

# Platform

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The World Anti-imperialist Platform

A stylized illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt, holding a large, dark red flag aloft with her right arm. The background is a solid red color. The illustration is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page, partially overlapping the text area.



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# Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

## IX. Critique of imperialism

V.I. Lenin

January-June 1916

*(It is an extracted version from the "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism")*

By the critique of imperialism, in the broad sense of the term, we mean the attitude of the different classes of society towards imperialist policy in connection with their general ideology.

The enormous dimensions of finance capital concentrated in a few hands and creating an extraordinarily dense and widespread network of relationships and connections which subordinates not only the small and medium, but also the very small capitalists and small masters, on the one hand, and the increasingly intense struggle waged against other national state groups of financiers for the division of the world and domination over other countries, on the other hand, cause the propertied classes to go over entirely to the side of imperialism. "General" enthusiasm over the prospects of imperialism, furious defence of it and painting it in the brightest colours—such are the signs of the times. Imperialist ideology also penetrates the working class. No Chinese Wall separates it from the other classes. The leaders of the present-day, so-called, "Social-Democratic" Party of Germany are justly called "social-imperialists," that is, socialists in words and imperialists in deeds; but as early as 1902, Hobson noted the existence in Britain of "Fabian imperialists" who belonged to the opportunist Fabian Society.

Bourgeois scholars and publicists usually come out in defence of imperialism in a somewhat veiled form; they obscure its complete domination and its deep-going roots, strive to push specific and secondary details into the forefront and do their very best to distract attention from essentials by means of absolutely ridiculous schemes for "reform," such as police supervision of the trusts

or banks, etc. Cynical and frank imperialists who are bold enough to admit the absurdity of the idea of reforming the fundamental characteristics of imperialism are a rarer phenomenon.

Here is an example. The German imperialists attempt, in the magazine *Archives of World Economy*, to follow the national emancipation movements in the colonies, particularly, of course, in colonies other than those belonging to Germany. They note the unrest and the protest movements in India, the movement in Natal (South Africa), in the Dutch East Indies, etc. One of them, commenting on an English report of a conference held on June 28-30, 1910, of representatives of various subject nations and races, of peoples of Asia, Africa and Europe who are under foreign rule, writes as follows in appraising the speeches delivered at this conference: "We are told that we must fight imperialism; that the ruling states should recognise the right of subject peoples to independence; that an international tribunal should supervise the fulfilment of treaties concluded between the great powers and weak peoples. Further than the expression of these pious wishes they do not go. We see no trace of understanding of the fact that imperialism is inseparably bound up with capitalism in its present form and that, therefore [!!], an open struggle against imperialism would be hopeless, unless, perhaps, the fight were to be confined to protests against certain of its especially abhorrent excesses."<sup>1)</sup> Since the reform of the basis of imperialism is a deception, a "pious wish", since the bourgeois representatives of the oppressed nations go no "further" forward, the bourgeois representative of an oppressing nation goes "further" backward, to servility towards imperialism under cover of the claim to be "scientific." That is

also "logic"!

The questions as to whether it is possible to reform the basis of imperialism, whether to go forward to the further intensification and deepening of the antagonisms which it engenders, or backward, towards allaying these antagonisms, are fundamental questions in the critique of imperialism. Since the specific political features of imperialism are reaction everywhere and increased national oppression due to the oppression of the financial oligarchy and the elimination of free competition, a petty-bourgeois-democratic opposition to imperialism arose at the beginning of the twentieth century in nearly all imperialist countries. Kautsky not only did not trouble to oppose, was not only unable to oppose this petty-bourgeois reformist opposition, which is really reactionary in its economic basis, but became merged with it in practice, and this is precisely where Kautsky and the broad international Kautskian trend deserted Marxism.

In the United States, the imperialist war waged against Spain in 1898 stirred up the opposition of the "anti-imperialists," the last of the Mohicans of bourgeois democracy who declared this war to be "criminal," regarded the annexation of foreign territories as a violation of the Constitution, declared that the treatment of Aguinaldo, leader of the Filipinos (the Americans promised him the independence of his country, but later landed troops and annexed it), was "jingo treachery", and quoted the words of Lincoln: "When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs others, it is no longer self-government; it is despotism."<sup>2)</sup> But as long as all this criticism shrank from recognising the inseverable bond between imperialism and the trusts, and, therefore, between imperialism and the foundations of capitalism, while it shrank from joining the forces engendered by large-scale capitalism and its development, it remained a "pious wish".

This is also the main attitude taken by Hobson in his critique of imperialism. Hobson anticipated

Kautsky in protesting against the "inevitability of imperialism" argument, and in urging the necessity of "increasing the consuming capacity" of the people (under capitalism!). The petty-bourgeois point of view in the critique of imperialism, the omnipotence of the banks, the financial oligarchy, etc., is adopted by the authors I have often quoted, such as Agahd, A. Lansburgh, L. Eschwege, and among the French writers Victor Berard, author of a superficial book entitled *England and Imperialism* which appeared in 1900. All these authors, who make no claim to be Marxists, contrast imperialism with free competition and democracy, condemn the Baghdad railway scheme, which is leading to conflicts and war, utter "pious wishes" for peace, etc. This applies also to the compiler of international stock and share issue statistics, A. Neymarck, who, after calculating the thousands of millions of francs representing "international" securities, exclaimed in 1912: "Is it possible to believe that peace may be disturbed... that, in the face of these enormous figures, anyone would risk starting a war?"

Such simple-mindedness on the part of the bourgeois economists is not surprising; moreover, it is in their interest to pretend to be so naive and to talk "seriously" about peace under imperialism. But what remains of Kautsky's Marxism, when, in 1914, 1915 and 1916, he takes up the same bourgeois-reformist point of view and affirms that "everybody is agreed" (imperialists, pseudo-socialists and social-pacifists) on the matter of peace? Instead of an analysis of imperialism and an exposure of the depths of its contradictions, we have nothing but a reformist "pious wish" to wave them aside, to evade them.

Here is a sample of Kautsky's economic criticism of imperialism. He takes the statistics of the British export and import trade with Egypt for 1872 and 1912; it seems that this export and import trade has grown more slowly than British foreign trade as a whole. From this Kautsky concludes that "we have no reason to suppose that without military occupation the growth of British trade with Egypt would have been less, simply as a result of the

mere operation of economic factors." "The urge of capital to expand... can be best promoted, not by the violent methods of imperialism, but by peaceful democracy."

This argument of Kautsky's, which is repeated in every key by his Russian armour-bearer (and Russian shielder of the social-chauvinists), Mr. Spectator, constitutes the basis of Kautskian critique of imperialism, and that is why we must deal with it in greater detail. We will begin with a quotation from Hilferding, whose conclusions Kautsky on many occasions, and notably in April 1915, has declared to have been "unanimously adopted by all socialist theoreticians."

"It is not the business of the proletariat," writes Hilferding "to contrast the more progressive capitalist policy with that of the now bygone era of free trade and of hostility towards the state. The reply of the proletariat to the economic policy of finance capital, to imperialism, cannot be free trade, but socialism. The aim of proletarian policy cannot today be the ideal of restoring free competition—which has now become a reactionary ideal—but the complete elimination of competition by the abolition of capitalism."<sup>3</sup>

Kautsky broke with Marxism by advocating in the epoch of finance capital a "reactionary ideal," "peaceful democracy," "the mere operation of economic factors," for objectively this ideal drags us back from monopoly to non-monopoly capitalism, and is a reformist swindle.

Trade with Egypt (or with any other colony or semi-colony) "would have grown more" without military occupation, without imperialism, and without finance capital. What does this mean? That capitalism would have developed more rapidly if free competition had not been restricted by monopolies in general, or by the "connections," yoke (i.e., also the monopoly) of finance capital, or by the monopolist possession of colonies by certain countries?

Kautsky's argument can have no other meaning; and this "meaning" is meaningless. Let us assume that free competition, without any sort of

monopoly, would have developed capitalism and trade more rapidly. But the more rapidly trade and capitalism develop, the greater is the concentration of production and capital which gives rise to monopoly. And monopolies have already arisen—precisely out of free competition! Even if monopolies have now begun to retard progress, it is not an argument in favour of free competition, which has become impossible after it has given rise to monopoly.

Whichever way one turns Kautsky's argument, one will find nothing in it except reaction and bourgeois reformism.

Even if we correct this argument and say, as Spectator says, that the trade of the colonies with Britain is now developing more slowly than their trade with other countries, it does not save Kautsky; for it is also monopoly, also imperialism that is beating Great Britain, only it is the monopoly and imperialism of another country (America, Germany). It is known that the cartels have given rise to a new and peculiar form of protective tariffs, i.e., goods suitable for export are protected (Engels noted this in Vol. III of Capital). It is known, too, that the cartels add finance capital have a system peculiar to themselves, that of "exporting goods at cut-rate prices", or "dumping," as the English call it: within a given country the cartel sells its goods at high monopoly prices, but sells them abroad at a much lower price to undercut the competitor, to enlarge its own production to the utmost, etc. If Germany's trade with the British colonies is developing more rapidly than Great Britain's, it only proves that German imperialism is younger, stronger and better organised than British imperialism, is superior to it; but it by no means proves the "superiority" of free trade, for it is not a fight between free trade and protection and colonial dependence, but between two rival imperialisms, two monopolies, two groups of finance capital. The superiority of German imperialism over British imperialism is more potent than the wall of colonial frontiers or of protective tariffs: to use this as an "argument" in favour of free trade



and "peaceful democracy" is banal, it means forgetting the essential features and characteristics of imperialism, substituting petty-bourgeois reformism for Marxism.

It is interesting to note that even the bourgeois economist, A. Lansburgh, whose criticism of imperialism is as petty-bourgeois as Kautsky's, nevertheless got closer to a more scientific study of trade statistics. He did not compare one single country, chosen at random, and one single colony with the other countries; he examined the export trade of an imperialist country: (1) with countries which are financially dependent upon it, and borrow money from it; and (2) with countries which are financially independent. He obtained the following results:

EXPORT TRADE OF GERMANY (000,000 marks)			
To countries financially dependent on Germany	1889	1908	Per cent increase
Rumania	48.2	70.8	47
Portugal	19.0	32.8	73
Argentina	60.7	147.0	143
Brazil	48.7	84.5	73
Chile	28.3	64.0	114
<i>Total</i>	<i>234.8</i>	<i>451.5</i>	<i>92</i>
To countries financially independent of Germany			
Great Britain	651.8	997.4	53
France	210.2	437.9	108
Belgium	137.2	322.8	135
Switzerland	177.4	401.1	127
Australia	21.2	64.5	205
Dutch East Indies	8.8	40.7	363
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,206.6</i>	<i>2,264.4</i>	<i>87</i>

Lansburgh did not draw conclusions and therefore, strangely enough, failed to observe that if the figures prove anything at all, they prove that he is wrong, for the exports to countries financially dependent on Germany have grown more rapidly, if only slightly, than exports to the countries which are financially independent. (I emphasise the "if", for Lansburgh's figures are far from complete.)

Tracing the connection between exports and loans, Lansburgh writes:

"In 1890-91, a Rumanian loan was floated through the German banks, which had already in previous years made advances on this loan. It was used chiefly to purchase railway materials in Germany. In 1891, German exports to Rumania amounted to 55 million marks. The following year they dropped to 39.4 million marks and, with fluctuations, to 25.4 million in 1900. Only in very recent years have they regained the level of 1891, thanks to two new loans.

"German exports to Portugal rose, following the loans of 1888- to 21,100,000 (1890); then, in the two following years, they dropped to 16,200,000 and 7,400,000, and regained their former level only in 1903.

"The figures of German trade with Argentina are still more striking. Loans were floated in 1888 and 1890; German exports to Argentina reached 60,700,000 marks (1889). Two years later they amounted to only 18,600,000 marks, less than one-third of the previous figure. It was not until 1901 that they regained and surpassed the level of 1889, and then only as a result of new loans floated by the state and by municipalities, with advances to build power stations, and with other credit operations.

"Exports to Chile, as a consequence of the loan of 1889, rose to 45,200,000 marks (in 1892), and a year later dropped to 22,500,000 marks. A new Chilean loan floated by the German banks in 1906 was followed by a rise of exports to 84,700,000 marks in 1907, only to fall again to 52,400,000 marks in 1908."<sup>4)</sup>

From these facts Lansburgh draws the amusing petty-bourgeois moral of how unstable and irregular export trade is when it is bound up with loans, how bad it is to invest capital abroad instead of "naturally" and "harmoniously" developing home industry, how "costly" are the millions in bakshish that Krupp has to pay in floating foreign loans, etc. But the facts tell us clearly: the increase in exports is connected with just these swindling tricks of finance capital, which is not concerned with bourgeois morality, but with skinning the ox

twice—first, it pockets the profits from the loan; then it pockets other profits from the same loan which the borrower uses to make purchases from Krupp, or to purchase railway material from the Steel Syndicate, etc.

I repeat that I do not by any means consider Lansburgh's figures to be perfect; but I had to quote them because they are more scientific than Kautsky's and Spectator's and because Lansburgh showed the correct way to approach the question. In discussing the significance of finance capital in regard to exports, etc., one must be able to single out the connection of exports especially and solely with the tricks of the financiers, especially and solely with the sale of goods by cartels, etc. Simply to compare colonies with non-colonies, one imperialism with another imperialism, one semi-colony or colony (Egypt) with all other countries, is to evade and to obscure the very essence of the question.

Kautsky's theoretical critique of imperialism has nothing in common with Marxism and serves only as a preamble to propaganda for peace and unity with the opportunists and the social-chauvinists, precisely for the reason that it evades and obscures the very profound and fundamental contradictions of imperialism: the contradictions between monopoly and free competition which exists side by side with it, between the gigantic "operations" (and gigantic profits) of finance capital and "honest" trade in the free market, the contradiction between cartels and trusts, on the one hand, and non-cartelised industry, on the other, etc.

The notorious theory of "ultra-imperialism," invented by Kautsky, is just as reactionary. Compare his arguments on this subject in 1915, with Hobson's arguments in 1902.

Kautsky: "... Cannot the present imperialist policy be supplanted by a new, ultra-imperialist policy, which will introduce the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital in place of the mutual rivalries of national finance capitals? Such a new phase of capitalism is at any rate conceivable. Can it be achieved? Sufficient

premises are still lacking to enable us to answer this question."<sup>5)</sup>

Hobson: "Christendom thus laid out in a few great federal empires, each with a retinue of uncivilised dependencies, seems to many the most legitimate development of present tendencies, and one which would offer the best hope of permanent peace on an assured basis of inter-imperialism."

Kautsky called ultra-imperialism or super-imperialism what Hobson, thirteen years earlier, described as inter-imperialism. Except for coining a new and clever catchword, replacing one Latin prefix by another, the only progress Kautsky has made in the sphere of "scientific" thought is that he gave out as Marxism what Hobson, in effect, described as the cant of English parsons. After the Anglo-Boer War it was quite natural for this highly honourable caste to exert their main efforts to console the British middle class and the workers who had lost many of their relatives on the battlefields of South Africa and who were obliged to pay higher taxes in order to guarantee still higher profits for the British financiers. And what better consolation could there be than the theory that imperialism is not so bad; that it stands close to inter- (or ultra-) imperialism, which can ensure permanent peace? No matter what the good intentions of the English parsons, or of sentimental Kautsky, may have been, the only objective, i.e., real, social significance of Kautsky's "theory" is this: it is a most reactionary method of consoling the masses with hopes of permanent peace being possible under capitalism, by distracting their attention from the sharp antagonisms and acute problems of the present times, and directing it towards illusory prospects of an imaginary "ultraimperialism" of the future. Deception of the masses—that is all there is in Kautsky's "Marxist" theory.

Indeed, it is enough to compare well-known and indisputable facts to become convinced of the utter falsity of the prospects which Kautsky tries to conjure up before the German workers (and the workers of all lands). Let us consider

India, Indo-China and China. It is known that these three colonial and semi-colonial countries, with a population of six to seven hundred million, are subjected to the exploitation of the finance capital of several imperialist powers: Great Britain, France, Japan, the U.S.A., etc. Let us assume that these imperialist countries form alliances against one another in order to protect or enlarge their possessions, their interests and their spheres of influence in these Asiatic states; these alliances will be "inter-imperialist", or "ultra-imperialist" alliances. Let us assume that all the imperialist countries conclude an alliance for the "peaceful" division of these parts of Asia; this alliance would be an alliance of "internationally united finance capital." There are actual examples of alliances of this kind in the history of the twentieth century—the attitude of the powers to China, for instance. We ask, is it "conceivable," assuming that the capitalist system remains intact—and this is precisely the assumption that Kautsky does make—that such alliances would be more than temporary, that they would eliminate friction, conflicts and struggle in every possible form?

The question has only to be presented clearly for any other than a negative answer to be impossible. This is because the only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interests, colonies, etc., is a calculation of the strength of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc. And the strength of these participants in the division does not change to an equal degree, for the even development of different undertakings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism. Half a century ago Germany was a miserable, insignificant country, if her capitalist strength is compared with that of the Britain of that time; Japan compared with Russia in the same way. Is it "conceivable" that in ten or twenty years' time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained unchanged? It is out of the question.

Therefore, in the realities of the capitalist system, and not in the banal philistine fantasies of English

parsons, or of the German "Marxist," Kautsky, "inter-imperialist" or "ultra-imperialist" alliances, no matter what form they may assume, whether of one imperialist coalition against another, or of a general alliance embracing all the imperialist powers, are inevitably nothing more than a "truce" in periods between wars. Peaceful alliances prepare the ground for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on one and the same basis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics. But in order to pacify the workers and reconcile them with the social-chauvinists who have deserted to the side of the bourgeoisie, over-wise Kautsky separates one link of a single chain from another, separates the present peaceful (and ultra-imperialist, nay, ultra-ultra-imperialist) alliance of all the powers for the "pacification" of China (remember the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion) from the non-peaceful conflict of tomorrow, which will prepare the ground for another "peaceful" general alliance for the partition, say, of Turkey, on the day after tomorrow, etc., etc. Instead of showing the living connection between periods of imperialist peace and periods of imperialist war, Kautsky presents the workers with a lifeless abstraction in order to reconcile them to their lifeless leaders.

An American writer, Hill, in his *A History of the Diplomacy in the International Development of Europe* refers in his preface to the following periods in the recent history of diplomacy: (1) the era of revolution; (2) the constitutional movement; (3) the present era of "commercial imperialism."<sup>6</sup> Another writer divides the history of Great Britain's "world policy" since 1870 into four periods: (1) the first Asiatic period (that of the struggle against Russia's advance in Central Asia towards India); (2) the African period (approximately 1885-1902): that of the struggle against France for the partition of Africa (the "Fashoda incident" of 1898 which brought her within a hair's breadth of war with France); (3) the second Asiatic period (alliance



with Japan against Russia); and (4) the "European" period, chiefly anti-German.<sup>7)</sup> "The political patrol clashes take place on the financial field," wrote the banker, Riesser, in 1905, in showing how French finance capital operating in Italy was preparing the way for a political alliance of these countries, and how a conflict was developing between Germany and Great Britain over Persia, between all the European capitalists over Chinese loans, etc. Behold, the living reality of peaceful "ultra-imperialist" alliances in their inseparable connection with ordinary imperialist conflicts!

Kautsky's obscuring of the deepest contradictions of imperialism, which inevitably boils down to painting imperialism in bright colours, leaves its traces in this writer's criticism of the political features of imperialism. Imperialism is the epoch of finance capital and of monopolies, which introduce everywhere the striving for domination, not for freedom. Whatever the political system, the result of these tendencies is everywhere reaction and an extreme intensification of antagonisms in this field. Particularly intensified become the yoke of national oppression and the striving for annexations, i.e., the violation of national independence (for annexation is nothing but the violation of the right of nations to self-determination). Hilferding rightly notes the connection between imperialism and the intensification of national oppression. "In the newly opened-up countries," he writes, "the capital imported into them intensifies antagonisms and excites against the intruders the constantly growing resistance of the peoples who are awakening to national consciousness; this resistance can easily develop into dangerous measures against foreign capital. The old social relations become completely revolutionised, the age-long agrarian isolation of 'nations without history' is destroyed and they are drawn into the capitalist whirlpool. Capitalism itself gradually provides the subjugated with the means and resources for their emancipation and they set out to achieve the goal which once seemed highest to the European nations: the creation of a united national state as a means to economic

and cultural freedom. This movement for national independence threatens European capital in its most valuable and most promising fields of exploitation, and European capital can maintain its domination only by continually increasing its military forces."<sup>8)</sup>

To this must be added that it is not only in newly opened-up countries, but also in the old, that imperialism is leading to annexation, to increased national oppression, and, consequently, also to increasing resistance. While objecting to the intensification of political reaction by imperialism, Kautsky leaves in the shade a question that has become particularly urgent, viz., the impossibility of unity with the opportunists in the epoch of imperialism. While objecting to annexations, he presents his objections in a form that is most acceptable and least offensive to the opportunists. He addresses himself to a German audience, yet he obscures the most topical and important point, for instance, the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany. In order to appraise this "mental aberration" of Kautsky's I shall take the following example. Let us suppose that a Japanese condemns the annexation of the Philippines by the Americans. The question is: will many believe that he does so because he has a horror of annexations as such, and not because he himself has a desire to annex the Philippines? And shall we not be constrained to admit that the "fight" the Japanese is waging against annexations can be regarded as being sincere and politically honest only if he fights against the annexation of Korea by Japan, and urges freedom for Korea to secede from Japan?

Kautsky's theoretical analysis of imperialism, as well as his economic and political critique of imperialism, are permeated through and through with a spirit, absolutely irreconcilable with Marxism, of obscuring and glossing over the fundamental contradictions of imperialism and with a striving to preserve at all costs the crumbling unity with opportunism in the European working-class movement.

## Notes

- 1) Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv, Bd. II, S. 193., V.I.Lenin
- 2) J. Patouillet, L'impérialisme américain, Dijon, 1904, p. 272., V.I.Lenin
- 3) Finance Capital, p. 567., V.I.Lenin
- 4) Die Bank, 1909, 2, S. 819 et seq., V.I.Lenin
- 5) Die Neue Zeit, April 30, 1915, S. 144. V.I.Lenin
- 6) David Jayne Hill, History of the Diplomacy in the International Development of Europe, Vol. I, p. X., V.I.Lenin
- 7) Schilder, op. cit., S. 178., V.I.Lenin
- 8) Finance Capital, p. 487., V.I.Lenin

# Lessons of 1914: Imperialism means war

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This article is based on the presentation made by Comrade Harpal Brar to an international seminar in Brussels to mark the centenary of the start of the first world war. It was later published in the November 2014 issue of Lalkar. Its increasing relevance today in consequence of the conflict in Ukraine has prompted us to republish this important analysis.

Whereas the 1914-18 war was an interimperialist industrial-scale slaughter for the redivision of the world between two imperialist coalitions, the conflict in Ukraine is neo-nazi Nato's proxy war, using Ukrainians as cannon fodder, against Russia, aimed at dismembering Russia, looting its vast resources and exploiting its highly-skilled, educated and cultured population.

The real socialists, such as the Bolsheviks, rightly denounced the first world war as imperialist and predatory on both sides, which the working classes were duty-bound to denounce and to use as the occasion to overthrow their own ruling classes, instead of joining them in the name of the 'defence of the Fatherland'.

The conflict in Ukraine, on the other hand, is an imperialist war on the part of Nato, while Russia is fighting an existential war for self-defence. Socialists, therefore, have a duty to side with Russia and work for the defeat of Nato.

However, there are quite a number of parties who call themselves socialist—even communist—that have described the Ukraine conflict as 'interimperialist'—some even going to the length of characterising it as 'imperialist' on Russia's part. Such disgraceful parties are beyond redemption and need to be exposed as the agents of neo-nazi Nato—as purveyors of imperialist ideology in the

working class.

There is an urgent need to bring home to the working class the knowledge that the analysis of the first world war cannot be mechanically transplanted onto the present situation in Ukraine. And also to help them understand that the defeat of Nato in Ukraine promises to advance the cause of the proletariat and oppressed people all over the world. Precisely for this reason, Russia must be supported in its just defensive war.

\* \* \* \* \*

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the first imperialist world war. This war was a momentous event which:

Created new nation states.

Turned the United States of America into a leading world power, replacing British imperialism as the premier imperialist predator.

Ushered in the October Revolution—heralding the era of proletarian revolution and the downfall of imperialism.

Through the Versailles treaty prepared the ground for the second world war, which in turn gave birth to a mighty socialist camp and accelerated the rising tide of national-liberation movements.

Sowed the seeds of all the troubles afflicting the present-day middle east.

## Chronology of events leading to the war

28 June 1914—A Serbian nationalist by the name of Gavrilo Princip assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian empire, Franz Ferdinand, during a visit to Sarajevo in Bosnia.

23 July 1914—The Austrian government, accusing

the Serbian government of complicity in the assassination, issued an ultimatum threatening war if the latter did not cooperate fully with its investigation and with the suppression of anti-Austrian agitation on Serbian territory.

28 July 1914—Finding the Serbian government's reply unsatisfactory, Austria ordered mobilisation for war against Serbia and opened fire on Belgrade.

30 July 1914—The Russian tsar ordered his army to mobilise in support of Serbia, motivated by imperialist expansionism and a desire to extinguish the fires of revolution at home.

01 August 1914—Germany, in support of Austria, declared war on Russia.

02 August 1914—The tsar declared war on Germany.

03 August 1914—Germany declared war on France, because Russian mobilisation threatened Germany and France was allied with Russia in the Triple Entente (an alliance between Britain, France and Russia).

04 August 1914 – Fearing that German domination of Europe would threaten the security of the British empire, Britain declared war on Germany.

Since Russian mobilisation had practically ranged Germany against the Triple Entente, Germany came up with an answer through the Schlieffen plan, which envisaged a six-week knock-out campaign against France through Belgium as a prelude to moving the bulk of German forces east to confront mighty Russia.

The above lays out the sequence of events that were used as a pretext for the war, but were not its real cause, which we shall deal with later on.

### **Mass slaughter**

The first world war was characterised by killing on an industrial scale. In four years of fighting, it claimed the lives of well over ten million men, with twice as many wounded. German losses in the war totalled 1.8 million dead, not counting the 750,000

civilians who died of hunger and starvation.

Britain lost nearly 900,000 soldiers; including the wounded, British casualties came to two million. By the end of the first year of the war, the French had suffered nearly a million casualties, the Germans 800,000, and 86,000 of the 120,000 British Expeditionary Force sent to France had been killed or wounded.

On 22 October 1914, 27,000 French soldiers met their death in just one day.

Individual battles from WW1, with their colossal loss of life, became seared into the memory of the European peoples.

The battles of Passchendaele (a million dead or wounded), Verdun (700,000 casualties), the Somme (in excess of a million casualties) and the Marne (half a million), have come to symbolise the industrialised slaughter of millions of people at the hands of the bloodthirsty system of imperialism, which twice plunged humanity in the 20th century into world wars, together claiming the lives of 100 million workers, with twice as many wounded, in order to decide which group of the imperialist banditry was to grab what share of the booty.

The scale of the savage butchery, only exceeded during the second world war, may be gauged by reference to the battle of the Somme, which began on 1 July 1916, and in which Britain suffered 60,000 casualties in a single day.

In 1917 alone, Italian casualties amounted to a third of a million. The French lost a quarter of their men in the very first month of the war.

### **Attempts to confuse the working class**

Bourgeois papers and media have been full of discussion about the centenary of the war—most of it useless, designed to confuse the working class and the oppressed peoples.

In Britain, the thrust of the media coverage has been to blame Germany for this mass slaughter on a gigantic scale and to portray Britain's role as

that of a 'defender of democracy' and sovereignty of nations, it being further stated that Britain went to war because she was outraged by the German violation of the neutrality and sovereignty of Belgium—forgetting of course to mention that 'plucky little Belgium' had then only recently slaughtered ten million Congolese in its very lucrative colony.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The first world war was an imperialist war fought by two imperialist coalitions. It was a war for domination—a predatory and imperialist war on both sides; a war in which the proletariat of the belligerent countries had no interest in defending their respective fatherlands.

It is impossible to avoid discussion, and controversy, on questions of war and peace. Not merely because these questions are of the highest theoretical and scientific significance, but also because war, devastation and the destruction of human life on a vast scale confront us at every turn.

Leaving aside the two world wars, which together claimed the lives of 100 million people, maimed many more and caused unprecedented material destruction on an unimaginable scale, imperialism has seen to it that the world has not witnessed literally a single year of peace since the end of the second world war in 1945.

Millions of people have been slaughtered in the imperialist wars led by US imperialism against the people of Korea, Indo-China, Congo, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya and Syria.

And now, as these lines are being written, US and EU imperialism are busy preparing the conditions for a war with Russia, through the destabilisation of Ukraine, with the sole aim of preserving, and extending, their domination over the entire region stretching from the middle east to the former eastern republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union—as well as a means of securing total world domination.

However, in all these discussions on the burning questions of war and peace, the most important thing that is usually forgotten, which receives insufficient attention, and which, therefore, causes so much futile controversy, is that "people forget the fundamental question of the class character of the war; why the war broke out; the classes that are waging it; the historical and historic-economic conditions that gave rise to it". (War and revolution, lecture by V.I. Lenin, 14 May 1917)

We find it necessary, therefore, to restate the Marxist-Leninist teachings on this question of exceptional importance, with the aim of ensuring that these teachings, and these alone, permeate the working class and the oppressed peoples in their struggles for proletarian revolution and national liberation through the overthrow of imperialism.

These teachings, fully corroborated by life, are as follows.

### **War—a continuation of policy**

First, according to Leninism, war is the continuation of politics by other (forcible) means.

This famous dictum of Clausewitz, one of the most profound writers on military questions, has always rightly been regarded by Marxists as "the theoretical foundation for their understanding of the meaning of every war". (Speech by V.I. Lenin to the eighth All-Russian conference of the RCP(B), 2 December 1919)

In order to evaluate a given war, and define one's attitude towards it, one must look at the class character of the war—i.e., at the classes waging the war, and the policy and aims pursued by those classes prior to the war—and not merely at who attacked first.

While the philistine is capable of justifying any war by the formula that "the enemy has attacked us", "the enemy has invaded my country", and by pleading the "defence of the fatherland", Marxism, with its refusal to stoop to the level of the philistine,



requires "an historical analysis of each war in order to determine whether or not that particular war can be considered progressive, whether it serves the interests of democracy and the proletariat and, in that case, is legitimate, just, etc.". (A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism, by V.I. Lenin, 1916)

Looking at any particular war in its historical perspective, Marxism says: "If the 'substance' of a war is, for example, the overthrow of alien oppression .., then such a war is progressive as far as the oppressed state or nation is concerned. If, however, the 'substance' of a war is redivision of colonies, division of booty, plunder of foreign lands .., then all talk of defending the fatherland is 'sheer deception of the people'." (Ibid)

How, then, asked Lenin, are we to reveal and define the 'substance' of a war? He answered this question as follows:

"War is the continuation of policy. Consequently, we must examine the policy pursued prior to the war, the policy that led to and brought about the war. If it was an imperialist policy, i.e., one designed to safeguard the interests of finance capital and rob and oppress colonies and foreign countries, then the war stemming from that policy is imperialist war. If it was a national-liberation policy, i.e., one expressive of the mass movement against national oppression, then the war stemming from that policy is a war of national liberation."

Lenin added: "The philistine does not realise that war is the 'continuation of policy', and consequently limits himself to the formula that 'the enemy has attacked us', 'the enemy has invaded my country', without stopping to think what issues are at stake in the war, which classes are waging it, and with what political objects." (Ibid)

Comparing the first world war (decidedly an imperialist war on both sides) with the French revolutionary wars of the 18th century against monarchist, autocratic, semi-feudal and reactionary

Europe, the latter, said Lenin, were nothing but the inevitable continuation of the policy of the victorious revolutionary classes in France.

When France's bourgeoisie and revolutionary peasantry overthrew their monarchy, got rid of their nobility and established a democratic republic in a most revolutionary fashion, this shook the whole of semi-feudal Europe to its foundations.

As a result, all the monarchist nations of Europe formed a coalition and "lined up against revolutionary France in a counter-revolutionary war". And during this war, the revolutionary people of France revealed "gigantic revolutionary creativeness" similar to the creativeness and energy they had displayed during the revolution—and on a scale "never shown for centuries".

"This example," said Lenin elsewhere, referring to the French revolution and the war of the French people at the end of the 18th century, by way of stressing the indissolubility of an economic and historical connection between every war and the policy preceding it, "it seems to me, deserves particular attention, because it shows us clearly something now forgotten at every step by bourgeois newspapermen when they play on the prejudices and the philistine ignorance of the quite undeveloped masses, who do not understand this indissoluble economic and historical connection between every war and the policy preceding it of each country, each class that was in power before the war and achieved its aims by so-called 'peaceful' means. So-called because the ruthless methods required, for example, to ensure 'peaceful' domination over the colonies, can hardly be called peaceful.

"Peace prevailed in Europe, but continued because the European peoples' domination over hundreds of millions of colonial inhabitants was effected by constant, uninterrupted, neverending wars which we, Europeans, do not consider to be wars, because all too often they resembled not wars, but the

most brutal slaughter, extermination of unarmed peoples." (War and revolution, lecture by V.I. Lenin, 14 May 1917)

Only after careful consideration of the class character of the war can the proletariat determine its attitude towards such a war. In its attitude to any given war, the proletariat must be guided by the principles of proletarian internationalism and by its duty to contribute to the preparation, and acceleration, of the world proletarian revolution.

Lenin, developing Clausewitz's analysis further, stated that "War is not only a continuation of politics, it is the epitome of politics." (Speech by V.I. Lenin to the seventh All-Russia congress of Soviets, 5 December 1919)

In other words, under the conditions of capitalism, war is not an aberration. It is not a break from the norm of political struggle, but quite the opposite, especially in the latest stage of capitalism—imperialism. Wars under capitalist imperialism are normal business—as normal as the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie and the subjugation of the oppressed nations by a tiny handful of imperialist oppressor states.

Only bourgeois pacifists and opportunists in the working-class movement can view peace as something in essence distinct from war, for they have never grasped the fact that war is a continuation of politics by other (forcible) means; that imperialist war is a continuation of imperialist politics of peace, and that imperialist peace in turn is a continuation of the politics of imperialist war. That imperialist wars grow out of imperialist peace, which in turn prepares the ground for further imperialist wars.

Just as the politics that the ruling classes of the belligerent powers pursue during the war are the continuation of the politics pursued by them long before the outbreak of the war, likewise the peace following war is merely the continuation of the "very same politics, with a registration of the

changes brought about in the relation of forces of the antagonists as a result of military operations. War does not alter the direction of prewar policies, but only accelerates their development." (The peace programme by V.I. Lenin, 25 March 1916)

### **Inevitability of wars under capitalism—the first world war**

Unlike the Kautskyites and their latter-day descendants, with their theories of ultra-imperialism and collective imperialism, which are nothing but a masked defence of imperialism and vain attempts to hide from the working class the contradictions inherent in imperialism, which inevitably lead to war, Leninism teaches, and life confirms, that modern war is a product of imperialism, and as such cannot be eliminated without putting an end to imperialism—an end to the exploitation of one human being by another and one nation by another.

"It is beyond doubt," observed Lenin, "that capitalism's transition to the stage of monopoly capitalism, to finance capital is connected with the intensification of the struggle for partitioning the world." (V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Chapter 6)

The last time that the big powers were able to divide the world 'peacefully' was at the Berlin conference, which lasted from 15 November 1884 until 26 February 1885. The Berlin conference started the 'scramble for Africa', in which Great Britain led the way. While in 1876, only 10 percent of Africa was ruled by Europeans, by 1900, 90 percent of the African continent was under European rule.

Apart from China, the world had been completely divided up by this time. In 1900, British, French, German, Russian, Italian, Japanese and American troops invaded China to crush the nationalist revolt and defend a string of 'concessions' (small colonies) on Chinese territory.

One of the major basic features of imperialism, that of the transition from pre-monopoly free-competition capitalism to its monopoly stage, is that it marks the completion of the territorial division of the world among the most powerful capitalist states. Once this partition has been effected, there can only be redivision and repartition, consequent upon change in the relative strength of the various imperialist countries due to the law of uneven development, whereby some countries spurt ahead and others lag behind.

If, as happens often, those countries who were economically weak yesterday, and therefore whose share in the global booty is relatively meagre, race ahead of their rivals and become more powerful, thus rendering the old division obsolete, they cannot fail to demand a new division—a new partition—on the basis of bourgeois 'justice'.

The new, younger and stronger robbers claim the same 'sacred' right to rob as the older and fatter bandits. This can only be achieved by the former robbing the latter, as the younger robbers "came to the capitalist banqueting table when all the places had been taken up".

And these matters, under the conditions of capitalism, are settled by means not very peaceful, for "finance capital and the trusts do not diminish but increase the differences in the rate of growth of the various parts of the world economy. Once the relation of forces is changed, what other solution of the contradictions can be found under capitalism than that of force?" (V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916, Chapter 7)

In the middle of the 19th century, Britain was the workshop of the world. It produced 50 percent of the world's cotton fabric, 60 percent of its coal and 70 percent of its steel. By 1914, however, it was producing just 20 percent of the world's cotton fabric, 20 percent of its coal and 10 percent of its steel.

On the other hand, Germany and the USA had

both overtaken Britain as industrial powers. But Britain possessed the largest empire, ruling over a fifth of the world's land mass and a quarter of its people. Its colonies were three times the size of French colonies and ten times the size of Germany's.

In parallel, there was the growth of monopoly. This made way for the transformation of free-competition capitalism to monopoly capitalism—finance capitalism.

For over a decade, Britain and Germany had been engaged in an arms race. Between 1899 and 1914, Britain increased its fleet of battleships from 29 to 49 and formed an alliance (the Triple Entente) with France and Russia.

British military expenditure rose by 150 percent between 1887 and 1914. By 1913, France had built up a 700,000-strong army, backed by three million reservists. Likewise in Germany, spending on the army and navy increased tenfold between 1870 and 1914. In the last four years of 'peace', the aggregate military spending of the great powers had trebled. When the war broke out, six million conscripts were sent immediately to the front, with another 13 million held in reserve in the rear.

These figures show two things very clearly. First, that the balance of power between Germany and Britain had changed very much in favour of Germany, and second, that both sides had long been in preparation for a war that was bound to take place sooner or later, in view of the discordance between the new balance of forces and the old division of the booty between the powers. Eventually this war broke out in the summer of 1914, as there was no peaceful way of resolving the basic contradiction between the two opposing sides.

As Lenin pointed out at the time, had the Triple Entente gone to war to safeguard Belgian neutrality, as it hypocritically pretended, in such a case "the sympathies of the socialists would, of course, be on the side of Germany's enemies".

But, he added, "the whole point is that the Triple Entente is waging war not over Belgium: this is perfectly well known and only hypocrites conceal this. Britain is grabbing Germany's colonies in Turkey; Russia is grabbing Galicia and Turkey; France wants Alsace-Lorraine and even the left bank of the Rhine; a treaty has been concluded with Italy for the division of the spoils (Albania, Asia Minor)..."

Lenin went on to say that "the defence of the fatherland" had no relevance in the first world war, which was an "imperialist war, war between reactionary-bourgeois, historically obsolete governments, waged for the purpose of oppressing other nations".

He went on: "Whoever justifies participation in the present war perpetuates imperialist oppression of nations. Whoever advocates taking advantage of the present embarrassments of the governments to fight for the socialist revolution champions the real freedom of really all nations, which is possible only under socialism." (V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and War*, 1915, Chapter 1)

Earlier in the same article, Lenin stated that from 1876 to 1914 the six 'great' powers had grabbed 25 million square kilometres—an area two and a half times the size of Europe. In the process, they had managed to enslave over half a billion inhabitants of colonies and subjected them to brutal treatment. And, he went on to say: "the Anglo-French bourgeoisie are deceiving the people when they say they are waging war for the freedom of peoples and for Belgium; actually they are waging war for the purpose of retaining the colonies they have inordinately grabbed.

"The German imperialists would free Belgium, etc., at once if the British and French would agree 'fairly' to share their colonies with them... from the standpoint of bourgeois justice ..., Germany would be absolutely right against England and France, for she has been 'done out' of colonies, her enemies are

oppressing an immeasurably far larger number of nations that she is... but Germany is fighting not for the liberation, but for the repression of nations.

"It is not the business of socialists to help a younger and stronger robber (Germany) to rob the older and overgorged robbers. Socialists must take advantage of the struggle between the robbers to overthrow them all. To be able to do this, the socialists must tell the people the truth that this war is... a war between slave owners to fortify slavery." (Ibid)

As for Russia, capitalist imperialism had been fully revealed by tsarism's policy in regard to Persia, Manchuria and Mongolia. As Lenin repeatedly pointed out, in no other country was the majority of the population so brutally oppressed as in Russia.

Of the 170 million inhabitants of Russia at the time, approximately 100 million (57 percent of the population) were oppressed, treated as aliens and denied all rights. Tsarism was fighting not merely to retain this prisonhouse of nations, but to extend it, by seizing further territories and crushing the liberties of other peoples.

Further, tsarism considered the war to be an instrument for diverting attention from the rising discontent within Russia itself, and as a means of suppressing the rising revolutionary movement—as did other imperialist powers, especially Germany and Austria.

It was the endeavour of tsarist Russia, as of other imperialist powers, to increase the numbers of peoples oppressed by it, and thus to perpetuate existing oppression and undermine the fight for freedom at the time being waged by the great Russians themselves. In view of this, on the part of Russia too, the war stood out for its profoundly reactionary, anti-liberating and counter-revolutionary character.

Besides, the powers that comprised the Triple Entente had concluded secret treaties for the repartitioning of the world. After the October

Revolution, the Bolshevik government published these treaties and exposed the fraud and hypocrisy of the imperialist assertions that they were fighting for the liberty of nations against German militarism and expansionism.

"'Finance capital strives for domination, not for freedom,' observed R Hilferding correctly in his 'Finance Capital'. Domination is the substance of imperialist policy, both in its internal and external policy.

"Imperialism strives to violate democracy, strives towards reaction both in foreign politics and in home politics. In this sense, imperialism is undoubtedly, the 'negation' of democracy in general, democracy as a whole, and not of only one of the demands of democracy, namely self-determination of nations." (A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism by V.I. Lenin, 1916)

And further: "War is a continuation of policy... 'world domination' is, to put it briefly, the substance of imperialist policy, of which imperialist war is the continuation."

The two world wars of the 20th century, as well as the scores of 'small' wars waged by imperialism, especially US imperialism, from the predatory wars against the people of Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to those against the people of Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon (the last two waged by US imperialism through its Israeli zionist surrogates), are eloquent proof, if proof be needed, of the Marxist-Leninist teachings on the question of war.

### **Just wars**

Marxist-Leninists do not oppose all wars. Apart from imperialist wars, there are other wars, wars which are just, which move mankind forward, and which, therefore, deserve the support of the proletariat. "Socialists cannot," said Lenin, "without ceasing to be socialists, be opposed to all war." (The military programme of the proletarian revolution

by V.I. Lenin, 1916)

Wars that socialists, far from opposing, are wholeheartedly in favour of, are:

(a) War against the bourgeoisie

First: civil wars waged by the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie. "Anyone who accepts the class struggle," said Lenin, "cannot fail to accept civil wars, which in every class society are the natural, and under certain conditions, inevitable continuation, development and intensification of the class struggle. That has been confirmed by every great revolution. To repudiate civil war, or to forget about it, is to fall into extreme opportunism and renounce the socialist revolution." (Ibid)

Marxism teaches, and life confirms, that no ruling class voluntarily gives up its rule and retires from the scene without a fight. What is more, in the face of the growing mass movement of the oppressed, the ruling exploiting classes are almost unfailingly the first to resort to counter-revolutionary violence to suppress and crush the oppressed classes.

In these circumstances, the oppressed class, if it does not want to betray its own fundamental interests, if it does not want to give up its historical right to rebel, its right to revolution, has no choice but to counter with revolutionary violence the counter-revolutionary violence of the oppressing class.

Although the working class would prefer not to resort to violent means, peaceful revolution is but a rare phenomenon, for no ruling class gives up its class privileges and class rule willingly, voluntarily and peacefully.

(b) Wars against absolutism

Second: there are wars against absolutism and mediaevalism, as for instance in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and statelets, Nepal, the Philippines and many other countries in Asia and Latin America.

In these places, medieval autocracy and absolutism, in close alliance with imperialism,



especially US imperialism, subjects the people to a barbarous existence, deprives them of the most elementary civil liberties, and stands in the way of economic and social progress.

The struggle of the peoples of these countries for a democratic revolution, for the overthrow of mediaevalism, is as just, legitimate and progressive as was the revolutionary struggle of the various European people against feudalism and alien oppression in the period from 1789 to 1871.

Therefore, this struggle deserves our wholehearted support. The freedom of the peoples of these countries from the shackles of serfdom, the destruction of the most vile, harmful and reactionary institutions (as for instance serfdom, autocracy and patriarchal savagery), the utter rout of despotism and the latter's protector, imperialism, would have a most beneficent and morally uplifting effect of the peoples of these countries and open before them a vista of economic development and national and social progress.

Capitalism, which during the epoch of 1789-1871 played such a progressive and liberating role in the struggle against serfdom, feudalism, absolutism and alien oppression, long ago (between 1890 and 1910) gave way, through the concentration of production, to monopoly capitalism—imperialism, which strives for domination and not freedom.

"Free trade and competition have been superseded by a striving towards monopolies, the seizure of territory for the investment of capital and sources of raw materials... From the liberator of nations, which it was in the struggle against feudalism, capitalism in its imperialist stage has turned into the greatest oppressor of nations.

"Formerly progressive, capitalism has become reactionary; it has developed the forces of production to such a degree that mankind is faced with the alternative of adopting socialism or of experiencing years and even decades of armed struggle between the 'great' powers for the artificial

preservation of capitalism by means of colonies, monopolies, privileges and national oppression of every kind." (Ibid)

It is precisely this desire for the artificial preservation of capitalism that explains and underpins imperialism's support for feudal reaction in the middle east and elsewhere, and which is a sure sign of its utter decay and parasitism.

"A more striking example," observed Lenin, "of this decay of the entire European [and American, we should add] bourgeoisie can scarcely be cited than the support it is lending to reaction in Asia for the sake of the selfish aims of the financial manipulators and capitalist swindlers." (Backward Europe and advanced Asia by V.I. Lenin, 18 May 1913)

#### (c) Wars of victorious socialism

Third: the wars waged by victorious socialist countries against imperialism in defence of socialism, against bourgeois states attempting to crush the socialist states would be just, legitimate and progressive and, therefore, worthy of the support of the whole of progressive humanity.

Such, for instance, was the war the Soviet Union waged against the imperialist predatory coalition in the early days of the Soviet regime. Such, too, was the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against the Nazi marauders, unleashed upon the Soviet Union by German imperialism.

Such indeed would be the wars today of the DPRK, Cuba, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and Laos, etc., were imperialism to dare to launch wars against these countries.

#### (d) Wars of national liberation

Last: there are the wars of national liberation waged by the oppressed nations against colonialism and imperialism. Such were the wars waged by the Chinese people against Japanese imperialism, the Korean and Indo-Chinese peoples against Japanese, French and US imperialism, and such are the wars presently being waged by the people of Iraq,

Afghanistan, Lebanon and Palestine against Anglo-American imperialism and their surrogate, Israeli Zionism.

Such also was the war of resistance by the Libyan people against the entire might of the imperialist camp, which resulted in the overthrow of the legitimate Libyan government, the murder of its head of state, the slaughter of tens of thousands of Libyan people, and the wholesale destruction of the country's infrastructure, leaving it in ruins as a 'failed' state.

And such is the war of resistance of the Syrian people, led by the Ba'ath party against imperialist-backed murderers and jihadists who have been wreaking havoc on this beautiful country with its great secular traditions.

In the words of Lenin: "The history of the 20th century, this century of 'unbridled imperialism', is replete with colonial wars... One of the main qualities of imperialism is that it hastens the development of capitalism in the most backward countries, and thereby extends and intensifies the struggle against national oppression. That is a fact. It inevitably follows from this that imperialism must often give rise to national wars." (The military programme of the proletarian revolution, 1916)

In the case of such national-revolutionary wars, in case of wars of national resistance against imperialist brigandage, it is incumbent on the socialists and proletarians of the oppressor nation to side with the oppressed nation and wish, and work for, the defeat of their own imperialist bourgeoisie, for "socialists always side with the oppressed". (Open letter to Boris Souvarine by V.I. Lenin, 15 December 1916)

Moreover, "any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slave-holding and predatory 'great' powers". (V.I. Lenin, Socialism and War, 1915, Chapter 1)

It is sad to have to remark, but would be shameful

to cover up the fact, that large numbers of 'socialists' in the centres of imperialism today, even those who call themselves communists, have failed, on one pretext or another, to support the resistance of the victims of imperialism against the predatory wars waged against them by imperialism—from Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan to Palestine, Libya and Syria.

In doing so, these shameful 'socialists' have betrayed socialism, flouted the basic principles of proletarian internationalism, and sunk to the level of despicable flunkeys of their own imperialist bourgeoisies. In this category must be included some of the leading lights of the misnamed Stop the War coalition in Britain who, while pretending to oppose imperialist wars, act more often as apologists for imperialism's wars on the pretext of the defence of some abstract principles of 'democracy' and 'human rights'.

### **War cannot be abolished without the overthrow of capitalism**

Further, Marxism-Leninism teaches that it is impossible to eliminate war without overthrowing imperialism, for as long as imperialism lasts, wars are inevitable.

"Imperialism," wrote Lenin, "has put the fate of European civilisation at stake: this war, if there does not follow a series of successful revolutions, will soon be followed by other wars; the fable of the 'last war' is an empty, harmful fable, a philistine 'myth'." (Position and tasks of the Socialist International, October 1914)

Failing the overthrow of imperialism, any 'peace' following a war can be no more than a truce and a continuation of imperialist war:

"Neither the bourgeois pacifists nor the socialist pacifists realise that without the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois governments, peace now can only be an imperialist peace, a continuation of the imperialist war." (Bourgeois

pacifism and socialist pacifism by V.I. Lenin, January 1917)

Thus the struggle for peace must be inextricably linked with the struggle to eliminate the division of society into classes, with the struggle for revolution and socialism, for "it is impossible to escape imperialist war, and imperialist peace... which inevitably engenders imperialist war, it is impossible to escape that inferno, except by a Bolshevik struggle and a Bolshevik revolution". (The fourth anniversary of the October Revolution by V.I. Lenin, October 1921)

In an earlier article, Lenin had emphasised the connection between peace and the end of a class divided society thus: "The proletariat struggles against war and will always struggle against it unremittingly without, however, forgetting for a moment that war can be abolished only with the complete abolition of society's division into classes." (European capital and the autocracy, 5 April 1905)

Imperialist wars, whether interimperialist or those waged by imperialism against the oppressed peoples, wars waged for the division of spoils and for the robbery of weak nations, with their resultant destruction and devastation, ruination and exhaustion of all peoples, the torments of hunger and misery to which they subject the masses of the people—bring humanity face to face with the dilemma: "either sacrifice all culture or throw off the yoke of capitalism by revolutionary means, eliminate the domination of the bourgeoisie and win a socialist society and lasting peace". (For bread and peace by V.I. Lenin, 14 December 1917)

### **Opportunist distortions on the question of war and peace**

The opportunists of the Second International, and their latter-day descendants, the Khrushchevite revisionists, have built up a veritable arsenal of distortions on the question of war and peace—with the sole purpose of prettifying imperialism

and blunting the fighting capacity of the proletariat through a combination of covering up the danger of war represented by imperialism and intimidating the masses with the notion that war would destroy humanity.

Kautsky's renegacy went so far as to assert that the source of war was not imperialism but the liberation movements of the oppressed nations and the USSR, which he referred to as a 'dictatorship', while the imperialist states presumably were nothing but pure democracies.

Revisionists and opportunists are forever attempting to obliterate the distinction between just and unjust wars and to propagate the erroneous theory that weapons are the decisive factor—vandal that, therefore, in view of the overwhelming superiority in armaments enjoyed by the imperialist states, it is pointless for the proletariat and the oppressed people to confront imperialism through armed combat.

Instead of linking the struggle against war to the struggle for the abolition of imperialism, to the elimination of the division of society into classes, the opportunists spread the illusion that 'world peace' can be maintained, and equality of nations secured, through 'disarmament', and that the money saved by disarmament can be put aside for the assistance of backward countries—failing to grasp the simple truth that imperialism is in the business of extracting the maximum of profit in the pursuit of which it seeks domination, not freedom and equality.

Imperialism would not be imperialism if it stood for assisting people at home, never mind the oppressed peoples abroad.

It was not for nothing that Lenin exposed the hideousness of such theories put forward by the opportunists, pointing out that their pacifist utterances merely served "as a means of colonising the people, as a means of helping governments to keep the masses in submission in order to continue

the imperialist slaughter!" (To the workers who support the struggle against the war, and against the socialists who have deserted to the side of their governments, 30 December 1916)

Ever since the outbreak of the first world war, it is social democracy, having betrayed the working class and joined the bourgeoisie, which has played the chief role in stupefying the masses on questions of war and peace—as indeed on every other question.

It was not for nothing that Josef Stalin observed that "social democracy is the main channel of imperialist pacifism within the working class—consequently, it is capitalism's main support among the working class in preparing for new wars and interventions." (Results of the July plenum of the CC, report by Josef Stalin to a meeting of party activists in Leningrad, 13 July 1928)

On the question of war and peace, as on so many other questions, Khrushchevite revisionism was to follow in the footsteps of Bernstein, Kautsky and other leading revisionist social democrats of the renegade Second International.

### **Khrushchevite revisionism and war**

The Khrushchevite revisionists went further even than the social democrats, by turning to nuclear fetishism and nuclear blackmail as the theoretical basis and guiding principle of its policy on the question of war and peace, and a number of related issues. It came to hold that, with the appearance of nuclear weapons, the distinction between just and unjust wars had been rendered obsolete.

"The atomic bomb," asserted the Khrushchevites, "does not distinguish between imperialists and working people, it strikes at areas, so that millions of workers would be killed for every monopolist destroyed." (Open letter of the CPSU CC to all party organisations, 14 July 1963)

According to Khrushchev and his fellow renegades, all the major contradictions in the world—that between capital and labour, between

imperialism and socialism, between imperialism and the oppressed nations, and the interimperialist contradictions between various imperialist countries—had all ceased to exist with the emergence of nuclear weapons.

In their view, there remained but one contradiction—namely, the fictitious contradiction fabricated by them between the alleged 'common survival' of imperialism and the oppressed classes and nations on the one hand, and their complete annihilation on the other.

### **Struggle against opportunism**

Opportunism expresses bourgeois policy within the working-class movement; expresses the interests of the petty bourgeoisie and the alliance of a tiny section of the bourgeoisified workers with 'their' bourgeoisie against the interests of the oppressed proletarian masses.

The first world war accelerated the development of opportunism and transformed it into social chauvinism—it transformed the secret alliance between the opportunists and the bourgeoisie into an open one.

Social chauvinism, which amounts to the defence of the privileges, advantages, robbery and violence of one's 'own', or every, imperialist bourgeoisie, constitutes a total betrayal of all socialist principles and convictions.

Opportunism and social chauvinism have the same economic basis—namely, the interests of a tiny section of the privileged workers and of the petty bourgeoisie, who defend their privileged position, their 'right' to crumbs from the profits 'their' national bourgeoisie obtains from the robbery of other nations, from the advantages of their position as the ruling nation.

Likewise, they share the ideological and political content that is class collaboration instead of class struggle: renunciation of revolutionary methods of struggle; assisting one's 'own' government in its

embarrassed situation instead of taking advantage of such embarrassments for revolution. That opportunism is the basis of social chauvinism is clear from the conduct of the opportunists in the decade leading up to the start of the first world war.

At the 1907 Stuttgart international socialist congress, while international Marxism was opposed to imperialism, international opportunism was already in favour of it. As soon as the war broke out, almost all the opportunists became social-chauvinists.

The history of the international working-class movement over the last 100 years furnishes irrefutable evidence that the misfortunes of the working-class movement are inextricably connected with the influence exerted by opportunism over the working class. Opportunism in the working class, far from being an accidental phenomenon, has deep economic roots—namely, in the superprofits extracted by the bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries from the robbery of the entire world, a part of which can be, and is, used to bribe the upper stratum of the workers—the labour aristocracy—and thus engender a split in the working class.

This upper stratum of 'bourgeoisified workers', thoroughly petty-bourgeois in their lifestyle, in the size of their earnings, and in their world outlook, serve as "the principal social... prop of the bourgeoisie... the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. In the civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, they inevitably, and in no small numbers, take the side of the bourgeoisie, the 'Versaillais' against the 'Communards'...

"Unless the economic roots of this phenomenon are understood and its political and social significance is appreciated, not a step can be taken toward the solution of the practical problems of the communist movement and of the impending social

revolution." (V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916, Preface to the French and German editions)

Two years after he wrote these lines, Lenin returned to the question at the second congress of the Communist International. During his speech, he posed the question: how was the persistence of opportunism in Europe to be explained? Here is the answer he gave to this very important question:

"Because the advanced countries have been creating their culture by the opportunity they have of living at the expense of a billion oppressed people. Because the capitalists of all these countries obtain a great deal more than they would have been able to obtain in the shape of profits resulting from the robbery of the workers in their own countries."

Out of the vast sums thus obtained, it is possible to use a portion for the purposes of bribing the labour aristocracy in all sorts of ways:

"The whole thing," continued Lenin, "reduces itself precisely to bribery. This is done in a thousand different ways: by raising culture in the largest centres, by creating educational institutions, creating thousands of soft jobs for the leaders of the cooperative societies, for the trade union leaders and parliamentary leaders. This is done wherever modern, civilised, capitalist relations exist. And these billions of superprofits serve as the economic basis upon which opportunism in the working-class movement rests." (Speech by V.I. Lenin to the second congress of the Communist International, 3 July 1920)

Lenin expressed himself in even stronger terms elsewhere. Recognising the reality of the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations, he described the differences in the condition of workers in these two groups as follows:

"(1) economically, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressor nations receive crumbs from the superprofits the bourgeoisie of these nations obtains by extra exploitation of the



workers of the oppressed nations. To a certain degree the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of their own bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

"(2) politically, the difference is that, compared with the workers of the oppressed nations, they occupy a privileged position in many spheres of political life.

"(3) ideologically, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt for workers of the oppressed nations. This has been experienced, for example, by every great Russian who has been brought up or who has lived among great Russians." (A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism, 1916)

Thus is formed, on the basis of imperialist superprofits, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the upper stratum of the proletariat in the imperialist countries—an alliance that is directed against the interests of the proletarian masses at home and the oppressed nations abroad.

Ever since the outbreak of the first world war, this alliance has been represented in Europe by social democracy. In Britain, the political expression of this alliance is the Labour party, which right from its inception has been, is now, and will always be a bourgeois labour party, representing the interests of British imperialism and the upper sections of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie.

Labour is a party of opportunism and social-chauvinism. Unless a ruthless struggle is waged against this party, it is pointless and hypocritical cant to talk about the struggle against imperialism, about Marxism-Leninism, about the movement of the proletariat, or about proletarian revolution.

From this, Lenin concluded: "The only Marxist line in the labour movement is to explain to the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism, to educate them for revolution by waging a relentless struggle against

opportunism," and by demonstrating that the opportunists are "alien to the proletariat as a class... are the servants, the agents of the bourgeoisie and the vehicles of its influence"; that "unless the labour movement rids itself of them, it will remain a bourgeois labour movement". (Imperialism and the split in socialism by V.I. Lenin, October 1916)

And further: "Most dangerous... are those who do not wish to understand that the fight against imperialism is a sham and humbug unless it is inseparably bound up with the fight against opportunism." (V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, 1916, Chapter 10)

### **Opportunism and the first world war**

In the run-up to the then-impending first world war, there were large-scale demonstrations of working people against its outbreak in almost every imperialist country. As soon as the war broke out, however, almost all the socialist parties belonging to the Second International—with the sole honourable exception of the Bolshevik party in Russia—betrayed the working class and deserted to the side of their respective bourgeoisies in the name of 'defending the fatherland'.

The German Social-Democratic Party, the largest and most important party in the Second International, gave stark evidence of its utter renegacy when all its 110 members of parliament voted for war credits on 4 August 1914. In so doing, they betrayed the solemn commitments they had formulated in the November 1912 Basle Manifesto of the Second International, which had characterised the then-coming war as imperialist and committed all socialists to turning such a war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. With actions such as these taken by nearly all the socialist parties, the Second International collapsed.

Towards the end of the war, revolutionary situations arose in a number of countries, including in Russia and Germany. While in Russia, led by

the Bolshevik party, which had waged a 30-year long struggle against opportunism, the Russian proletariat stormed the citadels of Russian imperialism, in Germany, the betrayal by social democracy led to proletarian defeat.

War, blockades, the disruption of food supplies and of other necessities of life, the astronomical rise in consumer prices, falling consumption and widespread hunger spread epidemics towards the end of the war. The influenza of 1918-19 is reliably believed to have killed 20 million Europeans and probably 100 million people worldwide.

These conditions obliged the working class of many European countries to turn against the war—and, even more importantly, against the whole system of exploitation.

In March 1917 (the February revolution), the Russian tsar was brought down by a revolutionary insurrection in Petrograd. The November 1917 Great October Socialist Revolution overthrew the provisional government, which had been committed to continuing the war.

The Bolsheviks rallied the workers, peasants and soldiers of Russia with the slogans "All power to the Soviets" and "Peace, land and bread". The new revolutionary government made peace with Germany, nationalised factories, and encouraged the peasantry to take control of the land. By taking Russia out of the war, the October Revolution ended the slaughter on the eastern front.

Other imperialist countries also faced trouble at home. In France, there were mutinies in the army, widespread desertions, and demonstrations of soldiers singing revolutionary and antiwar songs.

In Germany, 200,000 engineering workers went on strike against cuts in the bread ration in April 1917. Disaffection permeated the sailors of the fleet at Kiel. Poor conditions, harsh military discipline and the privileges of the officer class had helped to fill the cup of discontent to overflowing.

In January 1918, a wave of strikes spread across

Germany, with half a million workers out in Berlin and half a dozen other industrial centres. Workers' councils emerged spontaneously.

Though Germany got some reprieve through the Brest-Litovsk treaty, enabling it to concentrate its forces on the western front, this proved to be short-lived, and the German reinforcement faced the Americans as well, who were arriving on the front at the rate of 300,000 a month.

By the autumn of 1918 (between September and November), the central powers had collapsed. As a result, there was a revolutionary upsurge in Austria, making way for a coalition led by social democrats, whose main job it was to save Austrian capitalism. On 29 October 1918, German sailors mutinied, and by 3 November Kiel was controlled by a revolutionary council.

Within days, huge demonstrations broke out all across Germany, with scores of German towns controlled by workers, sailors and soldiers. By 9 November, the revolutionary movement had spread to Berlin. Karl Liebknecht addressed a crowd of several hundred thousand from the balcony of the imperial palace and proclaimed a "social republic" and "world revolution". These developments helped to bring the war to an end on the western front.

With the help of social democracy, the German bourgeoisie was to go on to murder Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and defeat the German revolution.

Thus it can be seen that the striking contrast between the successful Russian revolution and its failure in Germany is eloquent proof of Lenin's insistence on the need to fight against opportunism.

### **Bourgeois historiography of the war**

"The bourgeoisie turns everything into a commodity, hence also the writing of history. It is part of its being, of its condition for existence, to falsify all goods: it falsified the writing of history. And the best paid historiography is that which is

best falsified for the purposes of the bourgeoisie." (Preparatory material for the history of Ireland by Friedrich Engels, 1870)

A phenomenal amount has been written on the 'Great War', with about 25,000 books and scholarly articles produced on it since 1918.

At the end of the war, in view of the horrendous slaughter, Britain found itself in the grip of a pacifist delusion; all certainty that Britain had waged a brave, just and necessary fight disappeared.

The widespread sentiments of the masses were often expressive of the incipient protests, anger and consciousness regarding the reactionary character of the war. Since, unlike in Russia, there was no revolutionary party in Britain at the time capable of utilising these sentiments for a revolutionary struggle against British imperialism, they found their outlet in the dead end of bourgeois pacifism and daydreaming about a world without armaments and war, simultaneously with the continued existence of capitalism.

There was a total lack of any ability or willingness, consciousness or courage, to connect the war with imperialism and to relate imperialist war to imperialist peace.

As the trickle of memoirs turned into a flood, the sentiment of 'waste' multiplied, with British commander-in-chief Douglas Haig being portrayed as the "butcher of the Somme"—a callous nincompoop who had presided over the loss of two million British casualties.

Even before the end of the war, the horrendous slaughter of so many innocents, which had turned the mood in the trenches to one of sober resignation, plunged working-class communities into mourning and moulded middle-class patriots into antiwar poets, creating fertile ground for antiwar activity.

This sense of disillusionment and cynicism was reinforced by the Versailles treaty, which imposed extraordinarily harsh terms on Germany and, while

holding the latter solely responsible for the war, allowed the victors to get down to the business of redividing the world—the sole purpose for which the war had been fought on both sides.

The French grabbed Togo and Cameroon in west Africa, the British secured Namibia in southern Africa and Tanzania in east Africa. In the middle east, while the French were given Syria and Lebanon, the British received Palestine, Jordan and Iraq.

Only the Turks proved strong enough to prevent the carve-up of their country. On 16 April 1919, showing their true liberatory character, the British authorities perpetrated the Amritsar massacre, in which General Dyer's armed thugs killed over 1,000 innocent Indians.

John Maynard Keynes, in his *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, denounced the Versailles treaty for the treatment it meted out to Germany. (1920)

Basil Liddell Hart, a widely-read British military theorist whose battalion had been almost totally destroyed at the Somme, in addition to attacking the professional fitness of British generals questioned the very decision for Britain to get involved in a bloody land war on the continent in the first place.

In the early 1960s, Alan Clarke's *The Donkeys*, concentrating on the early failures of the British military leadership, played to the stereotypes of the 'chateau generals' commanding thousands of men to their deaths before comfortably tucking into a sumptuous dinner.

Clarke's book inspired Joan Littlewood's 1963 satirical musical *Oh! What a Lovely War*, which was later made into a film.

It is in this context that the current and relatively recent historiography of the war must be seen.

The controversies concerning the causes, strategies and consequences of WW1 refuse to be laid to rest. Earlier this year, Michael Gove, then the education

minister, attempted, not very successfully, to 'reclaim' the centenary commemoration on behalf of those for whom the war was a just cause fought for 'liberal values'.

He complained that for too long the war had "been seen through the fictional prism of dramas such as *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *The Monocled Mutineer*, *Blackadder*, as a misgotten shambles—a series of catastrophic mistakes by an out-of-touch elite. Even to this day there are left-wing academics all too happy to feed those myths."

Apart from the small matter that not everyone critical of Britain's participation in, or conduct of, the war, can be characterised as a left-wing academic, what Gove, if he had any interest in the truth, should have said is that, apart from those who belong to the Leninist tradition, almost everyone of the countless writers on the war—supporters as well as opponents—have been guilty of spreading myths, illusions, misrepresentations and downright falsehoods of one kind or another.

In this context, we wish to mention the following historians who have entered into the fray on this question in the relatively recent past.

### **Margaret MacMillan**

Margaret MacMillan, warden of St Anthony's college at Oxford. In her book *The War That Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War* (written October 2013), she pins primary responsibility for the war at the doorstep of Germany—and to a lesser extent on Austria-Hungary.

While she does not entirely accept the thesis advanced by Fritz Fischer, who caused a sensation in the early 1960s by arguing that his country's annexationist aims predated the Great War and bore a close resemblance to the Nazi war aims, she does perceive German militarism and the commitment of general staff under Helmuth von Moltke to fighting a two-front war, requiring rapid

and unstoppable mobilisation, as a catalyst.

In issuing a 'blank cheque' to Austria-Hungary by offering unconditional support for its punitive attack on Serbia following the Sarajevo assassination, says MacMillan, the German leaders were prepared to risk war. She adds that the three men with the power to decide between war and peace—the Kaiser, von Moltke and Chancellor Theobald von Berthman-Hollweg—saw opportunities rather than threats.

MacMillan makes it clear where her sentiments lie at the very beginning of her book, when she describes the sacking of the historically important city of Louvain in August 1914. According to her, since neutral Belgium had the audacity to resist the German advance as per the Schlieffen plan, the German soldiers vented their frustrations on the city and its people. And Louvain was only a foretaste of what was to come.

### **Christopher Clark**

By contrast, Christopher Clark, Professor of Modern European History at Cambridge, says in his *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (2012), that the start of the war "was a tragedy not a crime. The two sides simply sleep-walked into it."

He goes on to say: "There is no smoking gun in this story, or, rather, there is one in the hands of every major character." The last sentence, however inadvertently inserted, means a lot more than Mr Clark must have intended it to mean. For surely, the two imperialist blocs had been preparing for this war over a long period of time, with the aim of grabbing each other's colonies, markets, spheres of influence, raw materials and avenues for investment.

Britain and France could have satisfied Germany by making over to her a portion of their vast empires and other sources of loot. Equally, Germany could have decided to rest content with

the much smaller share she already possessed. If either of these imaginary scenarios had come to pass, there would have been no war.

But this is not how things happen in the world of finance capital. Imperialism would not be imperialism if it did not give rise to regular repartitioning of the world. Who is to blame either side for being driven to it? The answer lies, or rather the solution to the problem lies, in the revolutionary overthrow of the entire system.

An important theme of Mr Clark's is the breakdown of the international order that had kept the "long peace" in the 19th century. The absence of institutions to resolve conflicts led to "rapid-fire interactions among heavily-armed autonomous power-centres confronting different and swiftly-changing threats, and operating under conditions of high risk and low trust and transparency".

It was, he says, ignoring the elephant in the room, not the existence of two opposing alliances that helped plunge Europe into war, but the weakness of those alliances and uncertainty about intentions within them. Decisions were driven by contingency rather than any strategic plan.

He concludes: "The protagonists of 1914 were sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world."

### **Sir Max Hastings**

In his book *Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914*, Hastings has no time for Mr Clark's reluctance to apportion blame.

Germany, he writes, deserves the most blame because it alone had the power to stop the conflict and decided not to do so.

### **Niall Ferguson**

In his book *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (2003), Ferguson portrays the British empire as an instrument for the promotion

of commerce, the provision of clean government, the establishment of the rule of law, and the creation of conditions for an eventual transition to parliamentary democracy.

He says that he does not claim, as did Lord Curzon, that "the British empire is under Providence the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen", nor, as General Smuts claimed, that it was "the widest system of organised human freedom which has ever existed in human history"—the empire was never that altruistic.

Nevertheless, he maintains "that no organisation in history has done more to promote the free movement of goods, capital and labour, than the British empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries. And no organisation has done more to impose western norms of law, order and governance around the world.

"For much of its history, the British empire acted as an agency for relatively incorrupt government. Prima facie, there therefore seems a plausible case that the empire enhanced global welfare, in other words, it was a Good Thing."

It was the staggering cost of fighting the imperial rivals, he says, that ultimately ruined the British empire. In other words, "the empire was dismantled not because it had suppressed subject peoples for centuries, but because it took up arms for just a few years against the far more oppressive empires. In the end, the British sacrificed the empire to stop the Germans, Japanese and Italians from keeping theirs.

"Did not that sacrifice alone expunge all the empire's other sins? It did the right thing, regardless of the cost. And that is why the ultimate, if reluctant, heir of Britain's global power, was not one of the evil empires of the east, but Britain's most successful former colony, i.e., the USA."

If this isn't an unreserved and subservient apologia for Anglo-American imperialism, and an utter falsification of history, one would be hard



put to find one. Professor Ferguson's defence of British/American imperialism reminds one of the following shrewd observation made by Georgi Plekhanov:

"Marx said very truly that the greater the development of antagonism between the growing forces of production and the extant social order, the more does the ideology of the ruling class become permeated with hypocrisy. In addition, the more effectively life unveils the mendacious character of this ideology, the more does the language used by the dominant class become sublime and virtuous." (Fundamental Problems of Marxism, 1907)

There is, however, method in the madness of the bourgeoisie and its intellects—its ideological and political representatives. For the fight over the past is actually part of the struggle to control the present and the future.

Whatever the intentions of the bourgeois intellectual gentry, the net result of their writings—in this case on the question of the first world war—is to absolve imperialism from being the cause of the slaughter of hundreds of millions of innocent people and to prepare them for present-day imperialist wars and carnage.

What real educational purpose is served by history books and articles that portray the imperialist world war as either a 'mistake', an 'accident' or a 'tragedy' into which the two armed imperialist camps, having prepared over decades for precisely such a war, simply 'sleepwalked'?

What value can writings have that present the war as a struggle between 'good' (i.e., on the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie of their choice) against 'evil' (the opposing bourgeoisie), between 'democracy' (i.e., Anglo-American and French imperialism) and 'autocracy and militarism' (i.e., German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism)?

What can one learn from histories that portray the Anglo-American imperialist bourgeoisie, no less bloodthirsty and rapacious than the German

bourgeoisie, as having been motivated in this war by the sole desire to 'defend liberal values' and 'promote democracy'?

Even less is there to learn from histories that attribute the outbreak of the war to Germany's 'violation of the neutrality and territorial integrity' of Belgium—which, we are reminded, the European powers had pledged to respect by the 1839 Treaty of London.

As to histories that with a serious mien attribute the outbreak of the war to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo—just 37 days before Britain declared war on Germany—these are simply laughable fairy tales, meant for the entertainment of subnormal sections of humanity.

Bourgeois historians of the war, by their inability or unwillingness to emphasise the very real and close connection between modern war and imperialism, simply divert the proletariat from the task of overthrowing imperialism as the only means of getting rid of war. As such, they merely serve to prepare the ideological and political conditions for both present-day and future imperialist wars.

### **Imperialist crisis and preparations for new wars**

Imperialism is now gripped by its worst-ever crisis, and this crisis is driving imperialism ultimately to war as the only way out. No one can say with certainty who the next big war will be between. One thing, however, is certain: i.e., that beginning with the war against Yugoslavia, through the wars in the middle east, to the present troubles in Ukraine, imperialism is engaged in encircling Russia and China.

It is attempting to encircle Russia because Russia is the only country with the armaments that can challenge the armed might of US imperialism, and because of the vastness of its resources. Meanwhile, China is targeted because, in addition to its social

system, it is well on course to become the largest economy in the world in the next half decade (in fact, on the basis of purchasing power parity, it is already the largest economy), and this economic might is enabling China to become the dominant power in Asia as well as, through its economic aid to Africa and Latin America, to encroach on imperialism's traditional ability to loot unhindered.

Should imperialism dare to launch a war against Russia or China, devastating though such a war would be, it will sound the death knell of imperialism.

If the first world war ushered in the Great Socialist October Revolution; if the second world war gave birth to a mighty socialist camp covering a third of the world's territory and a quarter of its population; any war against Russia or China would put an end to imperialism in its entirety.

Should such a war break out, it is the deeply-held conviction of our party that the proletariat in the imperialist countries ought to side against its own bourgeoisie and work for the victory of Russia/China in resisting imperialist domination and subjugation, and for proletarian revolution in their own respective countries.

### **Imperialism—the eve of proletarian revolution**

Imperialism has sharpened all the contradictions to the extreme: the contradiction between labour and capital; the contradiction between a handful of imperialist oppressors and the vast majority of humanity inhabiting the oppressed countries; and the contradiction between the various imperialist groupings.

Spurred on by the economic crisis, it is driving full steam ahead towards war.

Imperialism, by sharpening all the contradictions of capitalism, faces humanity with the choice: either revolution or war and barbarism.

The Leninist theory of revolution and Leninist tactics and methods of organisation offer the only

road to salvation as the proletariat comes face to face with this stark choice: "Either place yourself at the mercy of capital, eke out a miserable existence and sink lower and lower, or adopt a new weapon—this is the alternative imperialism puts before the vast masses of the proletariat. Imperialism brings the working class to revolution." (J.V. Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 1924, Chapter 1)

# How British Imperialism Crushed the Greek Revolution

Nina Kosta, George Korkovelos | Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

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## Part 1

73 years after the end of the decade 1940-1949, the ideological battle over it continues to occupy an important place in the general ideological struggle that is taking place in our class society. No other historical event of the 20th century attracted as much interest as the Occupation (1941-1944) and the so called Civil War (1946-1949), a period that Greeks refer to as the Revolution. Confirmation of this comes from the fact that for the period 1941-1949 millions of pages have been written by the supporters of the warring parties (communists and anti-communists—the revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries) and by the so-called 'neutrals'. And they continue to be written, and it is certain that the interest will not fade along the way, but will grow because it was then, during the 20th century, that the greatest upheavals in the history of the popular movement took place. Thus, it is a prism from which to understand the Second World War, its fronts, its alliances, the end of illusions, the beginning of the Cold War, the Truman doctrine and the revisionist turn.

Most people on the Left know the general context of this period, namely: that the Greek people were then under the weight of a triple occupation, which encompassed pogroms, executions, arson, atrocities, torture, and famine (300,000 died of starvation); that the German, Italian and the Bulgarian fascist occupiers were committing the above, having an extra armed hand in the form of the collaborationist government and the Security Battalions along with other gangs; and that a giant popular movement arose against them—the EAM (National Liberation Front), notwithstanding the voices of 'prudence and logic', which called on the people to calm down for their ... own good! It was the EAM, which bore

the main weight of the Resistance.

Throughout the Second World War, what preoccupied the ruling class of Greece was what would happen after the liberation. They were concerned because a new revolutionary situation began to emerge in Greece, with people taking power in their hands, through self-government, the people's courts, and also the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA)—also known as 'The Government of the Mountain' which operated from March to September 1944). There was also the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS). The majority of the Greek people were organised in EAM, the National Liberation Front.

This historical period had as a key feature the people's liberation struggle against Hitler's occupation and enslavement, but this feature alone does not capture the whole truth. The class struggle between the ruling class of Greece, on the one hand, and the working class on the other hand, was being waged relentlessly. This expressed itself during the German occupation as a struggle for the formation of government after liberation (a liberation which, as it turned out, the Greek people were not to enjoy for long). The British imperialists with their army intervened in Greece as conquerors, with the aim of crushing the popular movement of EAM-ELAS and the KKE (Communist Party of Greece), to establish capitalist power, effectively imposing a second occupation. This is reflected in the armed intervention of the British and their alliance with local collaborators who had been supporting the German occupation up to December 1944.

The intervention of the British imperialists in Greece came as a continuation of the economic and political connection of Greek capital with the British bourgeoisie, on which the Greek

ruling class depended, because it was itself not leading the war of national liberation. We must not forget that the liberation struggle was led by the working class with its allies. The KKE and the EAM coalition were at the forefront of the struggle. The correlation of power that was formed during the liberation struggle did not allow for the Greek ruling class to be directing socio-economic and political developments in Greece after liberation, which is why it desperately needed British military intervention.

The strategic pursuit of the establishment of bourgeois power in Greece after liberation by any means necessary was implemented on the basis of a plan in place even before the end of the war. Churchill had reached an agreement with Hitler in order to facilitate this goal. They agreed that German troops should be left undisturbed during their withdrawal from Greece and that in exchange the Germans would cede the country to the British.

The British intervention resulted in the Varkiza Agreement, a compromise between the EAM and the KKE made in February 1945, on the basis of which ELAS was to disarm and hand over its weapons.

When it had duly done so, the White terror was unleashed, a ruthless persecution of the hundreds of thousands of EAM Resistance fighters. It was a full-frontal attack to bring about the annihilation of the popular movement, using tactics and methods involving unprecedented murderous orgies and brutal violence against the EAM fighters. Thus, 15 months after the signing of the Varkiza Agreement, there was a bloodbath: Murders: 1,289. Injured: 667. Tortured: 31,632. Prisoners: 8,624. while throughout the year they exceeded 30,000. Attempted murders: 509, Arrests: 84,931, Raped women: 165, Lootings: 18,767. This was the bloody chaos arising under the auspices of British imperialism.

### **Historical background on Greece**

The KKE and the Greek left had gathered around themselves the descendants and successors of the national democratic struggles of the Greek nation.

The Greek people had started their liberation struggle and their national uprising to free themselves from slavery and exploitation by the Kodjabashis ('elders'—a hereditary oligarchy in the Ottoman administration). The contradictions had their roots in the period of the struggle against the Turkish yoke, for the creation of an independent democratic state of the Greeks.

From the day the Greek state was proclaimed in 1830, contradictions and conflicts continued in various ways between the forces of progress and backwardness. The Greek people, after hard and bloody struggles, were able to create a small state, but could not gain genuine national independence and bring about a national rebirth, for economic and cultural progress.

The Kodjabashis and the ruling plutocrats were connected with foreign interests and were completely dependent on the alternating foreign powers that presented themselves as 'protective powers'. The parties that alternately came to power were creations of foreign intrigue and gave voice only to the politics of the oligarchy. Such were the first three Greek parties that were openly called 'English', 'Russian' and 'French'. These foreign powers presented themselves as protectors, but in fact behaved like masters. They were throwing the Greek people into wars for their own interests; they were blockading Greece; they were causing financial bankruptcies. They were eating each other up and they organised military interventions. Greece suffered at least two intense military interventions in the 19th century, i.e., an Anglo-French intervention, involving the arrival of the French fleet and consequent blockade, giving rise after 1897 to an enormous debt; and there was the creation of two governments after the Balkan Wars with the election of Venizelos who sided with the Anglo-French Entente and created a second government in Thessaloniki, involving a military operation to actually occupy Greece so as to force it into the First World War. These events show Greece's dependent status that is also highlighted by the fact that Greek shipping capital, the most

powerful capital in Greece, is traditionally based in the City of London.

The following statement is typical. In 1841, the English ambassador to Greece said: 'A truly independent Greece? It is something absurd. Greece is either Russian or English. And since it should not be Russian, it is necessarily English'.

When, with the Truman doctrine, America bought Greece from the British, it considered Greece its own, a place to which it has the property title. When American Democrats remarked that the attitude of the State Department and the Pentagon was against the principles of American democracy, they got the following answer: 'Democracy and freedom only very big states and rich societies can have. Other states are doomed to have a brutal oligarchy or to be a showcase of democracy'.

Greece's subordination to foreign interests from the very first day of its proclamation as a free state led the ruling bourgeois-kodjabashi plutocracy tying in its interests with foreign capital. The antagonism between the Kodjabashis, on the one hand, who had been represented by the Conservative Party since 1880 and later by the monarchist parties, and, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie, represented by such parties as the Venizelos party, had intensified. The bourgeois-kodjabashi plutocracy, which with the help of foreign powers took over the government of the country, hid behind the ideological slogan of the 'Great Idea' (Megali Idea), with the irrational aim of reconstituting the Eastern Roman Empire with Constantinople as its capital. Later on, during the 4th of August monarcho-fascist dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas, the ideology of the Great Idea was dressed up with the slogan of the 'Third Civilisation' having as its model an idealised Ancient Sparta.

Behind the Great Idea, the bourgeois-kodjabashis hid their true policy and succeeded in maintaining the privileged and semi-feudal relations of the rural economy. They turned Greece into an agricultural supplier to the industrialised countries. They engaged in heavy borrowing, resulting in the complete dependence of the country politically

and economically on foreigners. They imposed on the people huge tax burdens that stifled their productive vitality and potential. They condemned the people to poverty, oppression and exploitation. The industry developed very slowly because external indebtedness drained the Greek economy, prevented its internal accumulation and did not allow the economy to grow. (It remains the case today with Greece's debt to German banks and IMF).

Despite the weak organisation of the working class and lack of a clear perspective, the Greek people began the struggle for the improvement of their living conditions with protests and strikes. In addition to the workers, the peasantry too waged a constant struggle with the bourgeois-tsiflikades (rich landowners), demanding land, culminating in the peasant uprising in Kilerer, from 6 to 19 March 1910. Objective preconditions were maturing for a radical internal change.

The October Socialist Revolution was the main influence for the creation of the Communist Party of Greece. The October Revolution helped the revolutionary proletarian forces of the country to become aware of their mission and to proceed with the creation of the party.

This article does not allow detailed expansion on the struggle of the Greek communists in the 1920s and 1930s but suffice it to say that they acquired significant experience and knowhow in operating as an underground network, leading numerous strikes, serving sentences in exile and rotting in prisons. It was the generation impoverished by the wars of 1912 to 1922 and the tragic defeat in the Greco-Turkish war (the so called Asia Minor Catastrophe) who fought hard to improve their lives and to resist their ruling class.

Ioannis Metaxas, who studied in Germany and was a graduate of the German military academy, an admirer of Mussolini and especially Hitler, became Greece's fascist dictator in 1936, appointed by King George II of Greece. He had to side with the Allies, with regret on his part because ideologically, aesthetically etc., he was in favour of the Axis,



but Greek capital demanded siding with Britain. Metaxas' foreign policy was under the control of the palace, which was closely linked to the interests of Great Britain.

During the German occupation, the monarcho-fascist government went to Cairo whilst in Greece the regime called the 'Greek State' (just like the collaborationist Vichy regime in France was dubbed the 'État Français') was imposed after the German invasion and aimed to include Greece in the New Europe of the Axis. The fascist government had state repressive mechanisms, such as the police and gendarmerie used in the fight against communism and wielded legislative power to impose economic measures favouring capital for years to come.

### **The ANDARTIKO (1941-1945) The Greek Resistance**

"I, a child of the Greek people, swear to fight faithfully by the ranks of ELAS, shedding the last drop of my blood, as a true patriot for the expulsion of the enemy from our land, for the freedoms of our people, and still to be a faithful and vigilant guardian of the property and life of the agricultural labourer, I accept the death penalty in advance if I dishonour my status as a warrior of the Nation and the people and I promise to glorify and honour the weapon I hold and not to hand it over unless my Homeland becomes free and the people become masters in their land" (Oath of the first guerrilla group in Roumeli written by Aris Velouchiotis and introduced in 1942 in the Greek mountain region of Grammeni Oxia).

At the outset ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) was a rural army of young men from the mountains who formed the backbone of the resistance. Most of its fighters were males aged between 15 and 25, stationed in units based near their home village. Regiments in Central Macedonia offer some crucial data: 80 percent were farmers or agricultural labourers and only 5 percent were white-collar workers or professionals (teachers and doctors), though the majority were from the region in which they were fighting.

The Greco-Italian war (1940-41) in Albania was a formative experience for them. 50 percent of the veterans of the war against fascist Italy joined ELAS, and were later joined by teenagers. Their politics of armed resistance became the politics of a radical society and a people's democracy (Laokratia).

It was a revolutionary army because for most andartes (partisans) this was a Revolution directed against any return to the pre-war world of Metaxas and his monarcho-fascist dictatorship and against any attempt to reintroduce the monarchy by force with the aid of the British.

In the andartes' eyes, ELAS was fighting for the emancipation of their villages from the domination of the political world of the capital and for independence from their country's elite (the lackeys of international plutocracy). Thus, they also demanded Greece's liberation from the shackles of British capital.

It was the rural people who had for so long been forgotten by their rulers, joined by the city-dwellers who were dying in their thousands from famine during the occupation right next to the houses of the rich who were collaborating. United in their sensitivity to the calls for social change made by ELAS, the people joined a politicised resistance movement organised by the Communist Party, which is what made it so threatening to the established political order. They were fighting for a dual liberation: national liberation from an external oppressor and for internal social reform.

### **What they were fighting against: TERROR**

During the fascist occupation, there were anti-communist sweeps of incredible brutality but these did nothing to quell the resistance. There was torture, daily cold blood en masse shootings of civilian hostages rounded up in lightning sweeps called 'bloccos'. For city-dwellers the bloccos became the equivalent of reprisals for the rural population.

The purpose of such actions was not to punish those responsible for offences, nor to prevent

further crimes. The aim of the terror system was far more far-reaching: to extinguish the will and the imagination of the subject population. Justice in the terror system operated purely demonstratively, for effect. The question of individual guilt or innocence had become all but irrelevant.

The Germans oversaw the formation of new Greek police formations, the building up of paramilitary auxiliary units that were working alongside Wehrmacht commanders in operations against the partisans.

When the Germans had become the new exclusive rulers of the country, they had immediately realised the dangerous situation facing them. They launched fierce attacks and purge operations against 'Free Greece' (i.e., the territories controlled by ELAS). Their tactics were based on terrorising the population and the methodical destruction of the mountain villages of the country. More than 1700 villages were destroyed in the winter of 1943.

From Kalavryta to Distomo the mass executions of civilians created a nightmarish situation. The aim of the Germans was to remove the mountain populations away from ELAS and to condemn the inhabitants to starvation. ELAS, together with the camp of Free Greece and the Resistance, did not have answers to many of the problems that the political power brought with it. They could not solve the food problem of the cities, and they could not be secure a continuous supply of ammunition for the German and Italian weapons with which they had equipped themselves.

All these factors played their part in preventing the social and military power of the resistance from surviving as a political power. The British agents and the domestic forces that relied on them were not prepared to reach any agreement with the Left that would open the prospect of communists coming to power. They therefore sought the absolute destruction of the legacy of the ELAS Resistance, which was their only concern.

What was achieved—what was destroyed—The creation of Free Greece and its legacies

In 1943, EAM (the National Liberation Front) had

been established in wide areas of Greece and had managed to exercise substantial territorial control. The Germans and the collaborationist Greek government were absent. The area was formally under occupation, but in essence it was free.

"The whole central volume that forms the backbone of Greece is completely and utterly independent of the influence or contact with the occupying forces of the Quisling administration in Athens. The borders east and west are blurred and differ from time to time depending on the activity of the Axis forces. But in normal conditions they cross almost parallel the borders of the plain of Thessaly, on the one hand, and the main valleys of Epirus on the other. There are, of course, isolated sections of liberated areas throughout Greece, but this is the largest continuous section and starts unbroken from southern Serbia down to the mountains of Giona and Parnassos. In this you are in complete safety. You can travel from Florina to the outskirts of Athens without anything other than a permit from EAM.

This description of Free Greece was given in August 1943. In his famous report by British Major David Wallace, he added: "I did not realise before I went there how big it is or how free it is. This image is impressively captured in many reports by British liaison officers working with the Greek Armed Resistance.

### **Government of the Mountain**

Before the war, the poor mountainous provinces of Greece had suffered from the indifference of the politicians in Athens. Villages still remained hours away from the nearest road, hospital or law courts. Rural Greece was condemned to backwardness and neglect. The Metaxas' monarcho-fascist dictatorship put an end to any progressive local initiatives by committees able to resolve local issues in the absence of professional lawyers from the towns. He banned a proposed conference which was to have debated the social and economic difficulties facing the countryside.

Any attempt at local self-government was forcibly

dissolved, as a result of which villagers faced arduous journeys and heavy costs in order to receive any official justice.

But from the occupation in 1941 onwards, and the collapse of Athens' authority over the provinces, there was a vacuum which local initiatives started to fill. The dictatorship was deeply unpopular among the rural population, so by protesting against Metaxas' policies, the Communists from the 1930s started building up local support from farmers, even if these had little interest in communism.

Local activists of KKE who already had the esteem of their communities were the ones to spread the word about EAM and to recruit many influential older men in their localities, who before the war would have had nothing to do with young communists.

One of the most popular reforms of EAM concerned the law courts. They established Conciliation Committees making it easy for people to have 'people's justice', in courts that took place on a weekly basis in the village, where proceedings were public, free and conducted in a language everyday people understood. Plaintiffs and defendants presented their own cases and introduced witnesses before a tribunal whose members were appointed by election in the community. It was people's democracy—equality and justice in action. Official EAM guidelines for the People's Courts did not discriminate between the sexes and women became part of public affairs as far as possible.

People's courts were the basis for governing councils and village general assemblies where all citizens over 17, male and female, had the right to vote by secret ballot. New people's committees were set up and undertook actions such as securing the harvest for the needs of the people (the so-called Battle for the Harvest). They would order local olive oil producers and traders, for instance, to declare the quantities they possessed. They set the prices at which firewood could be sold. They forbade private work contracts and set wage rates. Exploitation by the crafty and the well-off stopped, as everything

growing on communal land was harvested by workers under the committee's supervision. Measures were taken to ensure that unemployed workers and children were regularly fed. Surplus crops were sold and any money remaining, after covering local needs, was handed over to EAM for the needs of the struggle.

For small mountain villages, to support of even a few guerrillas was a burdensome obligation. The peasants' surpluses were not large and the frictions that could be created were particularly dangerous for a military force that aspired to develop into a truly People's Army. The solution to this problem was found in the exploitation of stocks created by the adversary's own tax system. The kind of taxation imposed by the authorities created stocks in state warehouses, in the communities. Aris Velouchiotis (nom de guerre of Thanassis Klaras, a communist veteran and the legendary leader of ELAS) decided to seize and open these warehouses, achieving many goals at the same time. In other words, it created stocks of food and materials that allowed the numerical growth of ELAS teams, and brought access to a kind of 'currency' that could buy services and other supplies, while at the same time, part of the confiscated goods could be returned to producers and poor farmers. In this way, ELAS exercised a kind of social policy, while at the same time undermining the institutions and laws of the collaborationist state. In this way, at the beginning of the autumn of 1942, the numerical take-off of ELAS began. The first activity of the guerrilla groups was very prudent. They usually started with the execution of an executive of the state or collaborator with the occupiers. The act was a kind of political declaration as it broke the ties of the occupying authorities with the local government and announced the creation of a new government, which as such had the right to put on trial, judge and kill.

There could be only one master in the mountains now: the andartes. The gendarmerie was disarmed or forced to take refuge in the cities. In the free areas created by the expulsion of the

collaborationist state, a new system of power could now be established and operate, as a state in essence, which in turn supported and invested in ELAS.

From the end of 1942, a British military mission, the Eddie Mayers team, operated in the mountains of central Greece. The group's military and political goals did not include strengthening left-wing guerrilla standards. Their relations with ELAS from the first moment were relations of dislike, suspicion, sabotage. However, the British officers and ELAS could not but cooperate in the conditions then subsisting. ELAS offered free territory and security in which the British could operate. Despite their opposite desire, they offered ELAS the necessary prestige, a kind of international recognition.

The early cooperation between these forced allies was impressive. In November 1942, the andartes, together with the British military, blew up the railway bridge at Gorgopotamos after first neutralising its Italian garrison. The prestige of ELAS was secured. Very many weapons, and ammunition from the disbanded Italian army passed into the hands of the guerrillas. ELAS thus supplied with artillery, automatic weapons, mortars and ammunition now looked like a regular army. It exceeded 30,000 guerrillas.

By 1943, the Communists were the driving force behind the revolutionary self-government institutions of the Resistance, which culminated in the Government of the Mountain.

On Sunday, March 10, 1944, the Political Committee for National Liberation (PEEA) was founded in the village of Viniani in Evrytania. In the village square the Founding Act was read out:

"The main and primary purpose of the Commission is: To coordinate and carry out with all means and with all forces in Greece and on the side of our Allies the struggle against the conquerors. To fight for the expulsion from the country and the defeat of the German and Bulgarian invaders, for the complete national liberation and for the guarantee of the independence and integrity of the

country. To seek our national restoration based on the principle of self-determination of the peoples. To fight for the extermination of internal fascism and the armed traitorous battalions." [...]

The Commission, starting from the realisation that, in order to achieve the above national goals satisfactorily, all national forces had to be involved in this work, considered it as its primary task actively to pursue the formation of a general national coalition government.

One of the most remarkable events in the history of the formation of power in Free Greece was the election process of the National Council. If the PEEA (Political Committee for National Liberation) was the governing body of Free Greece, the National Council was the parliament that ratified its power. The election process was unprecedented in many ways. Undoubtedly the most important aspect was the unconditional participation of women in the electoral process, as well as young people aged 18 and over. But the most important thing was what followed: the political formation, that is, of Free Greece, with institutions staffed by elected members of the National Council and other executives of PEEA. Through them, the social alliances of EAM were consolidated. The announcement of elections was provided by the founding act of PEEA. The elections were scheduled for April 23, 1944, and it was definitely a mass process. We have estimates of 1,800,000 voters, despite conditions of unbelievable persecution by the occupiers. In comparison, in the parliamentary elections that had taken place in January 1936, 1,278,085 people had voted.

At the same time that the Greek people were fighting the conqueror, in the midst of famine and hardship, meeting death on a daily basis, they were also struggling to establish the reconstruction of a country that had been half-destroyed, to educate their barefoot children, to save their culture, to establish local government institutions to govern their country, to consolidate justice and democracy, to consolidate people's power.

The goals were set right from the start:



National Liberation; the restoration of popular sovereignty; the improvement, completion and smooth operation of the institutions of local self-government; the adaptation of the People's Army to the demands of the new reality; the satisfaction of the needs of the Greek people, and the care of the victims of the occupiers; the union of all the Greek people under a single government.

180 representatives were elected for the first meeting of the National Council, held in Koryschades, from 14 to 27 May of the same year. Patriots who belonged to the KKE, the Peasant Party of Greece, the Socialist Party, the Democratic Union, the Union of the Democratic Republic, the Left Liberal Party, the Reform Party, as well as independents took part.

The work of PEEA was particularly rich. It tried to live up to the expectations of all those who had fought with self-denial and heroism against foreign and local tyrants, harvesting the first fruits of the collective work and planting the seeds for the Greece that they wanted in the future. It was a glimpse of the bright future for which EAM/ELAS was fighting.

### **People's Democracy in action—Building the society to come**

In one of the many theatrical plays written for the revolutionary Free Greece by Georgios Kotzioulas, this social vision is expressed clearly:

"In the future we will all be one, villagers and town-dwellers, rich and poor. It is our Will. The People's."

With the Code of Local Self-Government, the PEEA defined the organisation, operation and responsibilities of the District Councils, the Administrative Committees, and the services of the Secretariats. In terms of legislation, it set the minimum maintenance limit for employees and their families and it recognised, for the first time in the history of the country, the equality of women with men, and the wage equality of the working man and the working woman. It allocated forests and pastures to communities. It took care of the

relief of the families of the victims, the needy and the fire victims. It ensured the operation of primary schools, as well as securing as pedagogical centres for teacher training. It printed books, and it also printed money. It founded the National Militia Corps, to safeguard the rights and freedoms of the people.

As mentioned, women were given the vote for the first time in Greece's history. Women entered the resistance through involvement in welfare work and running food kitchens in towns and villages. Others joined the partisans, the andartes, in fighting formations or as nurses and washerwomen. The emancipation of women was also accompanied by EAM's appeal to the young. Through the EPON (United Panhellenic Organisation of Youth), EAM mobilised teenagers in the villages and cities. Their younger siblings, the Aetopoula (Little eagles), carried out many useful tasks under the noses of the Axis authorities. They took part in demonstrations, helped transport supplies and carried messages, organised relief work and laid on cultural events. Many young Eponites served as reserve militia and many advanced into fighting units based far from their homes.

EPON itself emerged as a shadow national organisation to EAM. It organised regional conferences which hundreds of youthful delegates attended. They produced plays and puppet shows with themes drawn from the flames of the National Liberation Struggle.

Almost a thousand village cultural groups were sponsored across Greece, in addition to the travelling theatre troupes.

Reflecting the high value that EAM attached to education, EAM attracted many outstanding educationalists, like Rosa Imvrioti, a pioneer of female emancipation and the first woman principal of a high school in Greece. She embodied the idea of resistance as internal reform and improvement. She established a primitive teacher training college in a mountain village. "A school in every village was her motto. After the defeat of Free Greece- Rosa was written off as a dangerous radical, and Greece



was not to see such an impressive and dedicated effort to improve rural schooling for another 30 years.

The 1950s with their conservatism reflected the counter-revolution and its anti-communism. All these pioneering groups of people were sent into exile, some never to return, and their efforts became a poignant memory of a time when the conventions of Greek life had been challenged with a breath of freedom and people's power.

Many of EAM's leading reformers were university graduates and intellectuals and most saw the countryside through a city-dwellers' eyes. Some of the villagers were also often suspicious of the new social innovations. The most enthusiastic supporters of the cultural events were the partisans themselves, children and young women. But the brutality of the Germans' burning and looting made them look more tolerantly upon EAM's vision of social co-operation. In all these various ways EAM was showing people that politics was no longer the reserve of a specific elite of Athenians and local notables. The emphasis was on organisation. The power of organisation was made visible, encouraging people to persevere with what was dangerous work that alarmed potential opponents.

The schools and nurseries set up built up the support of everyday people for the resistance. They were teaching illiterate children how to write. Whether or not many peasants were able to read the hundreds of pamphlets, posters and broadsheets generated by the underground, the fact was that the press and the educational initiatives generated vast enthusiasm and respect. People felt great pride in supporting a movement which was capable of such innovations. The speeches made by EAM activists on every occasion represented for the inhabitants of Free Greece a quite new style of political practice.

The first person plural WE became the characteristic voice of songs, speeches and posters. "We are the little Eagles. With freedom in our hearts/blessed children of Greece and offspring of the People."

The youth of the villages had become accustomed, within the struggle, to speak before the people.

Perhaps the most important resource available to the revolutionary movement was the enthusiasm of the people. This is what the communists did. For them, popular support would not come so much from propaganda (notwithstanding the sense of passionate intensity and involvement they were putting across) but through the construction of a new revolutionary morality and the force of their own personal example. A powerful sense of patriotism inspired people to support the resistance 'to take to the mountain' and fight. EAM stressed the need for national unity. This was already a reality in Free Greece. There the people were boss in their own land. According to EAM's manifesto 'Two Years Activity', "The whole-hearted support of the people had led to a general People's rule in which hundreds of thousands of Greeks live and work in harmony, in security and order and fight with enthusiasm as pioneers for the freedom of the entire country.

And all this was happening at a time when the conquerors, seeing their impending defeat, were setting fire to villages and executing patriots with a vengeful fury, while the local reaction that had taken refuge in the Middle East was preparing for the enslavement of the Greek people to the British imperialists.

## Part 2

### The British in Greece

English historian Elizabeth Barker writes that during WW2, the British government "continued to behave as if Greece was its fiefdom". The only military aid that Britain gave to Greece was Italian loot from North Africa, while at the same time undermining efforts to buy modern aircraft from the US, which eventually, although paid for by Greece, ended up in the RAF.

The British presence in occupied Greece was a brutal colonial operation that led to the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). Churchill considered Greece to be

an integral part of the British Empire and wanted exclusive control over it:

"Even the last British employee controlled the Greek government abroad (exiled in Cairo) completely. They controlled, almost completely, all the resistance organizations inside Greece. Except for EAM, with which they were obliged to discuss and negotiate", writes Phoebos Grigoriadis, chief of staff of ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) in the Attica-Boeotia region, in his book *Resistance*.

The British officially kept more than 150 officers in the Greek mountains—a number outrageously greater than their war needed, but absolutely necessary for their ultimate aspirations. It is estimated that in Greek territory British secret agents were numerous, and more than 5,000 Greeks had some connection with the various English secret services.

The anglophile General Secretary of the Union for People's Democracy (ELD) and co-leader of the National Liberation Front (EAM), Elias Tsirimokos, describes the English who were in the Greek mountains:

"Most of them had common characteristics. Young, brave, healthy, sportsmen, sharp as a needle, with sincere contempt for the people and pure hatred for the idea of social change. They parachuted in our mountains with the will to serve their homeland and with the taste of adventure. Left alone on their own initiative, they had all the appetite to do something, not only brave actions, but also their first steps in imperial politics. [...] And here they were, in a small, backward place, representatives of a Great Power [...] they probably acquired the mentality of the children of very rich or very strong parents who are left to do whatever comes to their mind, knowing that they have 'their backs'. [...] They could not approach, feel and love the proud people who fought for their country, but they had not learned, nor did they want to learn, to flatter foreigners. On the contrary, every such person was very willing to be considered an 'enemy of England'" (published in the newspaper *Acropolis*, 21 January 1973).

Ordinary Greeks in the countryside saw the English as saviours. They opened their homes and their hearts. The head of the British Military Mission, Brigadier General Eddie Myers, describes his tours in the countryside and the warmth of the Greeks:

"I could have ended up in the house of one of the poorest Greeks, who, no matter how poor he was, always behaved with the greatest generosity and the highest spirit of hospitality. [...] They always gave us not only the best they had, but also gave from the little they had. It could seem pointless to an Englishman, but it showed the quality of these Greek mountaineers".

Myers, despite the subsequent compliments for the Greeks, during the Occupation at least, hated them. "I do not trust any Greek," he said, considering all the inhabitants of this country 'Asians' and most Asian of all Aris. (Referring to Aris Velouchiotis, the leader of ELAS).

Most of his officers had the same feelings. One of them, calls the Greeks "the hairy monkeys that infect this country", writes the historian R Clogg.

What must be emphasised is that the British officers, both during their period of action in the Greek mountains, and after the liberation, in their books and interviews, "judged the Greeks in accordance with the aims of British policy" (O Smith). No person, no organisation, no event is presented positively if it does not identify with their policy.

"In Greece, the testimonies of British officers against EAM/ELAS were exploited for political reasons. These testimonies were a valuable help to the post-war governments, in the context of their attempt to falsify Greek history. Now we can happily put things in their place" (O Smith, from the *Proceedings of the Conference Greece 1936-1944*).

To those who willingly obey their orders, the British were a little more tolerant, without ceasing to underestimate and ridicule them.

The best moment between EAM and the British was when the subordination of ELAS to the Middle

East Headquarters was signed. Mentioning even the name 'ELAS' was banned in Cairo by English censorship, writes the poet and diplomat Giorgos Seferis in his Diary.

### **How 'their' imperialist history is written:**

The abduction of the German Lieutenant General Kreipe in Crete was widely publicised because it was carried out by the English officer Patrick Lee Fermor and thus became legendary.

Coincidentally, on the exact same day in the Peloponnese, the permanent lieutenant Manolis Stathakis, with ELAS guerrillas, ambushed and killed the German Lieutenant General Krech but the fact was silenced and no one mentions this important success for all the Balkans.

Likewise, the great battle of ELAS against superior German forces in Karoutes on August 5, 1944, was led by Colonel Rigos. US Officer Ford and British Officer Joe were watching, raising serious doubts about whether the partisans would be able to stop the iron-clad Hitlerites. The Greek colonel interrupted them: "No one will escape". In a little while, the American excitedly threw his hat in the air during the successive phases of the battle and constantly repeated: "Tomorrow you will hear how much Cairo will broadcast about the battle". The Greek colonel stopped him again: "They will not say anything". And indeed, they did not.

As Christopher Montague Woodhouse, successor of Eddie Myers as head of the British military mission in Greece and faithful servant of imperialism, later admitted, "The BBC had orders to mention only Zervas—head of EDES, the British sponsored resistance."

The subversive activity of the British officers against the National Liberation Front (EAM) movement is reflected in a confidential report of Brigadier General Myers, who wrote the following—for the first report to his superiors—two days after his arrival in Cairo:

"X – 12 August 1943, Strictly Confidential (85-4 A.S.)

"According to your latest instructions, I have

instructed the British and Greek agents working under my administration to torpedo the work of ELAS and EAM and to prevent them from stabilising their position and gaining a dominant influence in Greece. However, such an outcome is problematic as the monarchists have no political influence in the country and their leaders are hated by the Greek people. [...] On the contrary, the political and military organisation of EDES is making remarkable progress, especially in Epirus. It is imperative that it be given war materiel and that we strengthen it morally. In my opinion, this organisation will be useful to us, on the one hand as a counterbalance to ELAS and on the other hand, when it (EDES) has been strengthened, it will possibly be able to be used against it (ELAS). One day it will be necessary to disband ELAS. [...] I have the impression that it would be useful for our agents to get in touch with the representatives of the Government (the collaborationist state) in order to encourage in them the idea that they have the duty and the right to hand over the leaders of EAM and ELAS to the occupation authorities and to assist in the capture of their agents to such an extent that these organisations, when the time comes, will be unable to oppose British interests.

"In this field, EDES helped us, it already handed over to Colonel Dertilis and Minister Tavoularis many personalities of the EAM, who are now in the hands of the Germans. [...]

"I think it would be better to delay the liberation of Greece for six months or a year than to allow it to fall under the rule of EAM" (Report published for the first time in October 1945 in the Bulletin of the Hellenic-American Association of the USA and subsequently in 1967 in the book by the French historian Jacques de Launay *Major Controversies of Contemporary History*).

In 1978, Brigadier General Myers, questioned about this particular document at a conference entitled *Greece 1936-1944*, claimed to have been unaware of its existence. Whether he told the truth or not, there has been no other text in which British politics in practice is so clearly captured.

Along the same lines with Myers, Colonel Tom Barnes writes: "I believe the best solution is for Greece to become a British protectorate for ten to twenty years after the war."

An American report mentions these plans, which still remain buried along with a wealth of other information in British classifieds:

"At that time a small group of capable officers tried to divert attention to the need to encircle and, if necessary, imprison the communist commissars and captains who ruled the ELAS administration" (F Spencer, 'War and Post-war Greece', from the book by Andreas Kedros *The Greek Resistance 1940-'44*).

The British were discussing a plan to gather an English brigade in the mountains for the capture of the General Staff and the violent dissolution of ELAS. For EAM, a popular mass movement, to be out of their control was clearly not tolerable to the British who took the view that when the time came, it would either have to surrender or be dissolved by force. That is why, after April 1943 the British authorities proceeded to prepare the head of the British military mission to Greece for what was to follow:

"The Cairo authorities consider that after the liberation of Greece, a civil war is almost inevitable" (Myers). And this is exactly what happened.

### **The defeat of ELAS**

In May 1944 it had been roughly agreed in the Lebanon Conference that all non-collaborationist factions would participate in a Government of National Unity. Eventually 6 out of 24 ministers were appointed by EAM. Additionally, a few weeks before the withdrawal of the German troops in October 1944, it had been reaffirmed in the Caserta Agreement that all collaborationist forces would be tried and punished accordingly; and that all resistance forces would participate in the formation of the new Greek Army under the command of the British.

When the British entered Athens in mid-October 1944, things were so contradictory in the recruitment and operation of the guerrillas

that, while they could have come down and occupied strategic positions, they did not do so and essentially left Athens and Piraeus unfortified in the hands of the British and their colonial troops.

No fighting took place when they first landed at Skaramagas, Keratsini and then Faliro. Without any battle, they were instead greeted by the ELASites and their reserve and the EAM, chanting "The Allies came", waving British, American and Soviet flags together and holding laurels. The British did not fight, they simply came in and the Greeks welcomed them. Yet, on 1 December, the British commander Ronald Scobie ordered the unilateral disarmament of EAM-ELAS. The EAM ministers resigned on 2 December and EAM called for a rally in central Athens on the 3rd, requesting the immediate punishment of the collaborationist Security Battalions and the withdrawal of the "Scobie order". The rally of some 200,000 people was shot at by the Greek police and gendarmerie, leaving 28 protesters dead and 148 wounded. These killings ushered in a full-blown armed confrontation between EAM and the government forces at first (which included the Security Battalions), and during the second half of December, between EAM and the British military forces.

The British entered Athens without resistance and even the guerrilla forces in the nearby mountain of Parnitha did not come down. ELAS was very wrongly given instructions to turn to a fight against Zervas in Epirus. When in fact ELAS could hold Athens in their hands, they were told to turn away. Only when there was an attempt by the British to enter the National Road to go to the Peloponnese did ELAS attack them and the British had to change their mind. However, inside Athens, British snipers used the Acropolis as a fortress and ELAS would not shoot against them out of respect for the monument, even if the shameful attitude of the British respected nothing. The 33 days of fierce clashes and sacrifices known as *The Dekemvriana* (The December events) are the climax of class struggle between the Greek people and the



British-backed bourgeoisie and its collaborationist machinery. This period and its lessons will be the subject of another article in the very near future.

The Soviets had contractual obligations towards the British, and ELAS was perceived as part of the Red Army. It was impossible to be six months away from ending the war and have another war between the components of the allied front on a strategically important spot of the Balkans. These were very difficult and extremely unlucky circumstances for the revolutionary movement in Greece. In the existing historical research, even by the Greek Communist Party in its most honest phases, not enough emphasis is given to factors such as the timing when these events took place, the potential they had, and what correlations of power existed.

### **The fallacy of blaming Stalin for every failed revolution**

In the following extract that comes from his book *The essential Stalin*, Bruce Franklin offers a clear answer to unfounded accusations:

"Stalin's role in the Spanish Civil War likewise comes under fire from the 'left.' Again taking their cue from Trotsky and such professional anti-Communist ideologues as George Orwell, many 'socialists' claim that Stalin sold out the Loyalists. A similar criticism is made about Stalin's policies in relation to the Greek partisans in the late 1940s, which we will discuss later. According to these 'left' criticisms, Stalin didn't 'care' about either of these struggles, because of his preoccupation with internal development and 'Great Russian power.' The simple fact of the matter is that in both cases Stalin was the only national leader anywhere in the world to support the popular forces, and he did this in the face of stubborn opposition within his own camp and the dangers of military attack from the leading aggressive powers in the world (Germany and Italy in the late 1930s, the US ten years later).

"After the showdown against the popular forces occurred in Greece we meet another 'left' criticism of Stalin, similar to that made about his role in Spain but even further removed from the facts of

the matter. As in the rest of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Communists had led and armed the heroic Greek underground and partisan fighters. In 1944 the British sent an expeditionary force commanded by General Scobie to land in Greece, ostensibly to aid in the disarming of the defeated German and Italian troops. As unsuspecting as the comrades in Vietnam and Korea who were to be likewise 'assisted', the Greek partisans were slaughtered by their British allies who used tanks and planes in an all-out offensive, which ended in February 1945 with the establishment of a right-wing dictatorship under a restored monarchy. The British even rearmed and used the defeated Nazi 'Security Battalions.' After partially recovering from this treachery, the partisan forces rebuilt their guerrilla apparatus and prepared to resist the combined forces of Greek fascism and Anglo-American imperialism. By late 1948 full-scale civil war raged, with the right-wing forces backed up by the intervention of US planes, artillery, and troops. The Greek resistance had its back broken by another betrayal not at all by Stalin but by Tito, who closed the Yugoslav borders to the Soviet military supplies that were already hard put to reach the landlocked popular forces. This was one of the two main reasons why Stalin, together with the Chinese, led the successful fight to have the Yugoslav 'Communist' Party officially thrown out of the international Communist movement. Stalin understood very early the danger to the world revolution posed by Tito's ideology, which served as a Trojan horse for US Imperialism".

### **Testimony of an anti-revisionist Greek fighter**

Giorgos Gousias (1915-1979) was a member of the Politburo of the KKE, a key collaborator of its General Secretary Nikos Zachariadis during the revolutionary period. We are translating here his first hand historical account published in his book *The reasons for the defeats and the split of the KKE and the Greek Left*.

Gousias writes about how Stalin agreed that the reason for the defeat of the Greeks (in 1949) was



the unsolved problem of reserves, the unresolved issue of supply of the units in southern Greece, the open betrayal of Tito, and the enormous support that the Anglo-Americans gave to the local reaction. Gousias recalls that Stalin said "well done" to the Greek communists who had had to retreat, as they could not continue the war after the situation that was created in the Balkans and that he agreed on the new tasks that were facing the movement in Greece.

Gousias refers extensively to a meeting between Stalin and the leadership of KKE, where Stalin answered a question on rumours that Tito and his associates were spreading. Rumours were spread that in a meeting Stalin had had with the Yugoslavs, he allegedly told them that he did not agree with the armed struggle of the Greek communists and that he asked them why they were patronising it. Zachariadis then asked Stalin why he did not help ELAS. Stalin replied that he could not do it because the Soviets would be in conflict with the British and they did not have a navy to carry out such an action. Gousias writes that Stalin considered it a mistake of ELAS that it did not fight the British (right from the start), and he considered it a mistake that after the loss of Athens, ELAS did not continue to fight and much more that it reached the point of voluntarily surrendering its weapons.

In that meeting, Zachariadis told Stalin that he knew of the existence of a letter by Georgi Dimitrov, then head of the foreign department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, which was sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece when the battle was taking place in Athens in December 1944, suggesting stopping the battle because the situation did not allow for the Soviet Union and the People's Republics to offer assistance. Stalin replied to Zachariadis that Dimitrov could not speak for the Central Committee of the CPSU. Zachariadis (who only returned to Greece from the Dachau concentration camp in May 1945) had received a notification from Dimitrov that a leading member of the KKE (Siantos) was an agent of the British. The discussion

with Stalin reinforced the view of Zachariadis that the struggle against the Hitlerite-fascist occupation had been betrayed by people like Siantos.

Gousias writes about how Zachariadis and Stalin and other members of the Soviet leadership discussed the deployment of the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) fighters and the civilian population. It was decided that all the people who had retreated to Albania would be taken by the Soviets by boat and stationed in the capital of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. The others who entered Bulgaria would be sent to various People's Republics. Stalin ordered the ships to be ready immediately and the transport to begin in October-November 1949.

Zachariadis thanked Stalin and the other members of the CPSU leadership for this gesture. Stalin said to Zachariadis: "You have nothing to thank us for, you did a lot for us while we could not help you, but we reserve the right to do so."

With the document signed by Stalin and the decisions they made about the refugees, and after all the discussions they had to clear up a number of issues, Zachariadis left the Soviet Union and returned to Albania.

As soon as Zachariadis returned, the Politburo of the KKE met and gave the document, that was written in Russian and signed by Stalin, to other members to read. Gousias writes that they were all satisfied with the discussion:

"With understanding we saw everything that Stalin said about the difficulties that were presented and our fight that was not helped. And we felt satisfied, because there was a common perception about the causes of our defeat and about the new tasks that now came before us. We decided to convene the 6th plenary session of the KKE Central Committee".

In October 1949, the 6th plenary session of the KKE's Central Committee took place in Bureli, Albania. Petrov and the delegation of the Central Committee of the Albanian Labour Party, headed by Mehmet Sehu, took part in its work on behalf of the CPSU. Gousias writes about the discussion

which took place and the decision which was made unanimously and published as 'The new situation and our duties'. It read as follows:

"1. Our confrontation in 1949 in Vitsi and Grammos was one of the toughest battles (napalm bombs were used for the first time against Communists). The fighters and the cadres of the Democratic Army fought well, but faced with the enormous superiority of the opponent we were defeated. The tactic of continuing the war definitely expresses a petty-bourgeois spirit of despair, which is why the political bureau of the KKE Central Committee acted correctly, following the tactic of retreating, which prevented the opponent from annihilating the main force of the Democratic Army.

"2. With the battle of Vitsi-Grammos, an important phase in the post-war course of the popular movement of our country closed. The following conclusions were drawn: (a) In December 1944 the KKE organised the heroic resistance of our people, against the English intervention. ELAS, however, due to a series of opportunistic mistakes in the period of Hitler's occupation, was in many respects unprepared to face victoriously the intrigue of English imperialism. (b) The persistence of the KKE and the EAM after Varkiza, for a smooth democratic development had been exhausted. The broad popular strata were convinced that there was no other way out of the armed struggle imposed on the people by the foreign and local reaction. At the same time, this policy of the KKE and the EAM prevented British imperialism from intervening militarily. (c) The time for the start of the armed struggle was appropriate. Internally, this need became consciousness for the broad masses. Externally we relied on the People's Republics, we had not yet Tito's apostasy and the balance of power on a global scale had changed in favour of democracy and socialism. The KKE, organising and leading the new armed struggle, drew the right line for the creation of the people's army with the aim of overthrowing the local reaction. A correct combination tactic of the regular army

war and the guerrilla warfare was elaborated. (e) The 5th plenary session, based on a correct analysis of the situation that prevailed in 1948 and early 1949, declared that we can win the turning point in our internal development. The Democratic Army, despite the fact that it could not solve its main problem of the reserves, came out of the test of 1948 stronger. The international situation was generally favourable for the camp of democracy – hence the promise we received in the autumn of 1948 from the leadership of the CPSU for help in military means and other supplies. (f) the outcome of this year's confrontation with the local reaction, determined the fact that the party, in conditions where the difficulties for our struggle grew mainly due to the betrayal of Tito and its exploitation by the Americans, their increased insistence to keep the bridgehead in Greece, greater support for monarcho-fascism, etc., could not solve the basic problem of the reserves of the Democratic Army and the supply of its units in Central and Southern Greece, failed to break the situation created by monarcho-fascism in Greece and combine a strong mass movement in the cities with the war of the Democratic Army.

"3. The 6th plenary session, based on the new situation, summarised the following events:

"Stop the armed struggle. Transfer of the centre of gravity of the work of the KKE to the organisation and guidance of the political struggles of all strata of the working people. 'Based on the programme for the democratisation of Greece, it is necessary to unite all the progressive forces of the country, in a common front fighting for the issues of the people, demobilisation, independence and peace'".

Gousias writes that the Communists were forced into a temporary retreat. However, the three-year heroic epic of the Democratic Army of Greece was an invaluable asset of the revolutionary movement. Gousias makes a strong point that as the Greeks retreated, a world-historic event took place, the second in a row after the October Revolution, the victory of China's popular forces, and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China.

The Communist Party of China had called the struggle of the Democratic Army of Greece "the second front of the Chinese war".

Gousias' account, that is full of historical accuracy and Marxist objectivity, is in stark contrast with the phenomenon of liberal tears over the defeated Greek Revolution and the Greek partisans who were allegedly "abandoned to the fascists by the Allies both capitalist and Soviet". One needs to consider a few important points that Australian anti-imperialist activist Jay Tharappel makes in order to counter such liberal hypocrisy and lies.

"Even if Greece succeeded in becoming a socialist country, most of these liberals would probably denounce it as 'Stalinist' given that the KKE of the time would effectively have been in charge, so why do they pretend they care? Some seem to like communist victims, especially if their victimhood can be blamed on Stalin, but once they take power they become evil Stalinists.

"The USSR already lost 27 million people in WW2, if you don't have to deal with the consequences of sending the Red Army to Greece to help ELAS (Greek resistance) against the fascists, then you're in no moral position to judge. The Red Army was not full of Stalin's personal robots; they were conscripts with families who had already been through hell.

"The mistake lies with ELAS (not the USSR) for handing over their weapons in the Varkiza agreement at a time when they had four-fifths of Greece under their control, and then agreeing to the British proposal to arrive with their troops on the promise that elections would follow, which never came because the British handed the weapons of the resistance over to the fascists.

"Liberals forget that 'Nazi terror' did not just 'come to an end' but was defeated by the Soviet Union, for whose sacrifices we will be indebted for life. Instead of gratitude, some prefer to spit on the liberation of Europe by complaining about Stalinism like the liberal hypocrites they are.

"No, the Greek partisans were not 'abandoned to the fascists' by the Allies, the Allies re-armed the

fascists to fight the partisans. Talking about Stalin 'abandoning the partisans' means letting British imperialism off the hook."

Also another thing that we need to counter is any notion that the British Labour party was proposing anything different than the policy of Churchill.

With the electoral victory of Labour in London, the movement in Greece was encouraged and the right wingers were terrified. However, it soon became clear that the Labour Party, for all its pre-election pounding on Churchill for his policy during the December incidents, was determined to continue on the same bloody path until every progressive citizen in Greece was exterminated. They compiled the report of Sir Walter Citrine, the trade union leader of the British TUC (Trade Union Congress), who rushed to Athens in search of mass graves. The war of impressions was put into practice, the counting of corpses (cadaverology), which is after all a constant tactic of imperialism (as we can see from the recent example of the massacre in Bucha, Ukraine) and it aimed to present EAM, ELAS, OPLA (Organisation for the Protection of the People's Struggle) and the KKE as criminal organisations. The crews of Citrine were digging up civilian victims of the bombings, and their provocations reached the point of presenting the victims of December, in shared graves throughout Attica, mixed with bodies of the security forces and guerrillas, horribly deformed. The aim was to attribute all the dead, both perpetrators and victims, fighters and anonymous alike to "the communist butchers". The movement in Greece responded to this defamation campaign by the deeply anti-communist lackey of Labour and its trade unionists, with the publication of the pamphlet entitled *The Hellenic Katyn* where the Goebbelsian propaganda is debunked.

### **Agents of colonial barbarism**

It is significant to note that the man in command of the British Police Mission to Greece was Sir Charles Wickham, who had been assigned by Churchill to oversee the new Greek security

forces—in effect, to recruit collaborators. He was one of the persons who traversed the empire establishing the infrastructure needed for its survival. He established one of the most vicious camps, in which prisoners were tortured and murdered, at Gyaros.

He had served in the Boer War, during which concentration camps in the modern sense were invented by the British. He then fought in Russia, as part of the allied force sent in 1918 to aid White Russian czarist forces in opposition to the Bolshevik Revolution. After Greece, he moved on in 1948 to Palestine. But his qualification for Greece was this: Sir Charles was the first Inspector General of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), from 1922 to 1945.

The RUC was founded in 1922, following what became known as the Belfast pogroms of 1920-22, when Catholic streets were attacked and burned. It was conceived not as a regular police body, but as a counter-insurgency one. The new force contained murder gangs headed by men like a head constable who used bayonets on his victims because it prolonged their agonies.

It is the narrative of empire and of course, they applied it to Greece. That same combination of concentration camps, putting the murder gangs in uniform, and calling it the police. That is how colonialism works. They will use whatever means are necessary, one of which is terror and collusion with terrorists, and of course it delivers.

The head of MI5 reported in 1940 that "in the personality and experience of Sir Charles Wickham, the fighting services have at their elbow a most valuable friend and counsellor". When the intelligence services needed to integrate the Greek Security Battalions—the Third Reich's 'Special Constabulary'—into a new police force, they used him.

We must demonstrate the timelessness of such methods and the genealogy of legalising the fascist elements that are in the service of imperialism, offering them equipment, clothing and safe transport. The security battalions were supposed to be condemned by the exiled government in the

Middle East if they continued to carry weapons after the withdrawal of the Germans. The same was decided in Tehran for all the collaborators of the Axis. The British tried to save the collaborators of the Germans cornered by the resistance, who were charged with horrific crimes against their compatriots throughout the occupation. They were taken to prisons like Goudi, gathering the outcry of the people who demanded justice.

Before the events of December, the people would see on the streets their former torturers moving around freely in a provocative way, ending up in the National Guard and becoming the guarantors of the monarcho-fascist restoration. We can only think of the recent coordinated efforts of the NATO countries for the evacuation of the 'heroic' fighters of Azov from Mariupol, in which Greece together with France and Turkey wanted to save the trapped fascists, or even the sporadic transfers of islamofascists from Syria and Iraq by US helicopters to other fronts of their dirty wars.

British imperialism shaped the character of the post-war regime in Greece and equipped it with the colonial methods that it had perfected in its historical course, such as the organisation of concentration camps and ways of torturing democratic and patriotic people, as first manifested in the desert of El Daba and then in the Greek prison islands of Gyaros, Makronissos, Agios Efstratios and other hellish prisons around the country.

History has nested in those prisons and places of execution, and the splendour of the Greek communists who defied death and torture spread its wings, not in words but in deeds, because they struggled for liberation, independence and integrity against fascism and for a better world without exploitation. As Communists of today, it is our duty to honour their memory and responsibility to learn from the history of their sacrifices. Where the Greek revolution failed other revolutions (like the Chinese revolution) prevailed. Every time the red flag falls in one place, it gets raised again in another and will continue to be raised until the final defeat of imperialism and the victory of socialism.

# The political stance of the Communist Party of Greece... a communist stance?

## "Gigantic amounts" of capital export from Russia

Chilean Communist Party (Proletarian Action)

September 23 2023

### Part 1: Critical approach to the positions of the CPG

- Reasons for a response to the Communist Party of Greece (CPG)
- Greece must leave NATO! Or should not it?
- The CPG's subterfuge to avoid debate
- No support for capitalists?
- Reactionary Venezuela?
- The member organizations of the Platform "ignore or deny" that the current mode of production in the world is capitalist...

### Part 2: Criticism of the ideological foundations of the CPG

- A handful of countries?
- "Imperialist pyramid" or Lenin's theory of imperialism?
- Idealism hidden in "imperialist pyramid"
- Methodological error
- No participation of communists in governments led by the bourgeoisie?
- Are there no stages between capitalism and socialism?
- Erroneous positions are not harmless
- Incorrect and damaging derivations

### Part 3: Imperialism vs. imperialism?

- A long work
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- A big mess
- China and Russia belong to the G20
- State presence in Russian companies

- Foreign penetration of the Russian economy
- "Gigantic amounts" of capital export from Russia

*(The previous sections have been published in past issues.)*

### "Gigantic amounts" of capital export from Russia

What does the CPG lecture us on the "export"<sup>(1)</sup> of capital from Russia?

*"In 2014, Russia ranked eighth among exporters of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) globally and fell to 18th place in the world ranking due to sanctions in 2018. In 2021, Russia's FDI reached \$65.189 billion, of which \$1.808 billion had been invested in CIS countries and \$63.381 billion in 'far' countries."<sup>(2)</sup>*

Thus we learn that in 2014 (9 years ago) Russia occupied a remarkable 8th place in the "ranking" of the largest "exporters of capital" in the world. It seems that the CPG considers this to be a relevant "scientific" data to prove that Russia is a great exporter of capital, thus fulfilling the "scientific requirement" that Lenin had established for the definition of an imperialist country. Unfortunately for the CPG, Russia was not stubborn and did not retain this place in the "ranking" of the world's largest exporters of foreign direct investment and decided to drop 10 places in 2018 to a not so spectacular 18th. For 2021, the CPG simply omits Russia's place in the "ranking". Instead, we read a huge number.



The astuteness of the CPG never ceases to amaze us. Reading its paragraph on Russia's capital exports, what remains in the head is the data delivered for the year 2014, forming the imaginary that Russia would be a major exporter of capital that would occupy a place among the "top ten" of the largest "exporters" of capital of the countries recognized by the United Nations and for which data are available.

The place occupied by Russia in 2021 was 20, in other words, from the year 2014 to the year 2021 Russia lost 12 places. What imperialism!

But, the issue of capital export is not only one of numbers, that is, of quantities of capital, but also of the way in which capital leaves a given country for abroad. For this it is necessary to understand what is export<sup>3)</sup> of capital. Now, between the concepts used by political economy and those used by the economic science of scientific socialism there are profound divergences. So also in how to understand the outflow of capital from a given country abroad:

The first, i.e., political economy, distinguishes two forms of capital outflow from a country abroad: Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (the capitalist invests in assets, usually by way of the purchase of shares) and Foreign Indirect or Portfolio Investment (FII) (the capitalist invests in funds or portfolios). The way in which the capital is placed abroad defines, according to this conception, its type, or rather, its character. Regardless, however, of the form that capital assumes when it leaves the country and is placed abroad, this conception considers both forms of capital outflows as capital exports.

Different is the conception of capital export according to the economic theory of scientific socialism:

*"We—says Hilferding—understand by capital export the export of value, which is destined to create added value abroad."<sup>4)</sup>*

This involves the purchase of means of

production, labor power and sources of raw materials abroad. Not all capital leaving a country in the form of money to be invested abroad is capital export.

It seems to us that the CPG does not distinguish between the forms of capital leaving a given country abroad, at least not in the way that the economic theory of scientific socialism does, perhaps because, without saying so openly or perhaps without realizing it, it adheres to the postulates of political economy, that is, to the postulates of the ideologues of the bourgeoisie.

The economic science of scientific socialism distinguishes the outflow of capital not according to the form in which the capital is invested abroad (directly or indirectly), but according to the aim which its owner, the capitalist, pursues in investing the capital outside the country. The capitalist pursues:

- the creation of new value added through the purchase of labor force in the country receiving the capital (the investment) and of the means of production necessary for the exploitation of that labor force<sup>5)</sup> and, if the industry receiving the capital belongs to the extractive sector of society, of sources of raw materials; or
- the redistribution of the value added already created.

When the outflow of capital from a country to a foreign country is aimed at creating new value added by exploiting the workers of the country receiving the capital, it is called capital export. If the aim of the capitalist is not to create new value added, but to redistribute the capital created in his own country, it is called capital flight<sup>6)</sup>. For example, if the owner of capital in a certain country does not want to pay the high taxes imposed by the State of his country and knows another country where the tax burden is low or nil, he decides to take his capital out of the country and place it in that other country. In this process no new value added has

been created, but the value added created in the capitalist's country of origin has been redistributed to the second country. Or another example: an organized crime capitalist wants to cover the tracks of his misdeeds. Knowing that there is a country that does not demand explanations about the origin of the money, he decides to take the money out of his country and deposit it in a bank abroad, where he can hide the money obtained by illegal means without major problems and thus evade national legislation. Once again, no new added value has been created, but a redistribution of that already created. The country receiving the escaped capital can benefit in two ways: either through low taxes, or through the circulation (in its own economy or abroad) of the foreign capital, i.e. the capital that escaped from the country where it absorbed new value and where it grew.

Capital that leaves a country without creating added value abroad is therefore escaped (and not exported) capital.

In summary: In the first form of capital outflow (intended to create new value added), the export of capital, we find mainly what political economy calls FDI, but also partly what it understands by FII, for example, when a bank (or more rarely an industry) makes a loan to organizations abroad (these organizations can be other banks, industries and even governments or public enterprises) that creates new value added indirectly because it allows the borrower to invest it in something to create value added. According to the economic theory of scientific socialism, these cases, i.e., cases in which one organization lends money to another organization abroad, also constitute capital export and are relevant both for understanding imperialism and for defining imperialist countries.

A concrete example of capital export is the installation of branches by the Santander Bank in most of the world's economies (capital export through the purchase of labor, means of production

and/or sources of raw materials) to exploit workers in distant regions.

A less clear example of capital exportation is Santander Bank's lending to the Chilean Army<sup>7)</sup>. If the loan to the Chilean Army indirectly creates value through the transactions carried out by the Chilean Army and the Chilean Army repays the loan with interest to Santander Bank, Santander Bank has engaged in capital export in the form of a loan. If, on the other hand, Santander Bank decides to lend the money to the Chilean army for "altruistic" reasons (i.e., to receive services from the Chilean military) without receiving interest, it is not a capital export but a capital flight.

In the second form of capital outflow, capital flight, that in which no new added value is created, but rather the added value already created is distributed, we find, as we have mentioned, from speculative acts (speculation with shares in the stock exchanges and the derivatives market, speculation with the value of currencies, metals, etc.) to corruption and organized crime whose perpetrators seek to hide their traces (e.g. tax evasion, money laundering, illegal commercial transactions), including money transfers to NGOs, political parties, etc. When a company invests its monetary capital abroad (usually in a bank) without creating new value, but in order to:

1. transfer the value added from its own country to the country where it invested the funds<sup>8)</sup>, or
2. participate in the process of distribution through speculation of the added value already created,

then the economic science of scientific socialism understands this kind of capital outflow not as capital export, but simply as capital flight. Capital export, then, according to scientific socialism, is essentially an outflow of money capital (sometimes even in physical form, i.e., in the form of means of production) that ultimately leads to the creation of surplus value.

The export of capital (in the form of investments or loans) must be distinguished from capital flight, which is usually a corrupt act, rejected even by sectors of the bourgeoisie itself, in which various capitalists place their capital, in the form of money obtained on the basis of the exploitation of national workers, in some "tax havens" or similar countries in order to evade taxes, hide illegal acts, etc. Nor does the placement of capital in, for example, stock market values for speculative purposes, count as capital export.

Therefore, not all capital outflows from one country to another have theoretical relevance for the study of a nation's imperialist character.<sup>9)</sup> Only capital destined for exploitation to create value added has analytical relevance in this regard.<sup>10)</sup> However, measuring exactly how much value added flows back to each country that has exported capital is a daunting task that is far beyond the scope of this article, so such an investigation will be omitted on this occasion. Comparing data on the amount of capital flowing out of the country and trying to determine (approximately) what proportion of this is capital export and what proportion is capital flight will be a sufficient indication, at least for the purposes of this article, which is to answer the CPG's argument that there is supposedly sufficient data to demonstrate Russia's possible imperialist character.

The concepts used by political economy differ from those used by the economic theory of scientific socialism, and consequently the available statistical data are not structured according to the logic of the economic theory of scientific socialism, but according to the concepts used by political economy. This complicates the research work for those of us who adhere to the first type of science, but does not make it impossible.

In this sense, an important fact that brings us closer to the study of capital flight and export from Russia is the determination of the destination

country of capital leaving Russia. If the destination countries are countries with rules that facilitate tax evasion or concealment of traces of illegal activity, the capital (at least a large part of it) with such destinations cannot be considered as capital export, but as capital flight, which, as we have already noted, consists of the outflow of the surplus value that has increased a certain capital in one country as a product of domestic social exploitation and ends up circulating or paying taxes or both in another country.

According to the database of the IMF data<sup>11)</sup>, in 2021, more than 80% (!) of the capital leaving Russia will end up in countries with legal provisions favoring tax evasion or concealment of illicit traces, including Cyprus, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Jersey and Singapore. These five countries occupy at the same time the first five (!) places in the outflow of Russian capital abroad. This proportion remains very constant over the years, since 2009, according to the same source. Some 20% of capital outflows can be qualified as capital exports.

Cyprus, which received no less than 54% (!) of the capital outflow from Russia in 2021, with a population of just over 1.2 million inhabitants, is not a country of which it can be said that the big Russian capitalists "exploit millions of workers". Although Cyprus was one of the countries removed by the OECD from the list of so-called "tax havens", it still maintains legal structures very similar to those of such "tax havens". Forming a company in Cyprus with a bank account can still significantly reduce the tax burden for your business. In addition, Cyprus offers a wide range of benefits and incentives to foreign investors and companies, which are comparable to those offered by numerous tax havens. Cyprus was organized as a tax haven immediately after the unification of Germany, geared mainly towards Russian billionaires, as well as Eastern European individuals and companies.

Austria is another case that is on the verge of being a "tax haven", because it allows to circumvent the tax authorities through the tax-free deposit in Austria of money made in the country of origin, thanks to a double taxation agreement between Austria and Cyprus.

Very different (not to say diametrically different) from the capital export situation of Russia is the capital export situation of the imperialist countries.

Of all the capital that left Canada in 2021, more than 75% (!) was not destined for a country where there are legal provisions favoring tax evasion or allowing the concealment of illegal activities<sup>12)</sup>. In the case of France, 75% of the capital that left the country the same year cannot be considered as capital flight<sup>13)</sup> but as capital export. More than 75% of the capital that left Germany in 2021 can be classified as capital export. Only slightly more than 20% capital flight. In the case of the United Kingdom, more than 80% (!) of the capital outflows in 2021 can be classified as capital export and only slightly more than 15% as capital flight. In the case of the United States, the same figures are over 70% and slightly over 25%, respectively.

What a difference between imperialist countries, whose capital outflow consists in putting themselves in a position to exploit human beings and nature, and a country like Russia, where capital outflows mainly to evade taxes or to cover traces of any kind.

These facts that we have just pointed out do not speak at all of a so-called imperialist Russia, but of a Russian national oligarchy with little patriotic feelings. We hope that the sanctions against this country will serve to deeply reduce the radius of tax evasion and capital flight from Russia in general. The Russian oligarchy exploits its workers and then, without the slightest patriotic feeling, takes money out of their country to evade taxes or even the law. Today we believe that it is in the interest of the peoples of the earth who aspire to national

sovereignty, or at least a greater share of national independence, that Russia has a healthy economy. Capital flight, in our opinion, is an unpatriotic act because it deprives the homeland of resources so vital for running a war economy and preparing against a NATO military escalation against Russia.

The bourgeois press understands the fact of capital flight much better than the CPG and rejoices in this fact:

*"Another pressure on the Russian currency is the ongoing capital flight. Faced with the prospect of an uncertain future, many Russians began moving their savings abroad since the war broke out. Transfers worth the equivalent of more than \$1 billion were made in three days of domestic turmoil in late June, according to the central bank, when mercenaries from the Wagner group rebelled against the army."<sup>14)</sup>*

Just today, capital flight has accelerated in Russia. This capital flight should be controlled in Russia with stricter legal and economic measures to encourage domestic production in areas of strategic interest and in the arms industry.

If the capital outflows of all the countries for which the IMF has data were subtracted from the capital "flight", Russia would be some ten to fifteen places lower in the ranking of the largest capital exporters.

We see that, here too, the bombastic accusations of the CPG against the WAP that "with these statements, the WAP once again seeks to distort reality. It is as if China and Russia do not..." does not hold true.

In the next section we will analyze the "huge" Russian bank.

## Notes

1) Below we will point out why the word "export" is in quotation marks.

2) Communist Party of Greece (CPG), op. cit.: "On the so-called World Anti-Imperialist Platform..."

3) This time without quotation marks.

4) Hilferding, Rudolf, "Das Finanzkapital. Eine Studie über die jüngste Entwicklung des Kapitalismus" (in english: "Finance Capital: A study in the latest phase of capitalist development"), Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1955, p. 468

5) It may be the case that the investor, i.e. the capitalist who exports and places his capital abroad, brings it from his country of origin or acquires it in a third country if the country obtaining the capital does not have the necessary means of production.

6) Since this paper is not an economic treatise, the question of capital transfer is not addressed here, although it is of great importance, for example, for the current process of deindustrialization in Europe and especially in Germany.

7) SETEM, "Banco Santander, Vínculos financieros con empresas y proyectos controvertidos en el mundo" (in english: "Banco Santander, Financial links with controversial companies and projects around the world"), Madrid, December 2007, Federación SETEM, p. 40, in PDF version available at:

<https://documentslide.org/download/documents/setem-banco-santander>

8) The capitalist who transfers his capital abroad earns the difference between the tax he has to pay at home and the lower tax he pays abroad.

The country receiving the transferred capital benefits from the payment of taxes that it would not have received if the capital had not flowed into its country. Countries with tax exemptions are usually small countries which, as such, cannot collect large amounts of taxes because they have few workers and a small capitalist class. Thanks to tax exemptions, they attract foreign capital to the country. The country receiving the capital also benefits from the fact that the capital circulates in its own country or that it can have resources to invest abroad.

9) It is precisely due to this fact that we had previously placed the word "export" in quotation marks.

10) "It is essential that—said Hilferding—the surplus value remains at the disposal of domestic capital. If, for example, a German capitalist emigrates with his capital to Canada, produces there and does not return home, this means loss for German capital, denationalization of capital; it is not capital export, but capital transfer. [...] One can speak of capital export only when the capital used abroad remains at the disposal of the home country and the surplus value generated by this capital can be disposed of by domestic capitalists. [...] The export of capital reduces pro tanto the domestic quantity of capital and increases the national revenue by the surplus value produced."

HILFERDING, Rudolf, op. cit. "Das Finanzkapital. Eine Studie über die...", p. 468

11) The data presented below are all from the same source: International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Table 2-io: Inward and Outward Direct Investment Positions (Total) by End-Year", by country and for the years 2009 to 2021, in:<https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=60564261>

12) No less than 56% of the capital leaving Canada in 2021 was destined for the United States and the United Kingdom.

13) In 2021, 50% of the capital leaving France went to two countries: the United States and Belgium.

14) Infobae, "Las drásticas medidas económicas de Rusia desnudan sus aprietos en tiempos de guerra" (in english: "Russia's drastic economic measures reveal its wartime predicament"), from Anatoly Kurmanaev, 17 Ago, 2023 10:34 a.m. EST, in: <https://www.infobae.com/america/the-new-york-times/2023/08/17/las-drasticas-medidas-economicas-de-rusia-desnudan-sus-aprietos-en-tiempos-de-guerra/>



# Anti-imperialism, and the transition from early to late socialist revolutions

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## Introduction

The Third World War (WWIII) is escalating. The Ukrainian front will not be the last. An outbreak of the major front in East Asia (on the Korean peninsula and Taiwan) is imminent, with several other potential ones in the boiling points of the global confrontation (Africa, Transcaucasia, Transnistria, the Middle East, etc.). The US-led imperialist camp is escalating the conflict, with blunt military interventions, coups, aggressive diplomacy of blackmail, etc., dragging its subordinates into deadly adventurism, opening more fronts than it can handle in its rapid decline and decay.

New forms of international cooperation, alternative to the imperialist 'world order', are declaring their presence (e.g., the expanding BRICS), while older ones are being reactivated with new, increasingly anti-imperialist character (e.g., legacies of the Non-Aligned Movement, such as the 'Group of 77+China', which today consists of 134 UN states).

WWIII constitutes an organic element of the modern stage of imperialism, the main characteristic of which is not only the international organic interconnection of productive processes and relations of production, but also the manifestation of the deeper contradictions of capitalism on a planetary scale. Thus, the basic contradiction—between capital and labour—manifests itself increasingly clearly in its interconnected aspects: between capitalist countries and countries of early socialism, and between imperialist countries—parasites and dependent, semi-independent, etc. countries subjected to overexploitation of the neo-colonial type.

The fact that the escalation of WWIII is bringing the above contradictions to the surface in a more acute form, revealing a historically unprecedented potential for imminent victorious revolutionary movements, constitutes historical law.

We are not concerned here with an academic approach in the spirit of abstract theorising, nor with the reduction of theory to vulgar superficial (dogmatic and revisionist) propaganda schemes to serve the opportunistic degeneration of the leaderships of bankrupt parties. Both above degenerative phenomena undermine the revolutionary movement.

Our approach focuses on revolutionary theory and methodology as a tool for investigating reality, a weapon for the foundation and militant empowerment of the victorious revolutionary movement, in order to achieve the goals of the rapidly developing World Anti-Imperialist Platform (WAP). The main interrelated goals of the WAP are: 1. The coordination and organization of the anti-imperialist struggle; 2. The ideological struggle against the undermining action of opportunism and revisionism; 3. The reconsolidation of consistently

revolutionary and internationalist communist forces, without the leading role of which the victorious anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples is unattainable.

It is a fact that 'Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity.' (Lenin's Collected Works, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, Moscow, Volume 5, pp. 347-530.). Particularly in view of the needs of the coming wave of new victorious revolutions that the escalation of WWII is bringing ever closer, the aims of the WAP can only be advanced upon the foundation of the theoretical and practical elevation of all components of the revolutionary subject, based on the creative development of the acquis of the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, in accordance with the needs of the present time and conjuncture.

The prospect of reviving the communist movement at the international and national level presupposes the creative development of new revolutionary theory at a level capable of supporting a revolutionary political programme (strategy and tactics) and connecting this theory with the new revolutionary movement. No tactical movement, no unifying action, no front can have any prospect without a theoretical diagnosis of the laws of society, without prediction of their outcome, without a scientifically substantiated strategy. If not, we will have a resurgence of the well-known degenerative phenomena at their worst: practicism and political pragmatism leading to organisational structures that instead of being able to predict future outcomes and prepare accordingly, are only capable of reacting to events as they unravel, which only causes further damage and disappointment.

In Lenin's view, 'It is precisely because Marxism is not a lifeless dogma, not a completed, ready-made, immutable doctrine, but a living guide to action, that it was bound to reflect the astonishingly

abrupt change in the conditions of social life. That change was reflected in profound disintegration and disunity, in every manner of vacillation, in short, in a very serious internal crisis of Marxism. Resolute resistance to this disintegration, a resolute and persistent struggle to uphold the fundamentals of Marxism, was again placed on the order of the day. [...] The repetition of 'slogans' learnt by rote but not understood and not thought out led to the widespread prevalence of empty phrase-mongering. The practical expression of this was such absolutely un-Marxist, petty-bourgeois trends.... Nothing is more important than to rally all Marxists...for defence of the theoretical basis of Marxism and its fundamental propositions, that are being distorted from diametrically opposite sides...'. (Lenin Collected Works, Progress Publishers, [1974], Moscow, Volume 17, pages 39-44.)

In this text I will refer to some essential aspects of the historically specific organic interconnection between the two fundamental components of the revolutionary movement of our time: socialist revolutions and the anti-imperialist movement. This paradigm is based upon the foundation of the science, theory and methodology of the 'Logic of History' founded by the brilliant Soviet revolutionary philosopher Victor Alexeyevich Vaziulin.

### **A few introductory remarks on terminology and concepts.**

In order to prevent certain expected misunderstandings, I owe some initial clarifications. The philosophical category 'early socialist revolutions' has here nothing whatsoever to do with the opportunism-revisionism of G. Plekhanov, K. Kautsky, the Mensheviks and the Second International. All the apostates of the revolutionary communist movement rejected the Great October Socialist Revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, striving to present them as 'adventurists' and irrelevant to the 'orthodoxy' of Marxism, of which they had proclaimed themselves the guardians. According to these apostates, the

'orthodox' Marxists should have been waiting patiently for the 'maturation of conditions' for socialism, the gradual evolution of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. According to their sermons, capitalism in its 'natural evolution' would bring progress, eliminating any pre-capitalist vestiges.

In contrast to these apostates, Lenin and the Bolsheviks took up their revolutionary tasks in a revolutionary way, based on the creative development of Marxism, the political economy of the monopoly stage of capitalism, of imperialism, the need for a conscious vanguard of the revolutionary party within the 'weak link' of imperialism, the interconnection of the perspective of the socialist revolution with the anti-imperialist struggle, with the right of the peoples to self-determination, etc. However, for these apostates, all the above was merely 'evidence of adventurism' that did not adhere to their own 'orthodoxy' to the letter. That is why, for example, Plekhanov and his ilk, both in 1905 and 1917, exclaimed: 'we should not have taken up arms'! From that time on, all the apostates of the movement have had anti-Sovietism, i.e., anti-communism, in common. They renounce not only the October Revolution, but also every anti-imperialist and socialist revolution, every practical undertaking of the working class and peoples in history to take their fate into their own hands. They therefore regard ALL revolutions as a mistake, as a dissonance to their dogmas, as something 'premature', carried out before its time, before the automatic and spontaneous 'maturation of conditions' and therefore, as 'a priori failed and doomed'!

The approach proposed here has nothing whatsoever to do with this opportunistic and revisionist rubbish. As we will show further on, early and late revolutions are legitimate and necessary stages in the unified global revolutionary process. The revolutionaries in tsarist Russia and its colonies, in Korea, China, Vietnam, Cuba, etc., the working class with its allies, had to seize power under severe conditions of destitution, during revolutionary situations. It was a profound social

necessity to carry out victorious revolutions and launch socialist construction, despite extremely adverse conditions and precisely because of these conditions. Any claim to the contrary constitutes a renunciation of revolutionary theory and practice.

After all, every great historical transition, as the classics of Marxism-Leninism have shown, necessarily passes through early, unstable, etc. stages and phases until it is established and developed.

Each transition, e.g., from a certain formation to another, more progressive one, is characterized by successive victories and defeats until the final prevalence of the more progressive one. With the prevalence of, say, slave-owning relations and the manifestation of the contradictions of slave-owning society, the decadent slave-owning states were successively swept away by the invasions of more coherent communities of 'barbarians', associations of tribes in the stage of 'war democracy', until ultimately all of these societies transitioned into feudalism.

But in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, did bourgeois revolutions prevail immediately, once and for all? On the contrary: they suffered repeated defeats, there were many counterrevolutions and restorations of versions of feudal relations and absolute monarchy until capitalism was finally established. In this process, two periods can be clearly distinguished: the period of the early and the period of the late bourgeois revolutions. The distinction between early and late bourgeois revolutions, and their respective features (e.g., the religious character of the early bourgeois revolutions), has been established in historiography and in the works of Marx and Engels. The transition from one form of private property to the highest one (from feudalism to capitalism) in European countries required relentless struggles, successive revolts, wars, revolutions and counterrevolutions, until the capitalist (legal, political, etc.) superstructure was established in societies where capitalist relations began to take root centuries ago, within the bowels of feudalism. The transition to

capitalism took more than 5 centuries to complete in the most advanced countries of Europe.

The historical process of the revolutions and counterrevolutions of the 20th century has shown that the transition of society not to a different exploitative formation, but to socialism-communism, to a radically different type of development (a prospect of unprecedented difficulty and complexity) cannot constitute an exception to this historical law.

### **On the necessity of differentiating between early and late socialist revolutions**

V. A. Vaziulin, in discussions with his students, introduced the term 'early socialism' with the paradigm he developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, specifying the positions of the Logic of History on the contradictory path to communism, as opposed to the dominant linear conceptions of history.

The underestimation of the global historical significance of the early socialist revolutions can only be overcome by emphasising their specific historical position and the role they occupy within the dynamics of the transitional period that gives rise to them, in its progression from phase to phase, within the dialectic of the global, regional and local, during the transition of humanity to communism, by revealing on this foundation the dialectical relationship between universal, particular and individual in their law governed manifestation, escalation and de-escalation, in the clash of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary tendencies. Therefore, it is necessary to further refine the scientific historical periodisation, through the distinction of two stages of the revolutionary process and the building of socialism on a global scale, as a necessary condition for the theoretical re-foundation of the communist perspective.

This perception is not a novel idea that comes to be added to the plethora of the left's sloppy verbalizations and doctrines, in order to claim 'vital space' in terms of petty partisan confrontation. It demonstrates theoretically and methodologically

the ways and means of a positive resolution—first in the field of revolutionary theory and methodology—of that framework of problems that are of existential importance for the revolutionary movement, the problems-challenges mentioned above.

The term 'early socialism' is now quite prevalent. However, in most cases, this term has been adopted without reference to the source and out of the theoretical and methodological context from which it emerged. The major problem lies in the fact that this term, even if used in good faith, is difficult to understand at the conceptual-categorical level<sup>1)</sup>. The term 'late socialism' is rather completely ignored<sup>2)</sup>. The adoption of this theoretical and methodological approach by an increasing number of (mainly young) thinkers from various traditions and components of the left is now a fact<sup>3)</sup>. However, there is also a difficulty in grasping these concepts, which is not only due to the perceptions of those who (on hearing the term alone) recall associations from the field of early horticulture..., but also to the stereotypical reinforcement of pseudo-interpretative figures.

For the historically and dialectically educated mind, it is clear that any complex historical process needs to go through early, weak and vulnerable versions and phases, until it consolidates and matures in its later forms<sup>4)</sup>. The global revolutionary process and socialist construction, the most complex project of social transformation, cannot be a historical exception to this law governed dialectic.

Besides, the distinction between early and late phases, stages, forms and so on, has become established in the periodization not only of revolutions that mark a global-historical transition of society, but also of longer-term phenomena on a larger scale in history and in the social sciences (e.g., early and late Bronze Age, early and late Renaissance, early and late capitalism, industrial revolution, early and late Enlightenment, early and late scientific revolution, early and late information revolution, early and late Calvinism, early and late Protestantism, etc.).

And yet, there are people on the left who reject this paradigm at the mere mention of associated terminology. Some even hasten to classify it as 'apologetic of those notorious regimes' [of actually existing socialism], which were not overthrown by counterrevolutions and capitalist restorations (since 'they were not revolutionary') but because they were 'unnatural' and 'vicious', they collapsed, suffered 'natural implosion' because 'that's what they deserved'! In this spirit, many eulogists of former existing socialist countries, after the counter-revolution in the USSR, etc., were quick to describe it as 'non-existent by definition'! For the bourgeois and opportunist-revisionists, these 'regimes', in the spirit of the vile ideologies of 'totalitarianism' (which strive to equate communism with fascism/nazism) 'are notorious because they fell, and they fell because they were notorious! In this palindrome sentence, where subject and predicate noun are interchanged casually in a vicious circle, the 'logic' of their theoretical magnificence is ultimately condensed...

This raises the question: since when in science (and in Marxism as a science) is it apologetic to expect the discernment of the historically specific character of a highly complex historical process in its primary, early, and late forms?

Behind this dismissive attitude lies a latent semi-religious perception and psychological disposition, an outgrowth of the petty bourgeois 'methodology' of proudhonic origins: the one that sees in capitalism 'good' and 'bad' aspects. Therefore, for them 'socialism' is nothing but a rejection of the 'bad' and acceptance of the 'good' aspects of capitalism. It is therefore reduced to the childish position 'in favour of all good and against all bad', according to which the reference system of abstract 'anti-capitalism' is ultimately an idealised version of capitalism, free of the evils that cause insecurity to the petit bourgeoisie, i.e., a capitalism with a positive sign! The proponents of this conception imagine socialism as an absolutely perfect, heavenly state, the main characteristic of which is the total absence of stages and contradictions, and

therefore the total absence of movement (hence the practical impossibility of distinguishing socialism from communism). According to this conception, socialism-communism as it is understood, will either emerge immediately, pure, and untainted, without real contradictions the day after the revolution, or it will be 'notorious' and rejected from the very beginning! The apex of revolutionary dialectics!

However, the actual revolutionary process in history is infinitely more complex than the linearity of any metaphysical fantasy and therefore requires specific historical investigation and theoretical reflection. The first stage of this process consists of waves of 'early socialist revolutions' in countries with an insufficiently socialised level of development of production, in countries with an average or near-average level of development. The early socialist revolutions arise according to law-governed historical process in the 'weak links' of the system, where their objective conditions, including the revolutionary situation, appear.

'Early socialism' arises from the victorious early socialist revolutions. There are two fundamental characteristics of early socialism: a) it emerges and develops on a material and technical basis which is not at all corresponding to socialism, in conditions of insufficiently socialised character of labour (victorious early revolutions in countries with a low level of development of productive forces, uneven development of the means of production, uneven development and low level of integration between socialist countries, strong presence of manual executive labour, etc. and so on) and b) arises in the context of superiority of the capitalist world in the balance of power (victorious early socialist revolutions breaking out first in one and later in a few countries, capitalist encirclement by more powerful enemies, aggression and subversion by the imperialists, and so on).

With the emergence and development of the socialist countries, the world dynamic is characterised by an unprecedented bipolarity. The contradiction of labour and capital takes the form



of a conflict between two camps: capitalism and early socialism.

It is precisely this new form-manifestation of the fundamental contradiction that is linked to the upgrade of the global-historical role of the anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, anti-neo-colonialist, national liberation struggle of the peoples.

### **On the subject of early revolutions**

The above processes do not constitute 'processes without a subject' (according to revisionists like those of the bankrupt second international, Louis Althusser and their successors) nor do they transcend politics. Given a largely ahistorical and undifferentiated perception of the working class, versions of which (from economic to metaphysical-Messianic) prevail on the left, it is appropriate to address briefly the predominantly objectively and historically formed character of the subject of the early and late socialist revolutions.

The subject of the early socialist revolutions is the traditional proletariat, the industrial working class, which is predominantly involved in repetitive, manual, executive, strenuous, one-sided and often unhealthy labour processes, which are presented as a means towards the (primarily quantitative) satisfaction of fixed needs. Human activity here becomes an appendage to the current technical and social conditions, subjected to their rigidity and reduced to non-creative functions. The character of the labour of this working class is linked to the transition from the formal to the actual subordination of labour to capital, resulting from the mechanisation of production, the result of which is turning the division of labour into a technical necessity dictated by the material conditions of production. With the historical necessity of transformation of this traditional working class from a class 'in itself' (an objectively defined category, without awareness and consciousness of its position and role in society) to a class 'for itself' (composed of people with a class consciousness of the position and role of their class in society and of their historical mission

in the struggle against capitalism and towards socialism), is largely linked to the development of the theoretical acquis of classical Marxism, the ideological reception and use of this acquis and the corresponding political-organizational forms (e.g. the Leninist 'new type' party at the beginning of the 20th century).

As a result of the action of this subject and their allies, the early victorious socialist revolutions appear, 'early socialism' emerges, the fundamental features and the laws of which were primarily revealed by the historical experience of the USSR.

### **The importance of the October Revolution for the emergence of the fundamental contradiction of socialism**

As I mentioned above, some people interpret the character of the October Revolution and of all early socialist revolutions as 'early' in the current sense: As something untimely, that arose early, before its time, that supposedly took place out of time and place, as a 'coup of Lenin and the Bolsheviks that forced the circumstances'... Some even react at the level of conditioned reflexes to the very use of the terms 'early socialist revolution' and 'early socialism' as only pertaining to the position of the Mensheviks<sup>5)</sup>.

Too often, the importance of a scientific discernment of the level of maturity of the social character of production is not understood. It is also not understood that the level of their maturity is assessed in the dialectical scientific approach on two levels of terms, with two different criteria of assessment:

1. of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the outbreak of the revolutionary situation, for the victory of the socialist revolution and the initial negation of capitalism, to the extent that socialism will develop on a foundation inherited from capitalism and the pre-capitalist remnants; and
2. of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the positive promotion of the socialist revolutionary transformations, for the development of socialism towards communism, for the launch of the

fundamentally novel type of social development on a foundation corresponding to that of a mature unified humanity.

However, the early socialist revolutions are not made-to-order or at the behest of deontological exhortations. They arise according to dialectical law, where their objective conditions, and above all, the revolutionary situation, appear. The Bolsheviks as revolutionaries had no other option, as long as the revolutionary situation had broken out. The glory of the first victorious revolution historically vindicated them, as it did all the communists who led the great early socialist revolutions of the 20th century. Any failure by them to take power would be disastrous for the people and the country, with dire international consequences (in case of immediate crushing of the revolution by the international forces of imperialist invasion and the local reactionary bourgeois and landowner militias, etc.).

Thus, the inherited low level of development of the productive forces (with the strong presence of the pre-capitalist origins of manual-executive labour), by default gives the relations of production imposed by the socialist revolution primarily the character of formal socialisation (through nationalisation). Due to the fact that the victorious early socialist revolutions break out first in one and later in a handful of countries, which are under capitalist encirclement by superior enemies, they are subjected to foreign interventions, and wars.

Bringing to light of the historical specificity of the objective and subjective conditions of the October Revolution and of all early socialist revolutions in a systematic way, requires specific research.

Revolutionary thinking has to emphasise the historical dynamics of the interaction between the extensive and intensive development of capitalism and early socialism, in relation to the escalation and de-escalation of the polarisation of the two global socio-economic systems in the light of the correlation between global revolution and counter-revolution. It may be that the war-related planned mobilization and the hasty acceleration of events

exacerbated the fundamental contradiction of socialist construction, imposing forms of formal socialisation instead of actual socialisation, extensive development instead of intensive, and so on, manifested in post-war bureaucratization. However, historical necessity was inexorable. Could the USSR have survived and won without the unprecedented pace of industrialisation it achieved, without the unimaginable feat of transferring all industrial production east of the Urals? Could the USSR have survived and won under conditions of total war, without the mass self-denial of its peoples, who believed in the victory of socialism and threw themselves into a life-and-death struggle with the technologically and economically superior (in the early years of the war) war machine of the reich?

The post-war reconstruction from the ruins of a literally flattened country and its transformation into the world's second industrial and military superpower, with the simultaneous advent of the Cold War, is a monumental achievement. In this context came the formation—largely in terms of geostrategic correlations and the presence of the Red Army, especially in the early socialist countries of Eastern Europe—of the socialist camp and the rise of the struggle of the peoples against colonial and neo-colonial dependency. With the anti-fascist victory, the early global socialist system emerges, and some anti-colonial and national liberation movements supported and guided in various ways by it. The limit of extensive development of global capitalism diminishes substantially. The pure and unquestioned global domination of the pole of the capitalist powers over the dependent world is dynamically intercepted by the alternative historical perspective, which is no longer an abstract possibility, but is being pursued as active reality. There are now three worlds: the 'First', the 'Second' and the 'Third'. The course of the countries of the latter is at stake, a matter of major historical significance.

The breadth and depth of the socio-economic and political independence achieved by these countries

emerged as a function of the class character of the socio-political and ideological fronts that led these anti-colonial anti-imperialist movements, of the balance of power at the national, regional and international level and of the effectiveness of internationalist assistance from the camp of the early socialist countries. Hence the range of diverse socio-economic changes and reforms historically observed in them in the decades after WWII.

Complex systems of interactions arise within each of them and between them. This is not a mechanical, quantitative, extensive-geographical contraction of the otherwise unchanging capitalist system. It is a change that brings with it qualitative and substantial changes to both poles of this new expression of the capital-labour antithesis, to both interacting and antagonistic camps, and to the contested space in between. It is a change in the field of extensive development that inevitably leads to intensive restructuring of the mechanism of exploitation on a national and international scale ('Cold War', transition from colonialism to neo-colonial forms of economic exploitation, state-monopoly regulation, 'welfare state', and so on).

This was followed by the Cold War, a plethora of localized conflicts (both overt and covert); to deal with which the economy becomes largely militarized, geopolitical tactics are also practiced for the urgent seizure and defense of the maximum 'living space' for socialism, and so on. The resources that the USSR allocated for the armaments that ensured the 'balance of terror' are unimaginable.

The fronts of declared and undeclared wars in which the USSR was involved were also numerous, as were its contributions (ideological, political, military, technological, financial, etc.) to anti-imperialist and revolutionary movements of many countries.

Unfortunately, the uneven development of the productive forces also leads to a low level of integration between the countries of early socialism, to tensions, even with elements of nationalism and geopolitics of the past, sometimes even to armed conflicts between them (see e.g., the

Yugoslavia-USSR split, the isolationism of Albania, the 1969 Sino-Soviet conflict on the Damansky Island of the Ussuri River, the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979 and 1988, and so on).

Systematically investigating the development of the relationship between the productive forces and the relations of production of early socialism in the USSR requires separate mention.

The successes of Soviet science in the late 1950s, following the spectacular Soviet breakthrough in space, forced the U.S. to revise its policy toward science, so that, to the extent possible, investment in science would be increased, regardless of the immediate expected profit (President's Science Advisory Committee, 1960, p.225)

### **Extensive and intensive development. A fundamental contradiction of socialism**

To the extent that the social character of production is not yet fully developed, not yet mature, we can observe a discrepancy with public ownership and consequently (to the extent that this discrepancy exists) public ownership is still formal (legal, etc.), exercised through the socialist state. The transition from formal to substantial-actual socialisation is a process which (despite widespread views to the contrary) cannot be relegated to 'democratic', 'participatory' etc. processes of the superstructure (despite the enormous and relatively distinct importance of the latter). It is primarily a question of the technological and organisational character of the productive-labour processes and the corresponding properties of their subject (including the political-conscious ones).

This question is organically linked to the transition of socialist construction from extensive to intensive development.

Every complex development process unfolds in history according to the emergence, formation, development and dialectical sublation of specific conditions and limits, which are essentially determined by the correlation between extensive and intensive development of production.

Given the industrial conditions of production,

extensive development is based on the expansion and repetition of identical technologies of production, division, organisation and character of labour. Intensive development requires an intensification of knowledge and technology, a qualitative and essential change in the technologies of production, and hence in the division, organisation and character of labour. These are fundamental concepts, without an understanding of which it is impossible to understand the historical process itself. Marx, in his study of expanded reproduction, is the first to introduce this conceptual dipole by referring to capitalist reproduction: '...Thus reproduction takes place in larger or smaller periods of time, and this is, from the standpoint of society, reproduction on an enlarged scale—extensive if the means of production is extended; intensive if the means of production is made more effective.' (Marx, *Capital* Volume II

Chapter 8: Fixed Capital and Circulating Capital, II. Components, Replacements, Repairs and Accumulation of Fixed Capital). A systematic generalisation and concretisation of the dialectical interrelation of this dipole of concepts when examining the structure and history of the development of society (at the level of philosophy of history, social theory, and methodology) is developed in the *Logic of History* (Vaziulin 2013). The correlation of extensive and intensive development during socialist construction requires specific research.

A critical turning point in the history of the USSR is marked by the manifestation and depletion of the type of structure and development of the USSR that prevailed in the post-war period, along with the inability to make a large-scale transition from extensive to intensive development (especially in the late 1950s-1960s, early 1960s-1970s).

When the need for a transition from the extensive to the intensive type of development came to the foreground in the USSR (late 1950s-1960s, early 1960s-1970s), the new subject that would have been able to promote this transition by driving the

basic contradiction of socialism to a higher level was statistically, socially and politically negligible (fragments of it had made their presence felt in the branches of science, aerospace engineering and the war industry).

Since then, the loss of revolutionary momentum becomes more and more evident, along with the inability to point out the necessary and sufficient conditions for the positive identification, concretisation, discernment and achievement of the strategic purpose in new conditions. Evidence of the latter is the inability to constitute the driving social forces and subject for the next steps of development of society towards communism. In this phase, the Soviet system—from its internal contradictions—gives rise to the need for self-criticism, the need for a radical reflection and re-foundation of the historical form of Marxism (classical and epigonic). Unprecedented contradictions, problems and impasses were coming to the foreground, for which the theory and methodology of the time were not sufficient. The hastening of imposing socialist relations was followed by 'corrective' moves of introducing value indicators into the planning and broadening of the field of commodity and monetary relations. Based on the latter, along with the inability of the planned economy to meet the increasing consumption needs, the 'shadow' economy, the underground economy, appears and develops. The 'business circles' of the latter, in conjunction with the most corrupt part of the bureaucracy, form the socio-political basis of the bourgeois counter-revolution (the 'perestroika' and so on).

We observe therefore that, based on the criteria mentioned above, the degree of maturation of the social character of production which is necessary and sufficient to break the weak link, for the overthrow, for the negation of capitalism, is not sufficient for the positive construction of socialism, for the formation and development of communism. In the second case, the criteria for assessing the degree of maturity of the social character of production (and of the other aspects of the societal

whole) are no longer the criteria of capitalism, but the criteria of communism as a process. There is therefore a developing process of correspondence-discrepancy of the social character of production with the socialist relations of production.

Thus, the basic contradiction of early socialism (but also of all socialism, of socialist construction in general, as the process of the formation of communism) is the contradiction between social ownership (initially formal socialisation, nationalisation) of the means of production and insufficient development, 'immaturity' of the social character of production, or in other words, the contradiction between formal and actual socialization<sup>6</sup>. Based on the experience of the USSR, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, and the other countries that emerged from the early socialist revolutions of the 20th century, this contradiction, in conjunction with which the other contradictions of socialism (between manual and intellectual labour, executive and administrative functions, city and countryside, and so on) is of universal validity, it is law-governed.

Historical experience has shown that early socialism (and all socialism) will either resolve, promote this basic contradiction (and its derivatives) by moving towards communism, or it will regress during its resolution, backtrack, which will result in the undermining of the gains of the revolution, the gradual strengthening of counter-revolutionary and restorationist tendencies, with their eventual predominance being very likely.

At the stage of immaturity, that is, the process of formation, maturation of the social character of production of humanity, both socialist and capitalist relations of production can exist. This stage constitutes the objective logistical basis of the possibility and necessity of early socialist revolutions, of various intermediate tendencies and versions of the coexistence of the two social systems, but also of the tendencies that usher in restorative counter-revolutionary undertakings, which accompany early socialist revolutions in a

law-governed fashion.

A modern scientific periodisation and the identification of the new stage of capitalism is unfeasible without including in it its position and role, its whole interaction with the rise and fall of the USSR and of early 20th century socialism as a whole, and with the emergence of the preconditions of late socialism. The historical conditions created by the emergence and whatever formation these societies, as components of the world revolutionary movement, were able to have, in conditions of relentless competition with the dominant global capitalist system, were able to receive and leave an indelible mark of this competition, which essentially undermined and threatened the very existence of capitalism. Without this type of interaction with the developmental process and destruction of early twentieth century socialism (in the USSR and in the European countries of early socialism), it is impossible to understand the texture and character of many phenomena, such as, for example, the Western European imperialist integration, first of the European Economic Community (EEC) and later of the EU.

Besides, it is impossible to understand what 'social policy' and 'welfare state', the guarantee of labour rights, state interventionism and regulation (in both its forms: Keynesian and overtly militarised fascist-style) mean outside of this interaction. This is particularly evident in the all-out assault on the above social and economic gains of labour (after the defeat of early socialism by the forces of counter-revolution), which in conditions of crisis takes on the characteristics of a predatory revanchist social war.

Nowadays, imperialism, despite the galloping fascism in the countries within its territory, has no need to establish outright fascist regimes in imperialist frontline countries (as in interwar Germany). There, through buyouts, corruption, fraud, manipulation and undermining of the workers' movement through its opportunist agents, but mainly through privatisation and consumerism (which it achieves by exploiting the resources from



the siphoning off of monopoly super-profits from around the world), the bourgeois regime is not in danger.

The present versions of the revival and instrumentalisation of fascism-nazism as a striking force of the aggressor imperialist axis under the US for the conduct of proxy wars (with typical cases of the Nazi regime in Ukraine, the occupation regime in South Korea, etc.) prove the extreme anti-communism of this axis and the need to crush it.

The objective contradictions of early socialism (linked to its fundamental contradiction) manifested themselves in acute and chronic form. An indispensable condition for the survival of early socialism through the practical resolution of these contradictions, in order to promote the transformations towards communism, was and is the foundation of the prospects of society on a serious and systematic development of theory capable of investigating them.

It became obvious, that the complexity of these problems occupied Stalin's thoughts when, before his death, as a legacy to future generations, he stressed the vital importance of theory for the salvation and development of socialism. In early March 1953, Stalin telephoned the newly elected member of the Presidium of the Central Committee, D. I. Chesnokov, and told him: '... You must in the near future deal with the matters of further development of theory. It is possible that we may mess something up in the economy, but in one way or another we will correct the situation. If we have confusion regarding theory, we will kill the whole affair. Without theory, we are dead, death!' These were Stalin's last words in his life (quoted from: Жданов Ю. 2012).

The development of theory as a condition for the survival of socialism, is connected with the law of the expanding role of the subjective factor in the development of society, which is radically upgraded in the preparation of the revolution and in the development of socialist construction on the path towards communism.

However, the then leadership of the USSR was not

in a position to produce the necessary theoretical research or even to realise its necessity. The defeat was mainly due to the fact that at the crucial turning point in the history of early socialism in the USSR, there were neither subjective nor objective capabilities for the resolution of these contradictions.

### **On the late socialist revolutions and their subject**

The completion of the first stage of the world revolutionary process leads to the transition to the era of the mature and 'late socialist revolutions', with which capitalism will be definitively and irrevocably eliminated from the arena of history. Only the development of the international revolutionary movement and socialism on a scale and in a way that will eliminate the capabilities for parasitism of the imperialist developed capitalist countries (hence the capabilities for the takeover & manipulation of all components of their working class, traditional and new), will lead to the revolutionisation of the subject of the late socialist revolutions and the outbreak of socialist revolutions in the developed capitalist countries, will shift the center of gravity of the struggle to the heart of capitalism.

Correspondingly, two are the key features that mark the beginning of the stage and era of late socialism:

- a. the beginning of the development of socialism on a material-technical basis, which is now in all respects corresponding to socialism in the direction towards communism (on the basis of large-scale global automation of production within a single matrix of scientific planning, in a gradual transition to the biologisation of production, with capabilities of a large-scale exit of unified humanity into space); and
- b. the forces of socialism are now beginning to prevail over the forces of the world of defeated capital on a global-historical scale.

The subject of the forthcoming late socialist revolutions is another type of worker, formed and

developed in labour processes, characterized by renewal, development, creativity, the cultivation of creative abilities, global-universal appeal, and the need for labour (not labour as a means and product of coercion, through hunger or repression). It is the subject of the activities associated with automation, which cease to constitute work in the traditional sense of the term. A foretaste of the developed form of these activities is provided by the most creative moments of scientific and artistic research, what Marx called 'universal labour'.

This subject is produced and reproduced today by the global capitalist system unevenly, as a class 'in itself', in objective terms, which reproduce the phenomena associated with the 'working-class aristocracy'. The subject of this labour is not directly subject to the rigidity of known and prevalent material conditions. It becomes the operator and creator of a universal range of developmental and developing material and ideal means and modes of human intervention on the environment, which at the same time constitute means and modes of relations, interaction, and communication between people. It is precisely these characteristics that can distinguish that subject which, developing qualitatively and quantitatively, transformed into a class 'for itself', will lead the late socialist revolutions, rallying all the forces and types of wage-labour.

Moreover, during socialist construction, as the main subject and result of the gradual sublation of the antithesis between manual and intellectual labour, and as the carrier of the whole, with oversight of the deeper needs and perspectives of humanity, it will gradually remove the contradictions that give rise to and reproduce bureaucratic phenomena and will consciously complete the fundamental contradiction of socialism. An event which will at the same time constitute the abolition of the antithesis of productive forces and relations of production. This will also mean the abolition of the very contradiction between humanity's productive intervention on nature (productive forces) and

relations of production, where productive forces will be transformed into relations of production and the opposite, where labour-production itself will be transformed into something else: a field for the universal cultivation of the creative capacities of every personality and collective.

People cannot place themselves at the helm of the objective conditions of their existence without being able to intentionally create and alter them. This is the fundamental aspect of the beginning of the domination of living labour over dead labour.

A law governed and indispensable condition of humanity's march towards communism is the conscious involvement of the subject in the advancement of revolutionary transformations, to a degree directly proportional to the breadth and depth of these transformations. Hence the vital importance of the fundamental development of revolutionary theory and methodology, through the dialectical development of the acquis of classical Marxism-Leninism, in order for this subject to be consolidated as a 'class for itself'.

However, this subject must first of all exist as a bearer of the corresponding qualities in terms of cognition and consciousness, which are primarily due to the character of their leading labour activity in society and to the broader cultural education-cultivation associated with it.

### **A few conclusions**

The bourgeoisie and the opportunists proclaim that socialism and anti-imperialism are meaningless, that they no longer exist, that they are irretrievably lost. They base their propaganda mainly on the defeat of early socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe. However, reality itself and scientific research completely and utterly disprove them, giving weapons and hope to the struggling peoples.

The scientific distinction between the early and late revolutions allows us to prove that the revolutionary process is neither local nor linear. On the contrary, it is extremely complex, contradictory, and global. The defeat of one or more early socialist

revolutions does not constitute proof of the non-existence or eternal impossibility of socialism on the planet.

There is a widespread perception according to which any victories or defeats of socialist revolutions are attributed collectively and exclusively to the subjective factor, to the will of certain party leaders, to their betrayal, to the existence or absence of a 'right' or 'wrong' line, to the 'violation of certain rules and values', to opportunism and revisionism that emerged -unknown how- at some point in time, etc. Unfortunately, many communists adopt and propagate the above stereotypes not only as explanatory principles, but also as basic criteria of 'communist consistency'! Without underestimating the above phenomena and tendencies, based on Marxist science, the complete attribution of an issue of utmost importance for humanity and for the movement, that of the victory and defeat of socialism, to the subjective factor, to the will of some people, has nothing whatsoever to do with Marxism-Leninism.

On the contrary, it paves the way for the abandonment of dialectical science, for the drift into the metaphysics of subjective idealism and the mysticism of the bourgeoisie. A typical case of the interpretation of the causes of the counter-revolution in the USSR, etc. on a subjective idealistic basis, are the writings of the organs of the leadership of the present KKE. Thus, as the sole self-appointed guardians of 'orthodoxy', they present as the cause of the defeat some decisions taken following the 'wrong line', the existence of commodity and monetary relations, etc. For them, even WWII is now collectively described as 'imperialist' from beginning to end... They deny the existence of socialist countries on the planet in the present day. They label the PRC as imperialist. Moreover, they label the DPRK as do the imperialists (North Korea) and present it not only as not socialist, but also as a puppet of (Russian, Chinese, etc.) imperialism, while 'interpreting' the very regime of US occupation of South Korea and

the possibility of war on the Korean peninsula, simply as 'intense geopolitical antagonism on the Korean peninsula and in Asia-Pacific' in the context of the 'inter-imperialist conflict'... (see e.g., Rizospastis, 14, 16-17.9.2023).

The very existence today and the impressive development of the countries that emerged from the early socialist revolutions of the 20th century (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Republic of Cuba, and Lao People's Democratic Republic) and is an extremely important condition for the survival of humanity and for the consolidation under their leadership of the anti-imperialist pole in the ongoing WWIII. The same applies to the de facto allies in the front that emerged from anti-imperialist uprisings and revolutions.

The unprecedented development and the unique in scale and depth achievements of the distinctive early socialism of the PRC play a crucial role. Xi Jinping is the first and only leader of an early socialist country who has explicitly stated the transition from extensive to intensive development as the strategic goal of scientifically planned development.

Without the theoretical and methodological intensification of investigating the law governed character of the emergence of early and late socialist revolutions proposed here—without the clarification of the contradictions, on the resolution of which alone, the viability, development or death of socialism depends—it is impossible to explain the events that happened and the ones that are about to take place in history. It is impossible to understand in depth the position and role of early socialism and anti-imperialism; it is impossible to reconstruct a victorious revolutionary movement with any perspective.

During the escalation of the WWIII, an increasingly clear global front of anti-imperialist forces emerges, with the countries of early socialism and the consistent forces of the workers' and communist movement playing a leading and

rallying role. With this war, we see the emergence to the historical stage, of unprecedented tendencies towards restrictions in the range of predatory parasitism of the imperialist countries at the expense of the colonies and their conquests, the semi-colonies, the dependent, semi-independent, and formally independent countries.

The creation of alternative international frameworks of more equal forms of cooperation that bypass and nullify the mechanisms of neo-colonial exploitation (e.g., the displacement of the US dollar and the euro from their position and role as global exchange and reserve currencies) clearly confirms the position and role of anti-imperialism as an organic component of the global revolutionary movement.

It is precisely the limitation and ultimately the prevention of the parasitic possibilities of the financial oligarchy, of the imperialist countries, at the expense of the working class and the rest of the peoples of the planet, that accelerates the defeat of the imperialist pole in the Third World War and in the historical arena as a whole.

Moreover, all early socialist revolutions are historically linked to anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, to national liberation movements, to struggles for democratisation and popular sovereignty. Apparently, this law governed tendency will be further escalated in the forthcoming revolutionary wave.

The above proves the upgraded contribution of the strong unity of the anti-imperialist and socialist-communist forces in the struggle for the defeat of US-led imperialism, and thus, in the law governed process leading to the maturation of the conditions for the completion of the early and the transition to the late socialist revolutions.

The rejection of socialism and anti-imperialism—as defining components of the movement of the time—is commonplace for the opportunists and revisionists of the time. Leading this destructive role for the movement is that tendency of the most dangerous opportunism of today (led by the current leadership of the KKE), ideologically invested with

the revisionist irrational dogma of the 'imperialist pyramid'. A tendency which, as the confrontation escalates, overtly develops its disruptive and divisive role in Greece and in the international labour and communist movement. This is why an open and militant front of all revolutionary anti-imperialist and communist forces is needed against any subversive ideological constructions and practices, to expose their counter-revolutionary character and the services that opportunists provide to imperialism.

For these reasons, we must consolidate, strengthen, and further develop the action of the WAP, with the militant rallying of all anti-imperialist forces in a united front of victory, with the early socialist countries and the communists having a leading role, at national, regional and world level. This role cannot be imposed, but only seized every day, to the extent that these forces emerge as the vanguard, through their effective, exemplary, and selfless conscious action in the frontal struggle.

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## Notes

1) See e.g., DECLARATION OF THE CC OF THE KKE On the 100th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

2) On the contrary, the term 'late capitalism' seems to be more popular within the literature. This fact testifies to the extent to which even

among Marxists a dogmatic and ahistorical metaphysical conception of socialism prevails, as if revolutionary transformations are not bound by the dialectic of historical law.

3) The absorption of new ideas and theories is governed by certain laws. The initial reception, as a rule, is negative: the new idea is mocked, perceived as nonsense, as absurdity, as unworthy of attention. Later on, various reactions appear (the new idea is characterised as exaggerated, or as a mere invention of certain terminology, it is regarded by some as barren or even useless, it is adopted by some as terminology with a different meaning, and so on), until finally more and more people emerge who claim to have always seen things this way (see also Rubenstein and Haverstrob 1966).

4) A typical example from another field of knowledge (medicine), is that of the incidence of miscarriages, particularly during the early phases of fetal development. The occurrence, however, of spontaneous loss of non-viable embryos in the first months of pregnancy does not constitute proof of the general inability to produce a viable embryo (even of the same mother).

5) Once again, I must point out that the theory and methodology of the Logic of History is diametrically opposed to that of the Mensheviks, Plekhanov, and their contemporary opportunist descendants. This is substantiated in the works of V.A. Vaziulin.

6) This contradiction can in principle be perceived by analogy with a historical contradiction in the development of capitalism. Under capitalism, initially (up to pre-industrial craftsmanship, the manufacture) the work of the worker craftsman (with hand tools) was formally subordinated to capital, through the supervisory, organizational, administrative, and so on, function of the capitalist. Only with the mechanisation of production, where the division of labour becomes a technical necessity dictated by the conditions of production, does the actual subordination of labour to capital occur.



# It's not the workers but the capitalists who are causing inflation

Joti Brar | Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

January 25 2023

It is the right and the duty of workers to demand a bigger share of the wealth their own labour has created.

Many of the workers presently on strike are calling attention not only to their own plight but to the crisis in the services in which they work, where poverty pay and other cuts have led to a general crisis in service provision that is doing serious harm to the workers who rely on these services.

As the cost of living soars, public services fall apart and anger grows apace in the working class, the government is blaming, in equal measure, the workers (for daring to try and hold back the steep decline in their wages) and Vladimir Putin (for daring to resist Nato aggression).

Tory party chairman Nadhim Zahawi managed to blame both Putin and the British working class at the same time, declaring that nurses should call off their strikes and abandon their pay demands because their action risked playing into the hands of the Russian president, who allegedly 'wants to fuel inflation' in the west. According to this fantastical logic, NHS workers have chosen the 'wrong time' to strike over poverty pay because a pay rise will 'increase inflation' and 'help Vladimir Putin divide the west'.

No doubt if the strikes are called off, those kids who don't get school shoes, or dinner, or a warm place to sleep, will perfectly understand that they ought to suffer in the interests of maintaining the status quo for their parents' exploiters. No doubt our academy CEOs are already preparing the assemblies: 'Why we're lucky to have British exploiters keeping us hungry and not that evil monster Putin.'

We can't help noticing that there is never any suggestion that negative economic effects might

arise from the inflation-busting pay deals and bonuses that CEOs and various mandarins of the ruling class regularly award themselves. Indeed, these flunkeys have been piling up their wealth to record levels throughout the crisis while expecting workers to accept the drastic wage cuts that inflation has caused.

## Money-printing

The reality that capitalist economists and politicians are keen to hide is that the biggest reason for the growth of inflation has been endless money-printing, which went up to a whole new level during the banking crisis of 2008, and has continued at an elevated rate ever since.

As the capitalists scramble to help their staggering system lurch from crisis to crisis, they have been bailing out one monopoly-dominated section of the economy after another, each one considered 'too big to fail' – or just next in line for a hand-out. (See, for example, the 'Covid' stock market bail-out of 2020, and the almost limitless subsidies given to the pharmaceutical monopolies under cover of the health crisis.)

As the capitalist economic crisis deepens, equally enormous handouts are making their way into the coffers of the energy companies (by way of the 'price cap' mechanism) and the arms manufacturers (by way of the British government's unlimited commitment to the USA's proxy war on Russia in Ukraine).

## Just in time means no contingency plan

Another factor fuelling inflation has been the disruption in supply lines caused when the capitalist 'efficiency' of 'just in time' met the hard reality of closed factories and ports during the

pandemic.

The just-in-time system so much favoured by capitalist economic gurus is so finely tuned to optimise profit at every stage in production that it can't easily withstand even a single day's strike at a single factory, or a single adverse weather event, or a single stranded container ship.

The chaos created by a succession of such 'freak' events, occurring in many places around the world and often simultaneously, led to disruptions in the supply of parts and finished goods that are still causing chaos and inflation two years later.

The profitable (for the monopolies) practice of abolishing all contingency planning and all warehouse space turned out to be extremely expensive for humanity at large.

### **Monopoly price gouging**

Another cause of high prices is good old-fashioned price gouging, which is always indulged in by monopolies that are in a position to get away with it. Prices are set artificially high to maximise profits, often as a result of a secret arrangement between the few big companies that between them control a particular area of economic activity.

Capitalist economists make much of the system's ability to bring prices down, and indeed it does, as a result of the battle of competition, the economies of scale that come from mass production, and the utilisation of the cheapest possible labour. But if big capitalists find themselves in a position where they can keep prices higher, they will most certainly take it.

It is noticeable, for example, that it only takes the rumour of a potential, future disruption in the oil supply for prices at the pumps or on the meter to go up. And if there is later a small 'correction', the price never seems to go back to where it was before. The line over time for such monopoly-controlled essentials only seems to go upwards.

### **Economic warfare backfiring**

And then, of course, there are the sanctions.

The imperialist countries have been using their control of world trading mechanisms to starve all independent-minded countries into submission for decades, but the steady ratcheting up of this blunt weapon against Russia and China in the last decade has forced both countries to take serious steps to protect themselves.

In the process, they have not only made their own economies more diverse, self-sufficient and resilient, but they have created a framework that allows other countries to join them and do the same. The weapon that was supposed to ensure US domination forever has actually accelerated the process of the decline of imperialist global supremacy.

When Russia finally (after decades of provocations and broken promises, and eight years of trying to implement the peace process in eastern Ukraine) responded to the proxy war being waged against it in February 2022, the west launched a massive sanctions war, which it confidently asserted would bring Russia to its knees in a matter of weeks, collapsing its economy, starving its people onto the streets, and toppling the hated Putin government.

The result, our leaders were sure, would be the installation of a stooge regime in the Kremlin, the break-up of Russia into seven or eight manageable chunks, and an orgy of unfettered looting of Russia's people and resources – just like the one that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and which the rise of a nationalist government in Russia so rudely brought to a halt.

When Russia failed to collapse as predicted, the sanctions began to hurt those who were wielding them far more than they were hurting Russia itself. While Russia found new markets for export commodities such as oil, gas, minerals, wheat and fertiliser, the absolute dependence of western industries on these materials was starkly revealed.

How many workers in Europe had understood before May 2022 that Germany's industrial strength rested on the provision of low-cost oil from the Urals? How many understood the fact that the

very engines and refineries that power Europe's economies are built around the specific features of this particular grade of oil, and that no 'alternative source' can easily replace it?

### **Who caused the war in Ukraine – and who is being asked to pay?**

So yes, a certain amount of the inflation that Britons are currently experiencing has been caused by the economic war against Russia, which has had the effect of disrupting supply and boosting prices. But it's quite a stretch to blame the intended victim of Nato's aggression for the inflationary consequences of Nato's war!

Whilst we are encouraged to dwell on such propositions as the notion that 'every 1 percent raise in pay for NHS workers costs the country £700m', nobody is invited to marvel at the cost in blood or treasure of the latest in hi-tech killing machines destined for the Ukraine meatgrinder.

The brilliant example being set by rail workers, posties, health workers and others is a red rag to the Tories and an uncomfortable reminder to the imperialist Labour party that the working class has not gone away.

Shadow health secretary Wes Streeting recently put the boot into the BMA, accusing the doctors' representative body of promoting a "something for nothing" culture in the NHS and whingeing that in spite of Labour's "commitment" to more staff, these ingrates remain "so hostile to the idea that with more staff must come better standards for patients". How better standards are supposed to be achieved in departments that are understaffed precisely because pay and working conditions are so bad, Mr Streeting didn't say.

As for Keir Starmer, he announced in a radio interview that the pay rise nurses are fighting for (19 percent, that is, 5 percent over the current official RPI and a long way short of the real-terms pay cut they've suffered over the last 15 years) is "more than could be afforded".

No parliamentarian of any political stripe would

dream of breaking with the holy consensus: blame greedy workers and evil Russian dictators, and don't talk about the capitalist crisis or the class war.

The truth is that with their system in deep crisis, our rulers have only two ways out: pass as much of the burden of the crisis onto the poor as possible, and search ruthlessly and relentlessly around the globe for ways to make a profit.

That might be by cutting wages to raise profits margins. It might be by putting the poorest workers with no choice onto prepay meters and wringing a few more quid out of them that way. It might be by privatising services like healthcare and education so that the public purse can be rinsed for private profit.

Or it might be by driving to war against any and every corner of the world where maximum profit-taking is curbed by some independent-minded people who have the temerity to think it's up to them how the resources in their lands are used and who should benefit from their wealth.

Either way, it is the workers who pay, and the poorest who pay the most.

Karl Marx proved long ago that it's not high wages which cause inflation. What higher wages ultimately do is reduce profit margins and the dividends that are paid out to the parasite class. While the system of capitalist production for profit remains, it's a fundamental right and duty of the working class to organise and to demand a bigger share of the wealth that its own labour has created.

Ultimately, of course, we need to recognise the truth of Marx's revelation that workers' problems can only really be solved when we drop the demand for 'fair wages' and take up the demand for an 'end to the wages system': that is, for an end to the system of workers' enslavement to the capitalist class, whose wealth is built upon our poverty.

# We will fight together and win together

**Stephen Cho** | Coordinator of the Korean International Forum

Commemoration of the 58th anniversary of the massacres in Indonesia, Colonel Fabien, Paris  
September 8 2023

Indonesia's tragedy is our tragedy. The tragedy is to suffer, whether we are the people of a colony or the workers of an imperialist country. For as long as imperialism exists, the tragedies like that suffered by the Indonesian people will be repeated many times. In order to liberate themselves from invasion, subjugation, genocide, oppression, exploitation and suffering, all the peoples of the world must fight to the end against the imperialists and their proxies.

The Indonesian Communist Party, once the third-largest in the world, has experienced periods of rise and fall since its founding in 1920, but the indomitable Indonesian communist and working people had to suffer the greatest hardship in 1965. In the wake of an infamous 'false flag' operation—the kind that the imperialist powers and their proxies are accustomed to using all over the world—a regime-change operation was effected. Sukarno was replaced by Suharto and a massacre of communists and pro-Sukarno forces was perpetrated.

The dead were never counted, but it is believed that 800,000 party members were done to death in this horrific bloodbath of progressive forces. More than one million people were imprisoned, more than 1,000 were exiled abroad, and more than three million workers and peasants were massacred in total nationwide. Anyone who was thought to have sympathy for the communists was a target during this US-directed massacre—a slaughter comparable to the crimes against the humanity committed by the Nazis during WW2.

We are confident that the communists and working people in Indonesia will rise like a phoenix and surely rebuild the communist party, creating a new people-centered society where the working people become the masters of their country and means of production, where everything serves the needs of the working people. We are also sure

that they will drive out imperialism, liquidate its puppets and realize a true people's democracy where there will be no more slavery or genocide.

Strongly believing in the truth of history, in the dialectical law of the negation of the negation, which shows how progress is achieved through contradictions and vicissitudes, we are convinced that the tragic misfortune in the history of Indonesia will ultimately be transformed into its fortune. We are certain that this is the path of human history, and that all of the people of the world will follow this path.

Indonesia is a part of Asia and of the world. The revolution in each country is a part of the world revolution. The individual and the universal are closely related as one. When the Indonesian revolution goes forward, so does the world revolution, and vice versa (when the world revolution is progressing, the Indonesian revolution is, too). Our revolution is a revolution that advances to the full realization of people's independence in their country, also that of advancing to the full realization of all humanity's independence through achieving global independence. Every communist must be an internationalist, and a true internationalist must be a communist.

At present, the biggest and most important event in the world is the war in Ukraine. This war, which was escalated in eastern Europe in 2022, is on the verge of spreading into wars in Taiwan and South Korea in East Asia. Today, in 2023, the probabilities of the spread of war in eastern Europe and of the outbreak of war in East Asia are rising. When war breaks out in East Asia, it will become clear that we are in a world war. History will record that the third world war began in eastern Europe in February 2022 and came into full swing with the breakout of war in East Asia.

Taiwan is in the middle of East Asia, and South Korea is to its north. Indonesia is to its south. If war breaks out in the East and Northeast of Asia, and WW3 becomes full-blown, Indonesia will not be left out. In fact, the president of the Philippines said during a recent visit to Japan that the Philippines would be involved if a war breaks out in Taiwan.

It has been reported that, besides the Philippines, Indonesia is preparing an operation to evacuate those of its citizens who are presently living in Taiwan. The USA also conducted an evacuation exercise last May. The USA, which suffered the unforgettable nightmare of being expelled from North Vietnam and Afghanistan, has a clear case of 'evacuation trauma'.

Wars in Taiwan and South Korea are most likely to break out simultaneously. An agreement to this effect was signed in 1961 between the President of the DPRK Kim Il Sung and the Premier of China Zhou Enlai, and was apparently reaffirmed when President Xi Jinping visited North Korea to meet Chairman Kim Jong Un in 2019. If one is pulled into a war against US imperialism, the other will automatically follow, forcing US imperialism to wage its war on two battlefields simultaneously—Taiwan and South Korea.

With NATO also running the war in Ukraine, the USA will in fact have to fight in three theaters, since it is the main, directing force within the Nato 'alliance'. Moreover, not only Russia, but also China and the DPRK are nuclear and missile powers armed with all kinds of advanced weapons, including hydrogen bombs and tactical nuclear bombs, and with various sort of missile, including hypersonic missiles unrivalled by western armouries.

These three countries, which have been superhumanly patient in the face of imperialist provocations, have said that they will not stand for it anymore and have launched a decisive counterattack, beginning with Russia's special military operation to stop NATO's advance into Ukraine. If the wars over Taiwan and South Korea break out soon, US imperialism will have to fight a fierce war on three battlefields against the three nuclear and missile powers.

Moreover, these wars are all expeditionary, making them very unfavorable to US imperialism. Above all, the anti-imperialist, national-liberation and preventive war being waged by Russia and the anti-imperialist, national-liberation and reunification wars being forced onto China and the DPRK are clearly just wars, with progress and socialist justice on their sides. Thus Russia, China, and North Korea have launched or are preparing to launch wars that are superior not only militarily and technologically but also politically and morally.

Whereas WW1 was an interimperialist war and WW2 was an antifascist war, WW3 will be characterized as an anti-imperialist war. The imperialist powers are increasingly jeopardizing their position through waging this world war and are on the path of decline and destruction. As a result of WW1, the world's first socialist country emerged, and as a result of WW2, the number of socialist countries increased more than tenfold, and the progressive and revolutionary movements reached an unprecedented high. WW3 will deal a decisive blow to imperialism and bring about a new phase of history and revolution.

The World Anti-imperialist Platform, which emerged in the present period of great transformation and turn of history, will fulfill the mission of justice dictated by our times. It will realize the three goals of waging anti-imperialist struggle on worldwide scale, of conducting a fierce ideological struggle against opportunism, and of strengthening the international communist forces, taking the lead in promoting revolution in each country and global independence movements worldwide.

We believe in the slogans 'Workers of the world, unite' and 'The people united will never be defeated'. We are convinced of the scientific truth, the truth of revolution; that the united struggle of the working people, led by the working class, will be victorious. We will stand firmly united with the working people and the communists in Indonesia, stand firmly against our common enemies, and remain firmly committed to the ultimate achievement of a brilliant victory together.





**Platform**

The World Anti-imperialist Platform