because the Independents, as the guardians of a theory that is no longer up to date, often want to be revolutionary, but with their insight

and their knowledge they are essentially the same as the social patriots, therefore they always take these hard-boiled reactionaries as lost brothers and want to go together with them. Therefore also they shy away from those deeds that are now necessary, because they do not fit to their old theory. The pre-war social-democratic lessons have now become the worst obstacle to proletarian revolution. Only those who overcome them can be a firm fighter for the new world. Nothing is therefore more necessary than to persistently bring enlightenment about the essence of communism and its difference against the social democratic point of view. Then the workers will understand the lessons that are poured upon them from the praxis of these decisive times.

But what about the Entente countries themselves? We are immune to Bolshevism, a French politician declared, by our victory; Bolshevism is a disease of defeated peoples. To a certain degree he was right. First of all, defeat in war increases the misery of war to the highest degree, and then a defeated government is so weakened that it can easily be overthrown. In the Entente countries the symptoms are therefore different and the movement is necessarily backward and less conscious. The English proletarians are not yet in their mass for communism, but they are also not ready to go to war; but now they are pressing for demobilization. Thus they paralyze the government to a great extent in the struggle against foreign communism. That is the main reason why there can be no stronger action against Russia - and in the future against Germany.

But besides there is no doubt that communism itself is gaining ground in these countries. We learn little about it, because the strictest censorship still guards correspondence and newspapers. But the very fact that this censorship is still so strictly applied proves how much the governments there fear the intrusion of Bolshevik ideas and truthful news from Russia. From the time of the English parliamentary elections there was an account of a meeting in London where Muir of the Gas Workers' Union defended Bolshevism; similar events may have occurred elsewhere; and in Glasgow [John] MacLean, a thoroughly Marxist Communist who led shipyard strikes during the war and was detained for many years, received a large number of votes. In England, the communist movement leans on the spontaneous

strike movement that flared up in the working masses against the will of the large trade unions already in the years before the war; it does not find itself faced with a significant and ossified socialist movement, but rather with an old, rusty trade union movement that is maintained for practical reasons but has no spiritual power over the minds because it has no spiritual content of its own.

In France, too, censorship seeks to prevent the intrusion of Bolshevism and the leakage of news to the outside world. But this is not entirely successful. A Dutch newspaper ("N. Rotterdamer") recently reported from Paris on 15 January:

"Last Sunday, the socialist federation of the Seine department (of Paris) had called a large meeting to discuss demobilization, the most burning and difficult issues of the moment in France. The meeting had hardly been opened by the deputy Aubriot, when it became clear that the revolutionary spirit completely dominated the meeting and that the majority socialists Albert Thomas, Renaudel, Bracke were considered there just as the Spartacus people in Germany regarded Ebert and Scheidemann. The deputy Bracke was constantly interrupted by shouts during his speech: Long live Lenin, Long live Trotsky, Long live Liebknecht.

The deputy Laval was heard at first; but when he emboldened himself by saying that French democracy would be insulted if it was believed to be prone to Bolshevism, fierce protests broke out from the assembly and the International was sung out loud. The deputy Renaudel could not speak at all, so violently he was screamed down at his first appear-

ance. He disappeared after some futile attempts to take the word. Then comrade Pericat tries the same, but each of his words is greeted by the same call of the assembly: Long live Lenin, Long live Trotsky, Long live Liebknecht. The chairman had long since left the board table and no longer found it necessary to officially close the meeting."

This shows how the deeds of communism in Russia and Germany are already being echoed by the Parisian workers. It shows the mood of sympathy, under the influence of the own dissatisfaction against their government – admittedly also not much more. We do not need to have illusions that a revolution in the Entente countries is near. But this mood does effectuate that the governments are incapable of putting down the revolution in other countries. And if the revolution continues in Central Europe, then a new enormous driving force will act from there on the countries of the victors.

K[arl]. Horner [Anton Pannekoek], February 1st, 1919

Source: **K. Horner, Der Ausgang des Kampfes, Arbeiterpolitik**, 4th Vol. (1919), No.5, February 1. p.342-343. Facsimile pdf available at:
<http://aaap.be/Pages/Arbeiterpolitik-Bremen-1916-1919.html> (7.6 MB)

German Transcription: F.C., November 2018
 Translation: H.C., November 27, 2018



The Dilemma's of Capitalism apropos of 'Trump' and 'Brexit'

Crisis – Conflicts – Struggles – Populism (Part 1)

In *A Free Retriever's Digest Vol.2 #4 (August – September 2018)* we have published the introductory section of this article: "*Trump and Brexit: A new economic and imperialist orientation?*" that sets out the question to be treated. Hereafter you'll find it repeated in the *complete article*, introducing the concept of capitalism's successive "*productive orders*". From this angle of attack reflections are developed on the characteristics of the present period and its perspectives. As the author has revised his *overview table* of capitalism's four main productive orders, we include the updated version as an annex.

Trump and Brexit: A new economic and imperialist orientation?

The arrival to power of *Margret Thatcher* in England (1979) and *Ronald Reagan* in the United States (1981) were indicative of both an economic and imperialist turning point in the early 1980s: economic with the end of post-war Keynesiano-Fordist prosperity and the establishment of the neoliberal productive order; imperialist with the end to peaceful coexistence and the relaunch of the Cold War aimed at bending the Soviet bloc ("*Star Wars*"...). Combined with the internal crisis in the Eastern bloc and its loss of legitimacy following the mass strike in Poland in 1980, this offensive led to the collapse of the bloc in 1989 (The "*fall of the Berlin Wall*", gradual fall of many countries of the Soviet glaxis into the American sphere of influence, etc.).

Similarly, one may wonder whether the election of Trump and 'Brexit' in these same two countries would not constitute a new turning point:

- An imperialist turning point, illustrated by a resurgence of tensions between the United States and its main partners: sanctions against Russia, unilateral policy towards Europe on the Iranian nuclear issue, etc., but also by a resurgence of all-out war interventions: Syria, Iran...
- An economic turning point, marked by an unprecedented American aggressiveness towards its main partners since the end of the Second World War: unilateral protectionist policies, a desire to reindustrialize and weaken its direct competitors by explicit calls for the dismemberment of Europe, by economic and imperialist retaliatory measures against China (taxes on Chinese products, revival of

ties with Taiwan...), etc. Generally speaking, we are witnessing a unilateral withdrawal by the United States and/or an implosion - at its initiative - of multiple multilateral agreements of all kinds to replace them with new bilateral agreements resulting from an imposed balance of power: on climate, the nuclear treaty with Iran, NAFTA, the Asian Pacific...

This reorientation of these two key players of the international ruling class is all the more understandable as the latest economic crisis (that of 2008-09) marks a patent exhaustion of the neoliberal productive order that has now been raging for nearly 40 years. Indeed, since 2009, the heart of the capitalist economy has not really recovered, while the next crisis is already knocking at the door, despite the massive injection of liquidity and an explosion of debt to try to support activity. In other words: are the policies advocated by *Donald Trump* and *Theresa May* at odds with the economic and imperialist logic of the neoliberal productive order and do they announce new orientations, or are all these phenomena merely the manifestation of an irrationalizing capitalism, generating irresponsible political apparatuses that would act even against the interests of the ruling class at the heart of the great imperial powers?

This question is all the more legitimate as the political milieu, and in particular the Communist Left groups – too much imbued with their political certainties, missed the neoliberal turn and its implications in the early 1980s. We must therefore go beyond the commonplaces we can read in the very general positions of the internationalist micro milieu: the current situation would be a "*sign of the seriousness of the terminal crisis of world capitalism in its decomposition phase*", "*the mark of a moribund social*

system" and/or "the choice of the march to generalized war", etc.

This question of a possible economic and imperialist reorientation is terribly complex, because it involves a conjunction of factors – themselves evolving and fluctuating – both economic, inter-imperialist and inserted in a given force relationship between the classes. It will therefore be a question of trying to develop some guidelines at the level of the crisis (its gravity, the competing powers...), hegemonic tendencies on the international scene, and the state of the force relations between the classes. To do this, we believe that a pertinent answer can only be found within a coherent analytical framework that provides good keys for reading reality. This series of articles, the first part of which deals with the analytical concept of the *productive order*, will be devoted to the implementation of this framework.

Productive orders

To ensure its extended accumulation, capitalism must meet a series of imperatives: producing with sufficient profits, selling the commodities it puts on the market, guaranteeing the reproduction of the employees and proportionality between its economic sectors and aggregates, etc. However, contrary to an idea commonly conveyed, both by the dominant ideology and in the Marxist camp, there is not *one* optimal way to ensure these imperatives, and one *only*, but there are several ways, which, moreover, may differ from one historical period to another or from one country to another. Thus, throughout its history and in different geographical areas, capitalism has several times redefined its mode of functioning, enabling it to ensure the conditions for its viability. These redefinitions have varied according to political, social, economic and technical contexts. The various arrangements of conditions allowing for enlarged accumulation extend over a variable period of time – from 35 to 60 years up to the present: we call them "productive orders" (their historical succession is described below).

Like cars can run on petrol, diesel, hydrogen, hydrogen, ethanol, electricity, LPG, etc. that, despite their very different engines, all serve the same purpose – the transport of people or materials – the engine of the "economic machine" can also be arranged differently, as long as it achieves the same purpose: pro-

ducing and selling more and more commodities with sufficient profit. We can easily illustrate this by taking two productive orders chosen at the two temporal ends of capitalism – savage capitalism at the time of the first industrial revolution, and the "thirty glorious years" after the second world war: It is obvious that, in a world where wage labor is still not widespread, where productivity growth remains modest, where surplus value is essentially of *absolute* origin, where the technical composition of capital is still low and where a large part of buyers still belong to the precapitalist sphere (farmers, artisans, ancient aristocrats...), the arrangement of the mechanics of accumulation and crises cannot have the same logic, motives and interconnections as in an environment where wage labor has become dominant, where productivity growth is high, where real wages are indexed to it, where surplus value is essentially of *relative* origin, where the technical composition of capital is very high and where the buyers are almost exclusively in the pure capitalist sphere!

Similarly, just as a new car works well in its early years and then gradually wears out, eventually having to be replaced, productive orders are also functional for a given period of time, only to run out of steam and give way to another (or a variant of the old one). The international economy is thus made up of a succession of productive orders. We will have to specify the modalities of the succession of these different *productive orders* and their differences in relation to cyclical *economic crises*.

Cyclical crises, non-cyclical productive orders

Capitalism has experienced twenty-four international economic crises for nearly two centuries, ⁽¹⁾ if we retain, with Marx, the 1825 crisis as the first general crisis of capitalism: "... *only with the 1825 crisis big industry opens the periodic cycle of its modern life.*" ⁽²⁾ This gives us an average cycle of more or less eight years between each of them. These cyclical crises of capitalist accumulation take the form of a

1) In respectively 1825, 1836-39, 1847-48, 1857, 1864-66, 1873, 1882-84, 1890-93, 1900-03, 1907, 1911-13, 1918-21 (- 1923 in Germany), 1929-32, 1937-38, 1948-49, 1952-54, 1957-58, 1966-67, 1970-71, 1974-75, 1980-82, 1990-91, 2001, 2008-09.

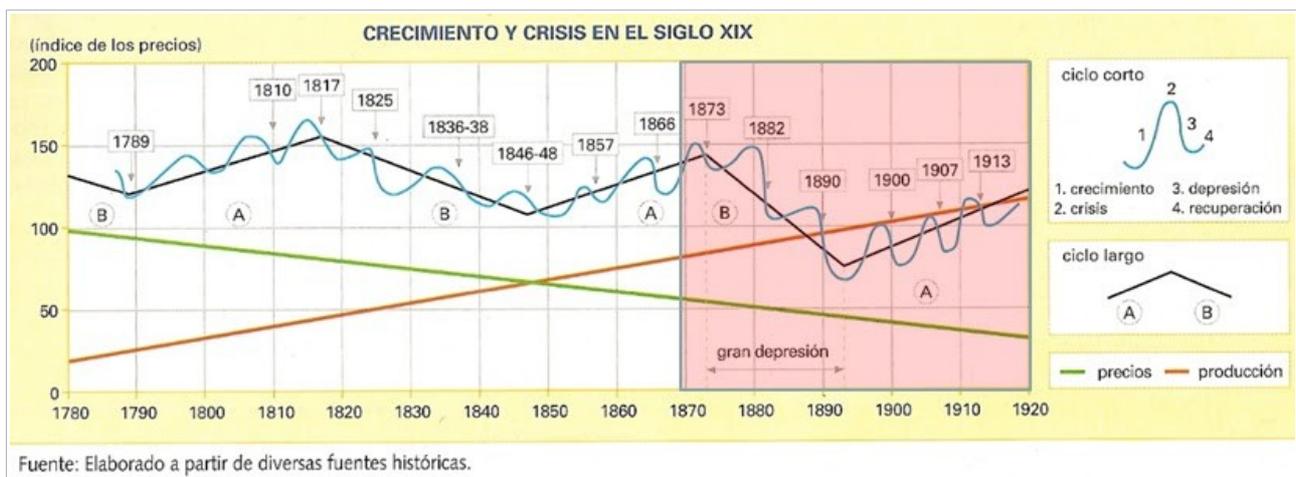
2) Karl Marx, Afterword to the 2nd German edition of *Das Kapital* (Volume 1), January 24, 1873. (MEW Bd. 23, p. 18)

"U", namely that the conditions that generate the depression put in place those permitting the relaunch, as Marx has well explained: *"The crises always are just temporary violent solutions of the present contradictions, violent eruptions that momentarily restore the disturbed equilibrium."* [...] *"The effected stagnation of production would have prepared - within the capitalist limits - for a subsequent expansion of production. Thus the cycle would have been, once again, completed. Part of the capital depreciated by stagnation would regain its former value. Incidentally, the same vicious circle would again be traversed, with extended production conditions, with an enlarged market, and with an increased productive force."* ⁽³⁾ The internal mechanism of the crisis thus

creates, by itself, the conditions for generating an *"enlarged market"*, an *"increased productive force"* and *"extended production conditions"* because, according to Marx: *"As the accumulation decreases, the cause of its decrease, namely, the disproportion between capital and exploitable labor force, disappears. The mechanism of the capitalist production process thus eliminates by itself the obstacles it temporarily creates for itself."* ⁽⁴⁾ This is illustrated in a graphic way by the undulating (blue) curve in the graph below, which includes all the dates of the international economic crises from 1780 to 1920.

3) Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, (Volume 3, 1894), III. Law of the tendential fall of the profit rate; Ch. 15: Unfolding of the inner contradictions of the law. MEW Bd. 25, p. 259 & p.265.

4) Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Volume 1, 4th edition 1894), VII. The accumulation process of Capital. Ch. 23: The general law of capitalist accumulation. MEW Bd. 23, p. 648.



As the saying goes: *"After rain comes sunshine"*. This is true for the cyclical crises of capitalist accumulation as we have just seen. However, this cannot be the case for the succession of *productive orders* because there is no mechanism to ensure their transition. Indeed, moving from one productive order to another requires a more global reconfiguration of the capitalist functioning at all levels: social, political, institutional... and not only at the economic level as in the case of cyclical crises. If the exhaustion of each productive order is inscribed in the contradictions of their modes of functioning (just as is the wear and tear of a car engine), on the other hand, the advent of a new order is not automatic because it does not depend solely on the economic mechanism but also on sociopolitical conditions and the

state of the balance of power between its different components.

Thus, the transition from one productive order to another follows the configuration of an "L". In other words, after a phase of sustained growth, the productive order takes place in a phase of lower growth and exhaustion of its functioning, a phase during which the reconfiguration of a new productive order can take place but without being unavoidable. This is shown by the oblique segments (black lines) crossing the undulating curve of the graph above, which identify these two phases of the "L" of a productive order, phase A of high growth and phase B of lower growth. While they differ in their logic of operation and succession, the temporality of the first three productive orders that crossed capitalism cor-

responds more or less to phases A (high growth) and B (low growth) of the industrial cycles identified by Kondratieff (whose growth rates are provided in the table below). This is no longer the case for the fourth Kondratieff cycle, which is divided into two distinct productive orders. This gives us the following chronology of productive orders:

1) *Manchesterian capitalism* (or savage capitalism) with the start of the industrial revolution in Great Britain (subsequently in France on the continent). It corresponds to Kondratieff's first cycle from 1789 to 1848 with a phase A of strong industrial growth from 1789 to 1817 and a phase B of weaker growth between 1817 and 1848.

2) *Victorian capitalism of the second half of the 19th century* (or fully colonial capitalism in Great Britain and France as other countries on the continent begin their industrial revolution in the same way as wild capitalism). It corresponds to Kondratieff's second cycle from 1848 to 1895 (this phase begins in 1840 in the table below) with a period A of strong industrial growth from 1848 to 1873

and a period B of weaker growth between 1873 and 1895.

3) *Consolidated colonial capitalism* ('consolidated' because it is now all the countries that have started their industrial revolution that are caught up in the same overall colonial dynamic). It extends from the end of the 19th century to the end of the Second World War with a phase A of strong industrial growth of the third Kondratieff cycle (1895-1913) and a phase B of weak growth (1914-45) corresponding to its exhaustion (the *thirty disastrous years*).

4) *Keynesian-Fordist capitalism* after the Second World War (since 1933 with the New Deal in the United States). Its best years correspond to the so-called *Thirty Glorious Years* (1945-75) or Phase A of the fourth Kondratieff cycle (see table below) while its exhaustion spreads from 1973 to 1982 more precisely, but until 1990 in Japan.

5) *Neoliberal capitalism* has been established since the early 1980s until today and corresponds roughly to the long phase B of the fourth Kondratieff cycle (see the table hereafter).

<i>Cycle de Kondratieff</i>	<i>Belgique</i>	<i>Grande-Bretagne</i>	<i>Allemagne (b)</i>	<i>Etats-Unis</i>
II A (vers 1840-1873)	5,2 %	3,1 %	4,5 %	5,4 %
II B (1873-1895)	1,3 %	1,7 %	2,5 %	4,9 %
III A (1895-1912)	3,4 %	5,4 %	4,3 %	5,9 %
III B (1912-1948) (a)	0,8 %	1,3 %	2,2 %	2,0 %
IV A (1948-1974)	3,4 %	2,9 %	3,9 %	5,2 %
IV B (1974-2008)	2,1 %	1,2 %	1,3 %	2,4 %

(a) **Années de guerre comprises.**
(b) **Allemagne de l'ouest pour la phase IV A.**

Sources : C. VANDERMOTTEN (1980); S. KLIZNETS (1956-1961), « Quantitative aspects of the economic growth of nations », *Economic development and cultural change*, Chicago, University of Chicago; L.H. DUPRIEZ (1966), *Des mouvements économiques généraux*, Louvain, Nauwelaerts; E. MANDEL (1976), *Le troisième âge du capitalisme*, Paris, UGE; Annuaire statistique des Nations unies; Banque mondiale (www.worldbank.org).

Tableau 67. Taux annuel moyen de croissance industrielle en Belgique, en Grande-Bretagne, en Allemagne et aux Etats-Unis.

In other words:

1) It took the long period of slower growth from 1817 to 1848 and the defeat of the revolutionary movements in the mid-19th century to move to Victorian capitalism in the second half of the 19th century.

2) It took the long period of weak growth at the end of the 19th century (1873-1895) and the increasing pressure of an ascending workers movement to drive the transition to the consolidated colonial productive order of the *Belle Époque*.

3) It took the defeat of the revolutionary wave between 1917-23, the period of weak growth and all

the political and social upheavals during the *thirty disastrous years* (1912-48 in the table) for the conditions of the deployment of the Keynesian-Fordian order in the developed countries after the Second World War to be put in place (but as early as 1933 with the New Deal in the USA following the crisis of 1929).

4) It took a decade of exhaustion of the thirty glorious years (1973-82), the rapid rise in unemployment

from 1975 and the decline in social conflicts from the late 1970s to allow the transition to the neoliberal order in the early 1980s.

5) As for the period of weak general growth of the neoliberal productive order, and its definitive exhaustion with the subprime crisis (2008-09), it opens a phase in which the objective bases for a reconfiguration of capitalism in a new productive order is possible, without however being unavoidable.

A transition to a new productive order or a sinking into barbarism?

As we have just seen, transition to a new productive order is not automatic, since such a passage imposes a reconfiguration of capitalism on several levels. In other words, it is not enough for the old to be exhausted in order for the new to emerge and become widespread. So what about the neoliberal productive order? Certainly, there are very good reasons to believe that it has reached its economic limits, but does this mean that a new productive order is knocking at the door and that social and political forces are there to carry it and impose it? Do Trump and May announce the advent of this new productive order on the economic and imperialist level?

Answering this question today is not easy because history has also taught us that past productive orders have not been set up just like that, and that it has often taken several years for them to emerge and become a system. Thus, while the main lines of Keynesian-Fordism emerged during the discussions on the Beveridge plan (1942), in the *Philadelphia conference in 1944*,⁽⁵⁾ and during meetings between employers, politicians and trade unionists in exile in London, it was not until the early 1950s that they took shape and became widespread. The same is true for the transition to the neoliberal productive order: the first elements emerged in the 1970s but they will only become a system in the 1980s. However, this does not prevent us from providing an answer with the elements of analysis at our disposal, but it can only be provisional and we reserve the right to change our opinion in the light of new ele-

ments. However, here is what seems to us to emerge from the current situation:

I. Certainly, the exhaustion of the neoliberal productive order makes a reconfiguration of capitalism necessary, but its failure must be obvious and large sectors of the bourgeoisie must be aware of it. This is partly the case in the United States and Great Britain where a significant fraction of the ruling class understands that neoliberalism does not only bring them benefits. However, there is no reason to believe that it will provide an alternative productive order to neoliberalism: its members remain convinced of its validity, at most they seek to mitigate its harmful effects on their interests. As for the rest of the ruling class, one only has to look at the last meeting of the world's leaders at the Davos Forum to see that they are still bathing in the neoliberal productive order and that the only criticisms are of a cosmetic nature.

II. Moreover, for a transition to take place, the model of a new productive order must also emerge and be credible for a large part of the bourgeoisie. However, this is not the case at present. Some sectors of the ruling class are even convinced that we are facing a very long phase of weak growth and that nothing can be changed, except to pursue the neoliberal logic where meager productivity gains are entirely confiscated by capital and where progressive transfers from the wage share of the GDP to it continue as before.

III. A transition to a new productive order likewise requires defeating the economic, political and social forces that live from the old productive order and convincing them or conforming them to the functioning of a new one as well. However, [we can see]

5) See "Declaration of Philadelphia" in Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Philadelphia

nothing like this today, all of the most powerful sectors of capital are viscerally attached to the neo-liberal logic. Although some elements within the bourgeoisie may become aware of the failure of some aspects of this policy, globally, the bourgeoisie as a whole remains firmly committed to its continuation, even in the United States and Great-Britain. For proof, Donald Trump's decisions to lower taxes on companies and the rich and to unravel the financial regulatory measures painfully negotiated and adopted under Obama: such measures are not a challenge but a *step forward* in neoliberal logic. As for the criticisms of certain aspects of neoliberalism on which Trump and May surf (and more generally all populist parties), they are only there to win over their electorate and not to really question it. Thus, Trump's bragging against the relocations does not fundamentally question neoliberal policy, it's compatible with it and is explained by a two-fold reason: economic and imperialist. There is an economic reason because, unlike others, the American and British bourgeoisies are more and more aware that they have made a big strategic mistake by letting their industry go to the so-called "workshop countries" and only maintain the tertiary segments of design, marketing and command. Thus, by making East Asia the workshop of the world, the countries of this sub-continent have benefited from technological contributions that they are turning around like a boomerang against the West, allowing them to close their development gap. There is an imperialist reason as well because, in order to counter the advances of second-rate powers, the dominant imperialist countries are led to significantly increase their military commitments. However, to do so, it is also necessary to defend or "relocate" certain industries to prepare for a possible generalized war. Thus, it is hard to see an imperialist country like the United States having to import steel or other metals from its rivals to be able to manufacture tanks and planes! This is the meaning of the protectionist measures taken by Donald Trump in defense of the American steel industry, automobile industry, etc.

IV. Establishing a new productive order also implies a reconfiguration of the balance of power within society, both between the antagonistic classes and within the dominant class itself. Thus, historically, this transition between productive orders has been achieved through a defeat of the working class as in

1848 (or in a context of strong weakening of the working class as in the transition to neoliberalism), and/or a prospect of prosperity making new compromises possible (as after the Second World War for example), and/or a reconfiguration of the balance of power within the ruling class (as in the establishment of the New Deal in 1933 in the United States). At the present time, if the working class is generally muzzled (although not historically defeated and still capable of reactions) and could allow the bourgeoisie to impose a new productive order, on the other hand, the deterioration of the economic situation and the break-up of the two former imperialist blocs push to the "everyone for himself" between fractions of the ruling class, which makes it unlikely that a common consensus and a redistribution of roles within can be reached that the establishment of a new productive order implicates.

Thus, on all the levels we have just analyzed, the current configuration of capitalism prevents, rather than encourages, the emergence of a reorientation of neoliberal policy. On the contrary, everything contributes to a deepening of the latter in an increased competitive framework on the economic and imperialist levels, especially since the balance of power is always to the disadvantage of the wage earners, which allows capital to increase its exploitation rate with relative ease to increase its profit rate. In this respect, it still has some room for maneuver given the achievements made by the vast majority of the population during the thirty glorious years.⁽⁶⁾ This is the central logic of neoliberalism and the bourgeoisie is not ready to restrain this profit manna.

Consequently, if the workers do not find the strength to oppose the iron fist of capital that is increasingly being imposed on them, everything suggests that the capitalist system will sink into a long stagnation during which humanity will be confronted with serious ecological challenges and the very likely advent of a period of economic, political, social and warlike barbarism similar to the *thirty disastrous years*.

6) See the article "How to understand 'May 1968' in France? - The significance of the struggles from 1966 to 1972 (Part 1)" in *A Free Retriever's Digest Vol.2 #5* (October-November 2018), or online: <https://afreeretriever.wordpress.com/2018/09/23/may-1968-in-france/>

While the rise in social conflicts in the second half of the 1960s and the persistence of a high level of social conflict in the 1970s could suggest an inversely proportional balance of power between wage earners and the dominant groups, the explosion in unemployment from 1975 onward gradually eroded combativity and encouraged withdrawal upon oneself and a search for individual "solutions". (7) The observation is clear: social conflicts at the global level decreased in intensity by a factor of six during the 1980s (and by a factor of ten in the Triad because they are on the rise in East Asia). As a result, while workers are not historically beaten (they do not emerge defeated from a crushed revolution or embroiled in an imperialist war), they are nevertheless in a very unfavorable balance of power (except in East Asia). In this context, the current issue is more like a [speed race] between the imposition of the interests of capital (maximizing its profit rate, devaluing its variable capital through all-out austerity and devaluing its fixed capital, including through imperialist war) and the interests of the workers (fierce

7) See the graphs on the next page, taken from "How to understand 'May 1968' in France?" (cf. note 6).

resistance to capitalist encroachments and development of its conscience and of the stakes of the situation within these fights). This is what we will develop in the second part of this contribution by also addressing *populism as a typical expression of this economic and sociopolitical configuration of a capitalism at the end of a productive order with no tangible outcome.*

End of the 1st part.

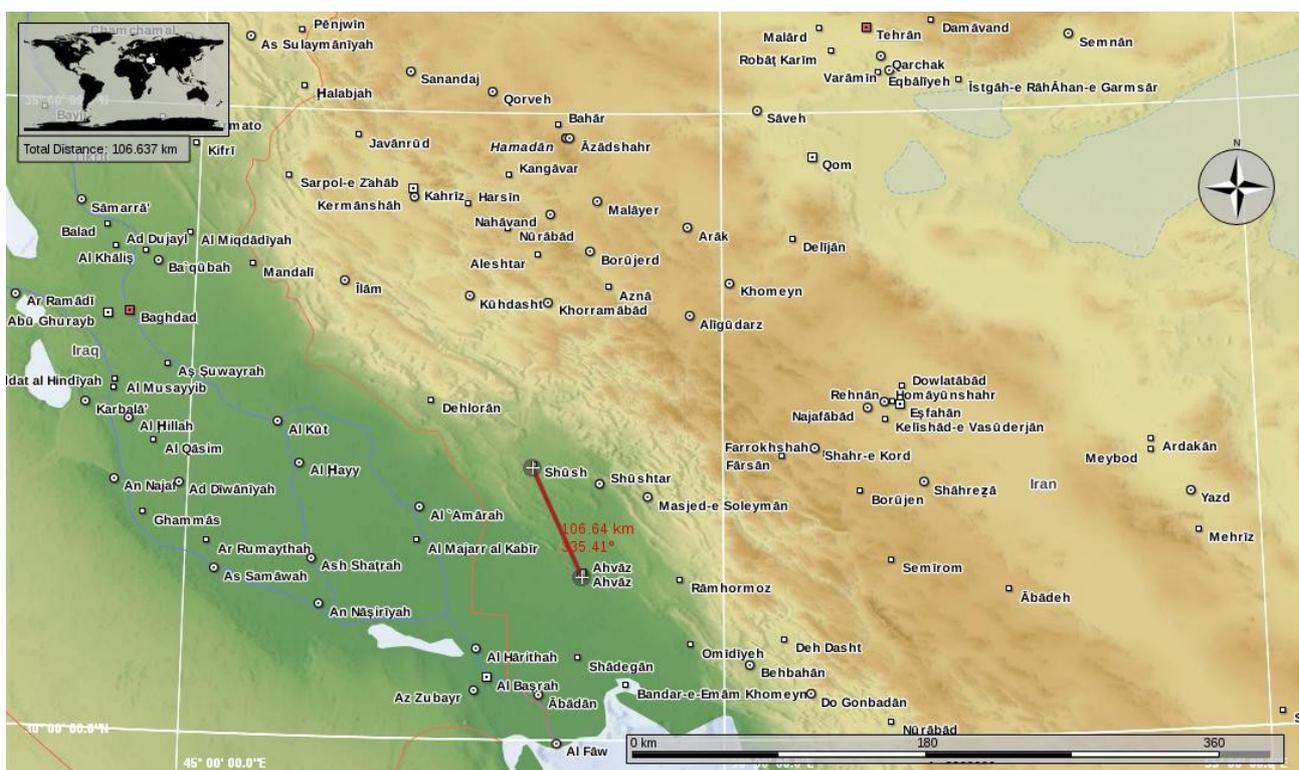
C.Mcl., *Controverses* No.5, May 2018

Source: *Crise - Conflits - Luttes - Populisme* (part I); *Controverses* No. 5, May 2018:

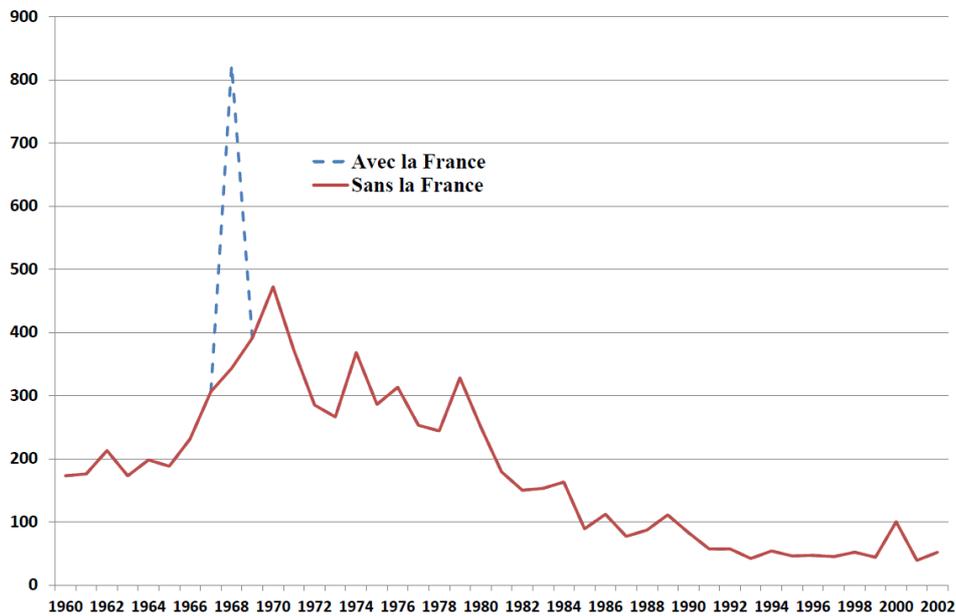
<http://www.leftcommunism.org/spip.php?article462>

The article's introduction "Trump and Brexit: A new economic and imperialist orientation?" has appeared in AFRD Vol.2 #4 (August - September 2018). Integral article translation by H.C., November 18, 2018. A revised overview table of the productive orders is included.

Discussion Topic: *The rise of proletarian militancy in Iran on page 29 ff.*

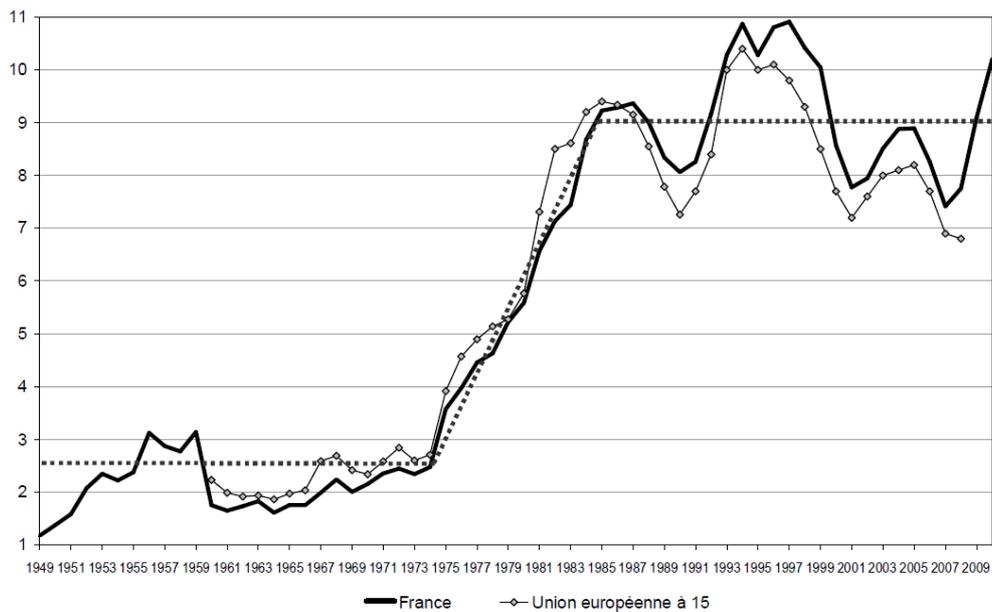


Intensity of labor disputes in the world



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

Unemployment rate, European Union, France



Graph 2: Unemployment rate, European Union, France (Source: Michel Husson, [La France du travail, IRES 2009](#) : 29)

Description of the major determinants of capital accumulation for the four main productive orders

	Manchesterian 1750* - 1850/71** * Britain ** Continent	Colonial Consolidated 1850/1871 - 1933*/45** * USA ** Other developed countries	Keynesian-Fordist 1945 - 1982	Neoliberal 1982 - Today
Productivity (Offer)	Strong regarding the past but weak in view of the future: ca. 0.64% annual average growth in G.-B. (1760 - 1850).	More vigorous increase: ca. 0.9% per year in G.-B. (1850 - 1945).	Very strong increase: USA 3%, Europe 4.8%, Japan 8%, G.-B. 2.4%.	Structural and continuous <i>decline</i> of productivity gains: G.-B. 2% (1982 - 1999)
Real Wages (Wage demand)	Diminishing or stagnating, representing 30% - 40% of the final demand → necessity of complementary precapitalist markets .	Constant increase at an average rate of ca. 1.0% per year in G.-B., representing 45-55% of the final demand → necessity of complementary precapitalist markets (colonies).	Very strong growth of 2 - 3% per year (2.2% in G.-B.). Wages represent 70 - 75% of the final demand → the role of the precapitalist markets (internal and external) has become marginal.	Decline of the wage share and slowing of the real wages rise (1.2% per year in G.-B.) → need for a third party demand.
Profits	Elevated because of the combination of a rising <i>absolute</i> surplus value (the annual labor time increases from 2,670 to 3,470 hours in G.-B. between 1760 and 1825) and of <i>relative</i> surplus value: real wages are stagnant in conjunction with a growing productivity.	Henceforth stemming from <i>relative</i> surplus value because of mechanization and a slow decrease of labor time, profits remain at a high level until WW-I. The profit mass grows following the extension of the markets, colonies and real wages. Subsequently, the rate of surplus value decreases following the powerful social revolts between 1917 and 1923, while peaking during the two world wars.	Maintained due to elevated productivity gains (work chains and continuous shift work). The important growth of the markets increases the profit mass (growth of investments, of the public sector and the real wages).	Elevated, following the compression of the wage share, the end of diminishing labor time and the increase of labor <i>intensity</i> . The rate of surplus value redresses.
Markets (internal and external precapitalist markets included)	Pure capitalism's internal markets are insufficient → need for precapitalist markets, firstly within industrializing countries. Relative exhaustion about 1871 (1850 in G.-B.).	The internal markets (proper and precapitalist) are insufficient → need for <i>colonial</i> precapitalist markets (abundant in 1880 - 1910, but relatively saturated by the end of this period).	The internal markets of pure capitalism are sufficient. The precapitalist markets have become marginal in the developed countries, and little exploitable in the Soviet bloc and the Third World.	A new logic: globalization of markets, export of capitals and development of a 'third party demand' (luxury goods, "financialisation", indebtedness, savings reductions).
Accumulation Circuit Completion	Unsold commodities within 'pure' capitalism are sold on internal precapitalist markets in developing countries: <i>ancient aristocrats, merchants, artisans, peasants</i> .	The colonial markets take over from the internal precapitalist markets, which have become insufficient compared to the <i>global</i> accumulation needs → the two World Wars.	The tri-partition of the elevated productivity gains between profits, real wages and state revenues (taxes) assures a parallel growth of production and markets.	Compression of the wage share and investments, <i>compensated</i> by indebtedness, luxury consumption, financialisation and reduction of savings.

An Invitation to a Discussion

Middle East: The rise of proletarian militancy in Iran

In contrast to the 'spontaneous' outburst of the proletarian mass mobilization in Iran at the turn of last year, ⁽¹⁾ the current *rise of proletarian militancy in Iran* appears to be subjected to a wide media blockage. Reports about strikes and demonstrations that have newly gained momentum since November 5 in the Khuzestan province, **uniting the struggle of the Haft Tapeh sugar cane workers (Shûsh) with that of the workers of the Iran National Steel Industrial Group (INSIG) at Ahvâz**, seem to have been relegated to *trades unionist and human rights campaigns* in the Western countries. If any main stream media outlet has referred to the deterioration of the social-economic situation of Iran so far, it has been to underline a lack of perspective in face of recession, regional tensions and war, and US-imposed economic sanctions. ⁽²⁾ Only after a month, a very first article on the social situation in Khuzestan ended this strict media silence about the renewed outburst of proletarian combativity and its repercussions. ⁽³⁾ The strikes have certainly been fueled by workers **not having been paid their wages and insurances for months** – a condition that has become a rather general cause for strikes and protests in Iran. But the strikers' of Haft Tapeh go well beyond demanding their pay and have declared **the aim to bring "their" company under the control of a workers' council ("shura")** in their long standing struggle, regardless whether under state or private ownership. By organizing massive demonstrations and assemblies in front of factories and government buildings, they have gained support not only in their region but throughout the country. Workers from different sectors, including hospital personnel, teachers, metropolitan transport workers in Ahvâz; students at several universities and other social categories, from pensioners to handicapped, have come out to put forward their own demands and express support for the striking workers in Khuzestan and their imprisoned comrades. Persistently denouncing the criminal behavior of the regime, the strikers demand the latter's unconditional release. The sugar cane and steel workers have continued their actions for over a month against all threats and attempts by the regime to break their strikes. As to all appearances, there is a very strong trades-unionist impact on their movement, expressing itself a.o. in initiatives to look for support from *Labour* and the trades unions in the UK and Canada.

1) See for instance: 'Nuevo Curso' on the proletarian movement in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran (2 articles) and *The movement in Iran is a practical refutation of Leninism* in: [AFRD Vol.2 #1 \(February – March 2018\)](#); *Iraq: The Sequels of the War against Daech* in [AFRD Vol.2 #5 \(October – November 2018\)](#). These articles are also available on the online blog.

2) The Guardian, November 28, 2018: ['We are desperate': economic crisis hits ordinary Iranians](#)

3) Al Jazeera, Sunday December 9, 2018: [Iran's government cannot afford to ignore Khuzestan anymore](#)

With the notable exception of the *ICT* and 'Nuevo Curso', the milieu of proletarian internationalist groups has so far also kept remarkably silent about this recent development of workers' struggles in Iran. (A modest selection of articles is listed page 3 ff.) *A Free Retriever's Digest* considers necessary to discuss the evolution of the situation in Iran and presents the following contributions:

- **The Future of the Struggle**

Extract: the conclusion of "Iran: Workers' Strikes and Protests Continue" (page 30)
(D. Saadati, CWO web page, November 29, 2018)

- **Which solidarity with the arrested workers of Haft Tapeh?**

Questions to discuss apropos of the strikes in the Middle East (page 31 ff.)
(Fredo Corvo, 'Arbeidersstemmen' blog, November 25, 2018)

- **Soviets in Iran: Is a Revolution Underway?**

An appreciation of the dynamic of the present workers' struggles (page 36)
('Nuevo Curso', November 23, 2018)

Readers are invited to send in their appreciation of the presented texts, advance questions and/or propose their own reflections on the subject per e-mail. Correspondence is eligible for publication, provided their respective authors' consent. *The editor.*

**Extract: the conclusion of "Iran: Workers' Strikes and Protests Continue"
(D. Saadati, November 29)**

The Future of the Struggle

Today, the outcome of all the rhetoric of the opposition of all strands, from the current government factions to the reformists, from monarchists to the leftists, can be clearly seen. Those who continually talked about Iran's perilous situation, the collapse of the country, civil war, occupation, national unity... and saw the way forward to be participation in the elections and electing of Rouhani, or saw the solution of all problems in the JCPOA agreement... what do they have to offer now? In fact, nothing.

The courageous and magnificent strikes in Haft Tapeh, Hepco, Ahvaz, Zanjan, and Assaluyeh... have revealed all their appeals for the workers to just take more of a hammering in "the national interest" as futile. Today the slogan of **Bread, Jobs, Freedom, Soviet Organisation** is to everyone's surprise, if not disbelief, resonating everywhere. The support of other workers, teachers, office workers has ignited hope in the hearts of millions of workers and toilers.

Against the regime's drumbeat for imperialist war, our slogan is "*no war but class war*". As the class struggle intensifies, the balance of power in Iran is being questioned for the first time since 1979. Forty years ago the magnificent strike of oil workers was the main and the final blow against the Shah's regime. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic, nothing changed for workers. If anything, our living conditions got worse.

This is not to say that the movement does not face a host of problems ahead. Alongside outright repression the regime will get up to the dirty tricks it has practiced over the years. Locking up the real leaders of class autonomy, infiltrating their own ideologies into the assemblies and isolating each group to fight on its own are all well known. Workers too will have to resist the confusions of the capitalist left who operate in an around the class movement. The trade

unionists amongst them will try to reduce the issue to one of economic demands whilst the internal rivalries these sects promote will be a real danger to class unity.

There are already plenty of lies on social media and in the mainstream capitalist press about the aims of the movement, the most common being that the workers are simply demanding the re-nationalisation of the plant.

At the moment too the call for "councils" or shuras is only a call for workers' self-management, for workers simply to take over the factories not the state. The assumption is that anyone would be better at operating them than the current bunch of clowns but it does not take into account that operating a capitalist enterprise in a capitalist crisis offers nothing more than desperate self-exploitation. The last thing the workers need is to occupy factories and try to make them workers' fortresses. The regime can leave them there to rot, as the Giolitti Government did to the Italian works councils in 1919-20.

In reality the call for *shuras*, whether the movement recognises it or not, will not be acceptable to the capitalists of Iran. This then poses the question of where the movement goes next. Ultimately the call to administer production is also a recognition that the old system is failing. However to go further the vanguard of the workers need to form themselves into a political fighting force which not only provides a programmatic direction for the class as a whole but also seeks to link with the wider international communist movement. Still, the only guarantee of any kind of success is the massive spread of the struggle right across Iran (and beyond, if it ignites the flame of resistance elsewhere)...

D. Saadati

29 November 2018

Which solidarity with the arrested workers of Haft Tapeh?

A contribution to the discussion by Fredo Corvo ('Arbeidersstemmen')



Sugar cane workers who renewed their protest in Shush, Iran, Nov. 5, 2018. The two arrested protest leaders can be seen in the front row: Moslem Armand (left) and Ismail Bakhshi (second from left). Source: VOA, November 21, 2018

Since the arrests on Saturday 17 November of two spokesmen of the workers of the sugar cane plantation and -factory at *Haft Tapeh*, Ismail Bakhshi and Mohsen Armand (see photo), and two other people, including a female reporter, from all sides appeals for solidarity with the prisoners have been published, from petitions to the Ayatollah government of Iran for their release,⁽¹⁾ to appeals for human and trade union rights. Sources speak of the arrest of 20 people during a peaceful demonstration in the town of *Shûsh* by Haft Tapeh workers and their families on Sunday 18 November. Of those arrested, 15 persons are reported to have been released on bail. The five people still being held are four Haft Tapeh workers (including the two spokesmen mentioned above) and an activist from the nearby town of *Ahvâz*, Sepideh Ghaliyan (no photo). The latter had already been arrested in February 2017. Ismail

Bakhshi and other spokesmen are known to have been attacked by “unidentified” persons during their commitment to the long struggle of the Haft Tapeh workers for *months of non-payment of wages*. Initially, the last five detainees were also to be released on bail, pending suspicion of “disturbing public order”. But later, the authorities declared that they were kept in prison for “investigating” the accusation of “endangering national security”.⁽²⁾ The fate of those arrested is unknown. In the courageous speeches to his fellow workers, especially his *call for an independent grass-roots organization of the workers*, which he explicitly named Soviet (Workers' Council), Ismail Bakhshi knew that he not only risked his life, but also a horrible death by torture. Since the rise of the current wave of strikes and demonstrations on the streets against all political factions of the regime, and ever more clearly di-

1) Change.org, [We Ask for the Immediate Release of Ismail Bakhshi and the Three Other Arrestees](#).

2) Voanews.com, 21-11-2018, [Iran Accuses 5 Activists Held in Labor Protest of Security Offenses](#).

rected against the wars in the Middle East in which the regime participates, the Ayatollah regime has made use of mysterious armed gangs of "unidentified" persons who at night pick up hundreds of proletarians suspected of participating in the struggle to make them disappear without a trace, or to have them be found in the river or somewhere along the road, tortured to death. Ismail Bakhshi has stated during a demonstration:

*"This is my will , if I am dead, no one should bury my dead body, just carry the empty coffins" (3) ...back to the factory (according to other sources). With this he explicitly laid his fate, his dead body and the cowardly disappearance thereof, his mission for the liberation of the working class in the hands of the workers' masses themselves. In doing so, he expressed explicitly, and in the best revolutionary traditions, what the working class of the Middle East spits in the face to their oppressors, their exploiters and imperialist warlords: **We are dying from starvation and war, you have taught us to lose all fear for you!***

Until now, the regime has not dared to kill militants so well known to the workers of Iran and the whole world like Ismail Bakhshi. Historical experience teaches us that the state often keeps such persons under lock and key to bring them out as celebrated martyrs in a final attempt to stop the rising proletarian mass struggle. (4) Did Bakhshi feel this when he said *"Our alternative is a Soviet, a collective alternative. We are not focused on individuals and; we do not want individualism"?* (5) The workers of Shûsh, who protested in the street on Monday [November 19, 2018] against his arrest, expressed this insight by saying: *"They arrested Ismail. But we are all Bakhshi", "Away with the oppressor, long live the worker!"* (6)

3) *Iran Watch Canada*, 19-11-2018, Video: [Ismail Bakhshi Leader Of " Haft Tapeh " Workers in The City Of Shoosh Speaks With Workers And Their Families In Front Of The Governor's Building.](#)

4) As happened just before the Shah regime fell, an event that is largely unknown to the younger generations in Iran itself.

5) Among others in *Nuevo Curso*: "Soviets in Iran: Is a Revolution Underway?", our translation is on page 36.

6) D. Mathieu, 21-11-2018, in *Lutte Ouvrière*: [Iran: 5 700 ouvriers en grève.](#)

Solidarity through recourse to civil rights or by developing workers' struggles?

The revolutionary martyrdom, as a form of bourgeois personal policy, does indeed give the opportunity to hide the proletarian class content that the victims previously expressed as a living expression of the workers' struggle behind sacred indignation and emotional appeals. Without going into all the details in this contribution, here are a few examples of the *false paper solidarity* proposed by the bourgeois left and what the workers' struggles in the Middle East have actually put forward:

- The fact that Haft Tapeh was founded by the state in the 1950s and later privatized, has led to discussions among workers about the best alternative. This is used by the Trotskyists of *Lutte Ouvrière* to put forward their state capitalist choice for workers' control. Wisely *Lutte Ouvrière* keeps silent about what Ismail Bakhshi has said about the alternative of private or state ownership of means of production: *"If you have put your hopes on the state's help, if your hope lies with the private sector, I do not know, but if you hope that someone else will come to rescue us, let me put your mind at rest. It's going to be the same, it will be the same soup and the same bowl all over again. (...) Our alternative is a Soviet, a collective one."* (7)

- *Iran News Wire* brings forward the trade union Haft Tappeh Sugar Mill Workers' Union. (8) It is to be expected that the defense of trade union rights will soon be called for as a form of solidarity. This sound usually comes from both the state-recognized trade unions as well as from the smaller organizations that are ready to take over their role once the former have unmasked themselves in the eyes of the workers. However, the struggle at Haft Tapeh is characterized by the attempt of the workers to form an alternative form of organization for the expansion and deepening of their struggle, workers' councils, as known from the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and from the German revolution of 1918.

- Finally, the solidarity in the form of petitions and demonstrations at the embassy, which Marxist-Humanists in the USA call for. As it happens to appear in the mass media – regardless of the intentions

7) *Nuevo Curso*, See footnote 5.

8) A. Nima, *Iran News Wire*, 18-11-2018: [19 Iran sugarcane mill labor activists detained on 14th day of workers' strike](#)

– the oppressors and exploiters, either those of Iran, or those of Iran's great imperialist opponent, the Trump government, are called upon. It should also be noted that *News and Letters* recently went so far as to publish a “discussion article” by *Anti-War Committees in Solidarity with the Struggles for Self-Determination* without any further commentary, in which the author, after having twisted himself – very “dialectically” – in all sorts of ways, concludes: “Without humanitarian intervention, the fatal end could be provided for in one revolutionary stronghold after another.”⁽⁹⁾

In Haft Tapeh's struggle, by contrast, a completely different solidarity was expressed by the workers: that of *unification with the struggle of the workers of the nearby steel industry*, of the proletariat of the whole of Iran. When this happens and when the struggle is organized by workers' councils, it will serve as a shining example for the workers in the Middle East to put an end to imperialist massacres going on for decades. What is happening in Iran, in Iraq, in Jordan, in the struggle against the crisis and the war, has the potential to grow into similar proletarian revolutions as those in Russia and Germany during and after the First World War. Proletarian solidarity only lies with the development of the workers' struggle, in Iran, in the Middle East, all over the world. This also requires understanding other important issues that in 2018 emerged in the struggle itself.

Some clarifications that the struggle in Iran brought to issues that divide the communist Lefts

Firstly, the struggle in Iran has shown differences in the slogans put forward during the street demonstrations. This has made it clear that there are different views within the proletariat, and that in the course of “economic” struggles, ideas about the purpose and means of the struggle may evolve towards political class goals. Finally, it has also been shown that this development can take place in the absence of organized minorities on the basis of proletarian

political positions. This is a refutation of certain Leninist⁽¹⁰⁾ as well as of anarchist and certain council communist positions.⁽¹¹⁾

Contrary to what some present council communists claim, following Otto Rühle, the positive role of these elements in the working class has demonstrated the importance of consciousness in the class. They are *the beginning of a vanguard of the working class* because of their daring and their keen understanding of the class struggle, which can persuade and encourage their more backward class members in discussions and in the struggle.

Today's larger and smaller groups – sometimes rather sects – that rely on the positions of the [historical] Communist Left⁽¹²⁾ are faced with the challenge of testing the different positions they have inherited from the past against the Praxis of the class struggle. This requires an open attitude in discussion, both internally and externally, an attitude that is totally alien to most of them. Yet their fate is decided by the development of the class struggle towards what may approach and hopefully exceed the level of the wave of proletarian revolutions of 1917 – 1923. Those positions that will not find a connection, a hearing in the emerging vanguard of the working class, and that are not useful for the whole class to expand and deepen its struggle, will be swept away in the struggle.⁽¹³⁾

The signs are not very hopeful. While signals are coming from the Middle East similar to those during World War I, the current groups and individuals are not even able to create a new [Zimmerwald](#), let alone a new International. For example, there was the Call of Militants in Iraqi Kurdistan for a conference and the creation of a preliminary organization.

9) David: “*Anti-War Committees in Solidarity with the Struggles for Self-Determination*”, in the September-October 2018 issue of *News & Letters*, [Discussion article: The Left's response to Syrian genocide](#).

10) F.C., [The movement in Iran is a practical refutation of Leninism](#) – A critique of the positions defended by some groups of the communist Left (Also in: *'A Free Retriever's Digest'* Vol.2#1, February – March 2018, p. 21)

11) “Politics” means in relation to the state and its destruction, and not the equation by Otto Rühle's followers of any form of politics with *bourgeois* politics.

12) Communist Left, first within and later outside of the stalinized Communist Parties and the Trotskyist organizations, especially those of Italy, Spain/Mexico, Germany and the Netherlands.

13) For the question of the vanguard and the party see: *Nuevo Curso*, [Qué es el partido](#). (Spanish)

However weak the formulations may have been, the appeal – from a group that nobody seems to know – responded to the rise of proletarian struggle in the Middle East, but remained almost without a response. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Without answering here all the questions that arise, I will list issues that need to be discussed urgently, given the struggle in the Middle East:

1) Is the working class of Western Europe and North America still the heart of the world proletariat, given the relocation of production and imperialist forces to Asia in particular?

2) In the 1970s and 1980s, a development of the workers' struggle seemed to be expected in response to the economic crisis. This in contrast to the revolutionary period 1917-1923. Now both crisis and war are the fate of the proletariat.

3) In the Middle East, economic struggle easily turns into political struggle against the state. But how do we get from repeated revolt to a conscious insurrection that destroys the state?

4) The working class in Iran has proven to start moving independently and is trying to maintain its independence from other classes. But also the 'bazaris' and students are moving. What attitudes of the proletariat are possible towards the "intermediate classes" in different phases of the struggle? This

14) *Tridni Valka*, [Afterword – Once upon a time there was an appeal for an international meeting in Kurdistan...](#)

partly in the light of the "peasant"- question in Russia.

5) The workers' struggle is also stirring up forms of oppression and resistance that are older than capitalism, especially of women and religion. What do we see in Iran and Iraq?

6) The long-standing debate of the struggle on the streets versus that of the enterprises is emerging... and is being clarified by the rise of a workers' council. ⁽¹⁵⁾

7) How will the armed struggle develop? Can the working class count on the support of groups and militias ('*Volksmarindivision*' and Eichhorn's police forces in the German Revolution, militants in Iraqi Kurdistan, Rojava, groups of fighters in the Syrian conflict)?

Fredo Corvo, November 25, 2018

'*Arbeidersstemmen*' would like to discuss these points. Participate by [sending in your contribution](#).

Source: **Welke solidariteit met de opgepakte arbeiders van Haft Tapeh?**, 'Arbeidersstemmen', November 25, 2018;
<https://arbeidersstemmen.wordpress.com/2018/11/25/welke-solidariteit-met-de-opgepakte-arbeiders-van-haft-tapeh/>

Translation: F.C., 25 November 27, 2018
 Proofreading: H.C., November 29, 2018

15) *Forum ICC*, [Street protests amid the barbarity of capitalism \(Jordan, Iraq, Iran...\)](#).

After 31 days: A new impetus for the strike movement or heading for its funeral?



"The workers of Iran National Steel Industrial Group (INSIG) have been on strike since November 10th. Today, the 31st day of their strike, they protested outside the office of Ayatollah Khamenei's representative in Ahvâz, Khuzestan Province. It is [the] 23rd day that they have been protesting [in] outside government buildings as part of their strike and protests. Many of the steelworkers wore shrouds to indicate that they were willing to die to realize their demands!" [Source: Shahrokh Zamani Action Campaign, 10 December 2018]

→ Continuation of “Soviets in Iran: Is a Revolution Underway?” (page 36).

We are witnessing the formation of the first workers’ councils, the passage from the independent organization of a strike to the organization of a parallel and alternative power of the workers. The qualitative leap which, if extended, would mark the passage to a revolutionary situation. As the Iranian comrade of the ICT points out in his article:

“ (...) we would like to briefly note the other two strengths of this mass meeting and its demonstrations, which took place after a few days in front of the governor of the city. Demonstrations that were also attended by other workers and their families from the city of Shush. They cried out for the solidarity and unity with other workplaces and cities that are facing similar issues with the management. In particular with the current dispute and strike that is taking place in the Foolad steel factory in the nearby city of Ahvaz. The slogan “Long live the unity of Foolad and Haft Tapeh”, broke the barriers to class unity and solidarity. This was well received by Foolad’s workers and the next day they responded with the same slogans in their demonstration.”⁽⁶⁾

What we are seeing is the development of *centralism* as expressed in a class struggle. We are seeing the proletariat being constituted as a universal political class, fighting for universal needs and including everyone in the struggle, confronting one by one all forms of exclusion and discrimination not by ideology, but by their very nature, not because individuals and their “identities” change but because it is a necessity of the struggle in defense of their unity. It is the struggle of the class as such and not the “cultural change” or feminist interclassism that already transforms, in the course of the struggles, the situation of working women.

What we are seeing in Iran is the affirmation of a pre-revolutionary situation in which a state and a national capital, oriented with all its forces towards

6) Ibidem.

the imperialist war, from Yemen (⁷) to Lebanon and Gaza, collapse, and a proletariat that affirms the basic human needs, life, livelihood and future of the species, in the face of the destructive needs of national capital. It is a first example of the only way in which the historical dilemma to which a terminal capitalism has led us, can be solved: war, death and misery or revolutionary transformation of the foundations of society.

What is also emerging and we see in Haft Tapeh, [for example in [this video](#)], is the role of those minority of workers who are able to draw lessons from the past, from the victories and defeats of the class. They are the nucleus of something fundamental to being capable of moving forward: a class party. For the time being, they are just relatively isolated seeds. But breaking out of that isolation, at some point a product of circumstances, is not a responsibility that falls exclusively on them. The development of the class struggle will come to nothing if it remains at the national level. It is up to us, all over the world, to prepare ourselves and construct the tool that will enable us to rise to the occasion: to organize ourselves, to learn and to intervene in order to break out of that isolation and to extend the struggles that are now breaking out around the globe to turn the generalization of the imperialist war in course into a world revolution.

Nuevo Curso, November 23, 2018

Source: *Soviets en Irán: ¿Hay una revolución en marcha? - Nuevo Curso, November 23, 2018*
<https://nuevocurso.org/soviets-en-iran-hay-una-revolucion-en-marcha/>

Translation and annotations: H.C, November 27, 2018
 Proofreading: F.C., December 2018

7) Al Jazeera, November 21, 2018: [Yemen: 85,000 children may have died from starvation](#)

Soviets in Iran: Is a Revolution Underway?

'Nuevo Curso' on the dynamic of the present workers' struggles

» We have been following the rise of the class struggle in Iran since last December. At the end of last year a wave of mass strikes spread, crossing the border of Iraqi Kurdistan, to mobilize the whole of the workers in Iran. ⁽¹⁾ The workers took to the streets and, what is most important: they did it under their own leadership, without subordinating themselves to the petty bourgeoisie of the bazaar and the university that rejected the movement. This massive and class character of the movement prevented widespread repression and temporarily halted the course towards aggravation of the war in the Middle East. It so much frightened the ruling classes that, when protest mobilizations began in *Jordan*, all powers allied to inject billions ⁽²⁾ and stop the movement before it reached a maturity similar to that of Iran. «

1) See 'Nuevo Curso' on the proletarian movement in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran (1): [Mobilizations of workers in the Middle East](#) or 'A Free Retriever's Digest' Vol.2 #1 (February - March 2018), p.17.

2) Al Jazeera, June 11, 2018: [Gulf nations pledge \\$2.5bn economic aid package to Jordan](#) [notably Saudi Arabia]

The Iranian mass strike however found an abrupt end due to its own weaknesses. ⁽¹⁾ As soon after in *Tunisia*, the absence of a massive organization, of workers assemblies and councils, prevented the movement from escalating and going further in its ambitions. Lacking the capacity to organize as a dual power, the mobilizations suddenly stopped.

The strength of the initial movement was later seen in the regime's inability to find "culprits" to crush. The subsequent repression, brutal as always, which affected thousands of workers, did not succeed in "decapitating" a movement that had not depended on individual leaderships. The regime then used the rupture of the nuclear agreement by the USA ⁽²⁾ to start a crushing campaign of patriotic propaganda. But nationalism had already been questioned from the first moment by the struggles, it is impossible not to do so if the course towards war is to be thwarted. ⁽³⁾ In May we reported the chronicle of an Iranian comrade of the ICT, ⁽⁴⁾ [relating] a new awakening of the struggles that not only directly confronted the official discourse but also the nationalist and democratic slogans of the clandestine leftist opposition (the mujaheddin).

1) See *Nuevo Curso's* second article: [Why is the movement in Iran in reflux?](#) (Ibidem, p.18)

2) See *The nuclear treaty and the Argentine rescue are two sides of the commercial war* ('Nuevo Curso', May 9, 2018) in: [Two internationalist statements on the American withdrawal from the Iranian 'nuclear agreement'](#) (May 17, 2018): or 'A Free Retriever's Digest' Vol.2#3, June - July 2018, p. 18.

3) *Nuevo Curso*: [4 posiciones básicas del marxismo sobre la Guerra y el Internacionalismo](#) (May 8, 2018)

4) Source: D. Sadaati, [Iran: Class War against Imperialist Pretensions](#): (May 10, 2018)

During the last few weeks news and videos about the struggles of sugar cane workers in Haft Tapeh, southeast Iran, have filled the social networks.

Thanks to the aforementioned comrade of the ICT, we have come to know that the speaker is a workers' delegate named *Ismail Bakhshi*, who has addressed the assembly saying:

" (...) We must say a few words before we start our soviet tasks, in fact this gathering is for that. Today, we came to decide for ourselves to say what the workers' soviet means is this. We decide for ourselves and make decisions and act for ourselves. We are working for our future and destiny..." (...) "...Today we have gathered to see what the meaning of the Independent Workers' Soviet that we keep talking about is, it means to get together, not to have anything to do with anyone else. If you have put your hopes on the state's help, if your hope lies with the private sector, I do not know, but if you hope that someone else will come to rescue us, let me put your mind at rest. It's going to be the same, it will be the same soup and the same bowl all over again." (...) "Our alternative is a Soviet, a collective one. We are not person-centered and we do not want individualism. Individualists, nationalists, racists and reactionaries do not associate yourselves with us. Our alternative is a workers' soviet; collectively we will decide for ourselves, we will issue demands from the below. Enough is enough!" (...) "...we need solidarity and unity. There is nothing wrong in disagreeing, nothing at all. We have now come together. We want to work together and put our minds together to find a way forward and reach a conclusion." ⁽⁵⁾

→ Continued on page 35.

5) Source: D. Sadaati: [The Crisis and the Rise of Workers' Militancy in Iran](#) (November 19, 2018)