

A Free Retriever's Digest

An internationalist Articles Selection & Review

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October - December 2020

October 25, 2020

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From the Editor

Sunday, October 25, 2020

Dear reader,

This issue presents two distinct contributions that reflect on and appreciate the general situation of capitalism and its perspectives, while taking into account the effects of the coronavirus pandemic:

In **'Capitalist Crisis and Bourgeois Offensive against the Proletariat'** the IGCL sets out that the economic crisis related to the 'financialization' of debt is currently only in its beginnings, whereas major attacks on the working and living conditions of the proletariat in general lie immediately ahead. It places the USA at the center of these attacks and points at ideological campaigns, like notably those about racism and anti-racism and on gender, or 'identity politics' in general, as important means for deepening divisions within the proletariat, undermining a unified response on its own terrain. **'France isn't a Special Case in the General Crisis of Capitalism'**, the editorial of *'Bilan et Perspectives'*, organ of the ICT's affiliate in France, takes up the international situation along the following four axes: a) the rise of mass unemployment and attempts of the bourgeoisie to make the proletariat pay for the economic crisis and its acceleration by the pandemic; b) an intensifying of imperialist tensions and conflicts; c) difficulties of the bourgeoisie in face of a political situation slipping out of its control; and d) the social situation world-wide, characterized by the reemergence of popular revolts and workers' resistance under changed conditions.

We close this review's background series **'Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics'** by Philippe Bourrinet with its fourth and concluding part. It will soon be available on the blog in its entirety. We take the occasion to announce a forthcoming essay attempting to develop on the proliferation of epidemics throughout the history of class societies: *'The Viruses, the Class Societies, ... the Human Community'*, written by Michel Olivier.

Two sections on rather distinct topics and questions highlight the difficulty of engaging in meaningful discussions that question positions long adhered to within the internationalist milieu of the communist Left. In **'State Capitalism – Historical Mistake or Means for proletarian Dictatorship?'** (2) we present a long awaited reaction by a protagonist from the IGCL to the GIC's 'Fundamental Principles', and a succinct reply by the initiator of this exchange. In the section 'With Special Attention' we present two contributions that rather urgently pose the question: how to evaluate capitalism's tendencies towards regional wars and their potential of generalization? at the hand of the newly assumed aggressiveness by Turkey in geographically diverse areas like the Maghreb (Libya), the Eastern Mediterranean, North-Eastern Africa (Sudan) and the Caucasus (the revived war on Nagorno-Karabakh).

An analysis by Gaetano Fontana (I.O.D.) apropos of the Beirut explosion of August 4 puts the situation in **'The Tormented Land of the Cedars'** in the context of broader inter-imperialist conflicts and rivalries linked to the internal factional struggles.

With **'Has Capitalism entered its Decadence since 1914?'** we present a work in progress that fundamentally puts into question a long cherished view deriving from the communist Left's heritage of the 3rd, or Communist International, on the basis of well researched elements and empirical data of the evolution of capitalism before and since the First World War. Our translation will be progressively published on the Topics page of the blog.

Last but not least, the *articles and news feeds section* is resumed in this issue, presenting a minimal selection of the most important articles we encountered over the past months, mainly at the hand of extracts.

Readers' appreciations, propositions and contributions are, as always, welcome.

Internationalist regards,

Henry Cinnamon (editor).

A Free Retriever's Digest aims at presenting publications relevant to 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 (notify if you need translation support). For articles a maximum of 3,000 words is observed; discussion contributions should be limited to 1,500 words. Bibliographical references and internet links need to be exact.

Articles and contributions express the views of their authors. Their publication is at the discretion of the editor. They may be freely adopted if correctly quoted with source reference. We highly appreciate receiving a notification.

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Selected Articles & News Feeds

3rd Quarter 2020 (Weeks 27 - 40)

The international Situation (1) - Analyses and Perspectives

On the economic crisis, bourgeois attacks and a resurgence of struggles

1 Crise financière-Ils veulent tous sauver le noyé en lui faisant boire de l'eau

Published on: 44,015

Author(s): G. Bad, July 1, 2020

Web link: <http://spartacus1918.canalblog.com/archives/2020/07/03/38408686.html>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 3,413

Remarks: French

"Between the ECB which injects 750 billion euros and the French state which sticks on the back of the social security 136 billion of debt, it is good to wonder how the capitalist system came to monetize the debt (a measure previously prohibited in all Western countries). ... Debt that presents itself as an endless loophole based on a few monetary safe havens such as the dollar and its reassuring military power, the Swiss franc and the Norwegian krone and even the Japanese currency. The whole system only holds together because these are the currencies that seem to be the strongest. But this scaffolding built on the ruins of Breton Wood will eventually collapse. A new strong currency, based on a heap of real capital gains resulting from the exploitation of millions of proletarians, presents itself as a positive relay for a new expansion of capitalist accumulation: the Chinese currency. Only nothing indicates that China (now robotized and leader of new technologies) can maintain its expansion, especially if its main buyers plunge further into recession.

The international financial Armageddon that everyone fears could very well happen, if the heaps of debt ultimately sitting on the people as collateral are not validated."

2 Resurgence

Published on: August 17, 2020

Author(s): Marlowe (*Internationalist Perspective*, 31 July 2020)

Web link: <https://internationalistperspective.org/resurgence/>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 6,648

Remarks:

"(...) the protest movements of 2020 have reacted to social conditions with yet more intensity. (...) There is clearly a need for Marxists to analyse these protest movements and their developments in the context of the evolution of capitalism. We are in new territory and need get a historical perspective on events. Where do they fit in this evolution and what do they portend for the struggle and its direction in the period ahead? Here, I give a broad-brush description of some aspects of recent history to provide context. This leads on to three key questions: Where is the working class? Where is the point of production? Where is the revolutionary subject?"

3 A Class Compass in the Covid Crisis

Published on: September 15, 2020

Author(s): *Battaglia Comunista* (ICT), 31 August 2020

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-09-15/a-class-compass-in-the-covid-crisis>

Subject:

Genre: Editorial

Length (words): 2,236

Remarks: Editorial of '*Battaglia Comunista*' #9-10 (Sept.-Oct. 2020).

"The crisis, which has been developing since the start of 2020, opens up new and unprecedented scenarios in class confrontations. For revolutionaries it is essential to clarify some basic points about the current period which are as original in form as they are classical in substance." (...) "This crisis long predates the Covid pandemic. Capitalism has been experiencing a structural crisis since the 1970s. It has responded to it at various times with the restructuring of industry and the relocation of entire production sectors. This has been accompanied by the digital revolution in information technology and communications – from landline telephones to the internet and the smartphones of today – and the financialisation of the economy, leading to the boom in public and private debt. All of this is based on increasingly precarious terms of employment and an attack on direct, indirect and deferred wages (pensions). This third industrial revolution – provoked by an attempt to resolve the economic crisis – has transformed human existence even more profoundly than the two previous industrial revolutions did, yet the crisis has never gone away. It has simply gone from one collapse to another and to one war after another. Despite these developments the only real "solution" to the crisis that capitalism knows is generalised war."

4 Capitalist Crisis and Bourgeois Offensive Against the Proletariat

Published on: September 19, 2020

Author(s): IGCL, September 10, 2020

Web link: <http://igcl.org/Capitalist-Crisis-and-Bourgeois>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 2,852

Remarks: The complete statement is included on page 11 ff.

"The capitalist crisis is here and now. Six months after the explosion of the pandemic and the crisis, the historical rupture is verified and is no longer in doubt, even for the most skeptical. The capitalist world is beginning to crack everywhere to the point that social revolts of all kinds and the threat of war are multiplying.

The economic crisis, expression and determining factor of the historical impasse of capitalism, can only deepen and worsen. No 'V' or 'L' shaped recovery, so much debated by bourgeois economists, is in sight. The lockdown and paralysis of more than half of world produc-

tion was not a simple parenthesis that, once closed, would see a normal recovery of the economy, a return to the situation before. Proof if proof were needed that the Covid-19 pandemic was not the cause of the crisis. It only precipitated it and gave it some very special characteristics. Just as it can still hinder today the so-called economic recov-

ery that the bourgeoisie hopes for without really believing in it. It is all very well to speak of recovery and revival, but the reality is that the open economic crisis is only just beginning."

The international Situation (2) - The Coronavirus Pandemic and its Consequences

Imperialist competition; the EU-relaunch plan; the situation in Spain, Belgium, France

1 The Global Pandemic and Imperialist Competition

Published on: June 14, 2020

Author(s): Jock (CWO)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-06-14/the-global-pandemic-and-imperialist-competition>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 4,860

Remarks:

"We cannot yet know the outcome of the current recession brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. What we do know is that across the world states will keep on absorbing debt in order to hold the entire capitalist structure together. What seems certain is that a new centralisation and consolidation of capital will take place. This will cost jobs and thus make it easier for the system to ramp up its attacks on the working class in terms of greater exploitation and greater job insecurity. And it will still not be enough to revive profitability. This crisis may lead to the depreciation of many capitalist values but it will not lead to the "creative destruction" described by the Austrian economist Schumpeter ..."

2 Espagne: Alors que la pandémie continue inexorablement – La bourgeoisie nationale et régionale déclare la guerre au prolétariat

Published on: September 18, 2020

Author(s): PCInt/Le Prolétaire

Web link: http://www.pcint.org/01_Positions/01_01_fr/200918_pandemie-continue.htm

Subject: The resurgence of the contagions in Spain and bourgeois attacks

Genre: Leaflet

Length (words): 2,435

Remarks: French

"The coming months will show more and more of this dark reality to the proletarian class. Hospitals will almost certainly be overwhelmed again, deaths will increase, and anti-crisis measures, which the bosses and the government are currently trying to postpone as long as possible, will begin to be openly displayed. In the face of this, the proletarians have only one path: that of class struggle.

No government, none of the parties that populate the national or regional parliament, will give them anything. The bourgeoisie only wants its workforce to generate profit, without worrying about its health when the time comes. To all this, the proletarian class must respond with the only strength at its disposal, the strength given by the fact that it constitutes the great majority of the population and the only one with the capacity to organize itself, both on the field of the immediate struggle to demand the improvement of its living conditions

(work, health, etc.) and on the field of the political struggle whose final objective, when guided by its class party, is the destruction of the bourgeois state and the elimination of the damned ruling class.

To the measures of containment, the proletariat must respond with the struggle against the pressure they exert on its life. To the lack of sanitary conditions, to the over-exploitation of doctors, nurses and auxiliaries in health centers and hospitals, where, moreover, what is essential to guarantee their functions is lacking, the proletariat must respond by hitting the bourgeoisie where it hurts the most: in production. As did the workers in the automobile sector, who carried out a series of strikes in March without respecting the notice period or minimum service, refusing to work until their health was guaranteed. To the more than predictable repression that will manifest itself in the coming days in the proletarian neighborhoods and suburbs of Madrid, the proletariat must respond with class solidarity."

3 Le plan de relance de l'UE et la monétisation de la dette

Published on: September 18, 2020

Author(s): G.Bad

Web link: <http://spartacus1918.canalblog.com/archives/2020/09/16/38537143.html>

Subject: The EU relaunch plan and the monetization of debt

Genre:

Length (words): 3,038

Remarks: French

"In March 2020, the so-called coronavirus crisis erupted in broad daylight. The paralysis of the economy so desired by the yellow jackets and much of the extreme left is paradoxically achieved by macronia and others worldwide. The general strike and the blockade of the economy are not enough to bring down a government, let alone capitalism. At this stage, we must ask ourselves how capitalism can resist a paralysis of the extraction of surplus value and allow itself to release billions of euros to finance (companies and employees on fallow land)? The trio of Emmanuel Macron, Christine Lagarde and Angela Merkel have no other choice to counter the sovereignists than to carry out a coup de force within the EU itself by announcing a 750 billion euro recovery plan. (...) It is now perfectly clear that OECD countries have adopted Modern Monetary Theory. This theory, which comes from the United States, is gaining in popularity among representatives of the left, the economist Stephanie Kelton has become the flag bearer and economic adviser of Bernie Sanders (left wing of the Democratic Party), that is to say the left of devaluation. In France Mélenchon will follow P. Artus in his approach, which explains why the creation of money (MMT) is not a factor of hyperinflation."

4 IN THE HOSPITAL, AS IN THE FACTORY AND THE OFFICE, THE STRUGGLE FOR HEALTH IS A STRUGGLE FOR WAGES AGAINST THE BOSS-STATE

Published on: September 27, 2020

Author(s): *Mouvement Communiste/Kolektivně proti kapitálu*
(September 12, 2020)

Web link: <http://mouvement-communiste.com/documents/MC/Leaflets/TR200912%20Sante%C3%AC%20vGEN.pdf>

Subject:

Genre: Leaflet

Length: 4p. A4 (pdf)

Remarks:

"(...) the balance sheets of many hospitals in Belgium are in deficit (...) The State, as individual capital, as the main investor in hospitals and even more so as a representative of the collective capital holding of the public hospital system, is seeking to reduce its contribution to the financing of the public hospital system and to invest in more efficient entities – i.e. those capable of generate profit. Contrary to the mystification conveyed by the trade unions on a so-called "non-market" sector, health has always been a "market" sector: the state buys care from the hospital, which then sells it to the patient, its contribution covers only a limited but growing part of the costs of care production. What is changing today is that the health care commodity must become profitable for the State. (...) Fighting the hospital business as a place of exploitation means abandon illusions about "general interest" and "public services". It also means recognizing the employer-state as the enemy of the workers. In order to do this, it is necessary to place the initiative on the class terrain by organizing collectively outside of the co-management unions, against the hospital boss and the hierarchy of the services."

5 Non au couvre-feu ! Non au retour de l'«état d'urgence sanitaire» !

Published on: October 18, 2020

Author(s): PCInt/Le Prolétaire

Web link: http://pcint.org/01_Positions/01_01_fr/201018_no_n-couvre-feu.htm

Subject: No to the Curfew! No to the return of the 'sanitary state of emergency'!

Genre: Statement

Length (words): 1,968

Remarks:

"This curfew, whose sanitary effectiveness is doubtful, could be only a first step according to official statements, Macron having declared that the current situation could last "at least until the summer of 2021". Above all, it is accompanied by a return to the "state of emergency"; it allows the executive to take any measures it deems necessary to limit individual liberties (banning demonstrations, ordering confinement to homes, etc.), regulate travel, order requisitions, etc., and to govern by decree. This state of emergency is therefore only "sanitary" in name; conferring full powers on the government, among other things, to counter struggles or to authorize bosses to exempt themselves from the labor code, it shows its essentially anti-proletarian nature. The economic crisis, whose only disastrous effects for proletarians are still being felt, will inevitably provoke angry reactions and struggles (...). The government, which has been confronted in the last period with large-scale social movements, seeing the first reactions to social plans and various demonstrations, is fully aware of this. It is preparing for this by once again reinforcing social control with these first curfew measures and also by re-establishing the state of emergency."

Lebanon: Factional Strife, Protests and Imperialist Maneuvering

Apropos of the Beirut Explosion of August 4, 2020

1 Beirut: Capitalism is the murderer! It is capitalism that must be fought and overthrown!

Published on: August 12, 2020

Author(s): PCInt/Le Prolétaire

Web link: http://www.pcint.org/01_Positions/01_03_en/200812_beirut-en.htm

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 1,890

Remarks:

"Following the protests and the widespread distrust, the government had opted for resignation on Monday, August 10, but not before trying to quell the anger by talking about anticipated elections; in his resignation speech, the prime minister has had the nerves to denounce "endemic corruption within the State"! Some protesters have replied that the government's resignation isn't enough, and that the whole political class must go.

However, the true issue isn't crooked politicians or weak institutions. The true issue is the capitalist system itself: it is the capitalist mode of production and the law of value that neglect protection measures

they deem too costly, thus condemning people to die, in Beirut or in Toulouse. It is the capitalist mode of production that generates corruption; and if corruption [becomes] all the more obvious and unbearable when a country experiences huge economic difficulties, it is nevertheless always present."

2 Il martoriato paese dei cedri

Published on: August 19, 2020

Author(s): Gaetano Fontana (I.O.D.)

Web link: <http://www.istitutoonoratodamen.it/joomla34/index.php/internazionale/58-asia/540-cedrimart>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 2,480

Remarks: Italian. Full translation in this issue on page 36.

"It is no coincidence that the French President Macron was already on the spot the day after the disaster, protecting French economic and strategic interests, and pointing out that the financing will arrive, but monitored by the United States and the World Bank (1): after all, jackals smell blood immediately." (...) "The opportunity was too favor-

able for the US–Israeli–Saudi super coalition not to take advantage of. In Lebanon the great game of the Middle East reopens, in order to reduce the uncomfortable Hezbollah, the Syrian and Iranian influence and the Turkish advance in the Mediterranean. The enormous explosion of August 4, 2020 has set in motion inter-imperialist dynamics that find one of the major points of tensions in Lebanon, and that risk to extend the theaters of the permanent imperialist war even more."

3 The Lebanon Disaster: A Metaphor for Modern Capitalism

Published on: August 20, 2020

Author(s): Jock (August 18, 2020)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-08-20/the-lebanon-disaster-a-metaphor-for-modern-capitalism>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 4,054

Remarks:

[Conclusion] "Lebanon needs more than a change in its rules of governance. If "revolution" (a slogan seen more and more) is to mean anything it has to be an international one, and it has to be about creating a new mode of production which destroys the power of the old order. The fact that the Lebanese working class is trapped by these confessional mini-nationalisms means it is objectively even more difficult for it to create its own independent political force and to pose a real alternative. It will be even harder if humanitarian aid is distributed via the existing clientelist system as seems to be happening already. Lebanon is a perfect metaphor for the failing Ponzi scheme that is modern global capitalism. That capitalism cannot be destroyed in one country alone. Only a mass movement of the world's workers can open the door to the relief of the working class everywhere and not just in Lebanon. Given the rate of development of the capitalist crisis this could arrive sooner than seems possible now..."

4 Explosion in Beirut: a tragic illustration of capitalist negligence

Published on: September 17, 2020

Author(s): Adjish (2 September 2020)

Web link: <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16905/explosion-beirut-tragic-illustration-capitalist-negligence>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 2,289

Remarks:

"As always, the same scenario arises: the international bourgeoisie sympathises, sends some assistance, and promises aid. But capitalist life continues its same frantic race for profit, exacerbating the geopolitical rivalries that fuel growing chaos. Under the guise of solidarity and humanitarian aid, it is the stampede of cynical imperialist vultures (be it the great powers or the second rank regional powers) rushing to "help" Lebanon in order to defend their own sordid interests.

And in the foreground of this swarm of grim predators, we find France. The eagerness of Macron (the only head of state to date to have visited the scene of the disaster) led to a first visit to Lebanon in which he told the Lebanese government the conditions for French aid in reconstruction ... because the French State intends to regain a preponderant place in the region after having practically been ejected from it in recent years." (...) "For the moment, the country is mired in an unprecedented crisis and the explosion of 4 August constitutes a new climax of the decomposition of the state with the impact of corruption and incompetence of the various political parties, financed by rich external sponsors. With this new scenario, the Lebanese bourgeois cliques are only trying to buy time and each is trying to keep its position in the face of growing chaos.

This terrible event reminds us once again that the "accidents" of capitalism are so many permanent threats against humanity. The only guarantee of security for the future lies in the constitution of a truly human international community, namely a society where man and his environment are at the heart of all concerns and decisions. Before that, it will be necessary to sweep away the rubble of this rotten and murderous capitalist society. This is our programme, our struggle. In 1915, Karl Liebknecht said: «The enemies of the people are counting on the forgetfulness of the masses – we counter this with the solution: Learn everything, don't forget anything!»"

Libya: Factional War and Imperialist Maneuvering

Protests erupt against war and corruption on both sides (August 2020)

1 Libya: a focus of capitalist barbarity

Published on: June 22, 2020

Author(s): D., March 22, 2020

Web link: <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16876/libya-focus-capitalist-barbarity>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 3,684

Remarks:

"Here is a work of cold criminality from the grand buyer and supplier of the European countries, and Britain and France in particular, which finds itself in Libya in the same camp as Paris in order to sow terror. [Saudi Arabia, ed.] To tell the truth, this is business with a band of "big" and "small princes" of the Gulf, newly-rich capitalists (thanks to black gold), stuffed with blood and power and permanently looking for

imperialist influence elsewhere. First and foremost this is what we are seeing in Libya, in Syria, Yemen, etc., in all the massacre zones: the blood-soaked states who fuel the conflicts.

Taking account of the importance of the "Libyan cake", none of these bandits want to give up their share to any of the others. In fact the situation here resembles, with all its terror, that of Syria with its destiny of permanent murder and destruction without any possible reconstruction.

Against the bloody chaos and the capitalist barbarity in Libya and elsewhere, only the united international class struggle, led by the most experienced fractions of the working class, can stay the bloody hand of capitalism."

2 The New Imperialist Alignments in Libya

Published on: August 1, 2020

Author(s): FD, July 12, 2020

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-08-01/the-new-imperialist-line-ups-in-libya>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 1,517

Remarks:

"All this makes us reflect on two factors whose serious consequences are inextricably linked. The first is that, in the historical period that we are dramatically living through, that of a very deep "coronavirus" crisis where everything seems to be in suspended animation, imperialist rivalries have continued on their fateful path. In fact the depth of the crisis has only accelerated them, both in terms of diplomatic clashes and wars, that even if by proxy have increased in intensity, devastating strategic geographical areas for the usual interests linked mainly to the control and exploitation of oil. (...) The second significant factor is that the entire population of the area are victims of these imperialist manoeuvres (...). This progressive barbarity is all that a capitalism in deep crisis can offer and it is making everyday life a tragedy. It is this everyday life that communists have the duty to oppose, by organising themselves in order to organise the alternative to a society that has nothing more to offer, except the intensification of wars, the progressive impoverishment of entire populations and the ever more intense exploitation of the working class, conceived by the capitalist system as "profit fodder" in times of peace and "cannon fodder" in times of war."

3 Libya: struggles on both sides of the front line brings war to a halt

Published on: September 15, 2020

Author(s): Communia (English blog of the group 'Emancipación')

Web link: <https://en.communia.blog/libya-struggles-on-both-sides-of-the-frontline-brings-war-to-a-halt/>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 1,591

Remarks:

"The protests that began in August in Tripoli have not yet been exhausted as a new wave of protests in Benghazi and its zone of influence has led to the resignation of the rival government in the east of the country. Will these struggles be enough to impose peace in a

country torn apart by imperialist conflict?" (...) "Until now, and in spite of the immense difficulties, the struggles have achieved a great victory: to stop the war. It is clear that there is no more peace than that which is won by fighting both armies. But there is no way of advancing the struggles that does not pass through the appearance of a general organization and assembly of all the workers in struggle. Now there is a race against time: the attempts to achieve this organization on the one hand, in the face of the rapid organization of the leading factions on both sides, encouraged by their bosses – from Russia to France, from Turkey to Qatar on the other."

4 Confusión, distorsión y disparates. Nuevamente sobre Emancipación (Comunia)

Published on: September 30, 2020

Author(s): Anibal (*Foro político-social internacionalista*)

Web link: <https://inter-rev.foroactivo.com/t9470-confusion-distorsion-y-disparates-nuevamente-sobre-emancipacion-communia>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 5,670

Remarks: Spanish, a follow up can be read on page 31.

"Both warring factions in Libya, as well as their international mentors and supporters, needed money to finance the military confrontations. And so after the vicissitudes of the Haftar mafia and the counterattack of their enemies supported by Turkey, they have reached agreements on production, quotas, export of oil and gas and distribution of profits ... which has not prevented them from continuing certain clashes and conducting various talks to reach agreements. It is in this context that have emerged then popular mobilizations for demands such as energy, bread, labor or democratic elections to end the war and [the] division of Libya.

The fallacious, ultra-left and distorting scheme that 'Emancipación' repeatedly employs, very visible already in its previous publication ('Nuevo Curso'), does not allow us to understand the thread between bourgeois, inter-capitalist and inter-imperialist conflicts, workers' struggles and popular movements. The constant tendency to exaggerate, to deform the meaning of existing struggles and to convert them into levers for a proletarian emergency endowed with strong capacities, capable of stopping even militarist confrontations like those in Libya, of wide international intervention, is notorious."

Workers' Struggles in the Near and Middle East

The renewed strike movement in Iran (Summer 2020)

1 Wave of struggles in Iran

Published on: August 3, 2020

Author(s): Communia (English blog of the group 'Emancipación')

Web link: <https://en.communia.blog/wave-of-struggles-in-iran/>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 694

Remarks:

"The surge of strikes that we are detecting around the world is now

reaching Iran, where since December 2017 at least three waves of struggle have taken place.

The Iranian workers are back in action. During the past month there have been strikes in municipal services, a mine in Kerman and in hospitals. The phenomenon has been on the rise since last week's strike at the North Azadegan oil field served as a prologue to the entry into the struggle of six refineries and an oil field in Abadan and the Persian region. The workers of the Hepco heavy machinery factory also joined the strike wave.

Workers demand payment of overdue wages, minimum working conditions and a reduction in working hours. At the moment they have to work at a temperature of 50° C. Less than a week ago a worker died

of heat exhaustion in a petrochemical plant. Another committed suicide because of the company's refusal to pay the arrears. In this already charged environment, threats of layoffs were the spark that precipitated the struggles. Since then, new workplaces have been joining in. And workers' demonstrations to and from the fields and industrial zones are taking on a massive scale. It is not just oil workers and regions with a hydrocarbon industry. Today, on the other side of the country, a bus driver's strike and Haft Tappeh, a historical hot spot, has been on strike for fifty days."

2 Strikes in Iran are still on the rise

Published on: August 9, 2020

Author(s): Communia (English blog of the group 'Emancipación')

Web link: <https://en.communia.blog/strikes-in-iran-are-still-on-the-rise/>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 643

Remarks:

"It has been a week since a strike wave began in Iran with the first strike movements in the refineries in the south of the country. Today the strike has spread over 12 provinces and has affected at least 38 large industrial complexes throughout the country. Just yesterday, the workers of the combined cycle power plant in Urmia went on strike. (<https://youtu.be/u9oTCwtspG>)

Workers in the oil and gas fields as well as in the refineries presented this series of complaints at the beginning of last week: Along with the strike in the Haft Tappeh sugar factory, which is already in its 57th day of strike and that of other sectors such as the Urmia buses and the wage taxi drivers on Thursday in three cities, there are calls for a truck driver strike. However, strikes continue to

erupt with no apparent coordination among the dozens of locations where they are taking place and, as one Iranian site puts it, this is the necessary next step in the struggle: «Expanding the correlation between the different sectors and weaving the immediate economic slogans of each unit into more general working class slogans is the way to push for even the smallest results»."

3 Workers' Strikes in Iran: A New Wave of Struggle

Published on: August 17, 2020

Author(s): Damoon Saadati

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-08-17/workers-strikes-in-iran-a-new-wave-of-struggle>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 8,620

Remarks:

"With the Haft Tapeh workers' strike entering its 64th day, it is reported that from the first of August, a wave of strikes has spread in the oil and gas industries and petrochemical complexes in Ahvaz, Abadan, Isfahan, Qeshm, Mahshahr, Kangan, Lamerd, Mehr, Jafir and Dasht-e Azadegan, Sabalan power plant company in Ardabil, as well as Hepco in Arak, and marked one of the most important and widespread workers' strikes in recent years. The protests in most cases are for their overdue wages, against the laying off of contract workers, improved working conditions, and greater job and livelihood security, against price hikes (the national currency has massively depreciated – it is the lowest in 35 years), removal of the Islamic Shura, and thus against militarisation of the workplace, etc.(...) However to put things in their wider context let's start where the Haft Tapeh workers left off in December 2018."

Popular Mass Protests in Eastern Europe

Strikes and pro-democracy demonstrations in Belarus (August 2020)

1 Strikes in Belarus Escalate as Lukashenko's Power Wavers

Published on: August 15, 2020

Author(s): Nikopetr (August 14, 2020)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-08-15/strikes-in-belarus-escalate-as-lukashenko-s-power-wavers>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 2,783

Remarks:

"Recently we have written about the background and escalation of the current opposition movement in Belarus, but in the days that followed the situation has already changed by quite a bit – with various developments in the struggle against Lukashenko's regime. Particularly interesting are the news on the industrial action front." "(...) the strikes have not been limited to just Minsk, as we have also heard of workers' action at: [follows a summing up of industrial strikes throughout the country]; as well as doctors and nurses across Belarus and employees in many smaller businesses too. It is precisely this kind of working class action and self-organisation that has the real potential to topple

Lukashenko's dictatorship, especially since the strikes have been happening not only in small local companies but also in some of the country's largest heavy industry factories. And we are not talking here of little initiatives by radical circles, but as many as hundreds of workers downing tools and walking out at just one factory, let alone multiple. Moreover, this is the best example of resistance from the working class that shows us the discontent has gone well beyond the urban middle class, and reached deep into demographics that have traditionally been considered supporters of the man who has ruled Belarus for the past 26 years (...)"

2 Electoral farce, repression and strikes in Belarus

Published on: August 21, 2020

Author(s): PCInt/Le Prolétaire

Web link: http://www.pcint.org/01_Positions/01_03_en/2008_21_belarus.htm

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 2,273

Remarks:

"Only the struggle against these authorities, while waiting to have the strength to overthrow them may enable substantial concessions to be extracted from them."

"The proletarians of Belarus will therefore have to emancipate themselves from interclassist union and democratic illusions to take the path of organization and class struggle. They have already taken a first step by mobilizing massively against Lukashenko; the next steps, against capitalism, whatever the form of government and the politicians in power, will be neither automatic nor easy; but, even beyond the immediate results of the current movement, the proletarians of Belarus have already given a sign that the long period of passivity and powerless resignation of the European proletarians is coming to an end."

3 Belarus: Between Imperialist Feuds and Class Movements

Published on: August 24, 2020

Author(s): GC ('*Battaglia Comunista*'), translated by CWO with additional footnotes and updated statistics (August 18, 2020)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-08-24/belarus-between-imperialist-feuds-and-class-movements>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 1,850

Remarks:

"Outbreaks of struggle can be seen everywhere now. They are all linked to the decline of the material conditions both of the working class (in a broad sense) and significant strata of the petty bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, in this class collaboration so dear to the "democrats", it is not uncommon for nationalist or racist ideas to develop. The bourgeoisie therefore can play a smart game by always proposing a single party which, regardless of the label, is always for the bosses. What is happening in Belarus so far seems to be in this vein. Faced with a massive mobilisation – widespread strikes in many industrial sectors, demonstrations, clashes with the police – as far as we know, our class is still not acting independently of the bourgeois forces in the

field."

4 Belarus: whether the regime is authoritarian or democratic, it's the same capitalist exploitation!

Published on: September 7, 2020

Author(s): EG (August 31, 2020)

Web link: <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16903/belarus-whether-regime-authoritarian-or-democratic-its-same-capitalist-exploitation>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 1,895

Remarks:

"But aren't strikes taking place in the factories? Strike committees and general assemblies – isn't that the proof that we are witnessing a proletarian movement? This is the argument put forward by the left parties, the Trotskyists in particular? But it's not enough for workers to be present in a mobilisation to make it a movement of the working class. In reality, the strikes were entirely piloted by the trade unions, in particular the Belarus Congress of Democratic Unions whose goal, concerned with the "future of the country", is to ensure "a rapid transfer of power" and to "help the country emerge from its acute political crisis". It was the unions, guard dogs of capital, who called the assemblies and pushed the strikes with the sole aim of forcing Lukashenko to step down. The Belarus Congress of Democratic Unions is also linked to many international trade union organisations (International Trade Union Confederation, International Labour Organisation) and benefits from the long experience of these union bodies in controlling the working class and sabotaging its struggles. These strikes are neither a "step forward" towards nor the premise for a class movement. This is a rotten terrain which disarms the proletariat on all levels, which delivers it with hands tied to the bourgeoisie. Apart from the illusions it is sowing in Belarus itself, the ruling class is also using it everywhere in the world to make workers think that bourgeois democracy is the highest goal of politics."

From the milieu of the communist Left

A critique of Trotsky and Trotskyism; the ICT and Mattick; A council communist critique of the bourgeois character of "October 1917"; Visions on the role of revolutionaries and the party

1 On the Role of Revolutionaries in the Wider Class Struggle

Published on: July 22, 2020

Author(s): ICT

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-07-22/on-the-role-of-revolutionaries-in-the-wider-class-struggle>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 1,978

Remarks:

"The letter which follows is part of the ongoing debate with some Russian comrades who find themselves operating, as it is easy to guess, in a very difficult environment: one that is even more scarred, if possible, by the devastation produced by the Stalinist counter-revolution and the rubble it has left behind. This means, as the comrades

themselves write, that many of the working class either hate "communism" as totalitarian tyranny, or wallow in Stalinist nostalgia for a more secure past than they have now. This letter to the Russian comrades is, therefore, a contribution to the debate among what are still the thin ranks of the revolutionary advance guard. It underlines some of the crucial problems that we find ourselves facing in the path towards the construction of the class party."

2 The fatal myth of the bourgeois revolution in Russia

Published on: July 27, 2020

Author(s): Fredo Corvo, July 2020.

Web link: <https://leftdis.wordpress.com/2020/07/27/the-fatal-myth-of-the-bourgeois-revolution-in-russia/>

Subject: A critique of Wagner's 'Theses on Bolshevism'

Genre:

Length (words): 8,300

Remarks:

"Helmut Wagner's 'Theses on Bolshevism' is perhaps the most influential council communist text. The theses excel in strict logic with which Wagner presents the 1917 revolution in Russia and the role of the Bolshevik party as a consequence of the socio-economic relations and geopolitical position of Tsarist Russia. The bourgeois outcome of this revolution also seems to confirm the correctness of the theses: in the Soviet Union state capitalism ruled by the terror of one party that had made the working class totally subordinate to the state. However, Wagner's analysis is not without its problems. Wagner's logic hangs a hint of historical necessity or inevitability, borrowed from Marxist conceptions of bourgeois revolutions as they took place before the proletariat started fighting for its proper class interests. This raises questions about the not entirely passive role of the proletariat in the revolution in Russia, about the role of the organized labor movement, of which the Bolshevik party was part of, at least in appearance. Wagner's analysis has also often been used to portray the Bolsheviks as cunning bourgeois politicians who were merely out to abuse the workers' struggle for their hidden bourgeois agenda. The reasoning in these kinds of stories approaches that of conspiracy theories. They can also serve to frame disagreeable positions as 'Leninist'."

3 Trotzki und die Ursprünge des „Trotzkismus“

Published on: August 30, 2020

Author(s): GIK (ICT)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/de/articles/2020-08-30/trotzki-und-die-ursprünge-des-„trotzkismus“>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 3,555

Remarks: German

"Let us begin by examining the many myths cultivated by the Trotskyist movement and its supporters. Their praises are rooted largely in Trotsky's prestige as Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet in 1905, as organizer and commander of the Red Army, and his fate as a martyr in the fight against Stalinism. A coherent critique of Trotskyism has nothing to do with the Stalinist method of digging up his Menshevik past or denying his theoretical and practical contributions during the Russian Revolution. Indeed, it was his analysis of the 1905 Revolution that enabled Trotsky to foresee the possibilities of a proletarian revolution with a clarity consistent with Lenin's 1917 vision. As a political movement, however, Trotskyism, despite some roots in the revolutionary period, is essentially a product of a later period: The period of counterrevolution, of which it became an integral part."

4 The Revolutionary Contribution of Paul Mattick

Published on: September 4, 2020

Author(s): CP

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-09-04/the-revolutionary-contribution-of-paul-mattick>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 3,706

Remarks:

Review of [Marxism in a Lost Century: A Biography of Paul Mattick](#) by Garry Roth (Haymarket Books/Historical Materialism Series).

"Today we consider Mattick's economic writings the most important part of his work. His economic analyses remain essential for understanding the present state of global capitalism. However, his political writings are also very sharp. Generally his analysis is excellent and much of it is incorporated in the platform of the ICT and other left communist organisations. The weakness we criticise is his rejection of the need for political parties and the belief that capitalist conditions on their own will compel the working class to form workers' councils which in turn will overthrow capitalism and build communism."

5 Trotzki und der Klassencharakter der UdSSR

Published on: September 26, 2020

Author(s): GIK (ICT)

Web link: <http://www.leftcom.org/de/articles/2020-09-26/trotzki-und-der-klassencharakter-der-udssr>

Subject:

Genre:

Length (words): 2,457

Remarks: German

"In Turkish exile, Trotsky could have tried to reappraise the experience, like the persecuted leftist faction of the Italian Communist Party, to take stock of the process that led to the arrest and expulsion of the revolutionaries. Trotsky did not, however, feel the need to investigate more deeply the degeneration process of workers power in Russia. As we have already pointed out, he himself was too deeply involved in this process. [See the aforementioned article] Even those who supported Stalin in the 1920s saw Trotsky as a man of the state rather than of the party. By no means was he the immaculate champion of workers democracy and workers control that his followers celebrate him today because of his role in introducing the ban on factions or his commitment to increasing labor discipline."

6 Tasks and Characteristics of the New Party

Published on: October 19, 2020

Author(s): Fredo Corvo

Web link: <https://leftdis.wordpress.com/2020/10/19/task-and-characteristics-of-the-new-party/>

Subject: First English translation from Dutch of an important text by Communistenbond 'Spartacus' (1945)

Genre: Pamphlet

Length (words): 8,104

Remarks: Subtitles: An analysis of the mass movement; a critique of the old party conceptions; sketch of the development of capitalism; the present tasks of the revolutionary workers.

The original can be found scanned at

<http://aaap.be/Pages/Pamphlets-Spartacus.html>.

In the 2020 transcribed version in Dutch at <http://www.left-dis.nl/>, necessary corrections of the text with political implications have been explained in footnotes.

For a weekly updated selection of articles on actuality from (mostly) internationalist sources, consult:

[New from internationalist sites](#) (*Left-wing Communism* blog)

Capitalist Crisis and Bourgeois Offensive against the Proletariat

The IGCL on the global recession (September 2020)

The capitalist crisis is here and now. Six months after the explosion of the pandemic and the crisis, the historical rupture is verified and is no longer in doubt, even for the most skeptical. The capitalist world is beginning to crack everywhere to the point that social revolts of all kinds and the threat of war are multiplying.

The economic crisis, expression and determining factor of the historical impasse of capitalism, can only deepen and worsen. No 'V' or 'L' shaped recovery, so much debated by bourgeois economists, is in sight. The lock-down and paralysis of more than half of world production was not a simple parenthesis that, once closed, would see a normal recovery of the economy, a return to the situation before. Proof, if proof were needed, that the Covid-19 pandemic was not the cause of the crisis. It only precipitated it and gave it some very special characteristics. Just as it can still hinder today the so-called economic recovery that the bourgeoisie hopes for without really believing in it. It is all very well to speak of recovery and revival, but the reality is that the open economic crisis is only just beginning.

The Economic Recession Is Only Beginning

After an unprecedented drop in world GDP in the first half of 2020,⁽¹⁾ this recovery remains very timid. According to the bourgeois economists and media, global GDP will take some time to recover to its 2019 level in the unlikely case that no financial, stock market or speculative crisis breaks out in the meantime, blocking the international financial system and causing the generalized debt market to collapse. *"Overall, this would leave 2021 GDP some 6½ percentage points lower than in the pre-COVID-19 projections of January 2020."* (IMF)⁽²⁾ Another unprecedented feature: no region, continent or country, including China, has been spared by the fall in GDP. Today, while work has resumed and the recovery should be vigorous to make up for the two months of paralysis if capitalism 'were in good health', *"the economic recovery remains sluggish in the United States"* (lapresse.ca, August 28th, 2020); in Germany, *"industrial production grew by only 1.2% in July, while the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) was expecting a 4.5% increase. The production index remains 11.4% lower than in July 2019."* (La Tribune, Sept. 7th, 2020); and in France, *"the National Institute of Statistics, however, confirmed its forecast of a contraction of GDP of about 9% for the whole of 2020, predicting that 'at the end of the year, economic activity would still remain below its pre-crisis level' of about -4%."* (idem, Sept. 8th, 2020).⁽³⁾ There is no doubt that the future eco-

nomic data of the entire world capitalist economy, and of the various countries, will confirm the absence of a recovery such as would allow us to envisage a way out of the crisis, or even to erase, or at least alleviate, the dramatic effects of the crisis and the amount of the bill that will be presented to the international proletariat.

Unemployment exploded because of the widespread lock-down, but the end of it also did not allow a return to the previous employment situation. Far from it. In the United States, *"we're still more than 11 million jobs down from where we were in February"*⁽⁴⁾ while the layoff plans, which are multiplying all over the world, are for the most part still to be implemented. The consequences are already terrible despite the state measures of partial employment urgently put in place by the various countries according to their historical 'tradition', as social security coverage is stronger in Europe than in America or Asia, for example. The queues at soup kitchens and similar initiatives have exploded. Housing evictions for non-payment of rent or mortgage payments are beginning to multiply, particularly in America and Great Britain. The end of temporary income support to unemployed workers at the end of July in connection with the Cares Act passed in March in the United States, and which provides \$600 per week in benefits to the unemployed, will throw millions more proletarians out on the streets, jobless and homeless. Added to this catastrophe are the

1) More than 30% in the US and United Kingdom, 10 to 20% in Europe depending on the country.

2) IMF, [A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery](#), June 2020.

3) Canadian and French newspapers, translated by us.

4) Paul Krugmann, in: *New York Times*, [Gross Domestic Misery Is Rising](#) (Sept. 9, 2020).

more than 800,000 deaths to date and the millions of Covid-19 patients, many of whom are having the greatest difficulty recovering, which the capitalist health systems have been unable to prevent and treat due to the lack of means, or even minimum health coverage in many countries. Needless to say, these deaths and illnesses mainly affect the poorest social classes. With the worsening crisis, how many more deaths and illnesses are still to come?

The Unbridled Flight into Generalized Debt

And yet the states, especially the most powerful ones, have been quick to release trillions of dollars and euros to cope. The sums make one dizzy. A tiny part of this money has been dedicated to the immediate treatment of unemployment and business bankruptcies, particularly in Europe, in order to avoid a generalized social explosion. For the most part, these sums – for those already spent – were used, as in 2008 but on an unprecedented scale, to avoid a blockage of the financial system by preventing a succession of corporate bankruptcies and payment defaults. Finally, most of these sums will be used either for so-called recovery plans or to safeguard the financial system. In the first case, the states will be able to keep their hand in imposing the use of these funds and plans for the strengthening and concentration of each national capital in order to face international commercial and imperialist competition,⁽⁵⁾ even if it means sacrificing the so-called non-essential sectors for the defense of national capital. In the second, public funds, although indispensable to keep the financial system afloat, will end up being lost – for the benefit of a few, of course – in the financial sphere and speculation. In fact, most of the capital provided by the central banks and actually ‘privatized’, and which are in permanent search for profits, prove insufficient, and will prove increasingly insufficient, to generate the necessary rates of profit obtained from the realization of the surplus value extorted from the proletarians in the sphere of production.

But where does all this money come from? Out of nowhere, if not, in the end, from the issue of paper money, from money printing. The phenomenon is

not new and has been going on since the end of the Bretton Woods agreements, the dollar as the reference currency pegged to gold, in 1971.⁽⁶⁾ But from immediate and punctual remedy, printing paper money and inflation of currency have become the rule. The result is that from 35 dollars, an ounce of gold rose to 1000 dollars during the crisis of 2008 and has now, following the pandemic, reached 2000 dollars. The risk of a collapse of the international monetary system thus accompanies the risk of a collapse of the financial system. From being a remedy for the explosion of budget deficits and public and private debt,⁽⁷⁾ the constant historical decline – independently of one-off rises and falls in the gold price – of the currency in relation to gold becomes in turn a contributing factor of deficits and debt. Since the crisis of 2008, central banks’ policies of lowering interest rates – to the point of being negative! – and Quantitative Easing (QE), which consists mainly in buying back public debt largely from the financial sector, banks and private funds, and which represents in fact and in the end a ‘socialization of losses and a privatization of gains’, have only made it possible to avoid a brutal credit crisis, its freezing, a credit crunch, and the sudden paralysis of the financial system. The slightest major bankruptcy, of an over-indebted bank or company, risking a pandemic of bankruptcies or the explosion of a speculative bubble, is today likely to reproduce the financial crisis of 2008 with much more devastating effects. The current monetary policies carried out by central banks, the issuance of money through the repurchase of public debt, the QE policy, etc., as well as the rebound of public deficits, are not an answer, impossible to find today, to the fall in profits from productive capital, which is causing capital to flee more and more from the sphere of production to the

5) *"Boeing has been awarded a \$22 billion Pentagon pharaonic contract (...). If we still had any doubts about it, Boeing is well and truly supported at arm's length by the United States"* (La Tribune, Sept. 14 2020), *"The United States is investing heavily in quantum computing and artificial intelligence (...). Against the backdrop of the global race for 'quantum supremacy', while China is suspected of making huge investments in this field"* (idem, August 8th, 2020).

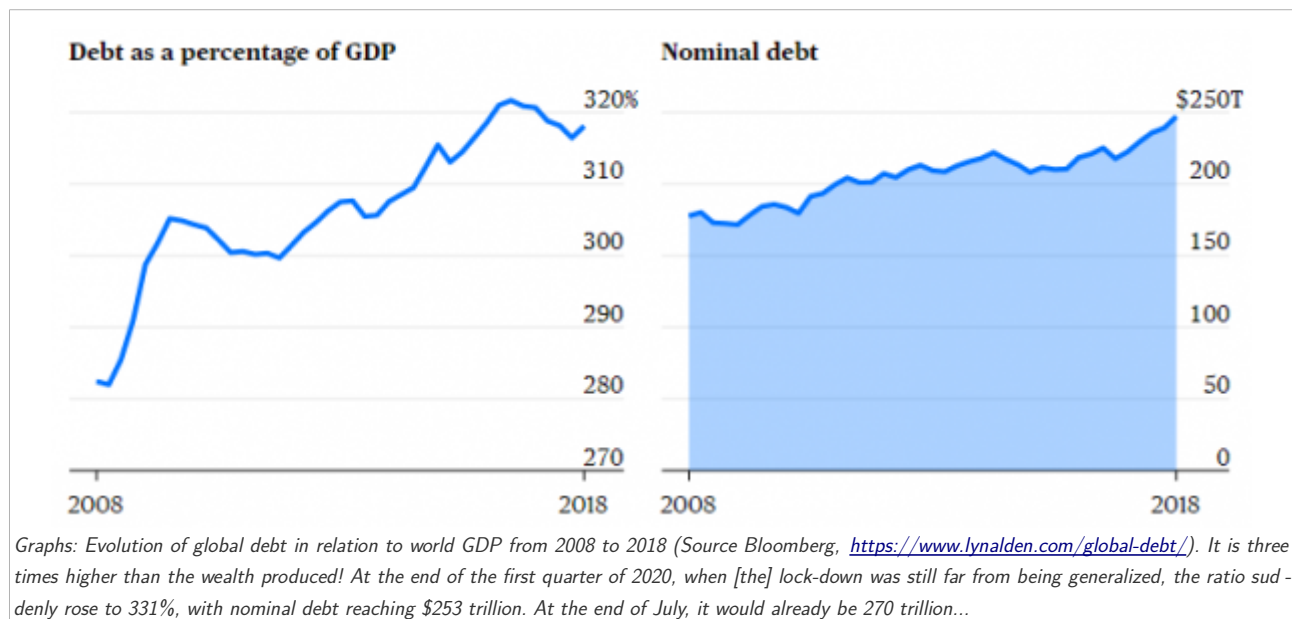
6) It is in fact with the First World War and for its needs that the main powers at war, United Kingdom, France, Germany, suspend the convertibility of their currency into gold. This suspension will be reintroduced following the 1929 crisis until the dollar, the Bretton Woods agreements of 1944, is the only currency still linked to gold and the other currencies are defined in relation to the dollar.

7) The phenomenon, peculiar to the historical period of decadence of capitalism, budget deficits, indebtedness, then depreciation of the currency against gold in an attempt to settle the former, arose during the First World War and for its needs, and developed throughout the 20th Century, relaunched by the 1929 crisis, accelerated for the needs of the Second World War, then became permanent, and finally increased tenfold from the end of the period of reconstruction, at the end of 1960-early 1970, until its current explosion.

increasingly speculative sphere of financial products and investments of all kinds and ... in particular on the debt market. Today, as an expression of the impasse, debt feeds debt. As the 2008 Nobel laureate Paul Krugman says, *"the 2008 financial crisis and the sluggish recovery that followed (...) demonstrated both that economic depressions are no time to obsess over debt and that slashing spending in the face of mass unemployment is a terrible mistake."* ⁽⁸⁾ In short, the re-

sult is that credit, originally a factor in accelerating the movement of goods and the accumulation of capital, has become a factor in slowing down and braking or even an obstacle, because of the excessive burden of debt and its magnitude on companies and states. Credit is no longer at the service of capitalist production, but capitalist production has put itself at the service of credit and debt in order to avoid sudden collapse.

8) *New York Times*, Coming Next: The Greater Recession, July 14th, 2020.



The Ruling Class Wants To Make The Proletariat Pay The Bill... And Impose War On It.

The ever-widening gap between the value of the world's production of goods and the issuance of paper money and debt must, sooner or later, be bridged in some way. Therefore, capital can only make the international proletariat bear the cost of the bill if it wants to keep its system afloat as a minimum. But this will not be enough to resolve its fundamental contradiction at the source of the existing gap. Having more forces and means of production than its social relations can absorb, capitalism is forced to make the surplus disappear and this can only be done, because of its dimension, at the price of a massive destruction of value, i.e. of capital and labor, concretely only at the price of a generalized imperialist war. As in 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, but on an even broader and deeper scale. More destructive.

And this is where crisis and imperialist war combine to exacerbate antagonisms and class struggle. The bourgeoisie has no other choice, whether its capitalist leaders and governments are aware of it or not, than to present at the same time the bill of the crisis and the bill of the sacrifices necessary for the march to war, first of all those indispensable to privilege and develop the arms race, the production linked to it and militarism. From economic, the question becomes political. Its solution depends on the balance of power between classes, on the capacity of the bourgeoisie to subjugate the proletariat, mainly at the political and ideological levels. For force and repression are not enough, and may even accelerate proletarian anger and conscience against the state.

The United States, Epicenter Of The Bourgeois Offensive

It is exactly at this point in the historical course that we find ourselves. The capitalist ruling class is forced, pressed all the more by the economic catastrophe that is exploding today, to engage in massive confrontations against the entire proletariat. Recruiting and using legitimate emotion, anger and revolt in the face of the serial murders of blacks, but also whites, reds and yellows – since the category 'skin color' is imposed on us – it has launched its first large-scale offensive in the United States. It is there that the epicenter of the evolution of the relation of forces between the classes is now.

Color and gender identity or class identity? The two are irreconcilable and opposed. The first denies and excludes the second. The first, which appeals so much to the petty-bourgeois students on university campuses, especially in the United States, is bourgeois, and its fate is the division and bloody defeat of the proletariat. Immediately, it diverts the exploited class from defending its living conditions in the face of the explosion of the crisis. The second is proletarian and its future is the unity of the proletariat and the exercise of its class dictatorship, i.e. the destruction of capitalism. It alone shows the way to the immediate response to the crisis. It is up to

the proletarians of all countries not to allow themselves to be dragged behind democratic campaigns, whether in the name of any color identity or otherwise, which can only divide them, subject them even more to capitalist exploitation and lead them to bloody defeats. It is up to the communist groups to make no concessions to this identity ideology spread by the forces of the left, by the leftists and anarchists, if they want to work positively for the workers' struggles that are bound to break out in the face of the exploding crisis, for the historical struggle of the proletariat and the real regroupment, that is to say in political clarity, of revolutionaries and for the constitution of the world party of the proletariat.

The slogans of the hour? No to sacrifices! No to identitarianism, and to divisions based on skin color and [gender]! Yes to proletarian class struggle! Yes to class identity and unity in the struggle against capital!

IGCL, September 10th, 2020.

Source: [Capitalist Crisis and Bourgeois Offensive Against the Proletariat](#), IGCL, Sept. 19, 2020 'Revolution or War', No. 16 (Biannual, October 2020).

Translation: IGCL (also available in French and Spanish)

Recent Blog Publications by A Free Retriever's Digest

Actuality

- [The Corona-virus and the Communists Today](#)
M. Lupoli (I.O.D.): An invitation to an open debate among proletarian internationalists (July 5, 2020).
- [Iran: A New Wave of Strikes and Workers' Protests and the Need for Workers' Solidarity](#)
A Communiqué by 'Internationalist Voice' (August 3, 2020), with a comment by 'Arbeidersstemmen'.

Background

- [Essay: On unionism and its revolutionary overcoming](#)
A contribution to a debate between council communists (R. Ferreira, August 17, 2020).
- [Anton Pannekoek: Marxism and Darwinism \(1909, 1914\)](#)
An Introduction by Ph. Bourrinet (October 2019). Translation online: September 7, 2020.
- [Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics \(III\)](#)
4. The destruction of health systems and of the ecosystem. The commodification of the world.
a) New pandemics taking advantage of a capitalist health system adrift.
Translation online: September 24, 2020. The conclusion of this article can be read on page 27 ff.

France isn't a Special Case in the General Crisis of Capitalism

Editorial of '*Bilan et Perspectives*' #19 (Autumn 2020)

Whichever way you look at it, the global situation is catastrophic. On the programme for the start of the 2020 school year, we had:

- The disastrous economic crisis, which predated the pandemic and was intensified by it, mass lay-offs, an exponential rise in unemployment and the attacks of the ruling class aimed at making us pay for their crisis following the grinding halt of production;
- A resurgence in the pandemic which had not stopped in the first place. History teaches us that this kind of pandemic tends to last a minimum of two years;
- A ruling class that seems to be stumbling in its response to the general political situation. One wonders if they know how to respond to a situation of which they are no longer in control;
- An acceleration of imperialist tensions.

On the Economic Crisis and Unemployment

The pandemic has officially killed nearly 900,000 people (statistic from 10 September) across the world, it has caused an international economic depression of a scale unparalleled since the Second World War. In fact, to find a decline in GDP of a similar scale (32.9% in the second trimester of 2020 and -8% provisional total), ⁽¹⁾ we must go all the way back to the crisis of 1929, when in four years the GDP of the USA fell by 26.3% (excluding inflation).

And according to IMF forecasts, France is third among the countries most impacted by the crisis, with an expected fall in GDP of 12.5% for 2020, only after Spain and Italy.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also led to the loss of 715,000 jobs in France in the first half of 2020 according to the *National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies* (INSEE, 8 September). But the dynamism of activity recorded since the lifting of lock-down is slowing down. The INSEE itself has begun to fundamentally revise its growth forecasts for the third trimester. In fact, in the next few months, bankruptcies, which have been restrained up to this point, are set to accelerate. A plethora of redundancy plans were announced and certain sectors that were particularly

badly hit, like the aviation sector, will start to see their effects. What's more, the safety net of partial unemployment after lock-down will become less effective from 1 October, when the measure will become more costly for businesses and employees too, as state support falls from 84% to 72% of their total wages.

Also on the cards is a sharp decline in the quality of existing jobs. According to economist Hippolytus d'Albis, director of research of the *National Centre for Scientific Research* (CNRS), the proportion of "underemployed" people out of all those in employment, which oscillated regularly between 6% and 20% in the second trimester, will reach "a level previously unrecorded by the INSEE ... If we add unemployed people of all categories to underemployed people, we would reach a total of 11.5 million in the second trimester, i.e. 37.4% of the active population in 2018."

In addition to this pathos of the specialists who sanitise social reality, we know for ourselves that poverty will hit us workers, and that it will continue to rise. The statistics are one thing but all the effects that this terrifying situation has brought out are even more dramatic because all of the cogs of the economy are broken and the repercussions in every domain are difficult to anticipate.

1) *Le Point*, 30 July 2020.

On Intensifying Imperialist Tensions

There has been no shortage of imperialist tensions across the world, but these have intensified in recent months. This is a summary of the major points of conflict.

Between *China and India*, on 15 June in Ladakh (in the Galwan Valley in Northwest India), clashes led to a number of deaths including 20 Indians and an unconfirmed number of Chinese. But Sino-Indian tensions form part of a wider geopolitical context, the strategy of the USA against Chinese omnipotence. To Beijing's

chagrin, the Americans are pushing India towards an Indo-Pacific front around the USA, Australia and Japan.

The heart of the tensions lies between *the USA and China*. Are we approaching a new Cold War? The Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun, at a summit of leaders organised by the *US-India Strategic Partnership Forum*, said, "Our strategy consists in pushing back against China in practically all areas", citing "unreasonable demands" from China "over its sovereign ter-

ritory, whether that be in the Galwan Valley, on the border of India and China, or in the South Pacific."

Harry Harris, the US Ambassador to Australia, confirmed on 14 February before the American Congress that Beijing intended to take control of the South China Sea.

In fact, China is currently building military bases on seven islands in the South China Sea, islands that neighbouring countries claim as theirs. The Chinese Navy is competing with the US Navy. Its bases are first rate with its first foreign base in the port of Djibouti.

A little over two years after the trade war on China was first declared by President Trump, the USA has new campaigns. Their offensive concerns the autonomy of Hong Kong, human rights in Xinjiang, and the accusation of espionage against Huawei. In reality, this offensive serves another objective: to slow China down in its technological quest – in the banking sector, drones, geolocation and telecoms. Eight video surveillance and facial recognition software enterprises were already by 2019 on a blacklist in the American Department of Commerce that prevents them from buying American parts without government approval. And Huawei for example will struggle to maintain its offer of 5G. The decisions of America have since had a knock-on effect for its allies: Britain has just excluded Huawei from its 5G networks, following Australia. Other countries will logically follow them in turn, notably members of NATO.

And the *Middle East* remains a powder keg into which France is attempting to stretch its short arms. Tensions are sharpening between Paris and Ankara. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has criticised Emmanuel Mac-

ron several times this week for his management of the Lebanese crisis and the tensions between Turkey and Greece. France announced on 13 August a reinforcement of its military presence in the *East Mediterranean* with two Rafale fighters and two warships. But in fact tensions between Greece and Turkey around the island of Karpathos and regarding the search for oil between Cyprus and Crete are only one part of the problem. The crux of the matter lies in *Libya* and *Lebanon*, where France seeks to position itself as the "saviour" of Lebanon. In Libya, the game is even more complex, since France has fewer assets there. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has called the arrival of Emmanuel Macron in Beirut a "spectacle" and denounced it as a "colonialist" intervention. In *Libya*, Turkey and Qatar are on the one side supporting the Government of National Union (GAN) under Fayeze al-Sarraj whilst Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are on the other in support of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, each side supporting with opposing militias. Russia finds itself in this latter camp with the support of France, Italy and Iran who have covertly sold out to a warlord.

In *Lebanon*, where France has a stronger political and economic base, the latter attempts to weaken Hezbollah which is the key to the situation. And here France is returning to the struggle against Syrian and Iranian power, that is, into the American axis. France is lucky to have its hands free in Lebanon.

Whatever comes of this, the East Mediterranean and Middle East remain a powder keg and everyone can be observed pursuing their interests there. The fronts are not yet stabilised, which prevents the development of a more open war.

On the Political Crisis

The governments and the ruling class appear to have reached the pinnacle of incompetence. Natural phenomena seem to be in league against the perpetuation of exploitation (which must be protected as a priority for capital) and thus the operation of businesses. States are incapable of putting in place what they themselves promised. We may cite as a significant example the existence of the report *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus as an Agent of Emerging and Reemerging Infection*, published in October 2007 by the *Clinical Microbiology Reviews*, a journal of the American Society for Microbiology. It states:

"Coronaviruses are well known to undergo genetic recombination, which may lead to new genotypes and outbreaks. The presence of a large reservoir of SARS-CoV-like viruses in horseshoe bats, together with the culture of eating exotic mammals in southern China, is a time bomb. The possibility of the reemergence of SARS and other novel viruses from animals or laboratories and therefore the need for preparedness should not be ignored."

This was not heeded because the only thing that matters under capitalism is the production of profit. In the introduction of the report, we read:

"The small reemergence of SARS in late 2003 after the resumption of the wildlife market in southern China and the recent discovery of a very similar virus in horseshoe bats, bat SARS-CoV, suggested that SARS can return if conditions are fit for the introduction, mutation, amplification, and transmission of this dangerous virus."

This is why capitalism, like all class societies, does not deign to concern itself with the health of humanity. Once more, we confirm that we can no longer expect anything of it. And in this way the ruling class demonstrates that it has been overwhelmed by the current situation, the measures and counter-measures succeed one another at a rate to make one's head spin. The credibility of the media and the state is called into question like never before.

→ Continued on page 23.

The Viruses, the Class Societies, ... the Human Community

Announcement: An essay by M. Olivier (*'Bilan et Perspectives'*)

Bibliographical data: *Les virus, les sociétés de classes,... la Communauté humaine*, an essay by Michel Olivier to appear with *Éditions Prométhée*, 2020, and as a supplement to *Bilan et Perspectives*, N° 19. Price per copy: €4,-. Orders can be addressed to M. Olivier, 7 rue Paul Escudier, 75009 Paris, France. Contents: 1. Epidemics and Class Societies; 2. Only the human community or communism can newly found the relations between man and nature; 3. Some bibliographical pistes to continue reflection.

Preface: Epidemics and Class Societies

" (...) the more civilization advances, the more it is compelled to cover the evils it necessarily creates with the cloak of love and charity, to palliate them or to deny them—in short, to introduce a conventional hypocrisy which was unknown to earlier forms of society and even to the first stages of civilization (...)"

F. Engels, *'Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State'* (1894); IX. Barbarism and Civilization.

By leaving the Garden of Eden, ⁽¹⁾ has humanity lost the peace of mind of the free hunter-gatherers wandering here and there and tasting the fruits of the wonderful trees? Now out of the Garden of Eden, shouldn't mankind cultivate the soil and domesticate animals by the sweat of his brow? Wouldn't the biblical texts describe a certain truth? ⁽²⁾ In any case, the change of gregarious life and the domestication of animals transmitted viruses that were unknown to him until then.

Hunter-gatherers in their universe know little or nothing about epidemics. Thus for the peoples of America still living from hunting and gathering, it was not until the discovery of America with Christopher Columbus that they were decimated by epidemics imported from Europe. Obviously, the Indians of the plains respected nature and animals, they lived in osmosis with it. This is still the case of the Guarani tribe in the Amazon, the last survivors of the primitive peoples, who preferred to choose suicide rather than be separated from their environment: *"When you are so close to nature, that you are surrounded by forests, you have life, you have everything"* said a Guarani.... There is no need for ecology

in this natural setting, nor to fear the demented evolution of agribusiness for the feeding of the herds that provide the new viruses.

Let us be clear! No need for a long sentence to show what homo sapiens sapiens has done with the Earth. No need for ecology ⁽³⁾ if we live in osmosis with nature. This is how modern-day ecology was invented to hide the mutilations of nature, to make people believe, on the one hand, that the fate of nature really preoccupies capitalism and, on the other hand, to calm and delude those who are alarmed by the new "virtual" yet very destructive world. Amadeo Bordiga in the 1970s was not fooled: *"Ecology is a reaction – reactionary! – to the incessant upheaval of productive techniques by capital, a defense against the exasperation of capitalism that makes life ever more painful, and also the reaction of the bourgeoisie against its own 'excesses', its attempt to control its anarchic destruction."*

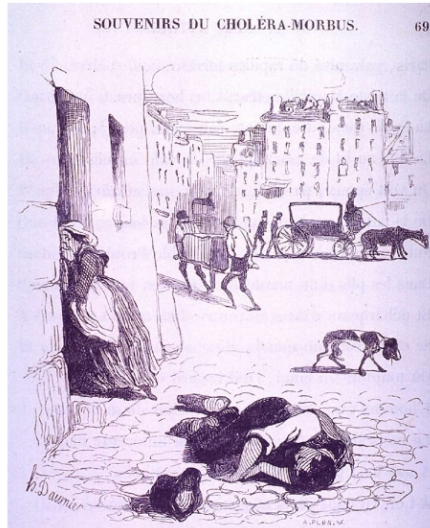
Today, following the litany of humanitarian, health and climatic disasters that are hitting the planet ever closer together, let us ask ourselves about the uninterrupted succession of epidemics and pandemics as soon as class societies appeared.

At the dawn of the Neolithic revolution, viruses and calamities appeared that we still know today, mostly due to the promiscuity between humans and domesticated animals. In a second part we will try to show the links between epidemics and the disappearance of a civilization. Finally, we will try to understand why epidemics follow one another more regularly and more rapidly in a society whose excesses on all sides only prepare them.

- 1) Does the Bible in fact contain reminiscences of the life without labor of primitive free men?
- 2) The life of the hunter-gatherers being less hard in terms of labor, there should not be an excessive idealization of their existence.

- 3) Here, as in the quotation from Bordiga, 'ecology' is employed in the non-scientific sense used by the media.

Les virus, les sociétés de classes,...



« Souvenir du choléra morbus » - H. Daumier

...la Communauté humaine

Michel Olivier
Éditions Prométhée
2020

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Back-cover text

In recent decades, there has been an increase in infectious diseases and epidemics, along with a drop in biodiversity and a significant increase in domestic animal production. I wanted to understand if there was a link between these different phenomena. My study shows that the global growth of livestock production threatens biodiversity and increases health risks for humans and domestic animals. (...)

Domestic animals can be a relay: these animals are reservoirs of many viruses and bacteria for humans. One thinks of swine or avian flu. At the same time, they constitute an epidemiological bridge with wild animals. This link can be made by extending the ecological footprint of livestock, notably through deforestation to produce animal proteins, or by simplifying ecosystems.

Serge Morand (researcher at the *Institut des sciences de l'évolution de Montpellier* (CNRS/Montpellier) and at the *CIRAD Astre laboratory*); from an interview in *Technique de l'ingénieur*, August 2020.

State Capitalism – Historical Mistake or Means for proletarian Dictatorship?

II. An Exchange apropos of 'Fundamental Principles' (GIC,1935)

Already about a year ago we signaled on these pages a certain interest to take a position on the GIC's 'Fundamental Principles' from the side of a group claiming adherence to a current of the historical communist Left(s). ^(a) Following a first reply by Fredo Corvo ('Arbeidersstemmen') last January, we have recently taken notice of "some elements of response" by an adherent of the IGCL, which we present here in full, together with the prompt reaction by Fredo. We invite our readers to take notice and send their appreciations.

a Read: *An Echo on our Introduction to the GIC's 'Fundamental Principles' in 'A Free Retriever's Digest' Vol.3 #4 (October – December 2019)*, p. 37.

Some elements of response and the state of a discussion (Robin, IGCL, July 2020)

We recently had interesting discussions with comrade Fredo Corvo on the transition period, especially on the work of the Dutch council communists on this particular issue. The reader can refer to the latest issues of our journal to pick up the thread of the discussion from the beginning. Otherwise, to summarize the main points, comrade Corvo has translated into English some texts written in the 1930s by the Dutch group GIC, including one we published in *Revolution or War*, which he believes shed new light on the theoretical contribution of this group. For the comrade, the Italian left (the journal *Bilan*) has thrown the epithet of councilism over the work of the GIC without understanding its real essence, thus distorting the debate from the 1930s to the present.

Our response to comrade Corvo was very simple. The new translations of texts by the GIC bring nothing new to the table and in fact reinforce in every respect the historical criticisms that the "Italian left" has brought to the council communist current. Having set the context, let us now answer the questions and arguments of comrade Corvo contained in his last letter of January 10, 2020. ⁽¹⁾

The comrade challenges us on three main aspects: state capitalism, the role of the Bolsheviks and democracy.

Corvo warns us against defending state capitalism and the dangers of such a position. However, we do not defend state capitalism as an abstract principle

that is valid at all times. Certain measures that take the form of economic centralization under the aegis of the state are necessary under specific conditions. These conditions were the outbreak of proletarian revolution in a momentarily isolated and economically underdeveloped country. What historical examples do we have? Germany in 1848 and Russia in 1917, among others. These two examples are comparable to the extent that these two different historical periods had similar aspects: economy lagging behind the countries of the most developed capitalism, a cowardly bourgeoisie delaying its revolution, the birth of a modern proletariat. The result was a single tactic: to push for the development of capitalism while advocating revolution and its extension in the advanced capitalist metropolises. State capitalism was not only necessary for these two historical examples, but it was the only revolutionary and Marxist tactic.

But this tactic was never intended as an end in itself. Indeed, Lenin is clear that state capitalism is not socialism, ⁽²⁾ a distinction that Stalinism will later erase with the mystification of socialism in a single country. That said, the conditions of the time are now absolutely exhausted in that capitalist industry has managed to invade probably the entire globe.

1) Read: *A first reply to the IGCL on the 'Fundamental Principles' in 'A Free Retriever's Digest' Vol.4 #1 (January – March 2020)*, p. 27 ff., adopted in 'Revolution or War' #16 (October 2020).

2) "No one, I think, in studying the question of the economic system of Russia, has denied its transitional character. Nor, I think, has any Communist denied that the term Socialist Soviet Republic implies the determination of Soviet power to achieve the transition to socialism, and not that the new economic system is recognised as a socialist order." (Lenin, "Left-Wing" Childishness, published May 9, 10, 11, 1918 in: *Pravda* Nos. 88, 89, 90). [Source: V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972; Vol. 27, pages 323-334.]

Therefore, today, state capitalist measures are no longer on the agenda. By the way, in parentheses, Corvo asserts that state capitalism was not a necessity to remedy isolation, a position we defend, but the consequence of a theoretical weakness. If this is the case, and to be consistent with the logic of the comrade's arguments, he would have to repudiate the Communist Manifesto and, why not, abandon Marxism! In fact, if the tactics of state capitalism are the result of a theoretical error, it should not be attributed to poor Lenin. Already, in the Manifesto, this "theoretical error" appears since Marx and Engels put forward a "state capitalist" orientation for Germany in 1848. ⁽³⁾

Concerning the Bolsheviks, Corvo ventures to say that they paved the way for counter-revolution as early as 1917 by eliminating the control of proletarians over factories. Here we find again the classic theme of councilism: Lenin only paved the way for Stalinism. We will not bother here to respond to this myth propagated as much by liberalism as by anarchism. It is easy to find in our pages and in the pages of other groups of the communist left (ICC, ICT, ICP) a refutation of this tenacious myth that refuses to die, among other things because it is defended by elements within the proletarian camp itself, such as comrade Corvo. And if the Bolsheviks are no longer internationalists as early as 1917, what about the 3rd International founded in 1919? Was it born counterrevolutionary? To judge Bolshevik policy, we do not restrict ourselves to what was happening within the four walls of the factories in Russia. This is quite secondary and is the result of a rather anarcho-sindicalist concern. ⁽⁴⁾ The central aspect of Bolshevik politics was the program of extending the revolution to the world level. On this point, the Bolsheviks were again and again in the vanguard.

It should be noted in passing that Comrade Corvo uses the term "state communism". From the Marxist point of view, the union of these two terms is a political oxymoron. But its use here is revealing. Indeed, the terms "state communism" or "authoritarian communism" have a very precise origin. They were used by the Bakuninists in their struggle

against the Marxists in the First International. To what can "state communism" be opposed if not... libertarian communism?

Finally comrade Corvo asks us to take a stand on democracy. We cannot agree with Fredo Corvo's tendency to oppose dictatorship and authority on the one hand and democracy and freedom on the other. This has more to do with the anarchist tradition, which is only the radical version of the great political family of liberalism. For us, the revolution does not get its legitimacy from a majority of votes. ⁽⁵⁾ In the same way, the workers' councils should not be the proletarian version of parliaments. In other words, the proletarians did not copy the parliamentary rules and then label their actions "proletarian democracy". For us, the revolution must be massive in numbers to ensure that it can materially destroy the old world. But the massive aspect is enough. The revolution does not have to stop at every moment to check whether the majority of proletarians are behind it. This is the difference between a materialist conception of revolution and a democratist conception.

For us, democracy is neither a principle nor a fetish. It is therefore necessary to be very careful in its use, all the more so because the counter-revolution will always be able to hide its intentions under the deceptive garments of democracy. ⁽⁶⁾ In spite of every-

3) We make a reference to the following part of the *Communist Manifesto* : "Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State." [[Chapter II. Proletarians and Communists](#) – the concluding section on 'measures']

4) See our texts on the journal '*Kommunist*' which criticize the famous "workers' control" in '*Revolution or War*' issues #13 and #14: [The "Bukharin Fraction" of 1918 Contrary to the Communist Left](#), resp. [The Communist Workers Organisation, the Journal Kommunist \(1918\) and the Period of Transition](#).

5) Whose caricatured expression can be found in *Spartacus*' 1918 program: "The Spartacus League will never take over governmental power except in response to the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian mass of all of Germany, never except by the proletariat's conscious affirmation of the views, aims, and methods of struggle of the Spartacus League." ("*What Does the Spartacus League Want?*", December 1918; [V. That is what the Spartacus League wants!](#)) [Source: Rosa Luxemburg, *Selected Political Writings*, Monthly Review Press, 1971.]

6) "As to pure democracy and its role in the future I do not share your opinion. Obviously it plays a far more subordinate part in Germany than in countries with an older industrial development. But that does not prevent the possibility, when the moment of revolution comes, of its acquiring a temporary importance as the most radical bourgeois party (it has already played itself off as such in Frankfurt) and as the final sheet-anchor of the whole bourgeois and even feudal regime. At such a moment the whole reactionary mass falls in behind it and strengthens it; everything which used to be reactionary be-

thing, it is ridiculous to think that the proletariat will be homogeneous and purely revolutionary on Day 1 of the revolution. There will inevitably be diverse tendencies, disagreements and even contradictions within the class. In the absence of unanimity and in the presence of disagreements, settling debates in general assemblies, making decisions, appointing delegates to workers' councils can often require votes and the use of the means of "proletarian

haves as democratic." ([Letter from Engels to Bebel, London, December 11-12th, 1884](#)). [Source: MEGA, International Publishers, 1942]

democracy". As such, this use of proletarian democracy is not a principle but a means and a moment in the struggle for the generalization of workers' struggles and the revolutionary unity of the proletariat.

Robin, July 2020

Source: <http://www.igcl.org/Some-elements-of-response-and> (Revolution or War No. 16. (Biannual – October 2020))

The bibliographic notes have been extended by the editor.

Back to a State Capitalist Program

How a non-discussion reveals Bordigist positions (Fredo Corvo, September 2020)

In an open letter dated 10 January 2020, I gave an initial response to an IGCL position on the first English translation of GIC, **Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution** (1935).⁽¹⁾ Robin's recently published answer confirms my suspicion that the IGCL has difficulty distinguishing between what is now known about the Russian revolution and the positions that the Bolsheviks had on it at the time. Robin's reply responds to prevailing prejudices within Bordigism against what it calls in a derogatory way councilism, prejudices that also exist within the post-Trotskyist *Communism*, with which Robin maintains warm ties.

Thus Robin qualifies me as an anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist because I have shown that already under Lenin the workers' power in companies was eliminated. Apparently, Robin is fine with the fact that a minority exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat, as long as it claims to serve the world revolution.

Robin uses the fact that in my text the term 'state communism' appears,⁽²⁾ to associate me with the users of the term 'authoritarian communism' (Bakunin), a term that is foreign to me.

Next, he claims that I contrast 'dictatorship and authority' with 'democracy and freedom'. If we dispense for a moment with the notions of *authority*

and *freedom* that he has put forward, we see that in reality Robin himself, following Bordiga,⁽³⁾ opposes *dictatorship* and *democracy*. In doing so, he agrees with the party dictatorship in Russia, and if he gets the chance, even after a future revolution. On the other hand, in agreement with Marx, Lenin, and the GIC, I have stated that both in capitalism and after the proletarian revolution, in the bourgeois state, respectively the 'half-state' *dictatorship* and *democracy* coexist. Robin, however, prefers only dictatorship, violence, and terror, in other words, to 'lean on bayonets'. I argue that on the issue of *democracy* and *dictatorship* Robin disagrees not only with me and the GIC, but also with Lenin and Marx. The latter spoke of the "association of free and equal producers", on which Lenin rightly commented that the reference to the bourgeois notions of freedom and equality indicated that there was no question of full communism.

While the GIC pointed out that Lenin derived his state capitalist views from reformism in social-democracy, Robin sees a parallel between Russia 1917 and Germany 1848. Remarkably, Robin (without knowing) in doing so approaches the GIC on two important and closely related points:

- 1) F.C., **State Capitalism: Historical Mistake or Means for proletarian Dictatorship?** in *A Free Retriever's Digest*, Vol.4 #1, January-March 2020, p. 27ff.
- 2) Because he hasn't read '*Fundamental Principles*', Robin doesn't know that I took that unfortunate term from the text of the GIC. The GIC used the term state communism instead of state capitalism because it believed in the good intentions of the Bolsheviks.

- 3) Bordiga objected to the "democratic" counting of votes. Robin quotes the program of 1918 of the KPD(S) to attribute this "counting" to the ... German and Dutch Left that arose from those who opposed this parliamentarism. Robin may not know that Pannekoek, in a publication of the GIC in 1932, opposed "counting" as well (see the text box on page 22).

- Russia was “an economically undeveloped country” (Robin) and was driven towards state capitalism by its isolated revolution.
- The Communist Manifesto of 1848 was a state capitalist program for underdeveloped capitalism (in Germany). ⁽⁴⁾

The GIC ignored the fact that by “the party” Marx meant the revolutionary working class masses, and that the masses would realize this program and not the tiny League of Communists, which would not act as a governing party either. It was the SED-Stalinist Dracker who claimed after the Second World War that the role of the Bolshevik party in Russia was modeled on the example of the League of Communists in 1848 in Germany. The council communist Willy Huhn unraveled this myth extensively. ⁽⁵⁾

As we know, following Marx after the Paris Commune (1871), the GIC did not consider this state-capitalist tactic applicable to the developed capitalist countries. Moreover, there are good reasons to doubt the correctness of the theory of the bourgeois revolution in Russia, as defended by Lenin, Trotsky and Otto Rühle, Helmut Wagner, and the GIC, to name but a few Marxists. ⁽⁶⁾ The IGCL might won-

- 4) For the GIC on the state capitalist view expressed in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847, see the text box on page 23.
- 5) Willy Huhn (1961): **On the doctrine of the revolutionary party**, available on the blog of ‘A Free Retriever’s Digest’: [Part I](#); [Part II](#); [Part III](#), and in the reviews of [July – September 2019](#) (Vol.3#3); [October – December 2019](#) (Vol.3#4) and [January – March 2020](#) (Vol.4#1).
- 6) F.C. (August 2020): **The fatal myth of the bourgeois**

der how a half-“bourgeois” revolution after 1914 fits into the idea of “decadence of capitalism” or into the era of *revolution or war*, the name of its publication. Or does it perhaps fit better with Trotsky’s theory of unequal and combined development?

Robin speaks for Germany 1848 and Russia 1917 specifically of an “*economy lagging behind the countries of the most developed capitalism, a cowardly bourgeoisie delaying its revolution, the birth of a modern proletariat*”. In the same paragraph, he says “*Certain measures that take the form of economic centralization under the aegis of the state are necessary under specific conditions*”. From this, we may deduce that these specific conditions still occur and will continue to occur in the future. Robin does say “*the conditions of the time are now absolutely exhausted in that capitalist industry has managed to invade probably the entire globe. Therefore, today, state capitalist measures are no longer on the agenda*”. In doing so, he ignores the fact that the capitalist industry has not penetrated large parts of the world, and where it had penetrated it has even been reduced. As, for example, in France, whose economy is increasingly lagging behind that of the countries of the most developed capitalism, the US and China. Combine this with the Bordigist view that the bourgeois revolution has not been completed. Indeed one can say that the French bourgeoisie is too cowardly for that.

Food for thought.

Fredo Corvo, September 25, 2020.

revolution in Russia. A critique of Wagner's 'Theses on Bolshevism' (a.o.: [Left-dis](#); pdf, 15 pages A4).

A. Pannekoek (1932): “*On the question of the parties*”, §3: Counting or measuring?

“It should first be noted that in the imagination of the ‘majority’ of workers’ councils these organs of the revolution are overly parliamentarized. In the great decisive battles in world history, it was never about a simple “counting” of votes; it was about power against power. Not every person there was an equivalent number, but each one was a different force. In that struggle the determination, the ability, the energy of individuals participate; then the ardent drag the discouraged along, then passionate minorities win the victory over hesitant majorities; then economic positions of power often put in a lot of weight. This can be dismissed as undemocratic, but what does this matter? The social storms are just as much outside the moral assessment as the natural storms. Moreover, it would be a wrong democracy: in the great historical task of the proletariat, all have to contribute to their forces, and so do the strongest. When, therefore, at decisive critical moments, an ardent vanguard jumps into the breach, averts the threat of defeat, and preserves the advantage obtained, it goes without saying that this does not violate equal rights for all.”

Source: [Over het vraagstuk van de partijen](#) (*Persdienst van de Groepen van Internationale Communisten*, Vol. V, no. 7, May 1932).

GIC (1935): Ch. 14: The control of the operating life, b. The “workers’ control” by Marx

*“In the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1847), Marx sees the development of communism in ever more far-reaching state capitalism, as we can see it today in Russia. The working class takes over the bourgeoisie’s governing apparatus and the new governing party (parties?) will then carry out a radical **reform program** with the help of this old apparatus. In the **Communist Manifesto**, the implementation of communism is not the task of the revolutionary masses. The expropriation of the owners is brought about by the new government, which “gradually snatches all capital” from the bourgeoisie. Land ownership is abolished, but the peasants must, as in the past, raise the ground rent, which is then due to the state. Private capital is still functioning for the time being, but the owners must pay “**heavy progressive taxes**”. The national credit bank becomes a **credit monopoly**, and a state transport monopoly is also introduced. Then the state will begin to expropriate more and more companies to put them into state operation, while at the same time there must be a rapid increase in the number of “national factories”. (In Russia, the five-year plan.)”*

Source: GIC, *Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution* (1935), Red&Black Books, Hamburg, 2020, p. 231 ff. (Pocket edition: ISBN 9798615430794).

France isn't a Special Case, → continued from page 16.

The Social Situation

Despite measures that destroy liberties taken in all countries ostensibly to bring the pandemic under control, the revolts have not stopped.

The revolts that have attracted the most media attention are those that have developed in *the USA*. But it suffices to say that outbreaks of struggle are visible everywhere. They are all linked to the decline in material conditions of both the working class (in the broadest sense) and important strata of the petty bourgeoisie.

What has been happening in *Belarus* seems unfortunately to be going the same way. Faced with a mass mobilisation – general strikes in numerous industrial sectors, demonstrations, confrontations with the police – the working class is still not acting independently of bourgeois forces and often remains nationalist by flying the national flag. This same thing is happening in *Lebanon*.

And even in *Libya*, where warlords make laws with no regard for the population, thousands of Libyans, chiefly young people, demonstrated in Tripoli for the third consecutive day on Tuesday 25 August, against corruption and the deterioration of their living conditions.

The Covid pandemic has halted the rise in struggles from 2019 across the whole world. The struggles of tomorrow will no longer have the same character, as the rise in poverty post-lockdown will most certainly lead to massive uprisings. They will possess a more working class and less populist character. We are already starting to see mobilisations against redundancy plans.

The wage workers of *Suez* demonstrated at La Défense, in front of the Suez headquarters, against the buyout offer of *Veolia* (the global leader in water resource management), on 8 September 2020. The presid-

ent of Suez himself, Philippe Varin, declared, “We cannot announce 500 million synergies and say that it will have no impact. I have never seen this in my life. If we look at Alcatel-Lucent, Lafarge-Holcim, GE-Alstom, every time promises were made. Every time, lay-offs followed.”

The lay-offs intensified with 750 job losses at General Electric (who took over the energy business of Alstom). Auchan got rid of 1,500 jobs following similar lay-offs at Nokia, Airbus, Air France Hop or Camaïeu in textiles with their 500 lay-offs...

But in August the *Directorate for Research, Studies, Assessment, and Statistics* (DARES) counted 275 restructuring plans between 1 March and 19 July, which got rid of 45,000 jobs across France. ⁽²⁾

To this must be added the crisis of the Gilets Jaunes (“yellow vests”) which is not really settled since they have not achieved anything and precarity can only rise further.

This issue of *Bilan et Perspectives* is therefore divided into several chapters: the health crisis and its consequences, the social situation and the revolts that are growing in the world, and finally the imperialist tensions that are developing in this capitalist system in its generalised and very deep crisis.

The Editors, October 2020.

Source: [France isn't a Special Case in the General Crisis of Capitalism](#), October 22, 2020. (English by CWO)

‘Bilan et Perspectives’ #19 (Autumn 2020), 33 p. A4, €5,- p. copy.

2) *Le Monde*, 13 August 2020, “Le nouveau coronavirus, une aubaine pour les sociétés qui veulent licensier.” (“The Novel Coronavirus, a Godsend for Societies that want to make Cuts to Jobs”

Has Capitalism entered its Decadence since 1914?

The Falsehoods of the *International Communist Current* (ICC) — A Critique

This contribution challenges a fundamental programmatic position shared by several groups of the contemporary communist Left, in continuity with the beginnings of the III. (or Communist) International, namely that capitalism has entered its phase of decline as an historical mode of production since the outbreak of World War 1. It does so following the method that Marx applied in his (unfinished) magnum opus '*Capital*', comparing the evolution of capitalism before and since 1914 at the hand of documented empirical data. These are summarized in a series of graphs the conclusions of which are contrasted with the affirmations by one of the most outspoken protagonists of this position.

Our translation will be published as a work in progress on the [Topics pages of the web site](#). Hereafter we present the contents' overview of the first chapter available there in English, together with the author's introduction, its first section and a telling graph.

Contents

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- 1.1. Historical materialism
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Introduction by the author

Formally the ICC defends a series of pertinent political positions like the capitalist nature of all countries that have pretended to be 'socialist' – or still do so; the institutional integration of so-called "left" organizations, including the trade unions; the outdated character of "revolutionary parliamentarism"; self-management as self-exploitation of the waged workers, etc.

a) However, the theoretic framework that supports them is completely obsolete, because it frontally contradicts the facts; it is anachronistic according to historical materialism and beyond the Marxist critique of political economy. It results in a sum of explanations without objective foundations; in reality idealist ones.

b) As a consequence, it implies dangerous political aberrations, for instance on the immediate struggles and the so-called impossibility to obtain real and sustainable reforms since 1914; ⁽¹⁾ the impossibility of real national developments in the 20th Century; an idealist conception of human nature and morals; ⁽²⁾ productivist visions

1) Cf. C.Mcl., [How to understand 'May 1968' in France?](#) (Abridged version, September 23, 2018, also in '*A Free Retriever's Digest*' Vol.2#5, October – November 2018). The full version appeared in French on May 11, 2018 at the '*Controverses*' website: [Mai 68 : la signification des luttes de 1966 à 1972](#), and in '*Controverses*' no. 5, May 2018.

2) Cf. C. Mcl., [Morale et matérialisme historique – Ière partie](#) ('*Controverses*' no. 2, September 2009); currently only available in French.

of historical materialism; ⁽³⁾ not taking into account objective divisions within the working class, whose origins are not specific of class societies (like for example gender); an idealized vision of the first societies...

- c) Consequently, this theoretical framework has to be replaced by a corpus with really scientific foundations, one that establishes a new coherent whole in which material reality and theory are conjugated and respond to one another.
 - d) This implies to amend certain basic positions of the ICC ⁽⁴⁾ in the light of the evolution of Capitalism, like on the national question, or the place occupied by the reformist forces since the First World War and the defeat of the insurrectional movements from 1917 to 1923.
 - e) Moreover, two positions of the ICC are only stated without really being defended by it, like the non-substitution of the workers' councils by the party, and the respect of non-violence when deciding on divergences within the working class.
- 3) Cf. *Matérialisme historique et dialectique – La société se complexifie-t-elle au cours du temps?* in [Controverses No. 5, May 2018](#) ("Historical and dialectical materialism – Does Society become more complex over time?"); currently only available in French.
- 4) Cf. [Basic Positions of the ICC](#).

- f) Finally, numerous questions are either absent from its basic corpus or are only marginally treated, albeit they are crucial: gender, human nature, the relationship with nature, new technologies, the changes in the composition of the proletariat, the period of transition, ecology, etc.

Our objective here is not to develop all these points, that will be treated in subsequent contributions, but only to treat the first one, in order to demonstrate the incoherence of its basic credo – the decadence of capitalism since 1914 – in its version inherited from the *Gauche Communiste de France* ⁽⁵⁾ since the Second World War, and which, essentially, has not changed one iota. Well, this framework, which at the time already was shaky on many points, is totally outdated today.

C.Mcl., August 14, 2019

Source: **Controverses**, August 14, 2019, [Les impostures du CCI \(Courant Communiste International\)](#), § 1 and 2.

Translation: H.C., October 2020, The translation has been reviewed by the author.

- 5) "French Communist Left", cf. [Gauche Communiste de France \(1944-1952\)](#) (French)

§1.1 Historical materialism

No civilization has lasted forever, they all have known a phase of expansion and one of decline, and there is every reason to think that the same goes for capitalism. Like with all past modes of production, its obsolescence is inscribed in its contradictory dynamic. In this way Marx has considered at least at four occasions that capitalism had reached its apogee ⁽¹⁾ but, at the end of his life, Engels concluded that they both have been mistaken, estimating that this system still had a long future before it: "History has wronged us and all who thought alike. It has made it clear that the level of economic development

on the continent at that time was far from mature enough for the elimination of capitalist production; it has proved this through the economic revolution which has gripped the entire continent since 1848." [...] "If even this mighty army of the proletariat has still not reached its goal, if, far from achieving victory with a great blow, it has to advance slowly from position to position in a hard, tough struggle, this proves once and for all how impossible it was in 1848 to conquer social transformation by simple surprise." ⁽²⁾

This diagnostic of obsolescence of capitalism has nevertheless been taken up by the III. International

1) More details on the process of obsolescence of the modes of production in history and its application to capitalism by Marx and Engels, can be found in Chapter IV of: 'Dynamiques, crises et contradictions du capitalisme' (Ed. Contradictions, 2010): [L'obsolescence du capitalisme](#) (pdf, French language).

2) Engels' introduction of 1895 to Marx's 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich' (1848 – 1850). ("The class struggles in France"). The quotations have been translated from 'ML- Werke'. Source: MEW Vol.22 (Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1972).

and several of its fractions, and it is this theoretical foundation that the ICC has adopted to articulate its political positions: *"Since the First World War, capitalism has been a decadent social system."* ⁽³⁾ With the human and material destruction of the two world wars and the slowdown of growth from 1914 to 1945, this analytical framework, postulating a brake on the development of the productive forces, could still be defended just after the second world war, and even until the 1970s for certain characteristics, since capitalism has always shown itself incapable of developing the majority of the countries and of the population of the planet. ⁽⁴⁾ This is no longer

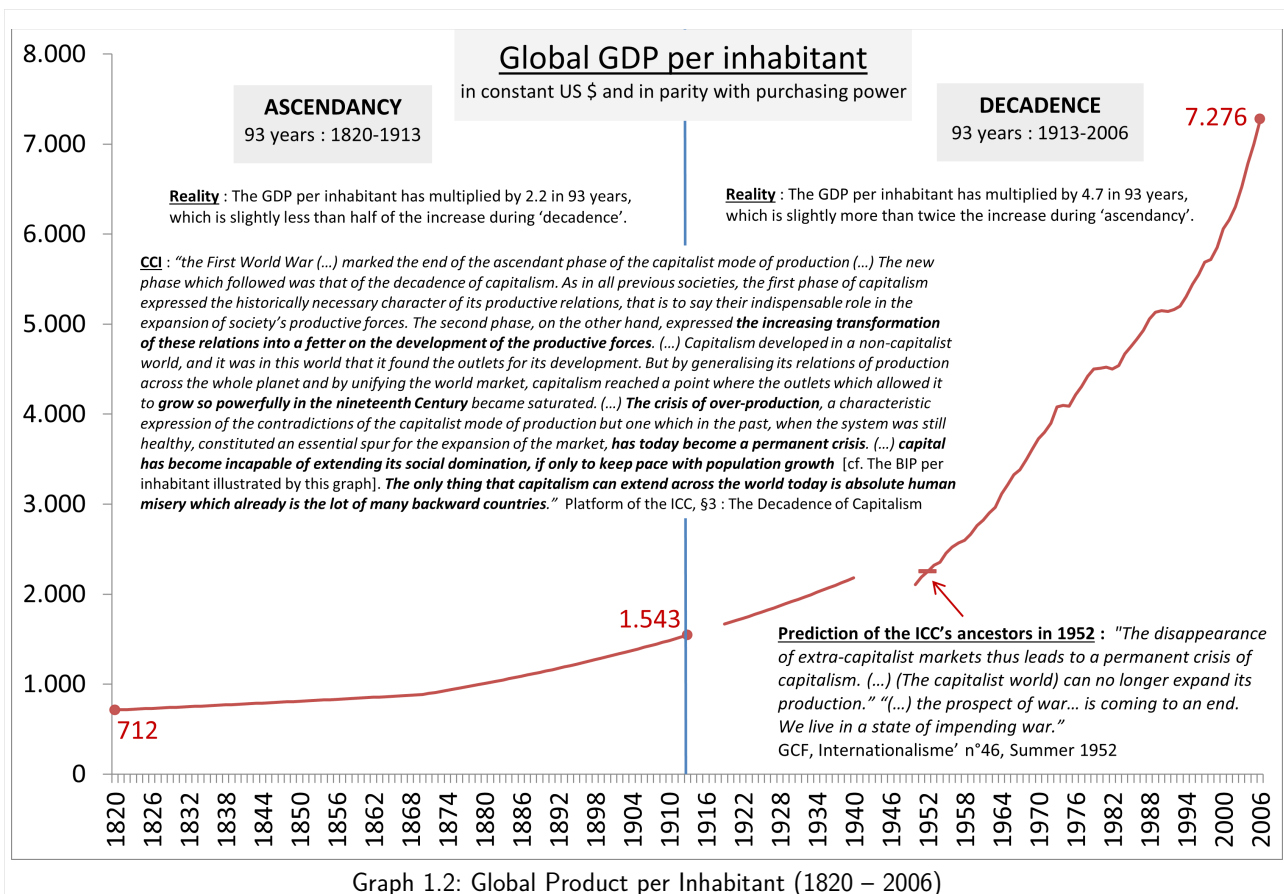
- 3) The first sentence of the [Basic Positions of the ICC](#).
- 4) Until 1967, world population growth was higher in the group of people living below the absolute poverty line. In other words, from the industrial revolution until that date, capitalism had been relatively impoverishing the world's population, but since then the opposite has been true, as nowadays (2018) only 11% of the population still live below the absolute poverty line.

the case ever since, as the article **'250 years of modern capitalism'** develops in a deepened way, ⁽⁵⁾ on which we rely for the development of the polemical elements that are analyzed hereafter.

To continue reading online:

[I. A Brake on the Productive Forces since 1914 – or their Acceleration?](#)

- 5) Cf. M. Roelandts, March 17, 2020: [250 ans de capitalisme - §1 à §3](#). (pdf, 48 p.) The first two chapters are available in English on 'A Free Retriever's' web site: [250 years of modern Capitalism: A reconstruction of its dynamics](#) (Topics' section).



Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics (IV. Conclusion)

To be buried by capitalism or to free the entire Earth from a vampiric system?

In the following we publish the *conclusion* of this article attempting to situate the corona-virus pandemic and its consequences in a broader perspective and from different angles. The three previous parts are all available on the blog of *A Free Retriever's Digest*, the first two have been included in the previous review issues (see the overview at the bottom of page 30).

A descent into the abyss

According to the IMF's early forecasts, U.S. GDP will contract by 6 percent in the first quarter and by about 30% over the next two quarters. **For the year 2020, a "negative growth" of 10% is expected for the United States and of 18% for the euro zone.** Since these figures are given by the Washington IMF (an instrument of U.S. capital), it is possible that they will have to be reversed. No forecasting institute dares to predict the shape of the economic curve: it will follow neither the V-shaped curve (a fall followed by a rebound) nor the U-shaped curve (a prolonged ebb prior to a rebound) nor the L-shaped curve (a straight fall followed by a long stagnation). It could even be I-shaped, equivalent to the vertical fall of a stone. ⁽¹⁾

The figures announced for additional job losses worldwide – which are largely underestimated – are 40 million for 2020. Let us recall that in 1932, in the midst of the crisis of 1929, there were 40 million registered industrial unemployed, including 13 million in the USA (25% of the active population). While Goldman-Sachs cautiously gives a figure of 15% unemployment on the horizon of the "American Dream", ⁽²⁾ the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis gives a much gloomier picture; it fears a loss of 47 million jobs in Donald Trump's America, which would result in **an unemployment rate of 32%, a rate close to that of Weimar Germany in 1932.**

The victims of unemployment will therefore be infinitely greater than those of the corona-virus. Often deprived of health care, the unemployed are the first victims: *"There is an excess mortality rate among job seekers, with 10,000 to 14,000 deaths each year attribut-*

able to unemployment." ⁽³⁾ The corona-virus epidemic, which is circumstantial and not permanent, will have led – at the end of April – in a middle power like France, to the death of more than 25,000 people. The toll will be much worse for the unemployed, the homeless, the precarious, all those whom the system does not count and ruthlessly rejects if they lose their jobs. In the US, they will lose their medical coverage. If they are new homeowners and find themselves unable to repay their loans, the capital throws them out into the streets, as has already happened after 2008.

The year 2020 will not end without a sharp deterioration of the food situation, even in developed countries. The British newspaper *'The Independent'* estimates that 1.7 million people are currently unable to buy enough food, while 2.2 million Britons would be unable to pay their rent. In the USA, the victims of the crisis are threatened with water shortages. With the massive layoffs caused by the closure of businesses, many households find themselves unable to pay their bills and are deprived of access to running water. Faced with this dramatic situation, reminiscent of the worst moments of the Great Depression, only 13 states have instituted a moratorium on bill payments.

In poorer countries, it is worse. Confinement translates – as in Ecuador, in Guayaquil, where the poorest receive no help – into a policy of starvation, imposed by the forces of state disorder: *"The police intervened with batons, chasing people, hitting, entering houses. But how can one tell a poor person to stay at home when he has no food?"* ⁽⁴⁾ And the phenomenon has spread from the shantytowns of South Africa to those of Brazil and India, where the health catastrophe has only just begun. In the Philippines, some 23

1) Cf. Stephen Bouquin, April 5, 2020: [«Une tempête parfaite. Covid-19 et crise du capitalisme»](#) ["A perfect storm. Covid-19 and capitalist crisis"]; *'Révolution permanente'*, website of trotskyists within the NPA. Augmented article version.

2) Jérôme Marin in *La Tribune*, April 2, 2020: ["6.6 million additional jobless in the USA within a week, a new record"]. The unemployment rate before February 2020 was 3.5%, against the present 15%.

3) Laurent Joffrin in *Libération*, April 8, 2020: «Le virus de Charybde et Scylla» ["The virus of Charybdis and Scylla"].

4) «À Nigeria, quartier de Guayaquil, la faim effraie plus que le virus», *Le Courrier international*, April 14, 2020. ["In Nigeria, Guayaquil neighborhood, hunger is more frightening than the virus"].

million people, nearly a quarter of the population, are threatened with starvation under the “*no work, no pay*” rule, denounces a trade union leader. ⁽⁵⁾ Confinement inexorably plunges hundreds of millions of human beings into sub-misery.

For workers in the poorest countries, it will be an apocalypse in real time, according to an ILO study. For this organization, no less than 1.6 billion people will lose their livelihoods because of the containment and the historic recession that this measure causes. ⁽⁶⁾

The Welfare State, if it ever existed, will be a memory in the death struggle of the major capitalisms to avoid losing their former positions in the world market. And in the face of an explosion of unemployment, affecting the poorest and the least poor, the bourgeoisie in each country will be reluctant to grant unemployment benefits, when they exist, and even more so aid to refugees driven out by wars or the effects of global warming. It will be the return of good old bourgeois Malthusianism, where all “useless mouths” must be eliminated from the “feast”, in a nature that has become totally capitalist:

“A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on whom he has a just demand, and if the society do not want his labour, has no claim of right to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact, has no business to be where he is. At nature’s mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute her own orders, if he does not work upon the compassion of some of her guests.” ⁽⁷⁾

For all those who dare to claim their rightful place, which should be first, while they are the creators of ALL the wealth of society, manual workers and intellectuals, the response of capitalist Mother “Nature” will always be the same: force, the dictatorship of money based on the systematic use of blind violence, guaranteed by the reinforced armoring of the state.

In the poorest countries, the dictatorship of confinement – without the slightest protection for these new prisoners, whose release authorization is equivalent to a new form of electronic bracelet – marks the triumph of police ⁽⁸⁾ and/or military absolutism: the Chief Minister of the State of Telangana (Deccan, Hyderabad) has dotted the i’s and crossed the t’s: “*The administration cannot arrest everyone and I will have to call the army or give the order to shoot on sight. Please stay home.*” ⁽⁹⁾ The same killer speech by the psychopathic Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on April 2, who ordered the military and police to massacre “*troublemakers*” as they already do with drug dealers: “**Understood? Killed. I’m going to bury you.**” ⁽¹⁰⁾

This prison confinement is equivalent to a descent into hell, well below the poverty line. In these countries where the informal economy dominates, we can see the effects: famines, interruption of vital exchanges, and the explosion of old or new pandemics, all the more so as the health system, already structurally weak, will continue to plummet. Such a situation can only favor an endemic social decomposition, resulting in repeated civil wars dominated by all sorts of bandits or “warlords”, whose ideological cover (religious or not) cannot conceal a systematic policy of looting and murder, and a devouring thirst for power (bourgeois of course).

Endless violence

In the USA, where the myth of the cowboy who shoots faster than his shadow dominates, two million guns have been sold in March 2020. Trump has even placed individual gun dealers on the list of essential business enterprises. Purchases of rifles, revolvers and machine pistols have **doubled** since the beginning of the crisis, the premises of endless violence. This “*economic rebound*” can only increase the death toll of health management.

And in the end, we will witness pandemics of war-like, local, continental and even generalized violence. The arms race, in which the USA always starts as the winner, has never been so intense in the last ten years: military spending have increased by 4% in

5) Cf. [La planète, confinée et en récession, vit un 1er-Mai inédit](#). (AWP/AFP, May 1, 2020 in *Bilan*, a bimonthly magazine from Lausanne (Switzerland)).

6) Cf. [ILO: As job losses escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods](#). (Press release of April 29, 2020).

7) Thomas R. Malthus, [An Essay on the Principle of Population](#) (1798¹, 1803², ...1826⁶). [This passage appeared only in the second, much enlarged edition, which the author wished to be considered as “*a new work*”. It was absent from all subsequent editions, following “*hostile reactions from many critics*”. (Source: Wikipedia)]

8) Laurent Joffrin, *Libération*, April 9, 2020: «Questions sur le confinement» [“Questions on confinement”].

9) *Mail Online*, March 26, 2020: [Indians are warned they could be SHOT if they defy coronavirus lockdown, as thousands ignore social distancing advice while queueing for food](#).

10) *Le Parisien*, April 2, 2020.

2019, the highest increase in the past decade. ⁽¹¹⁾ The confinement of workers in the military industry is inconceivable for all imperialist powers. In France, where a few factories had been closed without prior notice, Defense Minister Florence Parly recalled that **"the activity of defense companies must continue"** at all costs. ⁽¹²⁾

While it is inevitable that the ongoing conflicts in different parts of the world (Libya, Syria, Turkey, Yemen, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Mindanao (Philippines), Somalia, Sahel...) will continue, the UN Secretary, António Guterres, launched a vibrant appeal to put an end to the many armed conflicts around the world, in the name of the struggle against a *"common enemy: the Covid-19"*. Such an appeal, based on an online petition that aims to gather millions of signatures, is a decoy for a reality that is explosive: millions of war refugees, parked in makeshift camps, living in the worst sanitary and food conditions, and susceptible to become the ideal prey of all present and future pandemics.

Such speeches recall the political bankruptcy of the *League of Nations*, the forerunner of the UN, which always appealed to peaceful goodwill and proclaimed the outlawing of war, during the Briand-Kellogg Pact signed on August 27, 1928, in a salon on the Quai d'Orsay, a few months before the Great Depression that would lead to the Second World War.

All these fine speeches from the tribune, all these beautiful online petitions are nothing but wind. The cruel reality is there: wars to which are added various repressions have caused more than 200,000 deaths in 2019.

The capitalists and their political staff will never close the store of war – whether external or internal to a country – in order to submit to a "world truce", because of pandemic X or Y. It is an absolute evidence that only ideologues at the behest of the system or naive pacifists deny with the last ounce of energy.

Pandemic or not, the great capitalist powers continue their arms race and their domination of the oceans. In this month of April 2020, China's second aircraft carrier entered Taiwan's waters. Capitalist China will have 6 in 2030. This is far from being

equal to the 11 U.S. aircraft carriers (plus the other two under construction).

Criminal reformist illusions about the possibility of "curbing capitalism".

In the face of a catastrophic ecological situation, in the face of crashes of all kinds, of the galloping dehumanization of a society based on profit alone, some intellectuals preach without ever sowing the seeds for a return to the good old social-democratic solutions of compromise and consensus between classes, based on law and multilateralism. In short, it is a matter of leaving it up to the Caesars who dominate the world, in the absence of God, by making them adhere to new commandments or categorical imperatives: *"You will save the planet that you exploit in the sole interest of your capital"*, *"You will humanize the society that you rule with an iron fist through the grace of your army and your police."*

One can read, for example, in a book published by French academic Michel Beaud, professor emeritus, that it is incongruous to *"break with capitalism"*. On the contrary, it is a question of :

"Stemming capitalism, notably by undertaking long-term legislative work to reduce (sic), and if possible stop (resic), human and environmental devastation; opening up new avenues by supporting, strengthening and multiplying ecological and social actions aimed at keeping our planet alive (sic) and making our societies more humane (resic)." ⁽¹³⁾

Frédérique Audouin-Rouzeau, *Fred Vargas* in her thriller author's clothing, delivered a study to the general public (2009) based on the best scientific sources, sounding the alarm on *"humanity in peril"*, centered on the destruction of nature and the entire ecosystem. Unfortunately, the author advocates not a radical social revolution at the global level, led by those who create wealth, but a kind of *"third revolution"*, populist (*"We the people"*), ecological certainly, but electoral (*"vote well"*) and Thorézian ⁽¹⁴⁾ (*"Roll*

11) AFP telegram in *Les Échos*, February 14, 2020.

12) *Les Échos*, March 31, 2020: «Coronavirus, retour au travail pour les industriels de la défense» [*"Coronavirus, those in the defense industry go back to work"*].

13) Michel Beaud, *Face au pire des mondes* (Ed. Seuil, 2011, p. 224) [*"In face of the worst of worlds"*]. The cover page calls for a *"spirit of resistance"*, which would be understood by *"authentically progressive governments"*.

14) Editor's note: this is referring to Maurice Thorez, leader of the Stalinist PCF, topping the CGT's *"the battle of production"* campaign in a public speech he made as a postwar minister to discontented miners in the north of France, a few months after the German capitulation: *"Today, the highest form of class duty, of the duty of the French, is to produce. Yesterday, sabotage was our weapon, the armed action against the enemy, today production is the*

up your sleeves”), totally ubuesque in times of pandemics and the collapse of the capitalist system:

“Let’s roll up our sleeves and work, let’s act, let’s remain vigilant and vote, and vote well for conscious, active, sincere leaders. And let’s be hundreds of millions to do it, quickly, very quickly, which will lead to hundreds more in a row. That is what the Third Revolution is all about. We will succeed.” ⁽¹⁵⁾

There is nothing to respond to this Himalayan electoral nonsense, which leaves us speechless (literally and figuratively). The paths of the counterrevolutions of the past (fascism, Nazism, dictatorships of caudillos of the two worlds), which still proclaim themselves “third revolution”, that of the “people” above the classes, are paved with the bones of these champions of petitions, of peaceful marches against the system, of political lobbying, of calls to boycott “fascist products”, of the electoral cuisine of the past with a radical-socialist sauce.

To overthrow a world capital system, relying on powerful capitalist classes and middle classes that have gorged themselves with substantial crumbs (200 million in China!), it will take much more than good will (electoral or otherwise).

At present, the confinement at home is far from total. It can only be partial for sectors deemed strategic by capital (manufacturing of weapons, ships, submarine turbines, etc.; food, transportation, public construction).

Once the hour of “de-confinement” has come, that of the exit from the deleterious antiviral cocoon, all workers, women and men, will find themselves

weapon to thwart the plans of the reaction.” (July 21, 1945)

See [Wikipedia \(French\)](#).

- 15) Fred Vargas, *L’Humanité en péril. Virens de bord, toute!* (Ed. Flammarion, May 2019, p. 223) [“Humanity in peril. Let’s turn about completely!”].

faced with the merciless reality. The danger that most threatens them will not be this or that virus, but capital itself. Having shown its total incapacity to anticipate the crisis, and therefore to manage it, the system will make those without whom it cannot reap its profits foot the bill: the proletarians. Exponential unemployment, reduction of the real wage, lowering of all the burdens on capital, higher taxes, shortages, reinforced militarization of society, such will be the return to “normality” in the worst possible capitalist world.

After having trumpeted everywhere in its little trumpets: **“We are on the march”** towards more ‘progress’ (= less burdens, more **“crazy money”** for the richest), the capitalist class can hammer: **“We are at war.”** Yes, it is indeed a war against all those who will rebel, challenge the existing economic and social order, first of all against all those who live from their work in the midst of sweat and tears and no longer want to suffer the fear of tomorrow.

The ball is now in the proletariat’s court. It is up to the latter to take up the glove that the capitalist class has impudently thrown in its face!

Will the year 2020 be the year of the second (and ultimate) Great Depression of capitalism, after that of 1929, heralding an ‘October 1917’ at the world level?

Philippe Bourrinet, April 18, 2020 (revision: May 1, 2020)

Source: *Pantopolis*, June 27, 2020, [Capitalisme, guerres, pandémie : La crise mortelle de 2020 ?](#) (Conclusion) Paris, May 2020, *Éditions moto proprio*. (ISBN: 9-791094-518151. Pdf edition, 42 p. A4.)

The pamphlet can be freely downloaded from the *Pantopolis* blog. Prints: €3,- per copy. The publisher can be contacted by e-mail: pol.krabek@protonmail.com.

Translation and annotation supplements by H.C., September 2020.

Capitalism, Wars and Epidemics - The mortal crisis of 2020? (May 2020)

Part I: §1 Commodity, Commerce and Confinement;

§2 The Precedent of the Spanish Flu: Defense Secrets, Brainwashing and War Economy to better cut up the Cannon Fodder. ([Online: March 31, 2020](#), ‘AFRD’ [Vol.4#2 \(April – June 2020\)](#) p.9 ff.)

Part II: §3 Capitalism, Imperialism and the War of Microbes.

([Online: July 4, 2020](#), ‘AFRD’ [Vol.4#3 \(July – September 2020\)](#) p.19 ff.)

Part III: §4 The destruction of health systems and of the ecosystem. The commodification of the world.

([Online publication started: September 24, 2020](#))

With Special Attention

Discussion: How to evaluate capitalism's tendencies towards war?

At the hand of current belligerent events at the international scene implying *Turkey*, and on the war in *Libya* in particular, Anibal (*Forum 'Inter-Rev'*) has advanced a critique of the method employed by '*Communia*' (the English language blog of the group 'Emancipación'). We bring it to the attention of our readers, in order to point out the underlying question: how to appreciate and evaluate capitalism's tendency towards war in the present regional conflicts and confrontations?

In a second contribution we present the appreciation by a Russian author of the current flaring up of the smothering conflict over *Nagorno-Karabakh* in the Caucasus, bringing the regional antagonism of Turkey and Russia to the fore, and that may (in part) reply to a concern expressed by Anibal.

For a general view on the development of inter-imperialist rivalries and their possible outcome in terms of the formation of new imperialist blocks in a dynamic towards a generalization of war, we refer our readers to the summary article on *A Free Retriever's Digest's* blog: "[Impending war Iran-USA, towards a third world war?](#)" (Fredo Corvo, 10 January 2020).

Obfuscated distortion, distorted obfuscation.

The example of '*Emancipación*' (*Communia*)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg traveled to Ankara yesterday to remember that "dialogue" is the only solution to the accumulated tensions. ⁽¹⁾ "The future of Libya is at stake", says Guterres and calls on States to unite to promote peace. ⁽²⁾ September 18, 2020: The UN applauds Libya's prime minister of unity for his "brave decision" to announce intention to resign:

«The announcement of the president (of the Presidential Council) comes at a decisive turning point in the prolonged crisis, when it is clear that the situation is no longer sustainable," said the UN special envoy for the African country, Stephanie Williams, through a statement. Thus, he stressed that "it is now incumbent on the Libyan parties to fully assume their responsibilities to the Libyan people, make historic decisions and accept mutual concessions for the good of their country ...» ⁽³⁾

Militaristic and social realities, trends, obfuscation in distortion. The example of '*Emancipación*' (*Communia*)

The emergence of conflicts between states and capitalist interests is something recurrent: it constitutes a reality reproduced on numerous occasions, a reality

that has its roots in the essential determinations of the capitalist mode of production, which generate competition and constant contrast. The possibility of these rising to the level of military tensions and from there to open wars of various kinds is there. Local, regional, world wars, all that we have seen and will still be seeing.

Those who believe that the cycle is simple, and that a global war can emerge from any such conflict, are wrong. On various occasions the most powerful forces of capital, such as NATO in this case, act to limit and stop the escalation.

Each conflict must be embedded in its particular conditions and these in the general conditions. To do so, knowing the correlation of forces and the dynamics of the tendencies of the various capitalist forces is essential.

To believe that we are in an irreversible and fatal decline of capitalism, and that therefore the cycle reads "conflict – political crisis – military crisis", and that the very advanced general breakdown leads to a prompt irruption of an international generalization of warmongering *is not just taking up an inadequate and fallacious approach and framework, and a methodological failure, but ultimately leads to political forecasts that are systematically wrong and to orientations that are confused*. To this adds that any popular or workers' movement is understood as the fatal trigger for a class force capable of reversing capitalist tendencies, of stopping and transforming them ...

- 1) *Atalayar*, October 6: [Stoltenberg viaja a Grecia y Turquía para calmar la tensión del Mediterráneo oriental](#)
- 2) UN Secretary General, October 5, 2020: [Secretary-General, at High-Level Event on Libya, Urges Parties to Seize "Rare" Opportunity for Advancing Peace, Resolving Crisis](#)
- 3) Read more: *Europa Press*, September 18, 2020: [La ONU aplaude la "valiente decisión" del primer ministro de unidad de Libia de anunciar su intención de dimitir](#)

With the group '*Emancipación*' (Communia) we currently have a very marked case in this regard. At present it tells us about the evident deployment of Turkish troops outside its territory (in Libya, Sudan, Nagorno-Karabakh, etc). On the temporary stoppage of the war in *Libya*, with the development of negotiations, '*Emancipación*' expresses itself as follows:

"But it was finally the collapse of the strategy of both sides in the face of the mobilizations on both sides of the Libyan front line, which decided to spur the reopening of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh by supporting Azerbaijan." ⁽⁴⁾

But is there evidence that the popular protest movement in Libya has grown, spread and strengthened, has expanded its demands? Obviously we see none of this. The attempts have been reduced, facing considerable direct and indirect repression. The unrest is still there, and new outbreaks may occur, obviously, but the truth is that there has been no growth in protests, nor has the proletarian class emerged on its class terrain of struggle. ⁽⁵⁾

The dismissal of Fayed Serraj has not been produced by these popular protests, but is due to the tensions in this bourgeois faction of Libya, which is permeated by various conflicts fueled by the warmongering escalation of the Haftar faction and the latter's capture and subsequent control of important hydrocarbon extraction areas ... which in turn was replied to by an offensive by the Serraj faction, notoriously supported by Turkey. Subsequently Serraj has returned and Turkey has renewed its support:

"Erdogan reaffirms his support for the Libyan people in a meeting with Serraj in Istanbul (Madrid, October 5, *Europa Press*): *The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on Monday reaffirmed his support for the people of Libya after a meeting with the*

Prime Minister of the Libyan Unity Government, Fayed Serraj, in the Turkish city of Istanbul." ⁽⁶⁾

However amid of so many tensions between Libyan bourgeois factions and so many foreign imperialist influences, to this day the negotiations between the two capitalist camps continue in Morocco and reach the beginning of agreements, especially about their common and urgent interests. '*Emancipación*' goes against the facts, incapable of interpreting them properly. The imperialism of Turkish capital presents a strategy and a leadership that does not fit with these hopes of '*Emancipación*'. The former presses, stops the pressure, reorients it, does it politically, economically and militarily. Its strength is not stopped by limited popular struggles in one or several areas in which they intervene. There are sufficient foundations that we will understand if we grasp the essence of the history of long-term confrontations, aspirations, open struggles, coalitions and opportunistic conjunctural alliances (Israel, the Muslim Brotherhoods, Russia, Germany, EU, USA, Qatar...), the nationalist resentments and aspirations of the past and present, the arms capabilities, business, the geo-strategic constraints and movements.

The brushstrokes of lucidity that ['*Emancipación*'] shows at times do not allow it to create a coherent picture. Its interpretive framework, its workerist and decadentist, ultra-left methodology does not allow this.

Anibal, October 7, 2020.

Source: Forum Inter-Rev, October 13, 2020: [Distorsión ofuscada, ofuscación distorsionada. El ejemplo de Emancipación \(Communia\)](#)

The English translation has been reviewed; the annotations have been slightly adapted by H.C., October 17, 2020. Proofread by the author.

4) '*Communia*', October 3, 2020: [Who is who in the Nagorno-Karabakh war?](#)

5) *Vistazo* (EFE), September 27, 2020: [Vivir diez años en Trípoli condenados a la oscuridad](#)

6) Read more in *Europa Press*, October 5, 2020: [Erdogan reafirma su apoyo al pueblo libio en un encuentro con Serraj en Estambul](#)

Turkey at the center of local wars

The following article shows how Turkey is at the center of local wars, balancing forces between Moscow and NATO. It can contribute to an understanding of how *"The imperialism of Turkish capital presents a strategy and leadership that (...) presses, stops the pressure, reorients it, does it politically, economically and militarily. Its strength is not stopped by limited popular struggles in one or several areas in which they intervene. There are sufficient foundations that we will understand if we grasp the essence of the history of long-term confrontations, aspirations, open struggles, coalitions and opportunistic conjunctural alliances (Israel, The Muslim Brotherhoods, Russia, Germany, EU, USA, Qatar ...), the nationalist resentments and aspirations of the past and present, the arms capabilities, business, the geo-strategic constraints and movements."* (Anibal in the foregoing article)

The victory of Azerbaijani-Turkish forces in the second Karabakh war will lead to a serious strengthening of Turkey

The two leaders of the powers understand each other very well, for they rule with similar methods. They conclude mutually beneficial economic deals and agree on the division of zones of influence in several countries. Both oppose the attempts of the Western bloc to control the planet – here their interests are similar. Finally, both countries take revenge for the humiliation of the past, while rising from their knees – expanding their military and political influence, or, as they once said, living space. But here's the trouble – their areas of interest overlap.

The victory of Azerbaijani-Turkish forces in the second Karabakh war will lead to the serious strengthening of Turkey in the South Caucasus. It stands behind Azerbaijan and it wins, while Russia stands behind Armenia and Armenia loses. But what does it mean? It means that Georgia will drift after Azerbaijan towards Turkey.

It is already happening. Both because there are Abkhazia and South Ossetia occupied by the Russian army and pro-Russian separatists, and because Turkey comes to Georgia with its investments and builds enterprises there. Turkey and Azerbaijan have become Georgia's biggest trading partners, along with Russia.

Georgia is blocking military supplies to Armenia, which is Russia's ally, but Georgia will become increasingly close to Turkey, taking it as an instrument against Russia and the Russian-controlled separatists. That will happen more quickly than today, as Turkey's role has changed and it has a chance to dominate the South Caucasus. And if the anti-Russian parties win the elections in Georgia, the process will be even more intense.

In fact, every accurate shot the Azerbaijani-Turkish forces fired at the Armenian army is a shot at the Russian state. The Kremlin seems to have decided that it is so important for them to punish Armenia for the velvet revolution and the appointment of pro-American officials in the government that so far they have ignored the geopolitical factor.

It is true that Turkish analysts are now saying that Russia will soon interfere in the conflict, that it still cannot stand aside for a long time and allow Armenia to be torn apart – precisely for the above reasons. But even if it does, it will change little in the equation.

If Russia does not intervene, it will show that Turkey is more powerful in the South Caucasus because Russia's ally can be beaten with impunity. If it intervenes and tries to stop Azerbaijan's advance, it may lead to a sharp complication of relations with it and the country's full transition to the Turkish hand. Moreover, if by then the Azerbaijani-Turkish forces have taken only a small part of Armenia's occupied districts, it will still look like a success, albeit partial, as an argument for Georgia's pro-Turkish orientation.

Moscow clearly does not want to get involved in the Karabakh story. It does not like Pashinyan; it does not want to enter into another conflict with Turkey because of him. Besides, Nagorno-Karabakh and the 7 districts occupied by Armenia are the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan, and although the events in Ukraine and the Middle East show time after time that international law means little to the powers today, it is not in Russia's interest to increase the risks and put itself under new sanctions.

Moscow may answer Ankara asymmetrically – in Syria and Libya. In recent days, there have been signs of activity by Assad and his army in the Idlib area, and Haftar and his fighters from the LNA (Libyan National Army) in Libya. There, actions against Turkish and pro-Turkish forces are becoming more likely. However, Turkish Bairaktarians will meet them near Tripoli and near Idlib, and the armies, formed with Russian support, have so far been unable to do anything about it, as the 2020 military campaigns in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh have shown.

The confrontation between Russia and Turkey is taking place today on three fronts. And most importantly, there are more and more centers of confrontation. Since 2015, the front was Syria alone, in 2020 Libya was added, and now the South Caucasus. What will happen tomorrow? Georgia?

Michael Meer, October 9, 2020.

Source: Left-dis blog, October 9, 2020: [Turkey at the center of local wars](#)

Translated from Russian: [Победа азербайджано-турецких сил во второй карабахской войне приведет к серьезному усилению Турции](#) with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](#) (free version)

The Tormented Land of the Cedars → Continued from page 36.

Hezbollah, the party of God

Let us draw a brief profile, without going into details – as it goes beyond what we set out here – of the Lebanese Shiite movement, whose main fault, in the eyes of the Western powers (in this case the USA), is to be an ally of Syria and Iran.

Hezbollah (*"the party of God"*), born after the Israeli invasion of 1982, grew up over the years under Iran's protective wing. It soon became the protagonist of a double attack against the international peacekeeping force in Beirut. The transition from military militia to Shiite Islamist party took place thanks to the political vacuum left by the more traditional parties, and this has allowed it in the 2005 legislative elections to win 14 seats in parliament, and in time to constitute a State within the State.

Before the birth of *"the party of God"*, the Shiite community in Lebanon, in the early twentieth Century, was composed of sharecroppers and laborers subject to the power of the landowners (*zu'ama*) in a real feudal system, where high-ranking Shiite families acted as intermediaries between the popular masses and the State, advocating for themselves the role of guarantor, however, being de facto holders of privileges and power.

Caught in a stranglehold between exploitation by the powerful landowners and abandonment by the state apparatus, most of the Lebanese Shiites were forced to leave the countryside, to emigrate to the suburbs of Beirut, ⁽¹⁾ constituting a nascent form of an urban sub-proletariat. This would cause a form of *"empathy"* to spread between the Lebanese Shiites and the Palestinian refugees, united by the perception of themselves as *"oppressed peoples"*.

It is not by chance that personalities such as Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah and Muhammad Mehdi Shams el-Din, fundamental reference points of the future *"party of God"*, and Abbas al-Mousawi, the future first Secretary General of Hezbollah, come from these areas.

"The party of God", strongly rooted as a military militia after the Israeli invasion in 1982, as we have seen, turned into an Islamist party, finding an im-

portant inspiration in Ruhollāh Mostafāvi Mōsavi Khomeinī, the founder of the Islamic State. It is the latter who, in open contrast with the most conservative fringe of the Shiite world, elaborated an ideology and a doctrine that, in the name of war, faith and martyrdom, had characterized the *"Islamic revolution"* of February 1979. This would be the inspiring ideology of Hezbollah, which with the *"Open Letter to the oppressed in Lebanon and the world"*, written in 1985, made its political profile explicit, in the name of the establishment of an Islamist government in Lebanon.

An unstable area

In the meantime, this area of the Mediterranean had become increasingly unstable. Already in the spring of 2002 rumors of a probable American attack in Iraq were circulating. In the night from 19 to 20 March 2003 the American bombers began the area raids in Baghdad, on April 9 Saddam Hussein's regime fell.

To restore the centrality of the dollar was and is of primary importance to the American empire. With a massive military intervention in the Middle East, the U.S.A. secured an uncontested war presence and a constant control of the area, either directly or by proxy. ⁽²⁾ Subsequently, the Arab Spring, the Caliphate, the American invasions, the Russian and Turkish intervention, and most recently the air raids by Israeli jets, have inevitably caused *the massacre of unarmed populations*, the flight of millions of refugees and the collapse of the economy of entire countries.

The times are far away when the Lebanese pound, anchored to the U.S. dollar, could boast a good financial stability, when bank deposits exceeded three times the GDP, so much that Lebanon was called *the Switzerland of the Middle East*. ⁽³⁾

Today numerous interests that are indispensable to all [parties involved] converge in this area, from Iran that exploits the position of Lebanon and the alliance with Hezbollah as a strategic position in the Mediterranean, to the [United Arab] Emirates that hold important sums in the Lebanese banks.

1) Where later, because of the *Nakba*, a large wave of Palestinian refugees, expelled from the nascent Israeli state, will converge.

2) For a more in-depth and detailed reading, see G. Paolucci: *Oil and oil revenues have moved the Gulf War and shuffled the cards*, *Prometeo*, no. 1, V Series, 1991.

3) See R. Bongiorno: *Libano, corsa contro il tempo per salvare il paese dal collasso* (*"Lebanon, race*

After the *default* of March 9, 2020, declared by the government that has not repaid bonds for 1.2 billion dollars, expiring in March, and 1.3 billion, expiring between April and June, the *International Monetary Fund* is evaluating a credit line of 10 billion dollars, of course under conditions dictated by the international negotiators.

Terrain of imperialist clashes

It is no coincidence that the French President Macron was already on the spot the day after the disaster, protecting French economic and strategic interests, and pointing out that the financing will arrive, but monitored by the United States and the World Bank ⁽⁴⁾: after all, jackals smell blood immediately.

Lebanon, already on its knees because of a devastating economic crisis, with unemployment at 30% and inflation at 56%, a crisis that the pandemic has further worsened, with a political class inept and corrupt to the bone, and now deprived even of its main port, with resources reduced to a small amount of [electricity], has no other cards to play if it is not to sink definitively.

The opportunity was too favorable for the US–Israeli–Saudi super coalition not to take advantage of. In Lebanon the great game of the Middle East reopens, in order to reduce the uncomfortable Hezbollah, the Syrian and Iranian influence and the Turkish advance in the Mediterranean. The enormous explosion of August 4, 2020 has set in motion inter-imperialist dynamics that find one of the major points of

against time to save the country from collapse”), *Il Sole 24 ore*, August 6, 2020.

4) See the quotation from Antonio Negri below.

tensions in Lebanon, and that risk to extend the theaters of the permanent imperialist war even more.

The demonstrations in the days following the tragic event, in the absence of a political class point of reference that nails capitalism to its responsibilities, will most likely have a political facade as their epilogue, with the usual ballet of a government of national unity, with the priority of getting the country out of this *impasse*, and taking due account of the indications of international institutions. The script of a film already seen, in which, like in Tomasi di Lampedusa’s *“The Leopard”*, “everything is changed” so that nothing [really] changes. Meanwhile, as the **World Food Program** correspondent explained a few days ago, after seeing the blown up silos: “Lebanon has bread and flour for two and a half weeks. We’re sending ships, but there could be problems...” ⁽⁵⁾; all in all, in Lebanon we could go back to the war for bread.

This is the only future that capitalism can offer us: hunger and permanent imperialist war. It is the task of the small revolutionary vanguard to point the way forward for the revolution, in order to put an end to the barbarity of capitalism once and for all.

Gaetano Fontana (I.O.D.), August 19, 2020

Source: [Il martoriato paese dei cedri](#)

Translation: H.C., October 2, 2020.

5) V. Nigro, **The tycoon deputy: ‘Lebanon destroyed by bankers and politicians’**, *La Repubblica*, August 12, 2020.

As Antonio Negri wrote: “There is obviously the traditional role of the former colonial power France, the task that Paris took on as guarantor of international aid, the French support for the Hariri family tied hand and foot to Saudi Arabia. In addition, France wants its slice of the cake of civilian but also military supplies to strengthen the bloodless Lebanese army to oppose the Shiite militia. But there is also something else, the strategic match in the Mediterranean and the creation of a new anti-Turkish alliance. Lebanon is also part of this picture. France clashes with Ankara in Libya, where it has so far supported General Haftar, has an open dispute – as does Italy – for the exploitation of offshore energy resources in the Aegean. Erdogan is therefore a rival against which to create alternative alliances. Not only Erdogan is also the great protector of the Muslim Brotherhood, detested by Saudi Arabia with which France has huge war business. Macron thus sponsors an axis composed of Greece, Egypt, Cyprus and Israel which also includes the construction of the EastMed gas pipeline to constitute a block of interests of the anti-Ankara front. Lebanon is part of the “French” system and it is no coincidence that Beirut has entrusted offshore oil and gas exploration to a consortium led by the French Total with ENI and Russian Novatek. The rescue plan for Lebanon, before the explosion at the port, was estimated at 10 – 15 billion dollars, today it is much more. Even a child who is too rich to leave it to Hezbollah and their Iranian allies understands this: this is why the “commissioner” Macron arrived in Beirut.” (Source: A. Negri, **The “commissioner” Macron in Lebanon tries to dictate the rules**, *Il Manifesto*, August 7, 2020).

The Tormented Land of the Cedars

G. Fontana (I.O.D.) on the Beirut explosion of August 4

The huge explosion that destroyed the port of Beirut and caused hundreds of victims is only one of the last episodes of the permanent imperialist war. A war fueled by the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, which has in fact turned the cedar country into a theater of death.



The 'Ainfijar', the explosion

August 4, 2020 will remain etched in the memory of the Lebanese people as the day of the *"Ainfijar!"*, the explosion. The explosion involved a warehouse where 2750 tons of ammonium nitrate were stored and seized in 2014. The explosion was huge, it has devastated Beirut with a force of about a tenth of the first atomic bomb, someone has even called this event the *"Lebanese Ground Zero"*.

Diverse hypotheses open up before the investigators, from the neglect for the custody of ammonium nitrate to the attack by terrorist cells, to the Israeli military mission against Hezbollah (the area of the port is under the control of the *"Party of God"*). The presence of such a significant amount of ammonium nitrate in that area already raises more than one question.

Let us briefly reconstruct the story. The ship *MV Rhosus*, flying the Moldavian flag, came from the port of Batumi, in the Black Sea, in September 2013; after two months of navigation, it arrived at the port of Beirut asking to dock. The ship, destined to the *"Fabrica de Explosivos de Moçambique"*, with all its cargo of death remained moored in the port of Beirut, officially because the owner did not have the money to pay for the passage of the Suez Canal. The Lebanese judiciary, in August 2014, freed the crew and seized the ship with all the cargo, which was crammed in hangar 12 of the port. The shipowner's version left many doubts and many perplexities, also because the Mozambican port, as later confirmed by the Minister of Transport, had never been notified of the arrival of the cargo.

That there was only ammonium nitrate in that area of Beirut raises some doubt with *Danilo Coppe*, one of the greatest Italian experts in explosives, who in the summer of 2019 directed the works for the demolition of the *Morandi bridge* in Genoa in view of the reconstruction. In an interview he made the following statement: *"Ammonium nitrate generates a yellow cloud when it detonates. Instead, from the videos of the explosion, in addition to the white sphere, which can be seen expanding, and is condensation of air on the seashore, you can clearly see a brick-orange column tending to bright red, typical of the participation of lithium. Which in the form of lithium metal is the propellant for military missiles. I think there were some armaments there."* (*Corriere della Sera*, August 5, 2020)

An area of imperialist tensions

But beyond the uneasy task of tracing the actual cause of the explosion, the relevant issue is that the Mediterranean is once again the center of international tensions.

A crossroads of different cultures, cradle of ancient civilizations, the land of cedars is known to the world for the devastating civil war that from 1975 to 1990, which saw the opposition of Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims, Shiites and Druze. In 1982, the American-French-Italian multinational force gave life to the *peacekeeping* operation *"Missione Italcon"*, officially with the task of defending the civilian population.

Subsequently, in 2006, the UN set up *"Operation Leonte"* (currently still operational) in order to implement the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, protagonists of the second Israeli-Lebanese war.

This troubled process saw another milestone in the 2011 Syrian war on Lebanese territory, with the support of the Hezbollah militia. And it is precisely Hezbollah, sadly back in the news these days, who is to be called into question as the main responsible of the Lebanese economic disaster, and who – according to the Saudi newspaper *Arabnews* – will probably be blamed for what happened in these days.

→Continued on page 34.