



A Free Retriever's Digest

An internationalist Articles Selection & Review

Vol. 4 Issue #3

July – September 2020

July 31, 2020

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Printed Copy: €4,- (Eurozone) £3.60 (UK) \$4.50 (USA) \$6.50 (AUS, CAN)

From the Editor

Thursday, July 30, 2020

Dear reader,

With this issue we intend to emphasize our aim of stimulating necessary discussions among proletarian internationalists of diverse origins and with often diverging points of departure, views or analyses.

Firstly, we present the special issue of its theoretical organ D-M-D' by the *Istituto Onorato Damen* (I.O.D.), which takes a comprehensive approach to the crisis of capitalism, at present famously obscured by the so-called 'corona-virus crisis'; its manifold consequences and the questions the political minorities of proletarian internationalists are confronted with. 'The Crisis is not Viral but Capitalist' introduce their contributions that need translation from Italian for a larger debate. This is followed up by a brief presentation of the Institute's long term project. The back-cover article 'The Corona-Virus and the Communists Today', taken from this special issue, sets forth their vision on the actual tasks and responsibilities of proletarian internationalists and their proposition for an open debate.

Secondly, we present several newly emerging initiatives, some of which with an explicitly council communist orientation:

- Correspondence from Iraq and Russia, highlighting the difficulties of recent and actual struggles their realm;
- A critique of two council communist initiatives on the 'Left-Wing communism' blog;

As a follow-up to the publications and presentations of G.I.C. texts in this review, we have included the latter's **Theses on revolutionary enterprise nuclei, party and dictatorship** (1932) in the *historical documents* section, showing the vision of the role and function of revolutionary minorities the G.I.C. had arrived at in the course of their critique of the traditional expressions of the workers' struggle, trade unionism (syndicalism) and the 'leader-' (or mass) parties that – henceforth – had become obsolete.

In the same vein, we relate one of the very rare echoes we have encountered on the new language editions of the G.I.C.'s main work '*Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution*' (1935) that we have amply announced on the blog and in previous issues of this review. Sadly, the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives* have testified of their rather defiant stance. Its appeal and a correspondence we had at this occasion are concluded with here by a commentary of ours.

Last but not least, we continue the multipart article apropos of the Corona-virus pandemic '**Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics**' from the *Pantopolis* blog, with its chapter on the development and use of pathogens for biological warfare: '*Imperialism and the War of Microbes*'.

Due to an overflow of recent articles and publications, this issue is the first one without its usual *Selected Articles & News Feeds* section. We hope to make up for this in a supplement, envisaged in the course of this summer.

Hoping this issue provides interesting contributions for discussions, we call upon our readers to send in their appreciations.

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 addresses:

afreeretriever@gmail.com ; afreeretrievers@protonmail.com.

From the Horses Mouth

Correspondence from Iraq and Russia

Here we reproduce two letters, by different correspondents, that both testify of efforts to take up contact and discuss among internationalists. Anwar Najmadim relates an appreciation of the situation in Iraq, which finds the protest movements of 2019 faced with a setback due to waves of extremely harsh repression and their own political-ideological limits, as exemplified by nationalist and democratic illusions of the 'Rojava' type. A correspondent from Russia reports on a wild cat strike in East Siberia at one of the sites of the strategic Russian gas pipeline projects to China. We also relate the brief statement by the blog on the latter movement, and add a note ourselves. We'd like to encourage this kind of exchanges.

The Fate of the Class Struggle in Iraq (June 2020)

In order to define our tasks, we must above all draw conclusions from the lessons and experiences of the class struggle of our time. The purpose is to share and use knowledge derived from experiences out-comes from the real class struggle not from this or that ideology.

Iraq as an example:

"The government and its militias used all kinds of weapons to kill us. They are more dangerous than the virus", Iraqis vowed to continue the struggle against the state and all political parties.

Despite the threat of the corona-virus, during March 2020, many demonstrators were injured and killed in Baghdad and southern Iraq; activists are still subject to kidnapping, assassination, and torture. And beside the development of the conflicts between Turkey, Russia, Iran and Syria; US aircraft bombed 5 Iraqi Shia militia headquarters, the Iraqi army, and an airport under construction in Iraq's central **Karbala province** in retaliation for the earlier deaths of two US service members and a British nurse in a rocket attack on **Camp Taji** near Baghdad, which took place on 11 March, and 14 March, 2020. By these methods, the State is trying to drive the revolutionary proletariat out of the battlefield and isolate the proletariat from each other and from the international movement; on one side through putting both Iraq, Iran and Lebanon in "political quarantine"; on the other side by drawing them into the war that goes around in the Middle East. But despite all attempts and the Islamic links between Lebanon-Iraq-Iran militias against the movement, the class struggle has exploded once again by mass protests part of which are again protests in the Kurdistan Region surrounded by Iran to the east, Turkey to the north, and Syria to the west.

But despite everything happening in this area, we have to admit that the class struggle in Iraq has faced a setback, even when the struggle is still going on, and there is a hope to break the isolation between South and North (Iraqi Kurdistan, which is an autonomous region with its own local government and parliament controlled by bourgeois parties and became an effective means in hands of the bourgeois to split the class movement with under the title of *interests of different nations*).

The setback is of course not just because of fears over a new wave of outbreak of the corona-virus, but the morale has been dampened too. After many months of bloody struggle, after holding sit-ins, blocking roads, control of oil ports, rallying masses, and turning the **Tahrir Square** into a form of self-management and a real symbol of class solidarity, the proletariat is still incapable of finding a revolutionary organ against the State Power. If we look at the situation more closely, we will easily discover that the reason is not a strong State between the proletariat and its goal, but rather the obstacles that the movement itself is carried. The most understandable of the situation is that the actual experience the revolutionary class had gained is still far from overcoming barriers reflecting the obstacles that the proletarian movement is facing as a direct result of weaknesses within the class movement itself; which of course turn the balance of forces between classes in favor of the bourgeoisie. These weaknesses are regionalization of the movement, lack of cooperation on a working class basis between different regions in Iraq (South and North), the adherence to traditional slogans and ideas from old class movements, which are poisoning the proletarian movement through the various weapons of pacifism: elections, democracy, secularism, and defense of the fatherland. Last but not least, another two weaknesses are the ten-

dency of the sectarian socialists [to divide and split the movement] based on organization and doctrines, and *illusions about Rojava*, which do nothing but increase barriers that the proletarian movement is facing in the whole region, especially in Iraq and Iran. Rojava is still one of the major obstacles against the development of the class consciousness necessary for progression towards proletarian self-organization.

Thus, this chapter of the class struggle makes clear that the advance of the proletarian movement does not only mean the continued participation of the class struggle, but it also means the necessity of organized actions which is resulting from class consciousness, and allows the revolutionary class to self-organize in Workers' Councils, from which co-operation on a working class basis and a real unification of the proletariat will born. Workers' Councils emerge from the constant revolutionary battles, give the class struggle one common direction, and pushes the revolutionary proletariat to break with the existing social system.

Gazprom workers in revolt against unpaid wages (East Siberia, July 2020)

Workers in the Amur region destroyed the office of a company that is building a gas processing plant for Gazprom. Several dozen builders broke into the office of '*Renaissance Heavy industries*', a contractor involved in the construction of the Amur gas processing plant. It also became known that workers took over the store and took away some of the products. This is due to the fact that during the quarantine, food prices increased by 2 times, while workers stopped receiving full wages. See [YouTube](#).

This is no longer a struggle with monuments (like in the USA) or other examples of bourgeois ugliness, but a real proletarian uprising. Most of the workers are migrants, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz. However, there are Turks and Filipinos among the workers. At the same time, the Renaissance company that organizes work on this construction in the Russian village is a Turkish company. This is a class conflict of the era of globalization.

Workers who live on the territory of the construction are systematically deceived.

The employer recruits most of the workers for a month, then they are dismissed under various pretexts, without paying their wages, and then employers recruit new ones. Those who are lucky, stay to work, but also from time to time become victims of deception. This happened to the participants of the

However, it seems that the contemporary economic crisis evolves as an epidemic worldwide and without interruption, and the inevitable economic collapse will cause the expansion of the battlefield between the two international classes: Bourgeois and Proletarian, despite any weaknesses. But from weaknesses we will gain knowledge, derive experiences from the real class struggle, diagnose the tasks and the "international activities" that combine the disconnected efforts among internationalists. The constant development of the international movement requires a common action of the internationalists too.

Anwar Najmadin, June 2020.

Source: <https://leftdis.wordpress.com/2020/06/25/the-fate-of-the-class-struggle-in-iraq/>

The English has been slightly redacted to improve readability. H.C., July 25, 2020

riot, who were not paid part of their salaries for 2 months.

The monthly salary of workers is 600 dollars. Workers live in poor conditions – 8 people per 20 square meters. Their working day is 11 hours. They work for 1 weekend in 2 weeks. If you do not come to work for 1 day due to illness, the bosses take from your salary the amount equal to the salary for 2 working days! Transportation costs are not paid. There are no vacations. The food in the factory canteen is of disgusting quality. At the same time, the bosses take money from the workers' wages for this food. Altogether is a violation of the obligations that the bosses took on earlier.

Among the workers, there are many cases of coronavirus. Living conditions contribute to infection. As a result of the quarantine, prices in the store increased by 2-3 times. This last circumstance prompted the workers to seize the store and take away the products.

Workers seized part of the buildings in the village and took food from a store. They are opposed by riot police. A diplomat from Uzbekistan went there. We are talking about a revolt of 1000 workers. The riot continues. The Russian Governor promised the workers to return their money. But this has not been done yet. The village, which was captured by workers, is surrounded by police, riot police, and the

Russian army, including armored vehicles. The government has opened criminal cases against the workers.

The workers probably consult among themselves about what to do next, but they have not created an organized revolutionary proletarian structure (regular assemblies and an elected workers' Council for operational management, whose delegates can be replaced at any time). The workers also do not have a bourgeois-reformist structure (such as any trade Union) designed to introduce conflict into the field of legal systemic measures (inviting and hiring lawyers, negotiating with the employer, attracting the media, etc.). So this is partly why the situation is uncertain.

Today we received reports that the police entered the territory where the workers were located and made arrests of 11 people. These people may face jail time.

A correspondent, July 21, 2020.

Source: <https://leftdis.wordpress.com/2020/07/21/wild-cat-strike-and-a-workers-revolt-in-the-amur-region-in-russia/>

Editorial note: July 25, 2020.

Appeal for solidarity

I believe this is not petitioning governments or trade-unions, nor manifesting at embassies. Solidarity should call workers to recognize themselves in the struggle in Russia their own struggle:

- against the effects of capitalist crisis,
- against the class effects of COVID,
- against the effects of imperialist war,
- against all efforts to divide workers by nation, language, color or religion.

The best solidarity is workers' struggle against *the same enemy, world capitalism*.

Let's get rid of those who sabotage our struggles: the state unions and parliamentary parties.

Workers, we can rely only on our class organizations: **general workers' assemblies and elected and revocable committees**.

Left-wing communism blog, July 21, 2020.

Correspondence:

LeftWingCommunism@protonmail.com

An Editorial Note

The **Amur Gas Processing Plant** is situated in the vicinity of Blagoveshchensk, the capital city of the [Amur region](#), which is bordering on North-East China. It is part of a project linking up two large Siberian pipelines to transport gas into China through the Heihe – Shanghai pipeline. See the map on page 6.

According to Russian sources the strike broke out on July 13, 2020 on this *Gazprom* site. A more comprehensive video-report on YouTube than the one referred to, and without sensationalism, has been published by "[Yuzming TV](#)" (15 July 2020), which also includes scenes from nightly protests in a residential area (Duration: 11 min.).

It should be noted that, for instance, an "independent" medium like '*The Moscow Times*' (a foremost English language publication appearing since 1992) has observed a complete silence about this outburst of workers' discontent, in favor of a widespread campaign on the 'democratic' protests against the arrest and replacement of the elected ('rightist') leader of the neighboring [Khabarovsk region](#) by Moscow. Cf. '[Mass Anti-Kremlin Rallies Grip Russia's Far East](#)' (July 25, 2020).

The account begins by relating that the construction workers would have "*destroyed the office of 'Renaissance Heavy industries'*" at the site, but the videos only testify of relatively minor material damage caused by the workers, like demolishing windows of an office barrack, and throwing objects on their way to and through a canteen and kitchen facility inside it (in their search for victualia). Two passenger vehicles appear to have been turned upside down outside, but the videos do not show by whom. There is an interest in reporting as accurately as possible on such events. The fact that some of the video-reels have been made and commented by angry workers themselves has, for instance, not hindered media like an "[RBC news](#)" of July 15 to speak of "Стрельба и мародерство" ("shooting and looting") and of "погромы" ("pogrom" or "mayhem"). Which reads rather like a deliberate denunciation than as sober reporting.



Illustration 1: A map of the Power of Siberia pipeline, its connection to the Heihe-Shanghai Pipeline in China, and its possible future connection with the Sakhalin-Khabarovsk-Vladivostok Pipeline in Russia. By Khu'hamgaba Kitap, 4 December 2019. Source: [Wikimedia](#), License: [Creative Commons BY-SA \(4.0\)](#).

Recent blog publications by *A Free Retriever's Digest*

Anti-racist movements sparked by the police murder of George Floyd

- [The murder of George Floyd sets the USA on fire...](#)
A Statement by M. Lupoli (I.O.D.), Translation online: June 5, 2020.
- [Internationalist statements on the wave of protests and riots apropos of US state repression \(Spring 2020\)](#)
From the Editor: A rapid overview of internationalist statements. Online since: June 13, 2020.

Corona-Virus Pandemic

- [France: Cheerful and quarrelsome 1st-of-May Days?](#)
Some findings on the present state of emergency (Karlchen, May 2, 2020). Translation online: May 3, 2020.
- [Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics \(II\)](#)
Imperialism and the War of Microbes.
P. Bourrinet at *Pantopolis*; Online: July 4, 2020 (included in this issue on page 19ff.)

The Crisis is not Viral but Capitalist

D-M-D' Special Edition (#15, May 2020)

The following presents the special issue of the *Onorato Damen Institute's* review on the crisis of capitalism behind the so-called 'corona-virus crisis', followed up by a brief presentation of the Institute's project. We agree with the IOD's general point of departure "(...) *that the problems of the communist revolution in the 21st Century cannot be confronted with the old interpretative schemas, or by retreating to the positions of the Third or even the Second International.*" On page 32 we have adopted their critique of the ambient reception of the capitalist crisis by (at least parts of) the internationalist milieu laying claim to the inheritance of the Italian communist Left, accompanied by their invitation for an open debate. We call on readers with Italian language capacities to provide more translations of the IOD's contributions.

Presentation of the special edition

This special issue of the review is dedicated to the crisis that has affected the capitalist system on a global scale. ⁽¹⁾

The title '**The crisis is not viral but capitalist**' expresses the thesis we support in the eight articles of this issue: it is an epochal crisis that finds its origin in the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. The pandemic has only exasperated and anticipated the explosion of this crisis, to the extent that in the months preceding the spread of the corona-virus there were clear signs that the world economy was rapidly marching towards a recession of historic significance.

The first article in this issue '**The corona-virus and the communists today**' analyzes the role of the revolutionary vanguard in the new context that opened with this epochal crisis, and "*wants to be an integral part of a wider confrontation, firm on the foundations of the new materialism, capable of looking at both present and future with a renewed and sharpened look.*" ⁽²⁾

The second article '**Analysis of a crisis that will change the world imperialist framework**' goes into more detail about the economic mechanisms that determined the emergence of the crisis. Will the United States, the true epicenter of this devastating crisis, still manage to maintain world domination? Will the dollar still be the queen currency in the international monetary panorama, or will it be reduced by the advancing American decline? What role will China and the European Union be destined to play in the new imperialist world context? These are the questions that the article attempts to answer, with the consciousness that, without the alternative of the communist revolution, "*this is precisely the world that Capital offers us, a world in which humanity will be catapulted into the spiral of permanent imperialist war, fought for the control of the production of fictitious capital, and into generalized misery*".

The article '**The pandemic as a metaphor of the epochal crisis of capitalist society**' underlines how this crisis is destined to represent a watershed with the past. Unlike the past, "*in the current crisis, in fact, a fundamental factor that hitherto had allowed the system, by virtue of the destructive power of war as well, to overcome its crises and to launch a new cycle of capital accumulation, starting from the production of an overall mass of surplus value far greater than before the crisis, has hence disappeared.*"

This is followed by a series of articles dedicated to analyzing the crisis from different perspectives.

Will the social control imposed by the bourgeoisie in times of corona-virus be limited only to this particular period, or will it be the new frontier in which the domination of Capital will express itself? This is the subject of the article '**The class struggle in times of corona-virus**'.

How the world of labor changes with the crisis is the subject of the beautiful essay '**Who is smarter, the worker or Capital?**', while the subject covered by the article '**The school of the Covid-19 emergency. A further attack on the living conditions of the proletariat**' is all in the title.

How the spread of the virus has been facilitated by pollution and environmental degradation caused by the actions of Capital is the topic of the article '**The desert of the barbarians**'.

This issue of D-M-D' comes out without the usual contribution of our comrade Gianfranco Greco who left us last November 14, 2019. We miss Gianfranco much, and to dedicate a short memorial to him seemed the best way to close this special issue of the review.

Enjoy reading,

I.O.D., May 18 – June 02, 2020.

1) [D-M-D' Special Edition \(#15, May 2020\)](#).

2) Back-cover article of this issue, page 32.



D-M-D' is the theoretical review of the *Istituto Onorato Damen*, dedicated to the problems of communism in the 21st Century. It appears at irregular intervals since April 2010.

Web Addresses

The [portal page](#) of the I.O.D.'s website (Italian)

The [English language section](#) of the I.O.D.'s website.

Mail Addresses

Istituto Onorato Damen

Via Lazio 12- 88100 Catanzaro

e-mail: amministrazione@istitutoonoratodamen.it

The *Istituto Onorato Damen* (I.O.D.)

« The “Onorato Damen Institute” is *an internationalist communist association*. Our roots are in the Italian communist Left and in the Internationalist Communist Party – Battaglia Comunista. We didn't start any new party, which would have been absurd, but founded an association dedicated to Onorato Damen. ⁽¹⁾ »

We think that the problems of the communist revolution in the 21st Century cannot be confronted with the old interpretative schemas, or by retreating to the positions of the Third or even the Second International.

By contrast, it is necessary to analyze all changes that have occurred in the course of the last century in the ideological dominance of the bourgeoisie, in the international organization of labor, in the composition of the proletariat, and in the relationship between capital and labor, the development of the forms of imperialist domination [as well as of the process of capitalist *globalization*], according to the most rigorous historical materialism.

Our project is to contribute to building the future communist world Party in the perspective of the international revolution, by political struggle, theoretical elaboration and the creation of an international political workshop for fraternal confrontation with the other internationalist communists.

This is “[starting over from scratch](#)”, as elaborated in our founding document with the same title. ⁽²⁾ »

***Istituto Onorato Damen* (I.O.D.)**

(From a letter to the editor, March 12, 2020)

1) See the [announcement](#) of this split on September 20, 2009.

2) This translation dates from February 28, 2011, the Italian language original: [Punto e a capo](#), appeared on September 20, 2009.

Council Communists of the World, Organize (the Workers, or Yourselves?)

'Left-Wing Communism' blog: A critical review of two current initiatives

Two recently emerging groups who take up council communist positions: the new blog publication "*The Internationalist*" (political science, Marxism, council communism) and the "*Active Strike Support Group*" have obtained the following critical appraisal on the 'Left-Wing Communism' blog. Notably the latter's extensive *program* is subjected to a detailed review.

Recently I have witnessed some interesting attempts of council communists to organize. The actual historical situation brings forwards new elements interested in council communism, and older elements understand the unique chance for an activity larger than mere propaganda and theoretical discussions.

The renewed economic crisis forces capital to attack proletarians massively, as in Latin America and the Middle East last autumn, with resulting mass protests and revolt. After this movement disappeared by a lack of capacity to find a proletarian alternative, the Corona pandemic gave the world bourgeoisie an unprecedented occasion to hide the crisis of its mode of production behind a 'natural' disaster and to unite their nations behind the 'lock-down'. But workers, mainly in Italy and in the USA, resisted effectively working under unsafe conditions. At the same time, the billions spent by governments to help big corporations survive the economical collapse contrasted failing health services and care for the elderly as a result of spending cuts over the past years. This made many workers think critically about the system. And then, against the background of mass unemployment, hitting hard on precarious workers, the demonstrations and revolts against racist police brutality in the USA and elsewhere flamed up. We will see that the council communist initiatives responded differently to several aspects of this rise of class struggle.

The Internationalist

This is a new publication, with two interesting historical articles and one on actuality. On the occasion of the wave of protests in the USA, the article pointed at the "*millions of oppressed and exploited folks. All are being sacrificed to save the capitalist economy left battered by the COVID crisis, either by being pressed back to work risking infection by coronavirus, or*

the masses of workers fired to compensate falling rates of profit." (¹)

The article showed the following council communist perspective for the movement:

"We wish for the insurgency to reach places of production and link up with already struggling workers, springing up Struggle/Strike committees, strike assemblies, and factory councils; the objective being a new General Workers Union. For that the insurgency must become aware of itself as a political force of class-based change, for that, revolutionary communists everywhere must join the protest, defend communists' positions and critique. We have no doubts that the insurgency has already created radicals, but as observed in France, it was not enough, they need critical support, to identify clearly the root systemic injustice leading to the insurgency."

'The Internationalist' ended its article with a clear statement on racism and the impossibility to end racism within capitalism:

"Racism is not a calamity fallen from the sky, or 'human nature'. It takes roots in capitalists relations of productions and will only die with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the socialization of the means of productions. It is the ruthless mercantile competition which forms the framework of this system and models our consciousness and pitches us one against another. It is on this compost that racism prospers."

Active Strike Support Group

Another council communist initiative calls itself *Active Strike Support Group*. When asked to participate, I responded very reluctantly to this initiative, because some initial discussion in March/April 2020 on Michael Shraibman's "*Call from Russia*", showed no progress. Instead of clarification of political positions, a voluntarist approach 'to do some-

1) *'The Internationalist'*, June 2nd, 2020: [The Fire Next Time](#).

thing' took over. ⁽²⁾ In general, modern council communism suffers from a very weak theoretical base, mostly limited to a mix of anarcho-syndicalism and Otto Rühles AAU-E. This weakness also shows in the *Program* of the Active Strike Support Group. ⁽³⁾

Activities of the group (Theses 1/5, 17)

The basic idea of the group is to provide support and solidarity to striking workers. The form of help it proposed is unprecedented in historical council communism. I have known similar efforts in the Netherlands and Belgium that in the 1970-ties have been initiated by Maoists 'serving the people' and by the branch of Trotskyism known as Pablism (favoring 'workers self-management'). Autonomists animated several enterprise groups, [at] Philips, Ford, ADM (shipyard), focused on undercover work in industrial companies, combined with journalistic research. In Great-Britain, the *Solidarity Group* (around Paul Cardan, a Trotskyist influenced by Pannekoek) had similar initiatives. Presently *Angry Workers of the World* seems to be inspired by the work of *Solidarity*. The common historical roots of all these rather different initiatives are not to be found in the communist left or council communism but in the trade union policies of the Comintern that tried to give itself a semblance of radically with 'communist enterprise cells' and workerist verbiage. Some present NGO's show similar activities directed at China, trying to set up 'free' (that is US-orientated) trade-unions, with disappointing results for the Chinese workers involved; f.e. the German trade-unions in the automobile industry – unsurprisingly – never made true the promised 'solidarity'. In many countries we see [Labour-net](#) giving information about strikes and facilitating contacts between workers, from a syndicalist point of view.

The initiative seems to be based more on a willingness to help striking workers than on the question what are actually the needs of class struggle from a council communist point of view.

However, the initiative stands out as clear and positive when it wants to create an international and internationalist network. This is shown in one of the first responses it received, from a comrade in Iraq. ⁽⁴⁾

The *Working Group for Council Communist Initiatives* that set up the *Support Group* does not know these similar efforts by 'Leninists' in the past, but when they are told about, they simply declare their approach is different. They want to "serve as an information and logistics center for providing support". What this means concretely remains rather vague. In another post is explained that we may think about spreading news about strikes, directing our fire at the company and the owners, fund-raising for the striking workers, support for individual workers and researching the logistical and financial links with other companies.

Apparently, the group didn't notice that this kind of activities from what are in fact *outsiders* can harm the strikers by making them believe that 'denouncing' their capitalists in the eyes of the 'public' will help them to win the strike, that fund-raising may divert from searching **active extension of the strike to other workers**, that solidarity most probably is found elsewhere than in the logistic chains or along the financial streams in and out the company. This is all well-meaning help, comparable to the not so well-meaning paternalistic services by companies to their employees, charity by churches, and 'Red Help' by Stalinist parties, all directed at gaining influence amongst those 'helped'.

There is however one proposal that fits both historic and current council communism: criticism against trade unions leading strikes. Unfortunately exactly this point has only been mentioned in the *Program*, and lacks argumentation.

Historic council communism (f.e. Anton Pannekoek in his chapter on trade-unionism in *The Workers' Councils*) has underlined that the reason why trade unions no longer can serve even the most simple workers' struggles on wages, working time, and working conditions, that never have transcended capitalism but are movements inside the functioning of the labor market. Trade unionism relied upon leadership from outside factories, that could have oversight of the companies in a branch of industry

2) This correspondence is currently only available in Dutch: [Een oproep uit Rusland](#). (*Arbeidersstemmen*, April 22, 2020).

3) The program of this group in 17 points – in itself an important achievement – is available on the [Left-Wing Communism blog](#) (as this article's appendix), and via the group's [face book page](#) (login account required). Since July 1, the group has changed its name to: '*Support the Strike*' (STS).

4) '*Left-Wing Communism*', June 25, 2020: [The Fate of the Class Struggle in Iraq](#). (In this issue on page 3).

competing with each other, picking the one for a strike that was most probable to surrender to the strike, after which the other companies would follow. By the concentration of capital, the growing influence of financial capital, the existence of trusts, and finally the counter-organization of employers, this strategy started to fail. Under the pressure of the state, the trade-unions were integrated into a system of regulated negotiations and collective agreements.

From this historical point of view we can, therefore, see that the activity of the **Support Group**, that believes to be “*completely independent of any union or political organization*” (Thesis 5) is **programmed for trade-unionism**, especially by its focus on outsider activity, branch studies, and “*focus on separate strikes collectively* (meaning: democratically decided by the group) *deemed important and neuralgic*” (Thesis 2).

The internal functioning (Theses 6/8, 13/16)

When we have a look at what the **Program** says about the internal functioning, at first sight, all seems very democratic and according to anarchist and council communist principles: no hierarchy, no leaders, all members participate equally in decision making, work according to their abilities and develop these (Thesis 6).

Thesis 7 obliges members to defend these principles, formulated for the minority group, for the workers as a whole. “*Free workers’ thought on all matters*”, so dear to Anton Pannekoek, is mentioned explicitly. Probably to stimulate thinking for themselves by the workers, “*through a larger entity, or forum, the group will also publish theoretical, analytical and information texts on the situation in different counties and on the history of proletarian movements.*” (Thesis 8). In fact, the group by this political activity gives itself the main function that it should have as a communist minority. Therefore, why not integrate this function in the space of the group itself? Why this separation of economics and politics, that we know from social-democracy (trade union and party), that later was copied by the German Left, in a revolutionary “**Arbeiter Union**” and a **Communist Workers’ Party** (KAPD), that both organized the minority of revolutionary communists. The formation of Rühles AAU-E tried to integrate both economic and political functions, at the expense of the political tasks of the council communists, and became just another, a

third organization. Now that we are not a minority of thousands of councils communists, as in Germany in 1920, but just a handful, we did better limit ourselves to the formation of a group, one group, one publication.

In fact bringing together conscious proletarians from several enterprises and unemployed communists in one meeting instead of organizing separately, has always proven an important factor in finding ways to extend struggles. A precondition is of course that these meetings are private, ‘in real life’ and not on the Internet, that is permanently tapped by secret services.

But may be, this separate space is designed to be able to “*reject any attempt to indoctrination working people*” (Theses 7)? Presuming that **indoctrination** is understood as negative, as in general understanding, the question is how can be established what is **indoctrination** and what not. For most people indoctrination refers to political positions they don’t agree with and therefore don’t want to be confronted with. This is a potential killer of discussion and therefore of free-thinking.

The site’s only content will be “*articles, stories, interviews, images and video recordings of the selected striking workers*” so that “*they can express themselves and tell their story to an international audience.*” (Thesis 15) However, these may “*not contradict the ideas of council communism, according to the goals stated in the Program*” (Thesis 16). Has the group considered that striking workers may have positions that are NOT council communist? The kind of censorship that is introduced for what is meant to be a public space for striking workers, seems to introduce a limitation of the freedom of discussion and thinking, that may be appropriate for a minority group with base political positions, but not for a ‘free space’.

Missing is how the group’s coordinating committee is elected, and how it can be removed by the members, an important matter for a group that wants no leaders or hierarchy, and even more, this is essential ... for striking workers. This ‘principle of the Paris Commune’ and the Workers Councils should be mentioned as such.

Basic positions (Theses 9/12)

In four of its theses the group introduces some basic positions:

- The organization of the workers as a class and the refusal to form fronts with other classes (thesis 9).
- Defense of *workers' democracy*, a concept that refers to the class as a whole, strange enough this is elaborated on the level of minority organizations (as the group itself is) that pretend to be at the basis and support of mass struggle (thesis 10). A more sophisticated formulation of the relationship between mass and minority organizations seems needed.
- Contact with unionized workers is not refused; they are stimulated to act and think independently from unions (Thesis 11).
- Other forms of workers struggle than strikes, will be covered as well (Thesis 12).

In practical functioning the group may discover the need to extend and fine tune these basic positions. A form of struggle obviously missing is that of unemployed workers, where we should not forget the American experiences of Paul Mattick during the Great Depression.

Conclusions

I gave these comments, critiques and proposals, because I believe that the group can learn from its activities and class struggle. However, I will not join the activity of the group. Today's revolutionaries have to develop their knowledge, both by the understanding of the social continuity that links us to the past and by the understanding of the particularities that separate us from history. As one of the few remaining elements that have known the last members of the Dutch and German Communist Left, I concentrate on making known their texts and showing their importance in analyzing actuality. In fact, I could not have made these comments without the GIC's "*Theses on revolutionary enterprise nuclei, party, and dictatorship*"⁽⁵⁾, an important historical text on mass and minority organization, recently translated into English for the first time. The contributions and the GIC, as that of the KAPD, are hardly known, even amongst council communists.

Study of this historical text of the GIC, its introduction and the objections that Pannekoek made in 1920 to the formation of the AAUD, might teach *The In-*

ternationalist that in the current historical situation in the USA there is no reason to form revolutionary workers' unions on the model of the AAUD. The latter has been the result of a real mass movement in 1920 that raised the slogan '*Leave the trade unions*'. This happened after the social-democratic 'Freie Gewerkschaften' that participated in the imperialist war and in the repression of the struggle of revolutionary workers, finally were openly integrated into the state because the SPD-government made union membership compulsory for all workers. This had the effect that those who were kicked out the union, not only lost their jobs, but also their right to unemployment benefits, which were organized by the same state unions. Revolutionary workers attacked union offices, confiscated their money to distribute it amongst the unemployed and strikers. Actually there is no workers mass movement in the USA, there is no massive break with the state unions or with the democratic illusion. The few elements that gained a class consciousness from the actual movement can discuss with today's tiny communist minorities and unite on the basis of some basic positions. They should form groups to discuss and to be active within the class as a whole in the direction of self-organization in the struggle for proletarian class interests. As Pannekoek argued, there is a danger that forming a revolutionary workers' union at a certain moment (as now the IWW), will later leave the revolutionaries isolated in a separate organization when majorities of workers unite against the state unions on another basis.⁽⁶⁾

If there is an 'invariable program' (Bordiga), the question of mass and minority organization is not written in it in all concrete details. Therefore, I believe the best I can advise the new groups mentioned, to study and discuss these positions of the GIC on organization. New elements should decide for themselves what the questions raised in the 1930-ties, and what the answers given by the GIC, mean for us today.

F.C., June 23, 2020.

Source: [Council communists of the world, organize \(the workers, or yourselves?\)](#) (26 June 2020)

Annotations by AFRD.

5) The G.I.C.'s 'Theses' of 1931/32 are included in this issue on page 13.

6) [A Letter from Comrade Pannekoek](#) ('*Der Kommunist*', KAPD, July 1920).

Documents of the historical Communist Left

G.I.C.: Theses on revolutionary enterprise nuclei, party and dictatorship (1932)

The “Theses on Revolutionary Enterprise Nuclei” (1931) were originally written as the GIC's contribution to the congress of the anarchist *Alarm Group* in The Hague that year. Subsequently it was distributed as a stenciled pamphlet by the GIC together with the “Theses about party and dictatorship” (1932).

In this pamphlet *Theses on Revolutionary Enterprise Nuclei, Party, and Dictatorship*, the council communist *Group of International Communists* (GIC) presents its position on the new contents and forms that the workers' movement has taken since the First World War. The GIC also solves the following two questions of the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD), the General Workers' Union of Germany (AAUD) and Otto Rühle's AAU-E:

- All supposed that the future workers' councils would arise from the AAU, that was mistakenly considered a revolutionary mass organization substituting the trade unions.
- Should the revolutionaries take part in wage struggles?

In a letter published in *Der Kommunist*, KAPD, July 1920, ⁽¹⁾ Anton Pannekoek already criticized the conception of the Workers' Union in the program of the KAPD. This critique resurfaces in the positions of the GIC, eleven years later, when it made a clear distinction between mass and minority organizations. Still, the GIC maintained the idea of having *two minority organizations*, one on the level of the enterprise and another at a regional level.

The parliamentary mass party and the trade union have served their time as proletarian fighting organizations. In place of these permanent mass organizations, during open workers' struggles, the enterprise organization arises in the form of the general assembly of the struggling workers with elected and revocable struggle committees. Only in times of *permanent* workers' struggles do workers' councils appear as coordination over larger geographical areas that can hold on over a longer period of time. The GIC also describes the function of two minority organizations, namely that of the revolutionary enterprise nuclei and the opinion groups (or in the case of numerical growth, that of the revolutionary parties). According to the GIC, groups of unemployed had the same function as the revolutionary enterprise nuclei.

In contrast to the new mass organization, the enterprise organization, the revolutionary enterprise nuclei and the opinion groups could exist outside of the struggle in order to learn lessons from it and give impulses for new struggles. But that did not mean that if the revolutionary minorities would be large enough to call themselves parties, these parties would have the task of seizing power.

Remarkable is the direct link that the GIC draws between the association of free and equal producers after the proletarian revolution and proletarian autonomy in the daily struggles for direct workers' interests. As Marxists, the GIC does not make this connection on the basis of “*an ideal to which the real movement should be directed*”, but on the basis of the new forms of organization and the related revolutionary class goals of the mass strikes and the council movement since the turn of the 20th Century.

Our time differs in many ways from the period in which the GIC drew lessons from the revolutionary workers' struggles of 1917-1923 and the democratic, fascist, and Stalinist counterrevolutions. Today's revolutionaries have to fight for their own knowledge, both by the understanding of the social continuity that links us to past history and by the understanding of the particularities that separate us from it.

Fredo Corvo, June 2020

Source: Left-dis, [Introduction to the English translation](#)

1) In: ‘*A Free Retriever's Digest*’, Vol. 3 #1 (February – March 2019), or on the blog: [A Letter from Comrade Pannekoek](#).

THESES ON REVOLUTIONARY ENTERPRISE NUCLEI

I. Purpose

1. The revolutionary enterprise nuclei wage propaganda in the enterprises for the overthrow of the capitalist production system and for carrying through the production for needs on the basis of the association of free and equal producers: administration and management in the hands of the workers themselves through their enterprise organizations and councils.

2. In this struggle, the working class can only be victorious if it acts as a Unity, in actions led by the workers themselves, against the bourgeoisie's tremendous economic power of the bourgeoisie (trusts, monopolies) and its political power (the state). The class struggle itself is the nourishing ground from which this Unity in will, thought and action grows up to wrest the means of production from the bourgeoisie and to destroy its state. The rising up to this Unity is the essential content of the forthcoming class movements.

3. The destruction of the state is the carrying through of the principles of the Paris Commune (1871). The "smashing" of the state is the abolition of the old anti-workers civil service apparatus and the military-bureaucratic caste of the bourgeoisie, which rule over the masses as agents of this bourgeoisie. The "smashing" of the state consists in submitting all functionaries to "downwards accountability". Just as the workers have to control their organizations, just as the functionaries of organizations have to be nothing else than the "executive power" of the workers' will, and therefore downwards accountable, so the functionaries have to execute nothing else than the will of the workers in social life. This is only possible if the workers themselves, in the event through their enterprise organizations and councils, retain the right to appoint and dismiss functionaries for themselves. All general labor provisions and measures are then the responsibility of the councils' organization, that grows from the enterprise organizations. Therewith the authoritative civil service apparatus, closed off from the masses and ruling over them, is abolished and the social functions have become a living part of the masses. The management and administration of social life has been transferred to the masses themselves.

II. The struggle to come

1. The position of the revolutionary enterprise nuclei in the practical class struggle is fully carried by the principle of the proletarian revolution: administration and management of all social life has to rest in the hands of the workers. From this point of view the old point of contention, whether revolutionary workers should reject wage strikes – as reformist – or should support them, appears in a new light. From this point of view, it appears that the question has been put incorrectly and therefore the correct answer cannot be given. The essence of the forthcoming class movement is the **process of revolution** towards the autonomous effectuation of what lives in the working class itself, the development of self-consciousness and self-acting. The revolutionary enterprise nuclei therefore always try to carry through this "principle of the Paris Commune" in all movements of the workers. The **content** of these movements, whether they concern wages or other demands, **cannot** be determined by the revolutionary enterprises nuclei. That is why these nuclei are not substitutes for the old trade union movement: The improvement of working conditions is not on their terrain at all.

2. In this struggle for "self-leadership", the working class will find all the old workers' organizations pitted against it. The cause for this lies in the fact that in all these organizations the bourgeois relationship of leaders to masses dominates. At the top resides the leadership that determines the content, but above all the course of the movements. These organizations have developed a civil service apparatus that is separate from the mass of the members and leads an independent life. Accountability by the diverse functionaries is never rendered 'downwards', but always 'upwards'. The right to appoint and dismiss functionaries does not lie with the masses but with the higher echelons, that allow all functions within the organizational apparatus to be taken over by persons they deem appropriate for their leadership policies. The organizations of the old workers' movement thereby show the same characteristics as the state. That is why the "breaking down" the state signifies at once "breaking down" these organizations. Therefore they resist tooth and nails (and with machine guns) against a proletarian revolution, just like the bourgeoisie. That is why the bourgeoisie finds its strongest support against a proletarian revolution in the old workers' movement.

3. It follows from this condition that there is no fundamental difference between the struggle for the immediate carrying through of the proletarian revolution and the practical class struggle about wages. To lay the struggle for the principles of “self-leadership” in every workers’ movement is essentially a struggle for communism itself.

III. The ‘wildcat strike’

1. The trade unions constitute one of the most important strongholds of the bourgeoisie against the proletarian revolution. Completely entrenched in the cooperation between capital and labor, along the road of collective agreements, they are fully fused with capitalism. Incapable of taking up the fight against modern trust and monopoly capitalism with the professional associations,⁽¹⁾ they cannot even think of opposing the impoverishment of the working class without putting their own organization at risk. And where movements emerge to take up the struggle against capital from the workers themselves, they [i.e. the trade unions] directly side with the entrepreneurs, because this movement is as dangerous for them as for the bourgeoisie.

These movements, which emerge from the workers themselves, almost always (as practice itself has already taught) take the form of ‘wildcat’ strikes. The unions immediately break these wildcat strikes, using different methods depending on the circumstances. The most advantageous method for them is to take over the leadership of the strike, after which they enter into an agreement with the entrepreneurs and simply cancel the strike. If this does not succeed immediately, they oblige their members to scabbing in order to break the strike.

2. It is of great importance to investigate the course of these wildcat strikes. And, if we seriously ask ourselves after the movement ended, which method had the best effect, the “deliberations” of the unions in the boardroom of the entrepreneurs or the wildcat strike led by a strike committee of the workers,

1) Unlike the United States, most trade unions in Europe did not organize themselves as industry federations until after the Second World War. The left communists in Germany and the Netherlands in the 1920s and 1930s, therefore, considered, among other things, the American *Industrial Workers of the World* (IWW), which was organized along industrial lines, to be a step forwards to the professionally organized trade unions. Therefore the ‘Arbeiter Unionen’ (workers’ unions) were organized by industry. But the history of the unions so far (e.g. the AFL-CIO in the USA) shows that organizing by industry or by profession is not the crucial point in the difference between proletarian and state organizations. [Note by F.C.]

then practice has shown that in most cases both ended in defeat. The wildcat strike collapsed after some time, to which the manipulations of the trade union movement, which did not exclude any means to obtain the defeat of the workers, contributed in no small part.

Yet, the real cause of the defeat doesn’t lie here. The main cause is that the wildcat strike is still in the very first stage of its development. With the clear bankruptcy of the trade union movement, the workers are only taking the first step towards self-acting. But in fact they still remain within the pathways of the old trade union movement, for the time being, as far as the “limited” strike is concerned. Just like the trade unions still do once in a while, they bring a part of a particular industry to a standstill in order to force capital to make concessions. In some cases, this may be successful, but in general, especially in major conflicts, it leads to defeat, as with the trade unions. So “self-leadership” is absolutely not a miracle cure assuring victory. The point is that no limited strike (one purely limited to a certain branch of business) in the present times of trust capitalism can do something against the bourgeoisie. The bonzocracy of the trade union movement knows this very well and that is why it does not even try.

3. The revolutionary enterprise nuclei therefore have as their task to transform the “professional front” into a “class front”; they have to strive to immediately spark every strike off to other branches of business. This strike tactic is only possible if the trade unions are excluded from the strike leadership, because the trade union is unwilling and incapable of doing so. It is unwilling because its apparatus is entirely geared towards “consultations” between capital and labor; it is incapable because it is bound hands and feet by the collective agreements and, when the movement extends, it immediately enters illegal ground, so that its possessions are in danger.

IV. Enterprise organization and enterprise nucleus

1. The revolutionary enterprise nuclei concentrate their activity on having the enterprise personnel acting as one man, independent of any party or trade union.⁽²⁾ They call upon the personnel not to let themselves be divided by the shattering spirit of the diverse [qualification] certificates, but to decide upon their attitude in the struggle **together**. Here

2) On organizations of the unemployed, see also the ‘*Theses about party and dictatorship*’, I. The reversal in the old traditions.

every worker must struggle separately between party or trade union discipline and class solidarity. If class solidarity wins, and a closed struggle front comes about, then the leadership policies inherited from the bourgeoisie has been defeated, and the own proletarian class policies will take its place.

2. When the workers, organized in this way, take up the struggle, if they act organized according to the enterprise, then they form an enterprise organization at that moment, which constitutes a real class organization. These enterprise organizations wage the struggle; they decide on the struggle actions in the strike committees, wage possible negotiations with the entrepreneurs and end the struggle by themselves.

3. These class organizations should not be confused with the enterprise nuclei. The nucleus is **not** the representative of the class: it was not elected as such and therefore cannot take the leadership of the strike. To the extent that members of a nucleus take part in the strike leadership, they are there only as workers appointed by the personnel as such.

4. Following the end of a struggle, the enterprise organization falls apart, because the workers no longer

act to the outside as a unity organized on the basis of the enterprise: party and trade union discipline again sort the workers out in the various categories. What remains is the revolutionary enterprise **nucleus**, that is always ready to appeal to the class feeling again.

5. The enterprise organization as an expression of the unity of the working class will therefore disappear time and again **before** the revolution, in order to become the permanent form of organization of the workers only at the decisive turning point in the power relations. The workers then act independently of any party or trade union as a production unit, and through their network of relations, establish the association of free and equal producers.

G.I.C., Amsterdam, June 30, 1931.

Original version: **Stellingen omtrent revolutionaire bedrijfskernen**. (30 juni 1931). Also in: *Persdienst Internationale Communisten Holland (P.I.C.)*, 5e jg., no. 12, August 1932.

Source: <http://www.aaap.be/Pdf/Pamphlets-GIC/Stellingen-Revolutionaire-Bedrijfskernen-1.pdf>

THESES ABOUT PARTY AND DICTATORSHIP

I. The reversal in the old traditions

1. The traditions of the old labor movement have grown historically; they are the result of an earlier period in which "the old proven tactics" could achieve advantages. Several generations have successfully used this tactic so that these forms of struggle have still precipitated in the consciousness of the masses as valid by experience. Only a whole series of defeats, as we have seen over the past ten years, can open up the new truth to the younger generation. That is why in the present period the struggle within the working class is emerging to break the obedience to the trade union leaders and the political parties, and to extend the struggle to other groups through solidarity movements. Thus we have arrived at the transitional period to the autonomous action of the masses.

2. This reversal does not reveal itself immediately by the clear forms of the struggle for the self-activity of the masses but, for the time being, remains mixed with important parts of the old. Nevertheless, here as well the different views precipitate in differ-

ent organizational forms: the OSP ⁽¹⁾, the RGO ⁽²⁾, and the Third International. These formations concur in the recognition that the class struggle can no longer be waged with the limited professional strike. ⁽³⁾ Therefore, they demand that the trade union leaderships extend the strike. These formations all concur as well in the old, traditional conceptions about the leadership of class movements, which they want to put in the hands of the trade unions or of their party bureaus. However, this is

- 1) OSP: '*Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij*', Dutch political party, formed in 1932 as a split from the Social Democratic Party SDAP. In 1935 the OSP merged with Sneevliet's *RSP* to form the *Revolutionair-Socialistische Arbeiderspartij* (RSAP). During the German occupation, it illegally continued as the *Marx-Lenin-Luxemburg Front*, which refused to defend the USSR. After Sneevliet and nine other comrades were executed by the Nazis, the remainder of the proletarian internationalist MLL front, after a split from Trotskyists, merged with comrades from the GIC to form the council-communist *Communistenbond 'Spartacus'*. [Note by F.C.]
- 2) RGO: '*Rote Gewerkschafts-Opposition*'. Red trade union opposition led by the Bolsheviks.
- 3) See the *Theses on revolutionary enterprise nuclei*, III. The 'wildcat strike'.

still halfheartedness from the period of reversal, that only leads to a dead end. A militant class front can only arise, when the strikers, in association with the unemployed, ⁽⁴⁾ take the initiative to draw the workers from other sectors into their movement by massively making their way to these other enterprises.

3. The old, traditional relation of the masses towards leadership is still a reflection of capitalist social relations, where rulers and ruled, masters and servants, the higher patrons and the lower executives, constitute the self-evident social relations. In the class struggle, this leads to an overestimation of individual power, the individual capacities of the leaders, and an underestimation of the psychological self-movement of the masses. Therefore, such organizations aim at founding a mass party guided by a conscious, revolutionary leadership that determines the course and content of the movement. The masses constitute the “material” with which the leaders carry out the work of liberation.

II. The leaders’ parties and the revolution

1. In these so-called revolutionary mass parties, this liberation of the working class finds its short formulation in [the slogan]: “Socialism now!”, which means the carrying through of a state capitalism, more or less according to the Russian model. That is why the Russian industrialization through state exploitation poses for both the OSP and the Third International as the construction of socialism. According to this view, a mass movement must overthrow the ruling class, after which a government of “workers and peasants” takes control, expropriates the large farms, and hands them over to the state. The management of the economy then goes to the state, but the state can only function if it controls the masses. For the old labor movement, the domination of Labor is nothing but the organized domination of wage laborers. From this conception of “socialism now” the attitude of the Third International is born to destroy *even now* any organization of revolutionary workers that does not submit to its leadership. From this conception, the leaders’ executive tyranny towards the members of their own organization is explicable as well. Just as the leadership of the Third International demands absolute and blind obedience from its members, so it demands the absolute submission of the entire working class to its leader-

ship, when it has become the ruling party under the pretext of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”.

2. A proletarian revolution in the highly developed capitalist countries ⁽⁵⁾ however immediately enters in an insurmountable contradiction with a “socializing” workers’ government. The “workers’ government” always tries to consolidate the movement at a certain point in order to organizationally carry out its “socialization”. But the masses that have come in motion cannot stop in face of such a consolidation, as they try to revolutionize **all** social relations in order to put them on a new foundation. The “workers’ government” must act against it to create “order” and prevent “chaos”. But in the social sense, this “chaos” is precisely the birth of the new social relations that the workers themselves create. The further the social forces are unleashed, the deeper the revolution plows.

3. This irreconcilable contradiction between the self-acting mass and a “workers’ government”, which must establish ‘order’, determines that every party that wants to limit the activity of the masses to the boundaries of its program, ⁽⁶⁾ by becoming the ruling power in the state, must play a counter-revolutionary role in the revolution. It proclaims “the dictatorship of the proletariat” in order to fight the counterrevolution of the bourgeoisie AND to gradually install the new order in the social relations, as ... demanded by Marx’s “Communist Manifesto”. But in reality, this dictatorship is also directed against the Workers’ Councils, that exceed the boundaries of the party program by carrying out socialization **themselves**, by taking the leadership in their own hands. They are then destroyed by the dictatorship of the ruling party as counterrevolutionaries. Thus, in the highly developed capitalist countries, every party dictatorship is a dictatorship **over** the working class, and the forerunner of capitalist counter-revolution.

4) More or less connected to the GIC, an unemployed group was active in Amsterdam which, as a minority organization, fulfilled the same propagandist function as the revolutionary enterprise nucleus. [Note by F.C.]

5) The GIC, following Herman Gorter and the KAPD, made a distinction between the strategy for Russia on the one hand, and for Central and Western Europe on the other hand, based on different social conditions. This brought with it a partial justification of the Bolsheviks’ policy in Russia. But if one does not – as any Marxist did at the time and as many still do – look at the Russian Revolution from the perspective of “permanent revolution”, or as a “double” (bourgeois and proletarian) revolution, following the model of Marx’s politics for Germany in 1848, then the Left Communists’ critique of Bolshevism is also useful for an analysis of the counterrevolution carried out by the Bolsheviks in Russia. [Note by F.C.]

6) In the original: “party program”.

4. The purpose of a proletarian revolution can be no other than to revolutionize all bourgeois relations even in their remotest corners. Therefore, the revolutionary energies cannot have themselves restricted within the boundaries of a party program. The workers have to shape life by themselves, through their Councils and Enterprise Organizations, according to their new insights, and manage society. This is also a dictatorship, but one [exercised] by the workers, that is based on the real class power of the proletariat.

III. The political dictatorship

1. The self-movement of the working classes by means of their Councils and Enterprise Organizations is the same as the dictatorship of the proletariat. It merely means that all social functions are carried out by these organs, and that both the legislative and the executive power have been transferred to them. In other words, they seize all power without sharing it with trade unions, political parties, or other formations.

2. In order to maintain the exclusive power of the Councils, this dictatorship must dissolve all organizations that want to subjugate the Council movement to them. On the basis of the Council movement, on the basis of the class dictatorship, however, complete freedom of political propaganda is necessary for the various nuances within the labor movement, in so far as they accept the class dictatorship. This struggle of political nuances is an essential part of the liberation struggle. Its repression, as Russia shows under the dictatorship of the communist party is, in the highly developed capitalist countries, nothing but the repression of the revolution itself, leading to the opposite of what it pretends to strive for.

IV. The economic dictatorship

1. In the revolution, the political parties and the trade union movement will try to gain economic power through the detour of the state. The Councils and Enterprise Organizations can only retain this power, if they do not run the enterprises via the state, but **directly** manage and administer production by themselves without detours. This direct leadership is only possible if the old laws of movement of the economy are abolished and the movement of the goods is based on the production time,

with the socially average working hour then becoming the central category of both production and consumption. (7)

V. The proletarian party

1. With the understanding that the proletariat can only be victorious and carry through the communist economy as a Council-Unity, the relationship of the proletarian parties with the class must simultaneously change. If in the past it was about constituting mass parties in order to become the ruling power, now it is mainly about strengthening not the party but the **class**. The revolutionaries therefore work in close connection with the masses; they are a real part of the masses. They carry the propaganda for the autonomous development of the class forces and *actively* support them wherever they manifest themselves.

2. Before, during and after the revolution there will be different conceptions within the working class about the development of society and therefore different views about the measures that are necessary, which is the cause of the constitution of different political parties. To the extent that they do not claim power for themselves, do not seek power **over** the working class, it is not necessary for them to build up an instrument of organizational power. These groups are therefore local working groups that join together at district and national levels, in order to strengthen the propaganda and jointly determine their position in class conflicts. An organizational fusion of different views in this is harmful.

GIC, August 1932.

Original version: **Stellingen omtrent partij en dictatuur** (P.I.C., 5e jg., no. 12, August 1932)

Source: <http://www.aaap.be/Pdf/Pamphlets-GIC/Stellingen-Revolutionaire-Bedrijfskernen-2.pdf>

Translation source: [Theses on Revolutionary Workplace Nucleus, Party, and Dictatorship](#). (F.C., 29 June 2020)

This translation has been checked with the original and revised by H.C., July 10, 2020. The annotations by F.C. have been retained.

7) G.I.C., *Fundamental principles of communist production and distribution*. English translation of the 2nd Edition in Dutch, 1935 by H. Lueer (Editor), 2020. Red & Black Books, Hamburg 2020. ISBN: 979-8615430794. Postal order via Amazon: <https://www.amazon.de>.

Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics (II)

The mortal crisis of 2020? (*Pantopolis*, May 2020)

The second part of this contribution opens with a historical sketch of wars and epidemics from capitalism's early expansion since the turn of the 16th Century: the discovery of the "West Indies" and the ensuing conquest of the Americas by Europe's incipient colonialisms, as well as their expansion to Africa and the "East Indies", until the era of modern imperialism since the First World War. It focuses on the 'natural' spread of lethal diseases and epidemics as a consequence of the interaction of hitherto physically separated populations across continents, under the conditions of a merciless exploitation of slave and forced labor.

It continues by developing on *biological warfare* that only became systematically developed in the context of modern imperialism by all major rivaling powers, alongside chemical and – after WW-2 – in addition to nuclear warfare. Military-scientific programs for 'weaponizing' a diversity of biological agents (bacteria and viruses, like for instance anthrax, botulinum, plague or Ebola) and the yet limited attempts at "testing" and "applying" them in war conflicts are briefly reviewed, including the relatively recent example of the *Aum sect* in Japan (formally a non-state actor).

The chapter concludes with some theses for discussion, and a brief rejection of the rumors and speculations that the present Covid-19 pandemic would have originated from Chinese military laboratory experiments.

3. Capitalism, Imperialism and the War of Microbes

In 1913, on the eve of the war, Rosa Luxemburg forcefully pointed out that the rise of capitalism is nothing more than the history of its crimes, its violence on a global scale, that it steep into irreparable convulsions:

« [Capital] is not only born "from head to toe sweating blood and filth through every pore", but it imposes itself upon the world step by step in this way, and thereby prepares, in ever more violent convulsions, its own downfall.» ⁽¹⁾

The Moloch of money

The development of capitalism, first in its commercial form, was accompanied by a first globalization. This was largely a policy of **expansion, military conquests, colonization and exploitation** on the scale of entire continents. The "discovery" of America by Columbus inaugurated microbial globalization. Bacteria and viruses that thrived on the Euro-Asian continent spread everywhere during the conquest. Infections such as measles, smallpox, cholera, tuberculosis are destroyed whole populations. In Mexico, the Amerindian population fell from 25 million in 1519 to 1.5 million in 1580, and in Peru the

fall was just as sharp: 10 million around 1530. ⁽²⁾ The same apocalyptic observation [could be made] in North America. Epidemics in South and Central America were progressing to the present-day United States in the early 16th Century. French settlers installed themselves in Canada and depopulation began immediately as a result of contact between Indian communities – in commercial and warlike form – and many communities disappeared even before they had learned that foreign ships had reached their shores. ⁽³⁾ This deadly march of pandemics lasted until the 19th Century: in the early 1880s, when capital built a Canadian Pacific Railway line through the interior province of Saskatchewan, the Natives of the province, hitherto protected from the germs of the whites, were dying at a rate of 9 percent per year. ⁽⁴⁾

Let us add that the massively imported breeding system of the European settlers, who were living practically immune in the vicinity of domestic animals (cows, pigs, goats, horses and poultry), also

1) Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals* (1913). Part III. The historic conditions of accumulation, Ch. 31: Protective tariffs and accumulation (final clause). GW Band V, p. 385 (Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1985)

2) Carmen Bernand, Serge Gruzinski: *Histoire du Nouveau Monde. De la Découverte à la conquête*, Fayard, Paris, 1991; Nathan Wachtel: *La vision des vaincus. Les Indiens du Pérou devant la conquête espagnole*, Gallimard, Paris, 1971.

3) Frédéric Dorel, *La thèse du 'génocide indien' : guerre de position entre science et mémoire*, Amnis n° 6, 2006 (online article).

4) Jared Diamond, *De l'inégalité parmi les sociétés*, Gallimard, 2000, p. 210.

unquestionably favored the appearance of unknown infectious epidemics in America.

When it was not a deliberate genocide, in which the victor would have knowingly used the microbial weapon, it is obvious that the *Conquista*, like any military conquest carried out on a large scale was an irreversible human disaster. ⁽⁵⁾ The Dominican *Bartolomé de Las Casas*, who never speaks of these deadly epidemics, gave a striking picture of the conquest of the Caribbean and the Americas by iron and fire:

"In forty years, as a result of tyranny and the infernal and unjust actions of the Christians, twelve million souls, men, women and children are dead. And to tell you the truth, I believe, and I don't think I am mistaken, that there have been over fifteen million. [...] During these twelve years, out of these four hundred and fifty leagues [of New-Spain], the Spaniards killed with knife and spear more than four million people, women and children, young and old, or burned them alive." ⁽⁶⁾

But it is undoubtedly the use of forced labor by the colonial authorities that deals the final blow, hitting a population already devastated by the microbial shock. Thirsty for gold and silver, the Spanish Empire reduced the natives, free and not free, to virtual slavery in the mines, but also serfdom on immense agricultural estates. Relying on the indigenous nobility (the *caciques*), who supported *Cortès* in order to better topple the Aztec power and maintain their caste privileges, the aristocracy of the *hidalgos* got rich by imposing wage slavery, i.e. a miserable wage set by the colonial state.

The prohibition of the enslavement of indigenous people, from 1542 onward, merely formalized their reduction to the status of serfs. It was also accompanied by a flourishing trade in black slaves, who were already being used on plantations on the Canary Islands. *Las Casas*, who had initially accepted the importation of black slaves for domestic use, soon repented. *"Judging himself guilty by inadvertence"*, the Dominican then hammered home: *"The slavery of Blacks is as unjust as that of the Indians"*. ⁽⁷⁾

The development of the scourge of slavery in the Americas also had the perverse effect of importing other microbial scourges that did not exist on that continent. The introduction of the *yellow fever virus*, carried by monkeys from Africa, decimated the monkeys and the indigenous people of the Americas.

Forced labor, on the same title as slavery, ⁽⁸⁾ only spread at the height of the capitalist system both in Asia ⁽⁹⁾ and in Africa. Under Leopold II, the Belgian Congo, which was his personal property, saw a fierce serfdom being imposed by the large mining companies and big planters who shared their immense profits with the Crown. The colonial administration also imported more than 44,000 workers from Angola and Northern Rhodesia. These workers died of tick fever (caused by the *rickettsia africana* bacteria), influenza, pneumonia, exhaustion or repeated mining *"disasters"*.

We know, through the testimonies of Albert London and André Gide, about the human catastrophe of the construction of the Congo-Ocean railway line by French capital. It claimed more than 23,000 victims.

The historian *Elikia M'Bokolo* summed up very well the ecological, demographic and health disaster brought about by the brutal introduction of the capitalist system, which transformed human beings into flesh for profit or cannon fodder:

"The ecological disaster and the demographic catastrophe caused by the system of concessionary companies in the two Congos were only the extreme form of a much more general phenomenon that struck almost all the colonized regions: spectacular or deadly epidemics in Madagascar (plague) as in Senegal (yellow fever, plague) or in Ivory Coast (yellow fever); droughts and famines in areas as different as the Sahel and Angola; epidemics, epizootics, famines, wars and excess mortality mixed in an infernal cycle in Central and Eastern Africa." ⁽¹⁰⁾

Entire populations have thus been subjected to the yoke of rising capitalism since the 16th Century. Exploited to death, weakened by forced labor or slavery, unable to resist the pandemics that were taking place on the sea and land trade routes, they were

5) In this it is comparable to the Mongolian conquests in the 13th and 14th Centuries, following the paths of the plague pandemic.

6) *Très brève relation sur la destruction des Indes*, Mouton, Paris-La Haye, 1969, pp.26, 48.

7) Saint-Lu (André), *Bartolomé de las Casas et la traite des nègres*, Bulletin hispanique, tome 94, n° 1, 1992, p. 37-43.

8) Elikia M'Bokolo, *Le travail forcé, c'est de l'esclavage*, L'Histoire, nr. 302, October 2005.

9) In Asia, notably in the Dutch Indies, a system of obligatory crops was imposed, the so-called 'Cultuurstelsel' ("culture" or "crop" system).

10) M'Bokolo, *Afrique noire. Histoire et civilisations du XIX. siècle à nos jours*, Hatier-AUF, 2004, p. 315.

sacrificed to the great Moloch, the god Mammon, the god of money extending his hold over the whole world:

"(...) money is the hangman of all things, the Moloch to whom everything must be sacrificed. [...] Money indeed appears as the Moloch to whom real wealth is sacrificed." ⁽¹¹⁾

"It [compound interest-bearing capital] appears as a Moloch demanding the whole world as a sacrifice belonging to it of right." ⁽¹²⁾

The biological arms at the time of the necrosis of Capital

The use of biological weapons (bacteria and viruses) is as old as war. The soldiers of Antiquity enhanced the destructive power of their arrows by dipping them in rotting flesh or in corrupted blood, i.e. by making them not only toxic but just as well infecting. *Skythikon*, a toxic specialty of the Scythian archers, was composed of as many poisons as well as of infecting organic products simmered in manure: this mixture caused not only a poisoning but also gaseous gangrene, tetanus or any other type of blistering infection. ⁽¹³⁾

At the very beginning of the expansion of capitalism, we note the first use of biological weapons, during a commercial and colonial war. It was during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) that smallpox was used by *General Jeffery Amherst*, commander-in-chief of the British troops in North America. He wrote in July 1763, during the Pontiac War, when the revolt of indigenous peoples was raging. The use of biological weapons was part of the of a plan of "ethnic cleansing", a veritable genocide *avant la lettre*:

"Couldn't we find a way to spread smallpox among these tribes of disgruntled Indians? On this occasion, we must use every ploy in our power to defeat them." ⁽¹⁴⁾

And this "interrogation" is followed by a quick application using smallpox-contaminated blankets. This fine work finally earned him a seat in the House of Lords of Her Glorious British Majesty.

This technique of wiping out indigenous peoples was not forgotten in the last two centuries. It remains a "classic" of its kind. Let us take, among other examples, that of Brazil. The great landowners

and their cronies "offered" to the native Indians clothing from hospitals to contaminate them with smallpox or other diseases apt of decimating their villages. ⁽¹⁵⁾

The full development of capitalism and the deadly confrontation of imperialism at the scale of the planet has led to the scientific study of all biological agents that could be "militarized", i.e. used in the same way as a chemical weapon (and a nuclear one as well since 1945). In order to maximize its lethality, the biological weapon must meet several criteria – known as *the criteria of Theodor Rosebury* (1904-1976) – namely: direct contagiousness, minimum infective dose, route of infection or intoxication, incubation period or duration of appearance of the first symptoms, survival in the environment, ease of production and storage, stability of stored products, (possible) therapeutics... ⁽¹⁶⁾

In the course of studies conducted in the greatest secrecy, military strategists – USA, UK, Japan, USSR, France, Italy, etc. – noted the "prodigious effects" of the *anthrax* bacillus (*Bacillus anthracis*), stable in the environment, in powder or spray form, already in use during the First World War. ⁽¹⁷⁾ But also of the plague bacillus (*Yersinia pestis*), of the *tularemia* (disease transmitted to humans through contact with infected animals or by means of vectors, like ticks). The scientists of death also noted the "wonders" of viruses, very interesting by their microscopic size: **they can pass through the filtering elements of the containment and individual respirators; there is no effective therapy outside of the prevention by vaccination.**

The military "darling" may now be the *smallpox virus* – declared eradicated by the WHO on 8 May 1980 – which can be reactivated in the laboratory

11) Source: Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*; II. Das Kapitel vom Geld - Der Umlauf des Geldes; b) [Das Geld als Zirkulationsmittel]. MEW Band 42, p.129.

12) Karl Marx, *Theorien über den Mehrwert* (1861–63), Band III. Beilage: *Revenue and its sources. Die Vulgärökonomie*. [1.] Entwicklung des zinstragenden Kapitals auf Basis der kapitalistischen Produktion. MEW Band 26.3, p. 448.

13) Grmek (Mirko), *Ruses de guerre biologiques dans l'Antiquité*, *Revue des études grecques*, tome 92, fascicule 436-437, January – June 1979, p. 144.

14) L'Encyclopédie canadienne, 21 June 2019, article: [Jeffery Amherst, premier baron Amherst](#).

15) Mércio Pereira Gomes, *Os Índios e o Brasil*, Editora Vozes, Petrópolis (State of Rio de Janeiro), 1991.

16) Lepick & Binder, article *Guerre biologique*, in: Dominique Lecourt, *Dictionnaire de la pensée médicale*, PUF, Paris, 2004.

17) The German and French armies used the agents of anthrax and glanders against "enemy" livestock (idem, p. 555).

and spread, without a vaccine to stop it.⁽¹⁸⁾ To this can be added the viruses responsible for encephalitis (tick-borne encephalitis, chikungunya, dengue,⁽¹⁹⁾ yellow fever, Venezuelan equine encephalitis), transmitted by arthropods. Or the viruses transmitted by bats, which have been very well studied, especially in Chinese laboratories: Marburg virus, Lyssavirus from Australia, Nipah virus (Malaysia, India, Bangladesh), etc. In the case of insects, those correctly used in military programs (entomological warfare)⁽²⁰⁾ can serve as biological transmitters of plague, cholera, etc.

All these programs carried out in ultra-secret military laboratories are preparing for the biological wars of the future, which are akin to outright genocide. Used “experimentally” in the past, they had deadly effects, even if on a small scale.

Manchuria occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army (1932-1945) served as a testing ground for the germ warfare. The main research center (UNIT 731), located in Pingfang (Harbin province), comprised more than 150 buildings, five satellite camps and employed at least 3,000 scientists and technicians. These criminal scientists tested the agents of cholera, plague and anthrax on Chinese prisoners of war on a large scale. Nearly 3,000 prisoners perished in atrocious suffering. Biological attacks were carried out 12 times against Chinese cities, contaminating drinking water and food supplies with cholera, plague and anthrax. The death toll was in the thousands.

During the **Ethiopian War** (1935-1936), Mussolini – alongside the [chemical] gases he used extensively against the population and the army of the Negus – came very close to experimenting with his bacterio-

logical weapons. Marshal Badoglio discouraged him, not out of “humanism”, of course, but out of simple strategic realism. All these “experiments”, after the defeat of Japan and the dismantling of Unit 731, served as a “model” for the “bacteriological engineering” of the USSR and the USA.

The USA conducted their research from 1942 to the late 1960s. Deadly substances were tested on their population, especially on **prison populations and conscientious objectors**. During the **Korean War** (1950-1953), the bacilli of anthrax, plague, and cholera were spread among the North Korean and Chinese enemy. Flies, fleas, etc., were used, as well as aerosols. In the latter case, the US army sprayed the enemy by air.⁽²¹⁾ As the results were mixed, and following various incidents (“leaks” of bacilli and viruses), American biological weapons stocks were (officially) destroyed between May 1971 and February 1973...

Soviet state capitalism – dubbed “real socialism” by its ruling class – was not outdone in this biological arms race, from Stalin to Gorbachev. The militarization of a dozen pathogens entered the laboratory programs: anthrax, tularemia, brucellosis, plague, Venezuelan equine encephalitis, typhus, Q fever⁽²²⁾, botulinum toxin produced by bacteria. In 1973, a few months after the establishment of an international treaty banning all research on biological weapons,⁽²³⁾ a State decree established an entity (BIOPREPARAT = Preparation of biological substances) with 40 research centers and production sites for bacteriological weapons. The manufacture of *ad hoc* missiles, rockets and bombs would find its purpose in the dissemination of pathogens. The program was officially stopped in 1992...

Such programs may also be aimed at the population of a state, where the dominant capitalist class numerical minority is planning **mass racial genocide**. In the ‘white’ **South Africa of Apartheid**, a top-secret project – conducted in 1985 by “**Doctor Death**” Wouter Basson – was put in place. It targeted the black population, using extreme means:

18) To this can be added the Spanish flu virus, whose RNA was found in 2002 on victims buried in Norwegian permafrost. The RNA was sequenced in 2005. The unintentional or deliberate release of samples stored in one or more laboratories could lead to a pandemic on the scale of the 1918 – 1919 pandemic or even worse.

19) From January to early April 2020, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported nearly 1,173,000 cases of dengue fever and 355 deaths.

20) Before and during the Second World War, Japan, Canada, the USA and Germany embarked on insect vector programs: fleas carrying the plague, mosquitoes and biting flies, and beetles in the German case. The Cold War caused an explosion of research in all these fields, in which the USA and the USSR were the leaders. An American military program, which used the “right vector”, estimated the mortality rate at 50% in the case of an attack on a city, for the modest price of \$0.29 (1976).

21) Stephen Endicott & Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare: Secrets from the Early Cold War and Korea*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1998. Also: Gordon Thomas, *Les armes secrètes de la CIA*, Nouveau Monde, 2006.

22) A so-called zoonosis; a disease transmissible from a vertebrate animal (cattle, sheep, goats) to humans.

23) The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), opened for signature on 10 April 1972, entered into force in 1975.

Anthrax, Ebola, AIDS, cholera, mass sterilization, the use of ethnically selective chemical poisons. ⁽²⁴⁾

The case of **Iraq** is a textbook case of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) warfare against “enemies from within”. Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, with its impressive biological arsenal, limited itself to the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. From 16 to 19 March 1988, over the Kurdish town of **Halabja**, Iraqi army Mig (Russian) and Mirage (French) fighter-bombers spilled killer gases: mustard gas, Sarin and Tabun. The death toll was 5,000. Notably, these weapons “*were mainly supplied by French, Belgian and German companies, whose engineers and chemists knew exactly what Saddam was up to... For years, the United States and its allies blocked international campaigns to convict Saddam for his use of mustard gas and nerve gas*”. ⁽²⁵⁾

It is quite clear that the major capitalist powers (including China and Russia) have no intention of interrupting their biological warfare program. Accidental leaks of biological and/or chemical agents are well documented. The one in Dugway (Utah) in 1968 cost the lives of 6,000 sheep. The one in Sverdlovsk (Soviet Russia) in April 1969 was much more serious. The epidemic spread to cattle up to 50 km away. The military research center on the outskirts of Ekaterinburg (then Sverdlovsk) was the center of the leak.

Such “leaks” may [also] be deliberate, caused by multiple forms of bio-terrorism, involving religious or extremist sects – sometimes emanating from States that covertly arm terrorist groups. Let us recall some facts. In September 1984, the **Rajneeshees religious sect**, based in Wasco County, **Oregon**, spread salmonella on salads and raw vegetables served in restaurants in Dalles, resulting in 45 hospitalizations. The best known case is the Sarin attack perpetrated by the **Aun sect** in the **Tokyo subway** on March 19, 1995, which affected 5,500 people (including 12 lethally). The sect, with 50,000 members and a billion dollars in booty, had an advanced biological weapons research program. The cult had procured and stored anthrax and Q fever bacilli and botulinum toxin. It even sought to acquire the Ebola

virus (which has a fatality rate of 90% in outbreaks). ⁽²⁶⁾

At the end of this second part, it can be argued that:

1. The spread of microbes (bacteria and viruses) is favored by the extreme concentration of the world’s population (of which 50% lives in cities, often in the worst sanitary conditions, in polluted cities where fine particles promote the rapid spread of epidemics attacking the respiratory tract).
2. Microbes, which follow the paths of hyper-commercialization and hyper-production of Capital, are proliferating as pathogens with the very sudden demographic explosion (3 billion people in 1960; 7.7 billion in 2020). They find free places in air transport: three billion passengers on all routes in 2013 worldwide; in 2017, four billion passengers. They are moving slower but just as inexorably at sea. The merchant navy, which accounts for 90% of world trade, has seen the embellishments of globalization. The number of ships – including passenger ships, such as the cruise ships, nowadays transformed into super-“Exodus” vessels – has increased from approximately 52,000 in 2013 to 58,000 in 2018.
3. For large capitalist states, the preparation and entry into war justifies all military means, including the use of CBRN weapons in a generalized conflict. The use of biological weapons, which has been carried out on a small scale and on an experimental basis (Manchuria, Korean War) can become a monstrous reality if a global conflict breaks out. Bio-terrorism would then be carried out by the major imperialist powers, subcontracting their operations to mercenaries.

Some professional conspirators claim that Covid-19 came from Chinese military laboratories. This is probably to better rid their national bourgeoisie of its usual carelessness during its propagation. To that – for lack of a serious scientific investigation – one must answer that viruses do not wait for the self-serving elucubrations of the “sovereignists” to *mutate* again and again.

These inevitable mutations are the result of natural selection, in accordance with Darwin’s doctrine. ⁽²⁷⁾ While there may be deliberate or accidental manipu-

24) See: Tristan Mendès France, *Dr la Mort. Enquête sur un bioterrorisme d’État en Afrique du Sud*, 2002; Chandré Gould, *Chemical and Biological Weapons: Lessons from South Africa*, Foreign Policy, No. 1, 2005, pp. 109-121.

25) Barry Lando, *Saddam Hussein, un procès sous influence*, Le Monde, 17 October 2005.

26) Patrick Berche, *Une histoire des microbes*, John Libbey – Eurotext, 2007, p. 258.

27) Cf. Santé blog, 18 March 2020: [COVID-19 : On avance sur l’origine du coronavirus](#).

lations through genetic engineering, the outcome of which is uncertain (opening new Pandora's Boxes), **the best agent of the most dangerous viruses is not abstract "Man" but Capital itself.**

By spreading "virally" on a global scale, Capital exacerbates pandemics, which are less and less controllable, often by the collapse of health systems (when they exist for half of humanity) and by the

systematic destruction of the entire ecosystem by a **Vampire Capital** hungry for immediate profits.

PB/Pantopolis, April 1, 2020; rev. May 20, 2020.

Source: [Capitalisme, guerres, pandémie : La crise mortelle de 2020 ?](#) (June 27, 2020)

Translation: H.C., June 30, 2020. Reviewed by the author. The source references in the notes have been left untranslated, except for Marxist classics, which are referenced by sources in German.

The foregoing translation covers the *third* of a four parts article published on the *Pantopolis* blog, which situates the corona-virus pandemic in the destructive history of capitalism. The first and second chapters have appeared in '*A Free Retriever's Digest*' Vol.4 #2 and on its [blog](#). The complete article has been published in French as a pamphlet by *Éditions moto proprio*: '*Capitalisme, guerres, pandémie: La crise mortelle de 2020?*' (4 annotated chapters and a conclusion, with illustrations and supplementary texts, 40 p. A4) ISBN: 9-791094-518151. This pamphlet can be freely downloaded from the Pantopolis blog (see source). Printed versions are available at €3,- per copy. Readers of the French language can address their orders to: pol.krabek@protonmail.com.

The quotations from Marx (English translations)

1. **Marx on money apropos Boisguillebert in 'Grundrisse'** ("Foundations of the critique of political economy") *Notebook II. The chapter on money: '(b) Money as the medium of exchange' (note 11):*

"The commodity requires not simply demand, but demand which can pay in money. Thus, if its price cannot be realized, if it cannot be transformed into money, the commodity appears as **devalued, depriced**. The exchange value expressed in its price must be sacrificed as soon as this specific transformation into money is necessary. Hence the complaints by Boisguillebert, ⁽¹⁾ e.g. that money is the hangman of all things, the moloch to whom everything must be sacrificed, the despot of commodities. In the period of the rising absolute monarchy with its transformation of all taxes into money taxes, money indeed appears as the moloch to whom real wealth is sacrificed. Thus it appears also in every monetary panic. From having been a servant of commerce, says Boisguillebert, money became its despot. ⁽²⁾ But, in fact, already the determination of prices in themselves contains what is counterposed to money in exchange; that money no longer represents the commodity, but the commodity, money. Lamentations about commerce in money as illegitimate commerce are to be found among several writers, who form the transition from the feudal to the modern period; the same later among socialists." [M. Nicolaus, Penguin Books & New Left Review, 1973]

2. **Marx on compound interest-bearing capital in 'Theories on Surplus Value': Vol. III, Addendum 'Revenue and its sources. Vulgar political economy': [\[1.\] The Development of Interest-Bearing Capital on the Basis of Capitalist Production](#). (note 12):**

"The complete **objectification, inversion and derangement** of capital as interest-bearing capital—in which, however, the inner nature of capitalist production, [its] derangement, merely appears in its most palpable form—is capital which yields "compound interest". It appears as a Moloch demanding the whole world as a sacrifice belonging to it of right, whose legitimate demands, arising from its very nature, are however never met and are always frustrated by a mysterious fate." [Progress Publishers]

- 1) Pierre le Pesant Boisguillebert (1646–1714). French judge and precursor of the Physiocrats who opposed Mercantilism, upheld free competition, and denounced the misery of the French agricultural population, which, under Louis XIV, earned him exile to the Auvergne.
- 2) Boisguillebert, *Dissertation sur la nature des richesses, de l'argent, et des tributs*, printed in *Économistes Financiers du XVIIIe siècle*, ed. E. Daire, Paris, 1843, pp. 395 and 417.

With Special Attention

The new editions of the GIC's main work and the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives*

On the [blog](#) and in the [previous issue](#) of *A Free Retriever's Digest* we have presented the three new language editions of 'Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution' (1935) that have seen the light of day this year February. Whereas this occasion could have provided ample reason for a positive-critical reception by those preoccupied with the contributions of the historic current of council communism, this has notably not been the case with the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives*. Denying that these editions constitute any achievement, they have preferred to not mention the latter at all and have come to define their project on the same subject matter *in an implicit opposition* to them. The following documents our attempt to pose some necessary questions apropos of the *Archives'* project and their twisted appreciation, followed by the rather astonishing rebuff we have received in place of a serious reply and our commentary.

A new edition? (An appeal by the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives*)

The book by Jan Appel, in the 1935 Dutch second edition, has not yet been edited in other languages. ⁽¹⁾ In Dutch, it was republished in 1950 and in 1972, but without efforts to make it available in other languages, and there were little means neither. This edition integrated four texts, all written by Jan Appel himself in German, and partially translated (see beneath):

1. Grundprinzipien kommunistischer Produktion und Verteilung (Deutschsprachige Originalausgabe, 1930)
2. Die Ausgangspunkte der Grundprinzipien kommunistischer Produktion und Verteilung (Deutschsprachige Originalausgabe, 1931)
3. Marx-Engels und Lenin : Über die Rolle des Staates in der proletarischen Revolution / Max Hempel [=Jan Appel] (Deutschsprachige Originalausgabe, 1927, Niederländisch 1932)
4. Die gesellschaftlich-durchschnittliche Arbeitszeit als Grundlage der kommunistischen Produktion und Verteilung (Deutschsprachige Originalausgabe, G.I.C., 1935)

If you want to participate in making a new edition ⁽²⁾ please contact us. The fourth text [in German] has also been transcribed, thus the four texts could [now] be integrated into a new German edition in the wordings of Jan Appel himself, which, in turn, might serve for further translation, also based on

partial already existing translations into English, Spanish, French and Italian (notably the first two items; and it seems a good idea to respect the work already done). The English translator also made interesting changes in the text, which could be marked in notes (in all languages); furthermore his no less than 90 pages of annotations have not yet been taken into account.

Here, quality is more important than speed. And some knowledge about the history of the text is desirable to approach a more definite edition.

A very first version was published in Dutch in 1928 (recently discovered); a German original, which must have existed, has not yet been found. In 1930 a second German edition was published (known as the first edition), with a complement in 1931. These two were integrated into a new Dutch edition published in 1931. In 1935, two further contributions were integrated into a new Dutch edition; the first published in German in 1927 (Dutch in 1932), the second published in 1935 (exclusively in German, no Dutch version is known, yet it was separately translated towards French).

In 1970, a German reprint was made – including the 1930 edition, and the 1931 complement – but without the other two contributions, and without referring to the extended 1935 edition; and this 1970 German reprint served for the translation into English, French, Italian and Spanish; it also included an introduction by Paul Mattick, which can hardly be ignored (and which is already available in several languages). Finally, the pamphlet by Henk Canne Meijer, written in 1938, and rewritten in 1948, repub-

1) Latest addition, in the version of July 14, 2020: “ (...) has not yet been edited *reasonably* (...) in other languages”.

2) Idem: “(...) a new edition in *as many languages as possible* (...)”.

lished in 1972, should be considered to be an integral part of the work.

Furthermore, for a new edition, it seems desirable to give some credit to the persons who have contributed, like Jan Appel himself, to Henk Canne Meijer (and Herman de Beer, someone completely forgotten), and to previous translators and editors.

As many as possible original materials can be found here for further editing, and the research goes on; please contribute to get it better; premature paper editions are not of much help.

All the more as the already available materials (here in five languages) permit a very serious discussion, even without any final edition. ⁽³⁾

Antonie Pannekoek Archives, 1 May 2020.

Source: **Antonie Pannekoek Archives**, "*A new Edition?*"

Theme: [The Economic Solution for the Period of Transition from Capitalism to Communism](#)

Note: The final clause was added on May 23rd, 2020.

3) Idem, July 14, 2020: "*(:) and it should be studied within the context of so many other contributions available here.*"

Our attempt at an exchange on the *Archives'* editorial project

Dear Vico,

On the topic page "*The economic solution for the transition period from capitalism to communism*" of the website of the Antonie Pannekoek Archives I found your exposition "*A new edition?*", apparently from May 1st, about a new, "*more definitive*" edition of the 'Fundamental Principles' to their second Dutch edition of 1935. If I understand it correctly, you are referring in the first place to a publication in German, which can then serve as a basis for translations.

Of all the qualities that I can discover from this presentation of your project, and its points of departure, it strikes me in the first place that you have made an effort *not* to mention the recently published re-edition in Dutch and the translations into German and English. ⁽¹⁾

This inevitably leads to curious contradictions, such as the distortion at the beginning, that the Dutch 1935 edition "*has not yet been edited in other languages*", and the narrowly concealed recognition of the opposite, i.e. as "*premature paper editions*", at the end of the piece.

Unfortunately, the consequence of this approach is that your entire exposition must be read as a mainly *implicit* criticism of these book editions, which have been portrayed as "*not of much help*" and left unreported. Incidentally, your disqualification does not seem to me to do justice to the efforts made for it.

As I see it, the publications by Red&Black Books, as well as that by Left-dis, have no other pretension

than to provide a text edition of the last version of this collective work edited by the GIC, as a contribution to current discussions about the foundations of an alternative to capitalism. ⁽²⁾ In my opinion, they deserve to be judged as such. Their most important assessment criterion seems obvious to me: they simply have to be able to pass the test against the Dutch text of 1935.

In that respect, it seems to me a pure advantage that from now on, this edition can be placed in the center of current discussions, apart from all comments on, and "interpretations" and misconceptions of the first editions (1930, 1931).

By contrast, your exposition confirms that you are striving for a much more comprehensive project, in which later elaborations (such as those of Henk Canne-Meijer from 1938 et seq.), reviews and critiques (such as those of Paul Mattick from 1970), and even substantial amendments (in the form of text changes and 90 page notes by, if I understand it correctly, Mike Baker, 1990) should find a place.

Apparently in this context you want to compile the 'Fundamental Principles – 1935' in German on the basis of separate texts by Jan Appel. Perhaps this job is technically possible, but what is the advantage gained compared to a fresh translation from Dutch, possibly after a comparison with its sources in German? Do you have any indication that Jan Appel would have disagreed with the Dutch text from 1935?

1) All three have been presented together in the most recent edition of 'A Free Retriever's Digest' [[Vol.4#2, April 21, 2020](#)].

2) Such as the controversy Lueer - Victor at 'Kosmoprolet' and 'Arbeiterstimmen', as well as excerpts from a critique of GIC critics, which are also included in this issue.

Why, in your opinion, should “The Economic Foundations of Council Communism” (‘Radencommunisme’, 1938; 1948) be understood as “*an integral part of the work*” (the ‘Fundamental Principles’) and thus published together? The Spartacusbond/Uitgeverij De Vlam republished them both separately in 1972, in my opinion without denying their inner connection. Did they overlook the “integrality” of this “part” of the ‘Fundamental Principles’ at the time, and thus misunderstood the meaning of this text?

Since you would like to see “*interesting changes to the text*” (!) included in notes on the historical text by “the English translator” (Mike Baker), you apparently consider his work to be of such great significance, that you want him to act as a commentator of a kind of text-critical re-publication, even if his work, and possibly his knowledge, did not extend beyond the editions up to 1931.

I have to admit that I am not well informed about Baker’s work, so I do not judge its content. In my opinion, however, it is not the task of a translator to make textual changes to a translation, but to render the source text true to meaning, and comments and interpretations should be strictly distinguished from the source to which they relate.

As a result, a publication of the latter can very well take place independently of the discussion to which it gave rise, with the editorial notes, in particular, being limited to a minimum of explanations.

I find it regrettable that it is apparently not possible for you to integrate the recently published editions into your more comprehensive project, and that, apparently in the name of a yet to be created

“Gesamtkunstwerk”, you do not wish to acknowledge them even as contributions.

It is to be hoped that your undertaking in this matter will take a more favorable turn than the *new introduction* to the ‘Fundamental Principles’ announced at the *Archives*, for which, two years after the appearance of a text in this genre by another hand, ⁽³⁾ one unfortunately still waits in vain.

By contrast, after this introduction, with the recent full re-edition of the Dutch text from 1935 and its two translations, it seems to me that important conditions have been created to be able to participate in meaningful discussions about the foundations of the historical alternative to capitalism.

I don’t have the impression that the Olympics for “*a new edition*” to which you invite has much to contribute to this, and I would like to hear concretely what you find criticizable with the aforementioned publications, except that they apparently don’t fit into your specific project.

In addition, it could be enlightening (also) for readers of ‘*A Free Retriever’s Digest*’ to be able to briefly take note of Mike Baker’s, apparently neglected, work.

Perhaps you could contribute to that?

Henry Cinnamon, Monday May 18, 2020.

- 3) ‘*The GIC and the economy of the transition period - An introduction*’ appeared as a supplement to ‘*A Free Retriever’s Digest*’ Vol.2 #3 (June - July 2018), and previously on May 13, 2018 as a two-part article on its blog. The [current version](#) (1.1, May 15, 2019) is, apart from a few minor text corrections, [improved for printing] and contains a concise list of sources.

A declaration of inadmissibility instead of a reply

Dear Henry,

Obviously you are not at all aware of what happened; and then it seems wiser not to make overly firm statements, or ask provocative questions.

There is an agreed moratorium on the issue for as long as there is a lack of honesty and openness.

But it will be clarified, and notably in public, with all the references, so do not bother too much.

Greetings, **Vico, Saturday May 23, 2020.**

Vico,

From your e-mail I gather that you are not approachable for the explanations and the appeal at the Antonie Pannekoek Archives for “*a new edition*” of the ‘Fundamental Principles’, and that you see my question, what would be wrong or insufficient in content of the [already] published (re)editions, as a “*provocation*”.

I also note that you do not wish to make use of the opportunity to present Mike Baker’s substantive contribution in ‘*A Free Retriever’s Digest*’.

It is completely absurd to demand of someone who responds to announcements on your site *"to be aware of what has happened"*, when that apparently cannot be read there, and to finish off clarifying that with paternalistic exhortations like *"it seems wiser not to make overly firm statements, or to ask provocative questions"*.

What do you complain about a *"lack of honesty and openness"*, when you yourself lack the righteousness to even mention man and horse, and you are apparently incapable of anything but announcing that you will clarify everything tomorrow come never?

Old man, stop your drivel. You'll end up with nothing but imputations to others.

Henry Cinnamon, Monday May 25, 2020.

"Henry, Go see a doctor. You might very well be suffering from Corona staggers."

Vico, Monday May 25, 2020.

Commentary: An extended 'New Edition' or a Stroke in the Water?

Whereas the fact that the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives* have finally published the outlines of their project of an annotated and supplemented edition of the G.I.C.'s main work is certainly to be welcomed, we have been very unpleasantly surprised by learning that posing questions about it is considered not desirable at all. All the more so, as we have collaborated with them to provide valid translations of some texts considered central to this editorial project,⁽¹⁾ and had assisted in defining its scope already some years ago.

After having received the foregoing declaration of inadmissibility (in the name of a "moratorium" that its author claims to have concluded with an unspecified third party and has left unexplained), and having contracted a sick joke instead of receiving a sincere reply, we have terminated our collaboration with the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives*, notably on the eventually envisaged comprehensive "new edition", for as long as their founder wishes to behave like a misfit.

As to all appearances, the *Archives* have 'shifted their alliances' towards some anonymous contributors, purportedly in wait for better times of "honesty

and openness" (so to say in a moral self-quarantine). The maneuvering they have displayed in this, pissing off potential and actual contributors, is not exactly to their honor.

For our part, we have not received any contribution by the *Archives'* author(s) since the publication of an *introduction* to the G.I.C.'s *'Fundamental Principles'* more than two years ago, neither have we been able to find one at the *Archives'* web site, notwithstanding the latter's growth and tireless activity.

As their editorial project seems to become ever more complex and stretched out into an unforeseeable future, we'd be very curious to learn what the *Antonie Pannekoek Archives* mean by *"a very serious discussion"* that would be possible, *"even without any final edition"*, on the basis of *"the already available materials"*, because they have already rejected any discussion on the basis of the three available, straightforward language editions of the work in question we have presented in this review – and which they so obviously have failed to even mention by name.

To bring about a critically annotated and supplemented edition of *'Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution'* would require a rational approach that, sadly, the *Archives* do not seem to be disposed at.

Henry Cinnamon, July 16, 2020.

1) Notably: [The Economic Foundations of Council Society / \[Henk Canne Meijer\], 1948](#) and: [Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution \(G.I.C., 1930\). Introduction / Paul Mattick \(1970\).](#)

The Corona-virus and the Communists Today

→ Continued from page Error: Reference source not found.

The repercussions in materialistic metaphysics or idealism are as easy as they are common. The result is the impossibility to exercise human critical-practical activity, [...] this knowledge-transformative activity, in which subject and object co-institute themselves in a dialectical relationship.

Recently, we happened to read, in a publication of the area that stems from the Italian Communist Left, a *very indicative* interpretation of the XI. Thesis on Feuerbach (*"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."*)

Marx would here hurl himself against the philosophy that interprets reality (often badly). But it can be seen that the authors of the text in question do not even conceive the perspective of overcoming/reversal (we doubt they frequent the dialectical territories of the *Aufhebung*) of *philosophy* in a human activity [that is] no longer split and evaded, in which understanding and transformation represent a single process.

Without realizing that, by understanding it in this way, they flatten the XI. Thesis like the [...] false readings of bourgeois thinkers, they almost make Marx the supporter of a vulgar pragmatism, which has to do with *praxis* as much as Stalin's '*Dialectical materialism and historical materialism*' has to do with the '*German Ideology*' by Marx and Engels: in short, nothing.

The question that we want to highlight is not stupidity, but a completely political one.

To stop at the surface (even of texts!), to turn inward an repeat positions of past decades like litanies, but also to read reality according to the old schemas, is not only of little use but terribly distorting. What is more: the changes in capitalist society, even with the latter's essential continuity, are such that merely resuming the theoretical and political acquisitions of even just a few decades ago, if not even a few years ago, can lead you off the road and seriously jeopardize the work for the communist program and the world party of tomorrow.

We already have clear evidence, unfortunately already lasting for decades, of how the claim of "*invariance*" (a forerunner, of course, of changes and original theories like few doctrines in history) has

produced positions even at odds with proletarian internationalism and class independence.

It is enough to quickly recall the positions that many organizations still have on the trade unions (to be reconquered or to be newly found as "red" organizations), or on support for the wars of national liberation and self-determination of peoples. Once you realize that you have not got the wrong year of the press organs in question, it becomes evident how even organizations born in direct continuity with the Communist Left, can end up stiffening in positions that hinder the prospect of the future Party.

We do not mean that this is class betrayal: we would never dream of considering internationalist comrades, of any organization, on the other side of the barricade, who are steadfast on their battle post. But, precisely for this reason, the matter is more delicate.

We are convinced that it is simply impossible, and indeed harmful in relation to the objective, to hypothesize that the world Party of the communist revolution could be born from the *convergence* of the current forces that refer themselves to the Communist Left.

We have had sufficient confirmation that this will not take place. We also noted that for 70 years a part of the proletarian environment, the so-called "Bordigists", does not intend in any way to establish a debate with other organizations, not even in the simple approach of confronting "available" realities, which would in itself be fruitful, let alone on a basis of fraternal and rigorous confrontation, where this is possible and apt of producing effective advances.

Today we need to recognize the peculiar traits of capitalism in the 21st Century, to overcome the temptation to wear old "hermeneutical spectacles", and have the courage of a more radical approach.

The materialistic conception of history, the critique of political economy, dialectics, together with the critical rethinking of history and the lessons of the modern international revolutionary movement, from the Communist League to the Communist Left of the twentieth Century, offer the possibility of a communist militancy, capable of facing the theoretical-political challenges necessary to the contemporary struggle for the program and the Party.

We do not think this is anything outdated: if revolutionary Marxism has shown anything over the years, it is above all that it has been able to look far ahead, and to be more indispensable today than it was yesterday. But the point of view that the struggle requires is “human society, or social humanity” (X. Thesis on Feuerbach), not that of psalmodies!

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new confirmation of this comprehensive vision.

As Lorenzo Procopio writes in the article *“Analysis of a crisis that will change the global imperialist framework”*, in this same revue: ⁽³⁾

“A superficial reading of the crisis that opened in the first months of 2020 within the capitalist system on a global scale, leads many observers, even in that variegated area that lays claim to revolutionary Marxism, to interpret it as the consequence of the outbreak of the pandemic that hit the planet due to the spread of Covid 19. (...) We will certainly not deny the exasperation of the crisis as a consequence of the spread of the corona-virus within the sphere of capitalist economy (...)”, but “the pandemic has only accelerated and magnified the effects of the current economic crisis (...). This crisis has not been (...) triggered by the corona-virus, but by the contradictions in the capitalist mode of production, which finds itself in difficulty of remunerating the huge mass of fictitious capital produced in recent decades, [as] one of its most recent manifestations.”

This understanding is crucial within the militant work for the future world communist Party, as completely disregarding the understanding of the current phenomena betrays the substitution of a collective work of historical-materialistic theoretical praxis by the mix of superficial readings and adoption of past schemas that we have denounced as useless and harmful, because of their flaws and the theoretical, political, and methodological implications of the latter.

The necessity to interpret what the COVID-19 pandemic tells us about the peculiarities of this critical phase in the life of world capitalism has practically not been felt by most proletarian political organizations.

Some organizations felt that the epidemic should be read as yet another confirmation of the historical obsolescence of capitalism, and as further proof of their own interpretative label to which every phe-

nomenon on planet Earth has been brought back for decades.

Still, others have considered the pandemic as the trigger of the capitalist crisis, totally overturning reality and renouncing to apply the materialistic conception of history.

Not a few raised their voices on the structural inefficiencies of the health systems and forms of cooperation of the bourgeois states. Others have denounced the logic of profit which suffocates that of health, or the inability of capitalism to manage... natural events.

Furthermore, [we have seen] the unavoidable and very bourgeois delusions of not a few Trotskyists and Stalinists, who saw in the Chinese management of the corona-virus... the proof of the superiority of the “socialist” planned economy of the Chinese “workers’ State” (deformed or not) over the anarchy of the market... while someone else was already crying to the *fake news* of the death of the beloved North-Korean *leader* Kim Jong Un. But it is not the extreme bourgeois left that has surprised us.

We take note of how little the internationalist communists today are able to come to terms with the current epochal crisis, with its expressions and phenomena, aware of what it means for our class as a whole.

But we must lucidly reckon with the limited capacity to contribute to the program and to the communist Party of those who are, when all goes well, anchored in the past, or of those who have lost the compass of historical materialism.

That is why we do not hope to see the current forces stemming from the historical communist left *composing*. This will never happen, but even if it were to happen due to some mysterious circumstance, it could not represent any step forward for our struggle.

At the same time, we think it foolish to consider anyone, taken individually, as the more or less self-sufficient nucleus for the relaunch of the revolutionary perspective.

The road we seek and propose is the most arduous one but, we believe, it is the only one capable of being fertile. It is the road that passes through the *anti-dogmatic and anti-schematic* re-appropriation of the Marxian “new materialism” (cf. the X.

3) [D-M-D' no. 15 \(special edition\)](#), May 2020 (Italian language).

Thesis on Feuerbach), for the assumption of the point of view of social humanity, for the critical reconsideration of our whole history. It is the road that continues along a long path where each stretch is significant, full of lessons, but which now extends into territories with many new aspects, which only a critical-revolutionary theory can grasp, in dialectical relationship with the working class which constitutes its vanguard.

It is not a path for clerics, with their worn-out prayer books between their fingers. It is the path of revolutionaries, leading through continuous and lively confrontation, which can constitute an effective advancement towards a finally human society.

So what does confrontation mean? At the very least, what kind of confrontation do we seek, as the pure air that gives breath to our battle?

We are not dealing with more or less aged polemics, we are not interested in interminable squabbles, sterilized by the very structure of public dispute, where we end up defending at all costs one thesis against the others, when it is instead a question of multiplying our forces to understand and struggle, to collaborate to clarify ourselves, to speak a common language, to progressively represent a less isolated proletarian voice in an increasingly asphyxiating bourgeois world.

The attitude of those who believe that the authentic communist program has appeared in an *apocalypse*, a revelation, once and for all in perfect organic totality, and is held – *it goes without saying* – by one's own party; that will therefor be recognized sooner or later by the revolutionaries and then by the proletariat as a whole – is of little concern to us. Likewise, we will not follow those who conceive the political debate as a clash on verse x of the newspaper y published n years ago, because that comma was damned out of place. We have other things to do, because we think *there are* other things to do. The spirit of the Bolsheviks moves us in this:

"We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighboring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: Let us go into the marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render you every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don't clutch at us and don't besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are "free" to go where we please, free to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh!" (4)

In this issue of the revue you will find a contribution to the critical framework of the corona-virus phenomenon, within the epochal crisis of capitalist society. It wants to be part of a wider confrontation, firm on the foundations of the new materialism, capable of looking at the present and the future with a renewed and more acute look. We count on meeting other companions with the same perspective on this ground.

Mario Lupoli, IOD, 05 July 2020

Source: [Il coronavirus e i comunisti oggi](#), July 5, 2020. From D-M-D' no. 15, Special edition, May 2020)

Translation: H.C., July 14, 2020.

4) V.I. Lenin, 'What is to be done?' (1902); [I. Dogmatism And "Freedom of Criticism"](#).

The Corona-Virus and the Communists Today

I.O.D.: An invitation to an open debate among proletarian internationalists

Whereas 'A Free Retriever's Digest' does not adhere to Leninist conceptions of the role and function of politicized minorities of the proletariat, it is not blind to relevant analyses of burning questions either, let alone to promising efforts to contribute to a renewal of Marxism that may originate from Leninist tendencies. As such we consider the *Istituto Onorato Damen* (I.O.D.), that has originated from a split of Battaglia Comunista in 2009. We present its latest revue in this issue and its long-term project (page 7 ff.). The following article sets forth their vision on the actual tasks and responsibilities of proletarian internationalists and a proposition for an open debate on the basis of an historical materialist approach, criticizing certain tendencies with origins in the historical Italian communist Left for abandoning this terrain.

"What is known is not known. In the process of knowledge, the most common way to deceive oneself and others is to assume something as known and accept it as such." (G.W.F. Hegel)

Being aware, with Lenin, that *"without revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement"*,⁽¹⁾ means for the communist vanguard a precise assumption of responsibility.

When, in the years of affirmation of the highest phase of capitalism (imperialism), revolutionaries proclaimed the alternative between socialism and barbarism, the latter appeared as the terrible future that the capitalist mode of production prepared for humanity by its very mode of functioning. Socialism, however, starting from the same capitalist contradictions, presented itself as a prevention of barbarism and as the promise of a finally human society.

Today, almost 50 years after the beginning of the structural crisis of the third cycle of capital accumulation, barbarism, more than a menacing potential, unleashes its force throughout the planet, in an immense increase.

Such are the tensions that reboil within the current mode of production, that the shadow of the common ruin of the struggling classes, in the absence of a response from the workers, is increasingly taking on the character of a catastrophe. Permanent war, brutal exploitation, violent domination, devastation of the conditions of life on Earth, radical forms of alienation, are the inhuman everyday life of the workers.

Many old formulas of the Third International have long shown that they do not know how to respond to the problems that capitalist society poses today.

Its interpretative schemas, as well as most of those of the *Communist Left of the twentieth Century*, are no longer sufficient or adequate today.

As a reminder: the hermeneutical grids in which to frame the events of historical-social reality are not theory. The theory is a form of human *praxis*, which, of course, *also* produces coordinates that allow us to place and understand the phenomena, but it does not end there.

The problem arises in particular when coordinates are confused with rigid schemes and theory is downgraded to a relationship between subject and object, with which the former takes possession of the latter.

Not so, when recalling the first Thesis on Feuerbach, in which Marx explains that:

"The main defect of all hitherto-existing materialism — that of Feuerbach included — is that the Object [der Gegenstand], actuality, sensuousness, are conceived only in the form of the object [Objekte], or of contemplation [Anschauung], but not as human sensuous activity, practice [Praxis], not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in opposition to materialism, was developed by idealism — but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects [Objekte], differentiated from thought-objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective [gegenständliche] activity. In The Essence of Christianity [Das Wesen des Christenthums], he therefore regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice [Praxis] is conceived and defined only in its dirty-Jewish form of appearance [Erscheinungsform]. Hence he does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary', of 'practical-critical', activity." ⁽²⁾

→ Continued on page 29.

1) V.I. Lenin, [What is to be done? \(Burning questions of our movement\)](#) (1902).

2) Karl Marx, [Theses On Feuerbach](#) (1845).