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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 entire illustration is framed by a thin white border.





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The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government ^[1]

V. I. Lenin

April 28, 1918

The International Position of the Russian Soviet Republic and the Fundamental Tasks of the Socialist Revolution

Thanks to the peace which has been achieved—despite its extremely onerous character and extreme instability—the Russian Soviet Republic has gained an opportunity to concentrate its efforts for a while on the most important and most difficult aspect of the socialist revolution, namely, the task of organisation.

This task was clearly and definitely set before all the working and oppressed people in the fourth paragraph (Part 4) of the resolution adopted at the Extraordinary Congress of Soviets in Moscow on March 15, 1918, in that paragraph (or part) which speaks of the self-discipline of the working people and of the ruthless struggle against chaos and disorganisation.

Of course, the peace achieved by the Russian Soviet Republic is unstable not because she is now thinking of resuming military operations; apart from bourgeois counter-revolutionaries and their henchmen (the Mensheviks and others), no sane politician thinks of doing that. The instability of the peace is due to the fact that in the imperialist states bordering on Russia to the West and the East, which command enormous military forces, the military party, tempted by Russia's momentary weakness and egged on by capitalists, who hate socialism and are eager for plunder, may gain the upper hand at any moment.

Under these circumstances the only real, not paper, guarantee of peace we have is the antagonism among the imperialist powers, which has reached extreme limits, and which is apparent on the one hand in the resumption of the imperialist butchery of the peoples in the West, and on the other hand in the extreme

intensification of imperialist rivalry between Japan and America for supremacy in the Pacific and on the Pacific coast.

It goes without saying that with such an unreliable guard for protection, our Soviet Socialist Republic is in an extremely unstable and certainly critical international position. All our efforts must be exerted to the very utmost to make use of the respite given us by the combination of circumstances so that we can heal the very severe wounds inflicted by the war upon the entire social organism of Russia and bring about an economic revival, without which a real increase in our country's defence potential is inconceivable.

It also goes without saying that we shall be able to render effective assistance to the socialist revolution in the West which has been delayed for a number of reasons, only to the extent that we are able to fulfil the task of organisation confronting us.

A fundamental condition for the successful accomplishment of the primary task of organisation confronting us is that the people's political leaders, i.e., the members of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and following them all the class-conscious representatives of the mass of the working people, shall fully appreciate the radical distinction in this respect between previous bourgeois revolutions and the present socialist revolution.

In bourgeois revolutions, the principal task of the mass of working people was to fulfil the negative or destructive work of abolishing feudalism, monarchy and medievalism. The positive or constructive work of organising the new society was carried out by the property-owning bourgeois minority of the population. And the latter carried out this task with relative ease, despite the resistance of the workers and the poor peasants, not only because the resistance of the

people exploited by capital was then extremely weak, since they were scattered and uneducated, but also because the chief organising force of anarchically built capitalist society is the spontaneously growing and expanding national and international market.

In every socialist revolution, however—and consequently in the socialist revolution in Russia which we began on October 25, 1917—the principal task of the proletariat, and of the poor peasants which it leads, is the positive or constructive work of setting up an extremely intricate and delicate system of new organisational relationships extending to the planned production and distribution of the goods required for the existence of tens of millions of people. Such a revolution can be successfully carried out only if the majority of the population, and primarily the majority of the working people, engage in independent creative work as makers of history. Only if the proletariat and the poor peasants display sufficient class-consciousness, devotion to principle, self-sacrifice and perseverance, will the victory of the socialist revolution be assured. By creating a new, Soviet type of state, which gives the working and oppressed people the chance to take an active part in the independent building up of a new society, we solved only a small part of this difficult problem. The principal difficulty lies in the economic sphere, namely, the introduction of the strictest and universal accounting and control of the production and distribution of goods, raising the productivity of labour and socialising production in practice.

The development of the Bolshevik Party, which today is the governing party in Russia, very strikingly indicates the nature of the turning-point in history we have now reached, which is the peculiar feature of the present political situation, and which calls for a new orientation of Soviet power, i.e., for a new presentation of new tasks.

The first task of every party of the future is to convince, the majority of the people that its programme and tactics are correct. This task stood in the fore-

front both in tsarist times and in the period of the Chernovs' and Tseretelis' policy of compromise with the Kerenskys and Kishkins. This task has now been fulfilled in the main, for, as the recent Congress of Soviets in Moscow incontrovertibly proved, the majority of the workers and peasants of Russia are obviously on the side of the Bolsheviks; but of course, it is far from being completely fulfilled (and it can never be completely fulfilled).

The second task that confronted our Party was to capture political power and to suppress the resistance of the exploiters. This task has not been completely fulfilled either, and it cannot be ignored because the monarchists and Constitutional-Democrats on the one hand, and their henchmen and hangers-on, the Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, on the other, are continuing their efforts to unite for the purpose of overthrowing Soviet power. In the main, however, the task of suppressing the resistance of the exploiters was fulfilled in the period from October 25, 1917, to (approximately) February 1918, or to the surrender of Bogayevsky.^[2]

A third task is now coming to the fore as the immediate task and one which constitutes the peculiar feature of the present situation, namely, the task of organising administration of Russia. Of course, we advanced and tackled this task on the very day following October 25, 1917. Up to now, however, since the resistance of the exploiters still took the form of open civil war, up to now the task of administration could not become the main, the central task.

Now it has become the main and central task. We, the Bolshevik Party, have convinced Russia. We have won Russia from the rich for the poor, from the exploiters for the working people. Now we must administer Russia. And the whole peculiarity of the present situation, the whole difficulty, lies in understanding the specific features of the transition from the principal task of convincing the people and of suppressing the exploiters by armed force to the principal task of administration.

For the first time in human history, a socialist party has managed to complete in the main the conquest of power and the suppression of the exploiters, and has managed to approach directly the task of administration. We must prove worthy executors of this most difficult (and most gratifying) task of the socialist revolution. We must fully realise that in order to administer successfully, besides being able to convince people, besides being able to win a civil war, we must be able to do practical organisational work. This is the most difficult task, because it is a matter of organising in a new way the most deep-rooted, the economic, foundations of life of scores of millions of people. And it is the most gratifying task, because only after it has been fulfilled (in the principal and main outlines) will it be possible to say that Russia has become not only a Soviet, but also a socialist, republic.

The General Slogan of the Moment

The objective situation reviewed above, which has been created by the extremely onerous and unstable peace, the terrible state of ruin, the unemployment and famine we inherited from the war and the rule of the bourgeoisie (represented by Kerensky and the Mensheviks and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries who supported him), all this has inevitably caused extreme weariness and even exhaustion of wide sections of the working people. These people insistently demand—and cannot but demand—a respite. The task of the day is to restore the productive forces destroyed by the war and by bourgeois rule; to heal the wounds inflicted by the war, by the defeat in the war, by profiteering and the attempts of the bourgeoisie to restore the overthrown rule of the exploiters; to achieve economic revival; to provide reliable protection of elementary order. It may sound paradoxical, but in fact, considering the objective conditions indicated above, it is absolutely certain that at the present moment the Soviet system can secure Russia's transition to socialism only if these

very elementary, extremely elementary problems of maintaining public life are practically solved in spite of the resistance of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. In view of the specific features of the present situation, and in view of the existence of Soviet power with its land socialisation law, workers' control law, etc., the practical solution of these extremely elementary problems and the overcoming of the organisational difficulties of the first stages of progress toward socialism are now two aspects of the same picture.

Keep regular and honest accounts of money, manage economically, do not be lazy, do not steal, observe the strictest labour discipline—it is these slogans, justly scorned by the revolutionary proletariat when the bourgeoisie used them to conceal its rule as an exploiting class, that are now, since the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, becoming the immediate and the principal slogans of the moment. On the one hand, the practical application of these slogans by the mass of working people is the sole condition for the salvation of a country which has been tortured almost to death by the imperialist war and by the imperialist robbers (headed by Kerensky); on the other hand, the practical application of these slogans by the Soviet State, by its methods, on the basis of its laws, is a necessary and sufficient condition for the final victory of socialism. This is precisely what those who contemptuously brush aside the idea of putting such “hackneyed” and “trivial” slogans in the forefront fail to understand. In a small-peasant country, which overthrew tsarism only a year ago, and which liberated itself from the Kerenskys less than six months ago, there has naturally remained not a little of spontaneous anarchy, intensified by the brutality and savagery that accompany every protracted and reactionary war, and there has arisen a good deal of despair and aimless bitterness. And if we add to this the provocative policy of the lackeys of the bourgeoisie (the Mensheviks, the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc.) it will become perfectly clear what

prolonged and persistent efforts must be exerted by the best and the most class-conscious workers and peasants in order to bring about a complete change in the mood of the people and to bring them on to the proper path of steady and disciplined labour. Only such a transition brought about by the mass of the poor (the proletarians and semi-proletarians) can consummate the victory over the bourgeoisie and particularly over the peasant bourgeoisie, more stubborn and numerous.

The New Phase of the Struggle Against the Bourgeoisie

The bourgeoisie in our country has been conquered, but it has not yet been uprooted, not yet destroyed, and not even utterly broken. That is why we are faced with a new and higher form of struggle against the bourgeoisie, the transition from the very simple task of further expropriating the capitalists to the much more complicated and difficult task of creating conditions in which it will be impossible for the bourgeoisie to exist, or for a new bourgeoisie to arise. Clearly, this task is immeasurably more significant than the previous one; and until it is fulfilled there will be no socialism.

If we measure our revolution by the scale of West-European revolutions, we shall find that at the present moment we are approximately at the level reached in 1793 and 1871. We can be legitimately proud of having risen to this level, and of having certainly, in one respect, advanced somewhat further, namely: we have decreed and introduced through out Russia the highest type of state—Soviet power. Under no circumstances, however, can we rest content with what we have achieved, because we have only just started the transition to socialism, we have not yet done the decisive thing in this respect.

The decisive thing is the organisation of the strictest and country-wide accounting and control of production and distribution of goods. And yet, we have not yet introduced accounting and control in those enter-

prises and in those branches and fields of economy which we have taken away from the bourgeoisie; and without this there can be no thought of achieving the second and equally essential material condition for introducing socialism, namely, raising the productivity of labour on a national scale.

That is why the present task could not be defined by the simple formula: continue the offensive against capital. Although we have certainly not finished off capital and although it is certainly necessary to continue the offensive against this enemy of the working people, such a formula would be inexact, would not be concrete, would not take into account the peculiarity of the present situation in which, in order to go on advancing successfully in the future, we must “suspend” our offensive now.

This can be explained by comparing our position in the war against capital with the position of a victorious army that has captured, say, a half or two-thirds of the enemy’s territory and is compelled to halt in order to muster its forces, to replenish its supplies of munitions, repair and reinforce the lines of communication, build new storehouses, bring up new reserves, etc. To suspend the offensive of a victorious army under such conditions is necessary precisely in order to gain the rest of the enemy’s territory, i.e., in order to achieve complete victory. Those who have failed to understand that the objective state of affairs at the present moment dictates to us precisely such a “suspension” of the offensive against capital have failed to understand anything at all about the present political situation.

It goes without saying that we can speak about the “suspension” of the offensive against capital only in quotation marks, i.e., only metaphorically. In ordinary war, a general order can be issued to stop the offensive, the advance can actually be stopped. In the war against capital, however, the advance cannot be stopped, and there can be no thought of our abandoning the further expropriation of capital. What we are discussing is the shifting of the centre of grav-

ity of our economic and political work. Up to now measures for the direct expropriation of the expropriators were in the forefront. Now the organisation of accounting and control in those enterprises in which the capitalists have already been expropriated, and in all other enterprises, advances to the forefront.

If we decided to continue to expropriate capital at the same rate at which we have been doing it up to now, we should certainly suffer defeat, because our work of organising proletarian accounting and control has obviously—obviously to every thinking person—fallen behind the work of directly “expropriating the expropriators”. If we now concentrate all our efforts on the organisation of accounting and control, we shall be able to solve this problem, we shall be able to make up for lost time, we shall completely win our “campaign” against capital.

But is not the admission that we must make up for lost time tantamount to admission of some kind of an error? Not in the least. Take another military example. If it is possible to defeat and push back the enemy merely with detachments of light cavalry, it should be done. But if this can be done successfully only up to a certain point, then it is quite conceivable that when this point has been reached, it will be necessary to bring up heavy artillery. By admitting that it is now necessary to make up for lost time in bringing up heavy artillery, we do not admit that the successful cavalry attack was a mistake.

Frequently, the lackeys of the bourgeoisie reproached us for having launched a “Red Guard” attack on capital. The reproach is absurd and is worthy only of the lackeys of the money-bags, because at one time the “Red Guard” attack on capital was absolutely dictated by circumstances. Firstly, at that time capital put up military resistance through the medium of Kerensky and Krasnov, Savinkov and Gotz (Gegechkori is putting up such resistance even now), Dutov and Bogayevsky. Military resistance cannot be broken except by military means, and the Red Guards fought in the noble and supreme historical cause of liberat-

ing the working and exploited people from the yoke of the exploiters.

Secondly, we could not at that time put methods of administration in the forefront in place of methods of suppression, because the art of administration is not innate, but is acquired by experience. At that time we lacked this experience; now we have it. Thirdly, at that time we could not have specialists in the various fields of knowledge and technology at our disposal because those specialists were either fighting in the ranks of the Bogayevskys, or were still able to put up systematic and stubborn passive resistance by way of sabotage. Now we have broken the sabotage. The “Red Guard” attack on capital was successful, was victorious, because we broke capital’s military resistance and its resistance by sabotage.

Does that mean that a “Red Guard” attack on capital is always appropriate, under all circumstances, that we have no other means of fighting capital? It would be childish to think so. We achieved victory with the aid of light cavalry, but we also have heavy artillery. We achieved victory by methods of suppression; we shall be able to achieve victory also by methods of administration. We must know how to change our methods of fighting the enemy to suit changes in the situation. We shall not for a moment renounce “Red Guard” suppression of the Savinkovs and Gegechkoris and all other landowner and bourgeois counter-revolutionaries. We shall not be so foolish, however, as to put “Red Guard” methods in the forefront at a time when the period in which Red Guard attacks were necessary has, in the main, drawn to a close (and to a victorious close), and when the period of utilising bourgeois specialists by the proletarian state power for the purpose of reploughing the soil in order to prevent the growth of any bourgeoisie whatever is knocking at the door.

This is a peculiar epoch, or rather stage of development, and in order to defeat capital completely, we must be able to adapt the forms of our struggle to the peculiar conditions of this stage.

Without the guidance of experts in the various fields of knowledge, technology and experience, the transition to socialism will be impossible, because socialism calls for a conscious mass advance to greater productivity of labour compared with capitalism, and on the basis achieved by capitalism. Socialism must achieve this advance in its own way, by its own methods—or, to put it more concretely, by Soviet methods. And the specialists, because of the whole social environment which made them specialists, are, in the main, inevitably bourgeois. Had our proletariat, after capturing power, quickly solved the problem of accounting, control and organisation on a national scale (which was impossible owing to the war and Russia's backwardness), then we, after breaking the sabotage, would also have completely subordinated these bourgeois experts to ourselves by means of universal accounting and control. Owing to the considerable "delay" in introducing accounting and control generally, we, although we have managed to conquer sabotage, have not yet created the conditions which would place the bourgeois specialists at our disposal. The mass of saboteurs are "going to work", but the best organisers and the top experts can be utilised by the state either in the old way, in the bourgeois way (i.e., for high salaries), or in the new way, in the proletarian way (i.e., creating the conditions of national accounting and control from below, which would inevitably and of itself subordinate the experts and enlist them for our work).

Now we have to resort to the old bourgeois method and to agree to pay a very high price for the "services" of the top bourgeois experts. All those who are familiar with the subject appreciate this, but not all ponder over the significance of this measure being adopted by the proletarian state. Clearly, this measure is a compromise, a departure from the principles of the Paris Commune and of every proletarian power, which call for the reduction of all salaries to the level of the wages of the average worker, which urge that careerism be fought not merely in words,

but in deeds.

Moreover, it is clear that this measure not only implies the cessation—in a certain field and to a certain degree—of the offensive against capital (for capital is not a sum of money, but a definite social relation); it is also a step backward on the part of our socialist Soviet state power, which from the very outset proclaimed and pursued the policy of reducing high salaries to the level of the wages of the average worker.^[3]

Of course, the lackeys of the bourgeoisie, particularly the small fry, such as the Mensheviks, the Novaya Zhizn people and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, will giggle over our confession that we are taking a step backward. But we need not mind their giggling. We must study the specific features of the extremely difficult and new path to socialism without concealing our mistakes and weaknesses, and try to be prompt in doing what has been left undone. To conceal from the people the fact that the enlistment of bourgeois experts by means of extremely high salaries is a retreat from the principles of the Paris Commune would be sinking to the level of bourgeois politicians and deceiving the people. Frankly explaining how and why we took this step backward, and then publicly discussing what means are available for making up for lost time, means educating the people and learning from experience, learning together with the people how to build socialism. There is hardly a single victorious military campaign in history in which the victor did not commit certain mistakes, suffer partial reverses, temporarily yield something and in some places retreat. The "campaign" which we have undertaken against capitalism is a million times more difficult than the most difficult military campaign, and it would be silly and disgraceful to give way to despondency because of a particular and partial retreat.

We shall now discuss the question from the practical point of view. Let us assume that the Russian Soviet Republic requires one thousand first-class scientists

and experts in various fields of knowledge, technology and practical experience to direct the labour of the people towards securing the speediest possible economic revival. Let us assume also that we shall have to pay these “stars of the first magnitude”—of course the majority of those who shout loudest about the corruption of the workers are themselves utterly corrupted by bourgeois morals—25,000 rubles per annum each. Let us assume that this sum (25,000,000 rubles) will have to be doubled (assuming that we have to pay bonuses for particularly successful and rapid fulfilment of the most important organisational and technical tasks), or even quadrupled (assuming that we have to enlist several hundred foreign specialists, who are more demanding). The question is, would the annual expenditure of fifty or a hundred million rubles by the Soviet Republic for the purpose of reorganising the labour of the people on modern scientific and technological lines be excessive or too heavy? Of course not. The overwhelming majority of the class-conscious workers and peasants will approve of this expenditure because they know from practical experience that our backwardness causes us to lose thousands of millions, and that we have not yet reached that degree of organisation, accounting and control which would induce all the “stars” of the bourgeois intelligentsia to participate voluntarily in our work.

It goes without saying that this question has another side to it. The corrupting influence of high salaries—both upon the Soviet authorities (especially since the revolution occurred so rapidly that it was impossible to prevent a certain number of adventurers and rogues from getting into positions of authority, and they, together with a number of inept or dishonest commissars, would not be averse to becoming “star” embezzlers of state funds) and upon the mass of the workers—is indisputable. Every thinking and honest worker and poor peasant, however, will agree with us, will admit, that we cannot immediately rid ourselves of the evil legacy of capitalism, and that we can

liberate the Soviet Republic from the duty of paying an annual “tribute” of fifty million or one hundred million rubles (a tribute for our own backwardness in organising country-wide accounting and control from below) only by organising ourselves, by tightening up discipline in our own ranks, by purging our ranks of all those who are “preserving the legacy of capitalism”, who “follow the traditions of capitalism”, i.e., of idlers, parasites and embezzlers of state funds (now all the land, all the factories and all the railways are the “state funds” of the Soviet Republic). If the class-conscious advanced workers and poor peasants manage with the aid of the Soviet institutions to organise, become disciplined, pull themselves together, create powerful labour discipline in the course of one year, then in a year’s time we shall throw off this “tribute”, which can be reduced even before that . . . in exact proportion to the successes we achieve in our workers’ and peasants’ labour discipline and organisation. The sooner we ourselves, workers and peasants, learn the best labour discipline and the most modern technique of labour, using the bourgeois experts to teach us, the sooner we shall liberate ourselves from any “tribute” to these specialists.

Our work of organising country-wide accounting and control of production and distribution under the supervision of the proletariat has lagged very much behind our work of directly expropriating the expropriators. This proposition is of fundamental importance for understanding the specific features of the present situation and the tasks of the Soviet government that follow from it. The centre of gravity of our struggle against the bourgeoisie is shifting to the organisation of such accounting and control. Only with this as our starting-point will it be possible to determine correctly the immediate tasks of economic and financial policy in the sphere of nationalisation of the banks, monopolisation of foreign trade, the state control of money circulation, the introduction of a property and income tax satisfactory from the proletarian point of view, and the introduction of

compulsory labour service.

We have been lagging very far behind in introducing socialist reforms in these spheres (very, very important spheres), and this is because accounting and control are insufficiently organised in general. It goes without saying that this is one of the most difficult tasks, and in view of the ruin caused by the war, it can be fulfilled only over a long period of time; but we must not forget that it is precisely here that the bourgeoisie—and particularly the numerous petty and peasant bourgeoisie—are putting up the most serious fight, disrupting the control that is already being organised, disrupting the grain monopoly, for example, and gaining positions for profiteering and speculative trade. We have far from adequately carried out the things we have decreed, and the principal task of the moment is to concentrate all efforts on the businesslike, practical realisation of the principles of the reforms which have already become law (but not yet reality).

In order to proceed with the nationalisation of the banks and to go on steadfastly towards transforming the banks into nodal points of public accounting under socialism, we must first of all, and above all, achieve real success in increasing the number of branches of the People's Bank, in attracting deposits, in simplifying the paying in and withdrawal of deposits by the public, in abolishing queues, in catching and shooting bribe-takers and rogues, etc. At first we must really carry out the simplest things, properly organise what is available, and then prepare for the more intricate things.

Consolidate and improve the state monopolies (in grain, leather, etc.) which have already been introduced, and by doing so prepare for the state monopoly of foreign trade. Without this monopoly we shall not be able to “free ourselves” from foreign capital by paying “tribute”.^[4] And the possibility of building up socialism depends entirely upon whether we shall be able, by paying a certain tribute to foreign capital during a certain transitional period, to safeguard our

internal economic independence.

We are also lagging very far behind in regard to the collection of taxes generally, and of the property and income tax in particular. The imposing of indemnities upon the bourgeoisie—a measure which in principle is absolutely permissible and deserves proletarian approval—shows that in this respect we are still nearer to the methods of warfare (to win Russia from the rich for the poor) than to the methods of administration. In order to become stronger, however, and in order to be able to stand firmer on our feet, we must adopt the latter methods, we must substitute for the indemnities imposed upon the bourgeoisie the constant and regular collection of a property and income tax, which will bring a greater return to the proletarian state, and which calls for better organisation on our part and better accounting and control.^[5]

The fact that we are late in introducing compulsory labour service also shows that the work that is coming to the fore at the present time is precisely the preparatory organisational work that, on the one hand, will finally consolidate our gains and that, on the other, is necessary in order to prepare for the operation of “surrounding” capital and compelling it to “surrender”. We ought to begin introducing compulsory labour service immediately, but we must do so very gradually and circumspectly, testing every step by practical experience, and, of course, taking the first step by introducing compulsory labour service for the rich. The introduction of work and consumers' budget books for every bourgeois, including every rural bourgeois, would be an important step towards completely “surrounding” the enemy and towards the creation of a truly popular accounting and control of the production and distribution of goods.

The Significance of the Struggle for Country-Wide Accounting and Control

The state, which for centuries has been an organ for oppression and robbery of the people, has left us

a legacy of the people's supreme hatred and suspicion of everything that is connected with the state. It is very difficult to overcome this, and only a Soviet government can do it. Even a Soviet government, however, will require plenty of time and enormous perseverance to accomplish it. This "legacy" is especially apparent in the problem of accounting and control—the fundamental problem facing the socialist revolution on the morrow of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. A certain amount of time will inevitably pass before the people, who feel free for the first time now that the landowners and the bourgeoisie have been overthrown, will understand—not from books, but from their own, Soviet experience—will understand and feel that without comprehensive state accounting and control of the production and distribution of goods, the power of the working people, the freedom of the working people, cannot be maintained, and that a return to the yoke of capitalism is inevitable.

All the habits and traditions of the bourgeoisie, and of the petty bourgeoisie in particular, also oppose state control, and uphold the inviolability of "sacred private property", of "sacred" private enterprise. It is now particularly clear to us how correct is the Marxist thesis that anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism are bourgeois trends, how irreconcilably opposed they are to socialism, proletarian dictatorship and communism. The fight to instill into the people's minds the idea of Soviet state control and accounting, and to carry out this idea in practice; the fight to break with the rotten past, which taught the people to regard the procurement of bread and clothes as a "private" affair, and buying and selling as a transaction "which concerns only myself"—is a great fight of world-historic significance, a fight between socialist consciousness and bourgeois-anarchist spontaneity.

We have introduced workers' control as a law, but this law is only just beginning to operate and is only just beginning to penetrate the minds of broad sections of the proletariat. In our agitation we

do not sufficiently explain that lack of accounting and control in the production and distribution of goods means the death of the rudiments of socialism, means the embezzlement of state funds (for all property belongs to the state and the state is the Soviet state in which power belongs to the majority of the working people). We do not sufficiently explain that carelessness in accounting and control is downright aiding and abetting the German and the Russian Kornilovs, who can overthrow the power of the working people only if we fail to cope with the task of accounting and control, and who, with the aid of the whole of the rural bourgeoisie, with the aid of the Constitutional-Democrats, the Mensheviks and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, are "watching" us and waiting for an opportune moment to attack us. And the advanced workers and peasants do not think and speak about this sufficiently. Until workers' control has become a fact, until the advanced workers have organised and carried out a victorious and ruthless crusade against the violators of this control, or against those who are careless in matters of control, it will be impossible to pass from the first step (from workers' control) to the second step towards socialism, i.e., to pass on to workers' regulation of production.

The socialist state can arise only as a network of producers' and consumers' communes, which conscientiously keep account of their production and consumption, economise on labour, and steadily raise the productivity of labour, thus making it possible to reduce the working day to seven, six and even fewer hours. Nothing will be achieved unless the strictest, country-wide, comprehensive accounting and control of grain and the production of grain (and later of all other essential goods) are set going. Capitalism left us a legacy of mass organisations which can facilitate our transition to the mass accounting and control of the distribution of goods, namely, the consumers' co-operative societies. In Russia these societies are not so well developed as in the advanced

countries, nevertheless, they have over ten million members. The Decree on Consumers' Co-operative Societies,^[6] issued the other day, is an extremely significant phenomenon, which strikingly illustrates the peculiar position and the specific tasks of the Soviet Socialist Republic at the present moment.

The decree is an agreement with the bourgeois co-operative societies and the workers' co-operative societies which still adhere to the bourgeois point of view. It is an agreement, or compromise, firstly because the representatives of the above-mentioned institutions not only took part in discussing the decree, but actually had a decisive say in the matter, for the parts of the decree which were strongly opposed by these institutions were dropped. Secondly, the essence of the compromise is that the Soviet government has abandoned the principle of admission of new members to co-operative societies without entrance fees (which is the only consistently proletarian principle); it has also abandoned the idea of uniting the whole population of a given locality in a single co-operative society. Contrary to this principle, which is the only socialist principle and which corresponds to the task of abolishing classes, the "working-class co-operative societies" (which in this case call themselves "class" societies only because they subordinate themselves to the class interests of the bourgeoisie) were given the right to continue to exist. Finally, the Soviet government's proposal to expel the bourgeoisie entirely from the boards of the co-operative societies was also considerably modified, and only owners of private capitalist trading and industrial enterprises were forbidden to serve on the boards.

Had the proletariat, acting through the Soviet government, managed to organise accounting and control on a national scale, or at least laid the foundation for such control, it would not have been necessary to make such compromises. Through the food departments of the Soviets, through the supply organisations under the Soviets we should

have organised the population into a single co-operative society under proletarian management. We should have done this without the assistance of the bourgeois co-operative societies, without making any concession to the purely bourgeois principle which prompts the workers' co-operative societies to remain workers' societies side by side with bourgeois societies, instead of subordinating these bourgeois co-operative societies entirely to themselves, merging the two together and taking the entire management of the society and the supervision of the consumption of the rich in their own hands.

In concluding such an agreement with the bourgeois co-operative societies, the Soviet government concretely defined its tactical aims and its peculiar methods of action in the present stage of development as follows: by directing the bourgeois elements, utilising them, making certain partial concessions to them, we create the conditions for further progress that will be slower than we at first anticipated, but surer, with the base and lines of communication better secured and with the positions which have been won better consolidated. The Soviets can (and should) now gauge their successes in the field of socialist construction, among other things, by extremely clear, simple and practical standards, namely, in how many communities (communes or villages, or blocks of houses, etc.) co-operative societies have been organised, and to what extent their development has reached the point of embracing the whole population.

Raising the Productivity of Labour

In every socialist revolution, after the proletariat has solved the problem of capturing power, and to the extent that the task of expropriating the expropriators and suppressing their resistance has been carried out in the main, there necessarily comes to the forefront the fundamental task of creating a social system superior to capitalism, namely, raising the productivity of labour, and in this connection (and for this

purpose) securing better organisation of labour. Our Soviet state is precisely in the position where, thanks to the victories over the exploiters—from Kerensky to Kornilov—it is able to approach this task directly, to tackle it in earnest. And here it becomes immediately clear that while it is possible to take over the central government in a few days, while it is possible to suppress the military resistance (and sabotage) of the exploiters even in different parts of a great country in a few weeks, the capital solution of the problem of raising the productivity of labour requires, at all events (particularly after a most terrible and devastating war), several years. The protracted nature of the work is certainly dictated by objective circumstances.

The raising of the productivity of labour first of all requires that the material basis of large-scale industry shall be assured, namely, the development of the production of fuel, iron, the engineering and chemical industries. The Russian Soviet Republic enjoys the favourable position of having at its command, even after the Brest peace, enormous reserves of ore (in the Urals), fuel in Western Siberia (coal), in the Caucasus and the South-East (oil), in Central Russia (peat), enormous timber reserves, water power, raw materials for the chemical industry (Karabugaz), etc. The development of these natural resources by methods of modern technology will provide the basis for the unprecedented progress of the productive forces.

Another condition for raising the productivity of labour is, firstly, the raising of the educational and cultural level of the mass of the population. This is now taking place extremely rapidly, a fact which those who are blinded by bourgeois routine are unable to see; they are unable to understand what an urge towards enlightenment and initiative is now developing among the “lower ranks” of the people thanks to the Soviet form of organisation. Secondly, a condition for economic revival is the raising of the working people’s discipline, their skill, the effectiveness, the intensity of labour and its better organisation.

In this respect the situation is particularly bad and

even hopeless if we are to believe those who have allowed themselves to be intimidated by the bourgeoisie or by those who are serving the bourgeoisie for their own ends. These people do not understand that there has not been, nor could there be, a revolution in which the supporters of the old system did not raise a howl about chaos, anarchy, etc. naturally, among the people who have only just thrown off an unprecedentedly savage yoke there is deep and widespread seething and ferment; the working out of new principles of labour discipline by the people is a very protracted process, and this process could not even start until complete victory had been achieved over the landowners and the bourgeoisie.

We, however, without in the least yielding to the despair (it is often false despair) which is spread by the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intellectuals (who have despaired of retaining their old privileges), must under no circumstances conceal an obvious evil. On the contrary, we shall expose it and intensify the Soviet methods of combating it, because the victory of socialism is inconceivable without the victory of proletarian conscious discipline over spontaneous petty-bourgeois anarchy, this real guarantee of a possible restoration of Kerenskyism and Kornilovism.

The more class-conscious vanguard of the Russian proletariat has already set itself the task of raising labour discipline. For example, both the Central Committee of the Metalworkers’ Union and the Central Council of Trade Unions have begun to draft the necessary measures and decrees.^[7] This work must be supported and pushed ahead with all speed. We must raise the question of piece-work^[8] and apply and test it in practice; we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system; we must make wages correspond to the total amount of goods turned out, or to the amount of work done by the railways, the water transport system, etc., etc.

The Russian is a bad worker compared with people in advanced countries. It could not be otherwise

under the tsarist regime and in view of the persistence of the hangover from serfdom. The task that the Soviet government must set the people in all its scope is—learn to work. The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field. The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organisation of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism. We must organise in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our own ends. At the same time, in working to raise the productivity of labour, we must take into account the specific features of the transition period from capitalism to socialism, which, on the one hand, require that the foundations be laid of the socialist organisation of competition, and, on the other hand, require the use of compulsion, so that the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat shall not be desecrated by the practice of a lily-livered proletarian government.

The Organisation of Competition

Among the absurdities which the bourgeoisie are fond of spreading about socialism is the allegation that socialists deny the importance of competition. In fact, it is only socialism which, by abolishing classes, and, consequently, by abolishing the enslavement of the people, for the first time opens the way for competition on a really mass scale. And it is precisely the Soviet form of organisation, by ensuring transition from the formal democracy of the bourgeois republic

to real participation of the mass of working people in administration, that for the first time puts competition on a broad basis. It is much easier to organise this in the political field than in the economic field; but for the success of socialism, it is the economic field that matters.

Take, for example, a means of organising competition such as publicity. The bourgeois republic ensures publicity only formally; in practice, it subordinates the press to capital, entertains the “mob” with sensationalist political trash and conceals what takes place in the workshops, in commercial transactions, contracts, etc., behind a veil of “trade secrets”, which protect “the sacred right of property”. The Soviet government has abolished trade secrets^[9]; it has taken a new path; but we have done hardly anything to utilise publicity for the purpose of encouraging economic competition. While ruthlessly suppressing the thoroughly mendacious and insolently slanderous bourgeois press, we must set to work systematically to create a press that will not entertain and fool the people with political sensation and trivialities, but which will submit the questions of everyday economic life to the people’s judgement and assist in the serious study of these questions. Every factory, every village is a producers’ and consumers’ commune, whose right and duty it is to apply the general Soviet laws in their own way (“in their own way”, not in the sense of violating them, but in the sense that they can apply them in various forms) and in their own way to solve the problem of accounting in the production and distribution of goods. Under capitalism, this was the “private affair” of the individual capitalist, landowner or kulak. Under the Soviet system, it is not a private affair, but a most important affair of state.

We have scarcely yet started on the enormous, difficult but rewarding task of organising competition between communes, of introducing accounting and publicity in the process of the production of grain, clothes and other things, of transforming dry, dead, bureaucratic accounts into living examples, some

repulsive, others attractive. Under the capitalist mode of production, the significance of individual example, say the example of a co-operative workshop, was inevitably very much restricted, and only those imbued with petty-bourgeois illusions could dream of “correcting” capitalism through the example of virtuous institutions. After political power has passed to the proletariat, after the expropriators have been expropriated, the situation radically changes and as prominent socialists have repeatedly pointed out—force of example for the first time is able to influence the people. Model communes must and will serve as educators, teachers, helping to raise the backward communes. The press must serve as an instrument of socialist construction, give publicity to the successes achieved by the model communes in all their details, must study the causes of these successes, the methods of management these communes employ, and, on the other hand, must put on the “black list” those communes which persist in the “traditions of capitalism”, i.e., anarchy, laziness, disorder and profiteering. In capitalist society, statistics were entirely a matter for “government servants”, or for narrow specialists; we must carry statistics to the people and make them popular so that the working people themselves may gradually learn to understand and see how long and in what way it is necessary to work, how much time and in what way one may rest, so that the comparison of the business results of the various communes may become a matter of general interest and study, and that the most outstanding communes may be rewarded immediately (by reducing the working day, raising remuneration, placing a larger amount of cultural or aesthetic facilities or values at their disposal, etc.).

When a new class comes on to the historical scene as the leader and guide of society, a period of violent “rocking”, shocks, struggle and storm, on the one hand, and a period of uncertain steps, experiments, wavering, hesitation in regard to the selection of new methods corresponding to new objective circum-

stances, on the other, are inevitable. The moribund feudal nobility avenged themselves on the bourgeoisie which vanquished them and took their place, not only by conspiracies and attempts at rebellion and restoration, but also by pouring ridicule over the lack of skill, the clumsiness and the mistakes of the “upstarts” and the “insolent” who dared to take over the “sacred helm” of state without the centuries of training which the princes, barons, nobles and dignitaries had had; in exactly the same way the Kornilovs and Kerenskys, the Gotzes and Martovs, the whole of that fraternity of heroes of bourgeois swindling or bourgeois scepticism, avenge themselves on the working class of Russia for having had the “audacity” to take power.

Of course, not weeks, but long months and years are required for a new social class, especially a class which up to now has been oppressed and crushed by poverty and ignorance, to get used to its new position, look around, organise its work and promote its own organisers. It is understandable that the Party which leads the revolutionary proletariat has not been able to acquire the experience and habits of large organisational undertakings embracing millions and tens of millions of citizens; the remoulding of the old, almost exclusively agitators’ habits is a very lengthy process. But there is nothing impossible in this, and as soon as the necessity for a change is clearly appreciated, as soon as there is firm determination to effect the change and perseverance in pursuing a great and difficult aim, we shall achieve it. There is an enormous amount of organising talent among the “people”, i.e., among the workers and the peasants who do not exploit the labour of others. Capital crushed these talented people in thousands; it killed their talent and threw them on to the scrap-heap. We are not yet able to find them, encourage them, put them on their feet, promote them. But we shall learn to do so if we set about it with all-out revolutionary enthusiasm, without which there can be no victorious revolutions.

No profound and mighty popular movement has ever occurred in history without dirty scum rising to the top, without adventurers and rogues, boasters and ranters attaching themselves to the inexperienced innovators, without absurd muddle and fuss, without individual “leaders” trying to deal with twenty matters at once and not finishing any of them. Let the lap-dogs of bourgeois society, from Belorussov to Martov, squeal and yelp about every extra chip that is sent flying in cutting down the big, old wood. What else are lap-dogs for if not to yelp at the proletarian elephant? Let them yelp. We shall go our way and try as carefully and as patiently as possible to test and discover real organisers, people with sober and practical minds, people who combine loyalty to socialism with ability without fuss (and in spite of muddle and fuss) to get a large number of people working together steadily and concertedly within the framework of Soviet organisation. Only such people, after they have been tested a dozen times, by being transferred from the simplest to the more difficult tasks, should be promoted to the responsible posts of leaders of the people’s labour, leaders of administration. We have not yet learned to do this, but we shall learn.

“Harmonious Organisation” and Dictatorship

The resolution adopted by the recent Moscow Congress of Soviets advanced as the primary task of the moment the establishment of a “harmonious organisation”, and the tightening of discipline. Everyone now readily “votes for” and “subscribes to” resolutions of this kind; but usually people do not think over the fact that the application of such resolutions calls for coercion—coercion precisely in the form of dictatorship. And yet it would be extremely stupid and absurdly utopian to assume that the transition from capitalism to socialism is possible without coercion and without dictatorship. Marx’s theory very definitely opposed this petty-bourgeois-democratic and anarchist absurdity long ago. And Russia

of 1917-18 confirms the correctness of Marx’s theory in this respect so strikingly, palpably and imposingly that only those who are hopelessly dull or who have obstinately decided to turn their backs on the truth can be under any misapprehension concerning this. Either the dictatorship of Kornilov (if we take him as the Russian type of bourgeois Cavaignac), or the dictatorship of the proletariat—any other choice is out of the question for a country which is developing at an extremely rapid rate with extremely sharp turns and amidst desperate ruin created by one of the most horrible wars in history. Every solution that offers a middle path is either a deception of the people by the bourgeoisie—for the bourgeoisie dare not tell the truth, dare not say that they need Kornilov—or an expression of the dull-wittedness of the petty-bourgeois democrats, of the Chernovs, Tseretelis and Martovs, who chatter about the unity of democracy, the dictatorship of democracy, the general democratic front, and similar nonsense. Those whom even the progress of the Russian Revolution of 1917-18 has not taught that a middle course is impossible, must be given up for lost.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to see that during every transition from capitalism to socialism, dictatorship is necessary for two main reasons, or along two main channels. Firstly, capitalism cannot be defeated and eradicated without the ruthless suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, who cannot at once be deprived of their wealth, of their advantages of organisation and knowledge, and consequently for a fairly long period will inevitably try to overthrow the hated rule of the poor; secondly, every great revolution, and a socialist revolution in particular, even if there is no external war, is inconceivable without internal war, i.e., civil war, which is even more devastating than external war, and involves thousands and millions of cases of wavering and desertion from one side to another, implies a state of extreme indefiniteness, lack of equilibrium and chaos. And of course, all the elements of dis-

integration of the old society, which are inevitably very numerous and connected mainly with the petty bourgeoisie (because it is the petty bourgeoisie that every war and every crisis ruins and destroys first), are bound to “reveal themselves” during such a profound revolution. And these elements of disintegration cannot “reveal themselves” otherwise than in an increase of crime, hooliganism, corruption, profiteering and outrages of every kind. To put these down requires time and requires an iron hand.

There has not been a single great revolution in history in which the people did not instinctively realise this and did not show salutary firmness by shooting thieves on the spot. The misfortune of previous revolutions was that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people, which sustained them in their state of tension and gave them the strength to suppress ruthlessly the elements of disintegration, did not last long. The social, i.e., the class, reason for this instability of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the people was the weakness of the proletariat, which alone is able (if it is sufficiently numerous, class-conscious and disciplined) to win over to its side the majority of the working and exploited people (the majority of the poor, to speak more simply and popularly) and retain power sufficiently long to suppress completely all the exploiters as well as all the elements of disintegration.

It was this historical experience of all revolutions, it was this world-historic—economic and political—lesson that Marx summed up when he gave his short, sharp, concise and expressive formula: dictatorship of the proletariat. And the fact that the Russian revolution has been correct in its approach to this world-historic task has been proved by the victorious progress of the Soviet form of organisation among all the peoples and tongues of Russia. For Soviet power is nothing but an organisational form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the dictatorship of the advanced class, which raises to a new democracy and to independent participation in the administration of

the state tens upon tens of millions of working and exploited peoples who by their own experience learn to regard the disciplined and class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat as their most reliable leader.

Dictatorship, however, is a big word, and big words should not be thrown about carelessly. Dictatorship is iron rule, government that is revolutionarily bold, swift and ruthless in suppressing both exploiters and hooligans. But our government is excessively mild, very often it resembles jelly more than iron. We must not forget for a moment that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois element is fighting against the Soviet system in two ways; on the one hand, it is operating from without, by the methods of the Savinkovs, Gotzes, Gegechkoris and Kornilovs, by conspiracies and rebellions, and by their filthy “ideological” reflection, the flood of lies and slander in the Constitutional-Democratic, Right Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik press; on the other hand, this element operates from within and takes advantage of every manifestation of disintegration, of every weakness, in order to bribe, to increase indiscipline, laxity and chaos. The nearer we approach the complete military suppression of the bourgeoisie, the more dangerous does the element of petty-bourgeois anarchy become. And the fight against this element cannot be waged solely with the aid of propaganda and agitation, solely by organising competition and by selecting organisers. The struggle must also be waged by means of coercion.

As the fundamental task of the government becomes, not military suppression, but administration, the typical manifestation of suppression and compulsion will be, not shooting on the spot, but trial by court. In this respect, also the revolutionary people after October 25, 1917 took the right path and demonstrated the viability of the revolution by setting up their own workers’ and peasants’ courts, even before the decrees dissolving the bourgeois bureaucratic judiciary were passed. But our revolutionary and people’s courts are extremely, incredibly weak.

One feels that we have not yet done away with the people's attitude towards the courts as towards something official and alien, an attitude inherited from the yoke of the landowners and of the bourgeoisie. It is not yet sufficiently realised that the courts are an organ which enlists precisely the poor, every one of them, in the work of state administration (for the work of the courts is one of the functions of state administration), that the courts are an organ of the power of the proletariat and of the poor peasants, that the courts are an instrument for inculcating discipline. There is not yet sufficient appreciation of the simple and obvious fact that if the principal misfortunes of Russia at the present time are hunger and unemployment, these misfortunes cannot be overcome by spurts, but only by comprehensive, all-embracing, country-wide organisation and discipline in order to increase the output of bread for the people and bread for industry (fuel), to transport these in good time to the places where they are required, and to distribute them properly; and it is not fully appreciated that, consequently, it is those who violate labour discipline at any factory, in any undertaking, in any matter, who are responsible for the sufferings caused by the famine and unemployment, that we must know how to find the guilty ones, to bring them to trial and ruthlessly punish them. Where the petty-bourgeois anarchy against which we must now wage a most persistent struggle makes itself felt is in the failure to appreciate the economic and political connection between famine and unemployment, on the one hand, and general laxity in matters of organisation and discipline, on the other—in the tenacity of the small-proprietor outlook, namely, I'll grab all I can for myself; the rest can go hang.

In the rail transport service, which perhaps most strikingly embodies the economic ties of an organism created by large-scale capitalism, the struggle between the element of petty-bourgeois laxity and proletarian organisation is particularly evident. The "administrative" elements provide a host of

saboteurs and bribe-takers; the best part of the proletarian elements fight for discipline; but among both elements there are, of course, many waverers and "weak" characters who are unable to withstand the "temptation" of profiteering, bribery, personal gain obtained by spoiling the whole apparatus, upon the proper working of which the victory over famine and unemployment depends.

The struggle that has been developing around the recent decree on the management of the railways, the decree which grants individual executives dictatorial powers (or "unlimited" powers),^[10] is characteristic. The conscious (and to a large extent, probably, unconscious) representatives of petty bourgeois laxity would like to see in this granting of "unlimited" (i.e., dictatorial) powers to individuals a departure from the collegiate principle, from democracy and from the principles of Soviet government. Here and there, among Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, a positively hooligan agitation, i.e., agitation appealing to the base instincts and to the small proprietor's urge to "grab all he can", has been developed against the dictatorship decree. The question has become one of really enormous significance. Firstly, the question of principle, namely, is the appointment of individuals, dictators with unlimited powers, in general compatible with the fundamental principles of Soviet government? Secondly, what relation has this case—this precedent, if you will—to the special tasks of government in the present concrete situation? We must deal very thoroughly with both these questions.

That in the history of revolutionary movements the dictatorship of individuals was very often the expression, the vehicle, the channel of the dictatorship of the revolutionary classes has been shown by the irrefutable experience of history. Undoubtedly, the dictatorship of individuals was compatible with bourgeois democracy. On this point, however, the bourgeois denigrators of the Soviet system, as well as their petty-bourgeois henchmen, always display sleight of hand: on the one hand, they declare the

Soviet system to be something absurd, anarchistic and savage, and carefully pass over in silence all our historical examples and theoretical arguments which prove that the Soviets are a higher form of democracy, and what is more, the beginning of a socialist form of democracy; on the other hand, they demand of us a higher democracy than bourgeois democracy and say: personal dictatorship is absolutely incompatible with your, Bolshevik (i.e., not bourgeois, but socialist), Soviet democracy.

These are exceedingly poor arguments. If we are not anarchists, we must admit that the state, that is, coercion, is necessary for the transition from capitalism to socialism. The form of coercion is determined by the degree of development of the given revolutionary class, and also by special circumstances, such as, for example, the legacy of a long and reactionary war and the forms of resistance put up by the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. There is, therefore, absolutely no contradiction in principle between Soviet (that is, socialist) democracy and the exercise of dictatorial powers by individuals. The difference between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois dictatorship is that the former strikes at the exploiting minority in the interests of the exploited majority, and that it is exercised—also through individuals—not only by the working and exploited people, but also by organisations which are built in such a way as to rouse these people to history-making activity. (The Soviet organisations are organisations of this kind.)

In regard to the second question, concerning the significance of individual dictatorial powers from the point of view of the specific tasks of the present moment, it must be said that large-scale machine industry—which is precisely the material source, the productive source, the foundation of socialism—calls for absolute and strict unity of will, which directs the joint labours of hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of people. The technical, economic and historical necessity of this is obvious, and all those who have thought about socialism have always

regarded it as one of the conditions of socialism. But how can strict unity of will be ensured? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one.

Given ideal class-consciousness and discipline on the part of those participating in the common work, this subordination would be something like the mild leadership of a conductor of an orchestra. It may assume the sharp forms of a dictatorship if ideal discipline and class-consciousness are lacking. But be that as it may, unquestioning subordination to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of processes organised on the pattern of large-scale machine industry. On the railways it is twice and three times as necessary. In this transition from one political task to another, which on the surface is totally dissimilar to the first, lies the whole originality of the present situation. The revolution has only just smashed the oldest, strongest and heaviest of fetters, to which the people submitted under duress. That was yesterday. Today, however, the same revolution demands—precisely in the interests of its development and consolidation, precisely in the interests of socialism—that the people unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of labour. Of course, such a transition cannot be made at one step. Clearly, it can be achieved only as a result of tremendous jolts, shocks, reversion to old ways, the enormous exertion of effort on the part of the proletarian vanguard, which is leading the people to the new ways. Those who drop into the philistine hysterics of *Novaya Zhizn* or *Vperyod*,^[11] *Dyelo Naroda* or^[12] do not stop to think about this.

Take the psychology of the average, ordinary representative of the toiling and exploited masses, compare it with the objective, material conditions of his life in society. Before the October Revolution he did not see a single instance of the propertied, exploiting classes making any real sacrifice for him, giving up anything for his benefit. He did not see them giving him the land and liberty that had been repeatedly promised him, giving him peace, sacrific-

ing “Great Power” interests and the interests of Great Power secret treaties, sacrificing capital and profits. He saw this only after October 25, 1917, when he took it himself by force, and had to defend by force what he had taken, against the Kerenskys, Gotzes, Gegechkoris, Dutovs and Kornilovs. Naturally, for a certain time, all his attention, all his thoughts, all his spiritual strength, were concentrated on taking a breath, on unbending his back, on straightening his shoulders, on taking the blessings of life that were there for the taking, and that had always been denied him by the now overthrown exploiters. Of course, a certain amount of time is required to enable the ordinary working man not only to see for himself, not only to become convinced, but also to feel that he cannot simply “take”, snatch, grab things, that this leads to increased disruption, to ruin, to the return of the Kornilovs. The corresponding change in the conditions of life (and consequently in the psychology) of the ordinary working men is only just beginning. And our whole task, the task of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which is the class-conscious spokesman for the strivings of the exploited for emancipation, is to appreciate this change, to understand that it is necessary, to stand at the head of the exhausted people who are wearily seeking a way out and lead them along the true path, along the path of labour discipline, along the path of co-ordinating the task of arguing at mass meetings about the conditions of work with the task of unquestioningly obeying the will of the Soviet leader, of the dictator, during the work.

The “mania for meetings” is an object of the ridicule, and still more often of the spiteful hissing of the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks, the Novaya Zhizn people, who see only the chaos, the confusion and the outbursts of small-proprietor egoism. But without the discussions at public meetings, the mass of the oppressed could never have changed from the discipline forced upon them by the exploiters to conscious, voluntary discipline. The airing of ques-

tions at public meetings is the genuine democracy of the working people, their way of unbending their backs, their awakening to a new life, their first steps along the road which they themselves have cleared of vipers (the exploiters, the imperialists, the landowners and capitalists) and which they want to learn to build themselves, in their own way, for themselves, on the principles of their own Soviet, and not alien, not aristocratic, not bourgeois rule. It required precisely the October victory of the working people over the exploiters, it required a whole historical period in which the working people themselves could first of all discuss the new conditions of life and the new tasks, in order to make possible the durable transition to superior forms of labour discipline, to the conscious appreciation of the necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat, to unquestioning obedience to the orders of individual representatives of the Soviet government during the work.

This transition has now begun.

We have successfully fulfilled the first task of the revolution; we have seen how the mass of working people evolved in themselves the fundamental condition for its success: they united their efforts against the exploiters in order to overthrow them. Stages like that of October 1905, February and October 1917 are of world-historic significance.

We have successfully fulfilled the second task of the revolution: to awaken, to raise those very “lower ranks” of society whom the exploiters had pushed down, and who only after October 25, 1917 obtained complete freedom to overthrow the exploiters and to begin to take stock of things and arrange life in their own way. The airing of questions at public meetings by the most oppressed and downtrodden, by the least educated mass of working people, their coming over to the side of the Bolsheviks, their setting up every where of their own Soviet organisations—this was the second great stage of the revolution.

The third stage is now beginning. We must consolidate what we ourselves have won, what we ourselves

have decreed, made law, discussed, planned—consolidate all this in stable forms of everyday labour discipline. This is the most difficult, but the most gratifying task, because only its fulfilment will give us a socialist system. We must learn to combine the “public meeting” democracy of the working people—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with iron discipline while at work, with unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work.

We have not yet learned to do this.

We shall learn it.

Yesterday we were menaced by the restoration of bourgeois exploitation, personified by the Kornilovs, Gotzes, Dutovs, Gegechkoris and Bogayevskys. We conquered them. This restoration, this very same restoration menaces us today in another form, in the form of the element of petty-bourgeois laxity and anarchism, or small-proprietor “it’s not my business” psychology, in the form of the daily, petty, but numerous sorties and attacks of this element against proletarian discipline. We must, and we shall, vanquish this element of petty-bourgeois anarchy.

The Development of Soviet Organisation

The socialist character of Soviet, i.e., proletarian, democracy, as concretely applied today, lies first in the fact that the electors are the working and exploited people; the bourgeoisie is excluded. Secondly, it lies in the fact that all bureaucratic formalities and restrictions of elections are abolished; the people themselves determine the order and time of elections, and are completely free to recall any elected person. Thirdly, it lies in the creation of the best mass organisation of the vanguard of the working people, i.e., the proletariat engaged in large-scale industry, which enables it to lead the vast mass of the exploited, to draw them into independent political life, to educate them politically by their own experience; therefore for the first time a start is made by the entire population in learning the art of adminis-

tration, and in beginning to administer.

These are the principal distinguishing features of the democracy now applied in Russia, which is a higher type of democracy, a break with the bourgeois distortion of democracy, transition to socialist democracy and to the conditions in which the state can begin to wither away.

It goes without saying that the element of petty-bourgeois disorganisation (which must inevitably be apparent to some extent in every proletarian revolution, and which is especially apparent in our revolution, owing to the petty-bourgeois character of our country, its backwardness and the consequences of a reactionary war) cannot but leave its impress upon the Soviets as well.

We must work unremittingly to develop the organisation of the Soviets and of the Soviet government. There is a petty-bourgeois tendency to transform the members of the Soviets into “parliamentarians”, or else into bureaucrats. We must combat this by drawing all the members of the Soviets into the practical work of administration. In many places the departments of the Soviets are gradually merging with the Commissariats. Our aim is to draw the whole of the poor into the practical work of administration, and all steps that are taken in this direction—the more varied they are, the better—should be carefully recorded, studied, systematised, tested by wider experience and embodied in law. Our aim is to ensure that every toiler, having finished his eight hours’ “task” in productive labour, shall perform state duties without pay; the transition to this is particularly difficult, but this transition alone can guarantee the final consolidation of socialism. Naturally, the novelty and difficulty of the change lead to an abundance of steps being taken, as it were, gropingly, to an abundance of mistakes, vacillation—without this, any marked progress is impossible. The reason why the present position seems peculiar to many of those who would like to be regarded as socialists is that they have been accustomed to contrasting capitalism with socialism

abstractly, and that they profoundly put between the two the word “leap” (some of them; recalling fragments of what they have read of Engels’s writings, still more profoundly add the phrase “leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom”^[13]. The majority of these so-called socialists, who have “read in books” about socialism but who have never seriously thought over the matter, are unable to consider that by “leap” the teachers of socialism meant turning-points on a world historical scale, and that leaps of this kind extend over decades and even longer periods. Naturally, in such times, the notorious “intelligentsia” provides an infinite number of mourners of the dead. Some mourn over the Constituent Assembly, others mourn over bourgeois discipline, others again mourn over the capitalist system, still others mourn over the cultured landowner, and still others again mourn over imperialist Great Power policy, etc., etc.

The real interest of the epoch of great leaps lies in the fact that the abundance of fragments of the old, which sometimes accumulate more rapidly than the rudiments (not always immediately discernible) of the new, calls for the ability to discern what is most important in the line or chain of development. History knows moments when the most important thing for the success of the revolution is to heap up as large a quantity of the fragments as possible, i.e., to blow up as many of the old institutions as possible; moments arise when enough has been blown up and the next task is to perform the “prosaic” (for the petty-bourgeois revolutionary, the “boring”) task of clearing away the fragments; and moments arise when the careful nursing of the rudiments of the new system, which are growing amidst the wreckage on a soil which as yet has been badly cleared of rubble, is the most important thing.

It is not enough to be a revolutionary and an adherent of socialism or a Communist in general. You must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which you must grasp

with all your might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link; the order of the links, their form, the manner in which they are linked together, the way they differ from each other in the historical chain of events, are not as simple and not as meaningless as those in an ordinary chain made by a smith.

The fight against the bureaucratic distortion of the Soviet form of organisation is assured by the firmness of the connection between the Soviets and the “people”, meaning by that the working and exploited people, and by the flexibility and elasticity of this connection. Even in the most democratic capitalist republics in the world, the poor never regard the bourgeois parliament as “their” institution. But the Soviets are “theirs” and not alien institutions to the mass of workers and peasants. The modern “Social-Democrats” of the Scheidemann or, what is almost the same thing, of the Martov type are repelled by the Soviets, and they are drawn towards the respectable bourgeois parliament, or to the Constituent Assembly, in the same way as Turgenev, sixty years ago, was drawn towards a moderate monarchist and noblemen’s Constitution and was repelled by the peasant democracy of Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky.^[14]

It is the closeness of the Soviets to the “people”, to the working people, that creates the special forms of recall and other means of control from below which must be most zealously developed now. For example, the Councils of Public Education, as periodical conferences of Soviet electors and their delegates called to discuss and control the activities of the Soviet authorities in this field, deserve full sympathy and support. Nothing could be sillier than to transform the Soviets into something congealed and self-contained. The more resolutely we now have to stand for a ruthlessly firm government, for the dictatorship of individuals in definite processes of work, in definite aspects of purely executive functions, the more varied must be the forms and methods of control

from below in order to counteract every shadow of a possibility of distorting the principles of Soviet government, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to weed out bureaucracy.

Conclusion

An extraordinarily difficult, complex and dangerous situation in international affairs; the necessity of manoeuvring and retreating; a period of waiting for new outbreaks of the revolution which is maturing in the West at a painfully slow pace; within the country a period of slow construction and ruthless “tightening up”, of prolonged and persistent struggle waged by stern, proletarian discipline against the menacing element of petty-bourgeois laxity and anarchy—these in brief are the distinguishing features of the special stage of the socialist revolution in which we are now living. This is the link in the historical chain of events which we must at present grasp with all our might in order to prove equal to the tasks that confront us before passing to the next link to which we are drawn by a special brightness, the brightness of the victories of the international proletarian revolution.

Try to compare with the ordinary everyday concept “revolutionary” the slogans that follow from the specific conditions of the present stage, namely, manoeuvre, retreat, wait, build slowly, ruthlessly tighten up, rigorously discipline, smash laxity. . . . Is it surprising that when certain “revolutionaries” hear this they are seized with noble indignation and begin to “thunder” abuse at us for forgetting the traditions of the October Revolution, for compromising with the bourgeois experts, for compromising with the bourgeoisie, for being petty bourgeois, reformists, and so on and so forth?

The misfortune of these sorry “revolutionaries” is that even those of them who are prompted by the best motives in the world and are absolutely loyal to the cause of socialism fail to understand the particular, and particularly “unpleasant”, condition that a backward country, which has been lacerated by a

reactionary and disastrous war and which began the socialist revolution long before the more advanced countries, inevitably has to pass through; they lack stamina in the difficult moments of a difficult transition. Naturally, it is the “Left Socialist-Revolutionaries” who are acting as an “official” opposition of this kind against our Party. Of course, there are and always will be individual exceptions from group and class types. But social types remain. In the land in which the small-proprietor population greatly predominates over the purely proletarian population, the difference between the proletarian revolutionary and petty-bourgeois revolutionary will inevitably make itself felt, and from time to time will make itself felt very sharply. The petty-bourgeois revolutionary wavers and vacillates at every turn of events; he is an ardent revolutionary in March 1917 and praises “coalition” in May, hates the Bolsheviks (or laments over their “adventurism”) in July and apprehensively turns away from them at the end of October, supports them in December, and, finally, in March and April 1918 such types, more often than not, turn up their noses contemptuously and say: “I am not one of those who sing hymns to ‘organic’ work, to practicalness and gradualism.”

The social origin of such types is the small proprietor, who has been driven to frenzy by the horrors of war, by sudden ruin, by unprecedented torments of famine and devastation, who hysterically rushes about seeking a way out, seeking salvation, places his confidence in the proletariat and supports it one moment and the next gives way to fits of despair. We must clearly understand and firmly remember the fact that socialism cannot be built on such a social basis. The only class that can lead the working and exploited people is the class that unswervingly follows its path without losing courage and without giving way to despair even at the most difficult, arduous and dangerous stages. Hysterical impulses are of no use to us. What we need is the steady advance of the iron battalions of the proletariat.

Endnotes

[1] In the manuscript, Lenin's work *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* was headed "Theses on the Tasks of the Soviet Government in the Present Situation". Lenin's theses were discussed at a meeting of the Party Central Committee on April 26, 1918.

The Central Committee unanimously approved them and passed a decision to have them published as an article in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, and also as a separate pamphlet. In 1918 the pamphlet went through more than ten editions, in Moscow, Petrograd, Saratov, Kazan, Tambov and other cities of Russia. It was published in the same year in English in New York, and in French in Geneva; an abridged version in German, edited by F. Platten, appeared in Zurich under the title *Am Tage nach der Revolution*.

The Central Committee instructed Lenin to give a report on the immediate tasks of the Soviet government at a meeting of the All-Russia C.E.C. and to formulate the Theses briefly as a resolution (see this volume, pp. 314-17).

[2] Bogayevsky, M. P. (1881-1918)—counter-revolutionary leader and organiser of the civil war against Soviet power on the Don. He was defeated and surrendered in the spring of 1918.

[3] On November 18 (December 1), 1917 the Council of People's Commissars, acting on a proposal made by Lenin, passed a decision "On the Remuneration of People's Commissars and Senior Government Employees and Officials" (published on November 23 [December 6], 1917 in No. 16 of the Newspaper of the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government). Drafted by Lenin it fixed the maximum monthly salary of a People's Commissar at 500 rubles with an additional 100 rubles for every member of his family unable to work. This corresponded roughly to the worker's average monthly wage. On January 2 (15), 1918, in answer to an inquiry from the People's Commissar for Labour A. G. Shlyapnikov, the Council of People's Commissars issued a decision written by Lenin explaining that the Decree of November 18 (December 1), 1917 fixed no limit for the payment of experts and thus sanctioned higher remuneration for scientific and technical experts.

[4] Control over foreign trade was initiated in the early days of Soviet power. At first this was handled by the Petrograd Revolutionary Military Committee, which considered applications for the import and export of goods and supervised the work of the customs. By a decree of the Council of People's Commissars of December 29 1917 (January 11, 1918) foreign trade was placed under the control of the People's Commissariat for Trade and Industry. This kind of control and customs inspection, however, was not enough to protect the Soviet economy from foreign capital. Lenin emphasised later that the working class of Soviet Russia "would be totally unable to build up its own industry and make Russia an industrial country without the protection, not of tariffs, but of the monopoly of foreign trade" (see V. I. Lenin, *On the Foreign Policy of the Soviet State*, Moscow, p. 424). In December 1917 Lenin proposed introducing a state monopoly on foreign trade, a decree on which was passed by the Council of People's Commissars on April 22, 1918 (see *Decrees of the Soviet Government*, Russ. ed., Vol. 2, 1959, pp. 158-60).

[5] In the first months of Soviet power indemnities and special taxes were one of the principal sources of revenue, particularly in the provinces. When Soviet power became more firmly established the

question arose of how to devise a regular system of taxation based primarily on a progressive income tax and a property tax which would make it possible to place the main burden of taxation on the well-to-do sections of the population. At the First All-Russia Congress of Representatives of the Financial Departments of the Soviets, Lenin pointed out: "We have many plans in this sphere and have cleared the ground on which to build the foundation, but the actual foundation of that building has not yet been built. The time for this has now come" (see this volume, pp. 384-85). The Congress accepted Lenin's proposal on the need to introduce an income tax and property tax and elected a special commission to draw up the requisite Statute on the basis of Lenin's theses.

On June 17, 1918 the Council of People's Commissars approved the Decree on the Amendment of the Decree of November 24, 1917 on the Levying of Direct Taxes, which laid down a strict system of income and property taxation (see *Decrees of the Soviet Government*, Russ. ed., Vol. 2, 1959, pp. 441-43).

[6] Decree on Consumers' Co-operative Societies was passed by the Council of People's Commissars on April 10, 1918, approved at a meeting of the All-Russia C.E.C. on April 11, and published over Lenin's signature in *Pravda* No. 71 of April 13 and *Izvestia* VTsIK No. 75 of April 16.

The first draft of the decree, written by Lenin, was worked out in detail by the People's Commissariat for Food and published on January 19 (February 1) in *Izvestia* TsIK No. 14. The draft decree was bitterly opposed by bourgeois co-operators, who insisted that co-operative societies should be independent of the organs of Soviet power. In order to use the existing co-operative apparatus for accounting and control of the distribution of foodstuffs the Council of People's Commissars made several concessions during its negotiations with bourgeois co-operators (March to the beginning of April 1918). On April 9 and 10 the C.P.C. discussed the draft decree proposed by the co-operators. Lenin revised the draft considerably (he rewrote points 11, 12 and 13), and the decree with his amendments was passed by the Council of People's Commissars, and then by the All-Russia C.E.C.

[7] The organisation of social production on socialist principles made it necessary to draw up new internal regulations for the nationalised enterprises, and new regulations on labour discipline and on enrolling all able-bodied persons for socially useful work. These questions acquired special importance in the period of the peaceful breathing-space in the spring of 1918.

The first regulations concerning labour discipline were worked out by the Soviet trade unions in conjunction with managerial bodies. They were discussed at a number of meetings of the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Council with representatives of the central organs of the trade unions taking part. On March 27 the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Council after a debate in which Lenin participated passed a decision charging the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions with the task of drawing up a general statute on labour discipline. On April 1, with Lenin taking part, the Presidium examined the draft resolution on labour discipline drawn up by the A.C.C.T.U. and proposed that it should be re-worded as a decree, taking into account Lenin's remarks and suggestions. The re-worded Statute on Labour Discipline passed by the A.C.C.T.U. on April 3 was published in the magazine *Narodnoye Khozyaistvo* No. 2, for April 1918. In this statute the A.C.C.T.U. stated that strict regulations regarding internal management should be introduced at all state-owned enterprises,

that output quotas and account of labour productivity should be established, that piece-work and a system of bonuses for exceeding output quotas should be introduced, and that stern action should be taken against those who violated labour discipline. On the basis of the Statute specific internal regulations were drawn up at factories and these played an important part in the organisation of socialist industry. The Central Committee of the Metalworkers' Union was one of the first to carry out Lenin's instructions on raising labour productivity by introducing a system of piece-work and bonuses. When the question of improving labour discipline was discussed by the A.C.C.T.U. representatives of the Central Committee of the Metalworkers' Union got the thesis on the need for piece rates included in the resolution submitted on April 1 for consideration by the Presidium of the Supreme Economic Council. In April, on the basis of the decisions taken by the A.C.C.T.U. the Central Committee of the Metalworkers' Union instructed all the lower organisations of the union to adopt piece-work and the bonus system in the metal industry.

[8] After the October Revolution piece-work was almost everywhere superseded by a time system of payment, which had an adverse effect on labour productivity and labour discipline.

The introduction of piece-work, which came closest to the socialist principle of "to each according to his work", began at the first nationalised enterprises. During the period of respite, piece work was widely adopted in industry. By July 1918, for instance, a quarter of the workers of Petrograd went over to piece-work. The principle of payment according to the piece was finally endorsed by the publication in December 1918 of the Soviet Labour Code.

[9] This refers to the right protected by bourgeois law to keep secret all production, trade and financial operations and also all the relevant documents at private capitalist enterprises.

In his work *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It* Lenin showed that commercial secrecy in the hands of the bourgeoisie was "an instrument for concealing financial swindles and the fantastically high profits of big capital" (see present edition, Vol. 25, p. 339), and showed why commercial secrecy should be abolished. The resolution of the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) "On the Economic Situation" demanded the abolition of commercial secrecy as an essential measure for making workers' control effective (see *The C.P.S.U. in the Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences and Plenums of the Central Committee, Part 1*, Russ. ed., 1954, p. 378). After the October Revolution commercial secrecy was abolished by the Statute on Workers' Control passed by the All-Russia C.E.C. and the Council of People's Commissars on November 14 (27), 1917.

[10] The reference is to the decree of the Council of People's Commissars "On Centralisation of Management, Protection of Roads and the Improvement of Their Carrying Capacity" (see *Decrees of the Soviet Government, Vol. 2* Russ. ed., 1959, pp. 18-20). Having considered on March 18, 1918 the draft decree proposed by the People's Commissariat for Ways of Communication on non-interference by various institutions in the affairs of the Railway Department, the Council of People's Commissars instructed a special commission to revise the decree on the basis of the following theses put forward by Lenin: (1) Considerable centralisation. (2) Appointment of responsible executives at every local centre as elected by the railway organisations. (3) Unquestioning obedience to their orders. (4) Dictatorial rights to be given to the military detachments for maintaining order. (5) Steps to be

taken immediately to take account of rolling stock and its whereabouts. (6) Steps to be taken to set up a technical department. (7) Fuel.

Lenin made several important amendments to the draft, which was submitted by the commission and considered at a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars on March 21, before being approved by the government. In view of the hostility with which the decree was greeted by the All-Russia Executive Committee of Railwaymen (Vikzhedor), which was strongly influenced by the Mensheviks and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the People's Commissariat for Ways of Communication on March 23 proposed amending the decree at a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars. The representatives of Vikzhedor who attended the meeting attacked the decree on the grounds that it meant the "destruction of the role of Vikzhedor and its replacement by the individual authority of a Commissar". Arguing against the opponents of the decree, Lenin explained the need for taking the very firmest measures to eliminate sabotage and inefficiency on the railways and introduced amendments making the decree even more categorical. With these amendments the decree was finally approved by the government on March 23 and published over Lenin's signature on March 26 in No. 57 of *Izvestia VTSIK*.

[11] *Vperyod* (Forward)—a Menshevik daily newspaper, which began to appear in March 1917 in Moscow as the organ of the Moscow organisation of Mensheviks, and subsequently as the organ of the committees of the R.S.D.L.P. (Mensheviks) of the Moscow organisation and the Central Region. On April 2, 1918 the newspaper became the organ of the Mensheviks' Central Committee as well, and L. Martov, F. I. Dan and A. S. Martynov joined its editorial board. It was banned for its counter-revolutionary activities in February 1919 by decision of the All-Russia C.E.C.

[12] *Nash Vek* (Our Age)—one of the names of the newspaper *Rech*, the central organ of the counter-revolutionary party of the Constitutional-Democrats. After it had been banned by a decision of the Petrograd Revolutionary Military Committee of October 26 (November 8), 1917, the newspaper continued to appear until August 1918 under various names: *Nasha Rech* (Our Speech), *Svobodnaya Rech* (Free Speech), *Vek* (Age), *Novaya Rech* (New Speech) and *Nash Vek*.

[13] Lenin is referring to and quoting from *Anti-Dühring* by F. Engels, Section Three. Socialism. Chapter II. Theoretical.

[14] Chernyshevsky describes Turgenev's attitude to Dobrolyubov and himself in an account of a conversation he had with Turgenev in the early sixties of the last century (see the article "An Expression of Gratitude" in *Complete Collected Works* by N. G. Chernyshevsky, Vol. 10, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1951, pp. 122-23).

Is It Not Too Early to Consign Marx to the Museum of Antiquities?

Victor Alexeyevich Vaziulin

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The famous psychotherapist Fritz Perls^[1] once wrote, ‘A few years ago, I came across a book called *A Cow Can’t Live in Los Angeles*. It was about a Mexican man who taught his relatives how to live in America. ‘Look,’ he said. ‘Americans are wonderful people, but there is one thing that really upsets them. You mustn’t tell them they’re corpses.’

I couldn’t agree more with this Mexican. I believe this is an extremely accurate description of the ‘ailments’ of modern man. ‘Our man—is dead, he is a puppet (the emphasis is mine—V. V.) and his behaviour is indeed very similar to that of a corpse, which ‘allows’ those around him to do whatever they want with him, even though he himself, by his very presence, influences them in a certain way.’

He goes on to describe today’s people as follows: ‘they are deliberate and calculating, devoid of living desires, wants and aspirations; their lives are boring, empty and meaningless, and they play out various roles, usually fake ones, which prevent them from being and living.’

To get to the heart of the matter, Perls states nothing less than that modern man—is an object, that modern morality is duplicitous morality. It is the market and commodity-money relations that turn humans into objects.

The tragedy of human existence in a world dominated by commodity-money relations, where business reigns supreme and people ‘die for metal,’ has penetrated the conscience of many Western scientists, Western ideologists. They see, for example, as the eminent psychoanalyst Karen Horney does, ‘the contradiction in that, on the one hand, we value

and extol the concept of competition as the engine of progress, and on the other, we never tire of promoting brotherly love and humility, that, on the one hand, the American (and market-based in general—V. V.) way of life and prevailing morality dictate that we be persistent and aggressive, eliminating competitors, while on the other hand, church leaders instil humility and love for one’s neighbour.’

An attentive historian would note that the views of Karl Marx played an exceptional role in bringing the tragedy and contradictions of human existence in a market world dominated by commodity-money relations to the attention of contemporary Western scholars and ideologues. This fact can only be disputed by ‘our’ homegrown haters of Karl Marx—the ‘great intellectuals’ who dominated the intellectual landscape during the perestroika and post-perestroika periods.

However, it is not only the case that Marx’s views had a significant influence on global public opinion, including on ethical thought.

The point is also that they continue to have this impact. It is no coincidence that the ideas of Karl Marx are taught in one form or another in virtually all major higher education institutions in developed capitalist countries. Furthermore, despite numerous borrowings from Marx, these institutions do not convey the essence of this brilliant thinker’s views.

In his work, Marx did not merely state the contradictions and tragedy of human existence in a world dominated by market and commodity-money relations. Despite making these observations with such clarity and consistency, none of the people who borrowed his ideas recognised its influence.

He achieved what no one had achieved before him, and what was poorly understood after his time, if at

all,—he provided a profound explanation of a society dominated by commodity-money relations, in which everything, including human beings, is turned into a commodity. In particular, he explained the morality of this society.

Such a society appears, on the sphere of the surface, the sphere of exchange, to be one in which free commodity owners operate, exchanging their commodities freely to satisfy their needs. On the surface, during the process of exchange, it appears that the wage labourers freely sell all their labour and receive its equivalent in the form of wages.

‘This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to, is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each. Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence’.^[2]

Does this not remind us of the ‘captivating’ ‘democratic’ ideals of the last years of perestroika and the post-perestroika period? Is this not a concise summary of the basic ideals of the democrats? Isn’t that their idea of a perfect society?

However, Marx does not linger on the paradise of the representations of the surface. Instead, together with the intelligent and perceptive reader, he delves into the underground spheres, the depths of market

society into the sphere of production and through all the circles of this hell. Here, hidden from everyday conscience, from the world of the surface, the enslavement of wage labourers, the appropriation of the labour of others, and inequality reign supreme. Here lie the roots of the modern form of alienation, of the predatory nature of two-legged animals...

The hell of capitalist production acts as a foundation that supports the free exchange or circulation of goods, the paradise of natural human rights and ‘universal human values’. Only by descending into this hell and understanding its fundamental nature can one discover paradise as an objective reality. Only then can the contradictory nature and tragedy of the paradise of free exchange be consistently identified and explained in all their complexity.

Karl Marx’s explanation is systematic and comprehensive in nature, requiring a disciplined and developed mind to comprehend it, as well as a willingness to abandon any social prejudices, no matter how fashionable, widespread or generally accepted they may be and no matter how long they have misled people. In other words, to understand (not to mention develop) Marx’s explanation requires not only a sufficiently disciplined mind armed with methodology, but also to mentally reject a world of alienation in which man is reduced to the status of an object and in which hypocrisy and falsehood permeate all human activity.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Salomon Perls (1893-1970), better known as Fritz Perls, was a German-born psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and psychotherapist. Perls coined the term ‘Gestalt therapy’ to identify the form of psychotherapy that he developed with his wife, Laura Perls, in the 1940s and 1950s. Perls became associated with the Esalen Institute in 1964 and lived there until 1969.

[2] Karl Marx, 1867, Capital Volume One, Chapter Six: The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power.

Facing the Army of Fascism and Imperialist War

Unión Proletaria (Spain)

What conditions and what method for unity?

Concern is growing over the rise of the right and the far right, which we have once again confirmed electorally in Argentina, in Chile, and in Extremadura, and militarily with the Yankee attack on Venezuela, kidnapping its president Nicolás Maduro. This rise of reaction appears to be a general phenomenon, as it affects a wide diversity of countries.

Proletarians and Oppressed Peoples, Unite Against Imperialism!

However, this tide is characteristic only of countries aligned with the West, no matter how much the propagandists of the false left may disagree with this assertion, placing in the same basket those forces confronting the West merely because they are nationalist and conservative (Russia, China, Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, the military juntas of the Sahel, etc.). In their eagerness to uphold “progressive” imperialism, these confusionists replace scientific analysis with superficial analogies in order to disorient well-intentioned progressives. They conceal that there are two opposing versions of nationalism and conservatism, just as enslaving violence and liberating violence are opposed: in nations that combat foreign oppression, conservative nationalism serves to safeguard their identity and customs against continuous foreign aggression; by contrast, in oppressor nations, it serves to reinforce or recover domination over others when “modern” Anglo-Saxon cosmopolitanism has lost effectiveness. From that moment on, the ruling classes of the dominant countries need to foster a particular type of conservative nationalism—chauvinist, supremacist, racist, elitist, neoliberal, aporophobic, rabidly anti-communist and, ultimately, fascist—

both in their own countries and in the subjected countries, in order to turn their populations into cannon fodder for wars of plunder.

This does not mean that the defensive nationalism and conservatism of oppressed countries eliminate the root of the problem, but they do deserve the full support of sincere advocates of social progress. Those who deny this, such as the social democrats and the “leftists,” collaborate voluntarily or involuntarily with imperialism and its far-right poison, no matter how many “democratic,” “progressive,” or “proletarian” pretexts they invoke to differentiate themselves from it. The nationalism of an oppressed nation expresses a democratic necessity which, like all such necessities, does not by itself lead to socialism, but which must be assumed in order to reach it. In the past, this was the case in confronting the remnants of feudalism; today, in the decadent stage of capitalism, it is the case in confronting imperialism in any of its manifestations^[1].

The tendency toward right-wing political drift among Western populations and the tendency toward defensive nationalism among oppressed peoples share two principal but distinct causes that reinforce one another: a working class on the defensive and an imperialist bourgeoisie on the offensive.

How to Move from the Defensive to the Offensive

The retreat of the working class is due to economic motives and, above all, political ones: the revisionist liquidation of many communist parties such as the PCE, the defeat of the European socialist camp, and the consequent hegemony of social democracy over the labor movement, while the means of influence and domination of the bourgeoisie grow exponen-

tially.

In short, the vacuum that communists have left within the working class milieu for decades has been filled by the bourgeoisie and by its most camouflaged and perfidious instrument: social democracy. In Spain, in the absence of a unified communist force, the PSOE succeeded in dragging the entire petty-bourgeois left into the formation of a government that has fulfilled very little of the little it promised and has transformed a broad sector of the once combative labor movement into a postmodern electorate that follows NATO and the European Union. Its policy favorable to big capital and to its arms sector has increased inequalities and has turned the most impoverished exploited strata into easy prey for reactionary demagogues who attempt to capitalize on their despair. In the end, although the PSOE and its allies call for blocking the far right out of narrowly electoral interests, they decisively collaborate in leading workers toward fascism and war^[2].

That being said, the strategy for changing essential reality and the tactic that makes it possible are not identical. If they were—if there were no difference, that is, no contradiction, between strategy and tactics—humanity would not have needed these two concepts, but only one, in order to pursue its aims^[3].

Almost a decade ago, the combative masses succeeded in bringing down the government of the Partido Popular that spearheaded the offensive of finance capital. But they did not know how to do anything else to halt it other than to place their trust in the bourgeois left (PSOE) and the petty-bourgeois left (Unidas Podemos). At that moment, Unión Proletaria proposed to other communist organizations that we jointly and publicly express our respect for the political will of these masses, in order to prepare them to change course from the disastrous path toward which social democracy was leading them. How? By overseeing the actions of their government together with them, warning of the betrayal it was preparing, while at the same time mobilizing them

in favor of the reforms they were demanding and against the resistance that the oligarchy was opposing to those reforms, with the ultimate aim that they would discard bourgeois reformism in favor of the revolutionary path. The objective, therefore, was to win them over in order to build with them—or with an important and decisive part of them—a revolutionary force. Unfortunately, the necessity of approaching the question from the standpoint of dialectical materialism was not understood, and it was not possible to gather a sufficient organized force to put this tactic into action.

Today, we must reverse the betrayal that has already been consummated (above all since the government's participation in the militaristic hysteria against Russia), starting from a greater isolation of revolutionaries in relation to the bulk of the population. For this, negative criticism of the government is indispensable, but even more so is the positive proposal of measures and objectives that satisfy the needs of the impoverished working majority, in the short term and also in the long term, through the broadest alliances, though clearly delimited.

Many communists continue mistakenly to trust that a spontaneous popular explosion will turn the tables. It cannot be ruled out that a revolt may occur, and it would undoubtedly be a very positive factor for the revolution. But history attests that, especially in dominant countries, the bourgeoisie has the capacity to divert the development of class contradictions toward secondary objectives and even toward chauvinism against other nationalities: if it succeeded in Germany a century ago, it is not surprising that it has been able to take advantage of the gravest crisis of the international workers' movement to subject Ukraine to the fascist ideology of Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych. The central task of communists must not consist in waiting for the masses to place themselves at the vanguard, but in resuming our fundamental mission: to arm ourselves with the scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism, to concretize

it in a revolutionary policy suited to our particular conditions, and to bring it to the masses.

Developing a Mass Force in the Imperialist Metropolises

We will return to this question, but first let us examine the other cause of the political rightward shift of the West: the desperate offensive of a declining imperialism. I will not dwell on the economic basis of this decline: overproduction and overaccumulation of capital, the decrease in the general rate of profit, relative stagnation caused by monopolism, industrial relocation, militarization of production, astronomical debt^[4], resistance of the oppressed to growing exploitation, competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis emerging economies where capital does not dominate, etc. However, this structural deterioration of U.S. imperialism and its allies/vassals must not lead us to forget that it is still far more powerful than the oppressed countries^[5], even though this correlation of forces tends to invert, both because of their dynamism and because of its own decline. This tendency drives it toward ever greater aggressiveness and recklessness, bringing humanity to the threshold of a thermonuclear hecatomb.

Faced with these prospects, democratic and socialist forces must strengthen ourselves and tighten our unity with strategic prudence and patience. Our enemies are using the mass media they own and control (television, radio, press, internet, education, religions, etc.) to indoctrinate and recruit a portion of the population as a political army lined up toward fascism and war. They know they cannot win over the majority, but they do aim to intimidate it, divide it, and impose themselves upon it. From Western countries, we can prevent this only if we do not panic and if, in parallel, we form a political mass army for revolution, from the proletarian vanguard toward the rest of the working class and the people.

Both for the sake of democracy and socialism, and for the very survival of humanity, we must not leave

alone the countries that resist the imperialists, nor wait for them to resolve everything by themselves. On the contrary, we have the obligation to develop a mass anti-imperialist force that halts the aggressor beasts from within their own lair (which, incidentally, will favor the more progressive tendencies within independent nations). This task has common characteristics and others specific to each place. Although this international cause benefits from advice and criticism from all geographic origins, what is primary for us is to concretize it in the territory of the Spanish State.

The force capable of neutralizing and, not to mention, defeating imperialism in our country must have a mass character. Any alternative to this, however heroic it may be, is more harmful than beneficial. And the masses are formed through the practical unity of individuals. Therefore, one must struggle for unity and against what causes division.

We need the broadest unity of the people against the various manifestations of oppression caused by the domination of monopoly and finance capital, both within and beyond our borders. But the people are not homogeneous; they are composed of social classes with different material interests. Of all of them, the working class is the only one that carries out socially developed production and emerges from it completely dispossessed of the fruits of its labor except for the bare minimum necessary to live. For this reason, it is objectively the class with the greatest interest in uprooting every form of oppression produced by imperialist society. To understand this, workers must develop their unity through the three forms that their class struggle takes: economic struggle against their employers; political struggle for democracy and socialism; and theoretical struggle, through the interrelation between its more conscious and less conscious strata—that is, between communists and workers subjected to bourgeois ideology. In short, we must develop popular unity, workers' unity, and the unity of communists in such a way that they

strengthen one another.

I will focus on the problem of communist unity, decisive for the growth of workers' unity and popular unity. All communists are aware of the need to advance in our unity in order to link ourselves closely, effectively, and correctly with the mass workers' movement—that is, in order to build a communist party. And we do not cease trying, whether through the union of various communist organizations or through the growth of one of them. However, experience in Spain does not seem encouraging: not only do unifications end up fracturing, but organizations that manage to grow tend to suffer splits from which they emerge weakened. These failures can be avoided, as demonstrated by the success of communists in other countries or at other times, provided that we treat contradictions according to their most concrete nature.

In capitalist society, the antagonism between capitalists and workers is highly influential, but the contradictions among working-class and popular sectors are not antagonistic. Even the inevitable infiltration of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois positions into communist organizations does not necessarily have to result in a split: it can also be resolved by neutralizing or expelling such elements. The ideological and political influence of the ruling class may lead any militant to adopt erroneous positions that harm communist unity. But as long as these are not very serious errors that endanger the general Marxist-Leninist position, they can be corrected through a non-antagonistic method, provided that the person is allowed to explain themselves reasonably, that they are criticized appropriately (in accordance with dialectical materialism), and that the discussion is resolved democratically, with the minority submitting to the decision of the majority.

In order to advance communist unity, from the experience of Unión Proletaria, we consider it necessary: 1) to establish the insurmountable “red lines,” that is, to distinguish between unacceptable political

positions and those disagreements that do not prevent the general joint action required by the concrete situation; and 2) to agree on the method for deploying joint action, while addressing this latter type of disagreement.

Proposal for a Principal Axis to Unite Communist Organizations

It is non-negotiable to base unity on Marxism-Leninism, the struggle of the working class, the socialist revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. In this sense, there must be commitment and effort to avoid everything that distances us from this foundation: revisionism and dogmatism, reformism and “leftism,” liberalism and sectarianism, spontaneism and intellectualism, etc.

Among the current Marxist-Leninist organizations, there is fairly broad agreement on the most general ideological formulations, while differences arise when it comes to concretizing them. In fact, such differences also exist within each organization. But when communists are separated into multiple organizations, it becomes more difficult to understand and debate these differences, which exacerbates the tendency toward division.

There are different categories of disagreements, depending on their present importance and urgency. For example, those concerning the evaluation of the historical experience of socialist construction do not prevent broad unity of action among communist organizations in capitalist countries. Those, for instance, referring to the social nature of present-day China restrict that unity of action somewhat more, because those groups that consider it capitalist are reluctant to defend it and to make use of its practical achievements as support for socialist propaganda (which is a pity, because it has managed to lift hundreds of millions out of poverty in a short time without militarily aggressing other countries in order to plunder them—something incompatible with the logic and history of capitalism). Nevertheless, even

this disagreement does not prevent the principal unity of action, as we shall see below.

It is necessary to prioritize unity among communist organizations whose positions augur greater development of debate and joint action. With others, relations can only be more occasional, so long as they cling to their sectarian prejudices. But what is the concrete limitation and the pertinent “red line”?

The general guide for determining this is provided by *The Communist Manifesto*: “The theoretical propositions of the communists are in no way based on ideas or principles invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.”^[6]

It is the living social movement—the embodiment of the historical and strategic in the present—that determines the action of communists and, therefore, their unity. Agreement regarding the principal contradiction and the principal objective is the basis for advancing toward communist unity^[7].

Although the fundamental contradiction of capitalism opposes the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and although its solution is the socialist revolution, the principal contradiction and objective are its necessary mediation, determined by the concrete character—monopolistic, imperialist—of contemporary capitalism. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the present world was born from the moment when capitalist monopolies developed to such an extent that they dominated the markets of Europe and North America. All history since then has been that of collusion and struggle among the financial oligarchies of this geographic area to dominate the world, as well as that of the struggle of oppressed classes and peoples to shake off this domination. Thanks to their struggle, some oppressed nations have become powerful countries, without ceasing to be exploited, harassed, encircled, and attacked by the imperialist powers. Although they may contain

capitalist relations of production and even capitalist monopolies within them (which in not all cases dominate their society and state), they continue to be oppressed, and their national liberation struggle contributes to breaking the global imperialist collusion that is the principal obstacle to revolutions, both democratic-national and socialist-proletarian.

That their status as oppressed nations remains in force was demonstrated by the recent history of Russia after its return to capitalism. With this transformation, the new Russian bourgeoisie hoped to receive treatment similar to that accorded among the oligarchies of the United States, the European Union, and Japan. However, this was not the case. They did not treat it as an equal or second-class partner, but as prey to be plundered and even dismembered, like any other “third world” country: NATO rejected the Russian Federation’s application for membership, expanded to its borders, and fueled hostility against it (Chechnya, Dagestan, Abkhazia, Donbas, Latvia, etc.). It was empirically proven that Russia, like China, forms part of the so-called “third world,” that is, of the countries oppressed by the imperialist powers constituted as such at the culmination of capitalism’s progressive stage. The relation of oppression between the two “worlds” resulting from monopoly capitalism—as the word “monopoly” itself indicates—prevails over and imposes itself upon the successes achieved by an oppressed country in unequal capitalist development^[8]. It is precisely the development successes of oppressed countries (above all the USSR and China) that have forced the financial oligarchies of those old powers to collude until now against them, instead of once again waging war among themselves for new divisions of the world in proportion to their respective strengths.

Consequently, communist unity can only bear fruit by understanding that this—and not something else—is the contemporary reality of the class struggle: that is, by directing all partial struggles toward the principal objective of developing the unity of

all forces oppressed by the imperialists, guided by the summary suggested in *The Communist Manifesto*: “The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement... In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time. Finally, they labor everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.”^[9]

Hence, it is not possible to count for communist unity on organizations that are enemies of those who combat the imperialists, organizations that treat Russia and China—the largest forces in the anti-imperialist camp—as the opposite of what they are. Criticism and vigilance are legitimate and necessary, and it is even admissible to question the socialist character of China, but communist unity would be paralyzed and destroyed if it attempted to incorporate sectarian organizations that, in Trotskyist fashion, confuse friends and enemies, sowing discord within the anti-imperialist camp.

The working class needs to reconstitute its Communist Party by bringing together all Marxist-Leninists willing to strengthen unity for the overthrow of the imperialists and to promote within that unity the path of the world proletarian revolution, as advocated by the World Anti-imperialist Platform.

Proposal of a Method to Unite Communist Organizations

The urgency of this task is determined not only by the present suffering of the masses, but even more by the qualitatively greater pain that the desperate actions of an imperialist camp decomposing from its very economic base have in store for us. In this

conjuncture, it would be most appropriate for all communist organizations committed to this task to convene a congress that would unify us into a single party governed by democratic centralism, in order to intervene among the masses according to our political agreements.

Unfortunately, recent experience attests that our theoretical and practical differences—caused by the crisis of the socialist camp and amplified by the prolonged decline and dispersion of the workers’ and communist movement—still prevent this.

Consequently, we consider it necessary and possible to open an intermediate path^[10] between the current division and future organic unification:

1. A unity of action around the principal struggle against imperialism (and beyond, as possible), that is permanent and not merely occasional.
2. This front or federation of a growing number of communist organizations would conclude agreements unanimously in frequent meetings of plenipotentiary representatives of each organization.
3. Each organization would commit to strengthening this unity and loyally fulfilling the agreements, while retaining its total independence of action in all other matters^[11].
4. The united activity would include attention to the initiatives of mass movements and their organizations, but would not be limited to waiting for them.
5. On the contrary, it would proceed from joint Marxist-Leninist formation, from the elaboration of a first draft of a political program, and from a plan of agitation and propaganda to mobilize the masses for its realization.
6. This plan would have as its central axis a regular and frequent press (understood in a broad sense as a set of means of dissemination) that would present the agreed orientations and would also give space to discussion of differing opinions, especially regarding the most burning questions. The need for alternative journalism of counter-information has been understood by many revolutionary intellectuals who have

carried out commendable work in this direction. Learning from them, communists must gather and centralize these efforts from a strictly Marxist-Leninist point of view, around the realization of the anti-imperialist and socialist program.

7. Although one must begin with tasks of clarification and political definition on the basis of the scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism, it is of capital importance to avoid allowing communist activity to become enclosed within a ghetto of the most advanced sector of the working class. On the contrary, one must go out to meet the entire population, not only with propaganda (many ideas for a few), but with agitation (few ideas for many), making maximum use of legal possibilities.

8. Since the implementation of agreements would commit militants from all organizations, it would be possible to begin developing a division of labor and specialization among them, thus optimizing the use of available forces to carry previously agreed positions to more territories, more workplaces, more educational centers, more partial mass fronts, etc.

9. Over time, communists who have been separated and confronted for too many years would come to know and understand one another better, would develop mutual trust, and would grow accustomed to being sometimes in the majority and sometimes in the minority, until we could unify within a single party under the rules of democratic centralism.

This proposal is what Unión Proletaria wishes to share with the other communist organizations. Realism and prudence do not exclude—they also require—agility and courage in the face of the grave events that are approaching.

Notes

[1] See the section “On the relationship between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism” in the article <https://www.unionproletaria.com/el-oportunismo-no-se-combate-atacando-a-los-antiimperialistas/>.

[2] <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/>

[paginas/2025/181125-sanchez-acuerdos-ucrania-zelenski.aspx#:~:text=Para%20continuar%20apoyando%20a%20Ucrania,Ucrania%20y%20acelerar%20su%20reconstrucci%C3%B3n.https://agendapublica.es/noticia/20548/implicaciones-mision-espana-ucrania-oportunidad-debate-serio](https://www.marxists.org/espanol/stalin/1920s/fundam/fundam7.htm)

[3] If we pay attention to what Stalin explains in Foundations of Leninism, on strategy and tactics (<https://www.marxists.org/espanol/stalin/1920s/fundam/fundam7.htm>), we will observe that the “Direction of the main blow: isolate petty-bourgeois democracy, isolate the parties of the Second International, which are the principal support of the policy of compromise with imperialism” does not appear among tactical requirements, but among strategic objectives. Consequently, it must be fulfilled through the tactic that makes it possible, whose principles Stalin elaborates immediately afterward not solely from the needs of the masses, but from the degree to which they understand them. And it is precisely this understanding that absolutely determines communist intervention among the masses—the only truly revolutionary one.

[4] The public debt of the United States already exceeds 38.5 trillion dollars, more than two trillion more than a year ago. Of these, 8 trillion will mature in 2026 and will have to be “paid” to creditors, either by printing more greenbacks and provoking inflation or by refinancing it with guarantees over others’ wealth, such as Venezuelan oil and others.

[5] The Gross Domestic Product of the United States in 1990 was four times greater than that of China and Russia combined. In 2025, this difference has narrowed, but that of the North American country is still nearly 50% higher. And that of the U.S. together with its military allies amounts to more than double that of the BRICS ([https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Pa%C3%ADses_por_PIB_\(nominal\)_en_1990](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Pa%C3%ADses_por_PIB_(nominal)_en_1990) and <https://www.worldometers.info/es/pib/pib-por-pais/>).

The U.S. dollar accounts for 88% of international foreign exchange transactions, 58% of international currency reserves (euro 20%, pound 5%, yen 5%, yuan 2%), and 54% of world trade (<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/whats-behind-the-u-s-dollars-dominance-and-why-it-matters/#:~:text=Introduction,and%2054%25%20of%20global%20trade>).

The military budget of the United States exceeds by more than twice that of China and Russia combined. That of the U.S. and its military allies triples that of China, Russia, and their non-military allies (<https://www.bankinter.com/blog/economia/paises-gasto-defensa> and https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/yb25_summary_es.pdf). And as for military bases in foreign countries, there are nearly 1,000 versus only a few dozen.

[6] <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/48-manif.htm>, Chapter II.

[7] “Every question ‘runs in a vicious circle’ because political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain.” (Lenin, What Is To Be Done?, Chapter V)

[8] One may speculate about the prospect that, after the defeat of the current imperialist powers, the presently oppressed powers might

themselves become imperialist, since capitalism exists within them. But, first, this is an untimely hypothesis and therefore devoid of political value when we are still far from being able to sing victory over the current oppressors. Second, it presupposes that such victory could be achieved without a qualitative development of the international workers' and communist movement, which reveals a lack of confidence in the masses and in revolutionary theory more characteristic of a sectarian than of a Marxist. And third, it fatally condemns the new emerging powers to this destiny without concretely investigating their history and their relations with other countries, solely because they do not fit into a superficial, narrow, and dogmatic understanding of Marxism.

[9] <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/48-manif.htm>, Chapter IV.

[10] That "intermediate path" actually consists of the process through which different communist organizations unite into a single party. It is not an idea foreign to historical experience, but such a process has occurred in many cases, one of the most notable being that of the Russian Marxists. Police repression had sharpened ideological dispersion among them after the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (1898). It was necessary to traverse a process of overcoming political divergences in order to hold a Second Congress that consolidated the party (1903). This process began with Lenin's plan, together with a group of revolutionary Marxists deported to Siberia, to publish a newspaper—Iskra—organizing practical activity free of revisionist tendencies. In order to carry out this plan, they first united with like-minded organizations inside Russia and later allied with the "Emancipation of Labor" group formed by the most orthodox exiles. The diffusion of Iskra attracted an increasing number of organizations (and individuals, among them Trotsky) to Marxist positions, becoming a majority by the opening of the Second Congress.

[11] Lenin said that "To discuss the problem, to express and hear different opinions, to learn the view of the majority of organized Marxists, to record this view in a resolution and honestly to carry out that resolution—that is what is called unity in all parts of the world and among all sensible people. And this unity is infinitely valuable and important for the working class." (On Unity)

Frente al ejército del fascismo y de la guerra imperialista

Unión Proletaria (España)

¿Qué condiciones y qué método para la unidad?

Crece la preocupación por el auge de la derecha y de la ultraderecha, que hemos vuelto a comprobar electoralmente en Argentina, en Chile y en Extremadura, y militarmente con el ataque yanqui a Venezuela secuestrando a su presidente Nicolás Maduro. Este ascenso de la reacción parece un fenómeno general puesto que afecta a una gran diversidad de países.

¡Proletarios y pueblos oprimidos, unámonos contra el imperialismo!

Sin embargo, es una marea que sólo es propia de los países alineados con Occidente, por mucho que discrepen de esta afirmación los propagandistas de la falsa izquierda que meten en ese mismo saco a las fuerzas enfrentadas a Occidente, por el mero hecho de ser nacionalistas y conservadoras (Rusia, China, Irán, Hamás, Hezbolá, las juntas militares del Sahel, etc.). En su afán por sostener al imperialismo “progre”, estos confusionistas sustituyen el análisis científico por algunas analogías superficiales para intentar desorientar a los progresistas de buena fe. Ocultan que hay dos versiones opuestas de nacionalismo y de conservadurismo, al igual que son opuestas la violencia esclavizadora y la violencia liberadora: en las naciones que combaten la opresión extranjera, el nacionalismo conservador sirve para salvaguardar su identidad y sus costumbres frente a la continua agresión extranjera; al contrario, en las naciones opresoras, sirve para reforzar o para recuperar el dominio sobre otros cuando el “moderno” cosmopolitismo anglosajón ha perdido eficacia. Desde ese momento, las clases dominantes de los países dominantes necesitan fomentar un nacionalismo conservador de

un tipo particular —chovinista, supremacista, racista, elitista, neoliberal, aporofóbico, rabiosamente anticomunista y, a fin de cuentas, fascista—, tanto en sus propios países como en los países sometidos, a fin de convertir a sus poblaciones en carne de cañón para guerras de rapiña.

Esto no quiere decir que el nacionalismo y el conservadurismo defensivos de los países oprimidos atajen la raíz del problema, pero sí merecen todo el apoyo de los sinceros partidarios del progreso social. Quienes se lo nieguen, como los socialdemócratas y los “izquierdistas”, colaboran voluntaria o involuntariamente con el imperialismo y su ponzoña ultraderechista, por muchos pretextos “democráticos”, “progresistas” y “proletarios” que aleguen para diferenciarse de ella. El nacionalismo de nación oprimida expresa una necesidad democrática que, como todas ellas, no conduce por sí sola al socialismo, pero que es imprescindible asumir para llegar a él. En el pasado, fue así frente a los restos de feudalismo; hoy en día, en la etapa decadente del capitalismo, lo es frente al imperialismo en cualquiera de sus manifestaciones^[1].

La tendencia a la derechización de la población occidental y la tendencia al nacionalismo defensivo entre los pueblos oprimidos comparten dos causas principales distintas pero que se refuerzan mutuamente: una clase obrera a la defensiva y una burguesía imperialista a la ofensiva.

Cómo pasar de la defensiva a la ofensiva

El repliegue obrero se debe a motivos económicos y, sobre todo, políticos: la liquidación revisionista de muchos partidos comunistas como el PCE, la derrota del campo socialista europeo y la consiguiente hegemonía de la socialdemocracia sobre el movi-

miento obrero, mientras crecen exponencialmente los medios de influencia y de dominación de la burguesía.

En definitiva, el vacío que los comunistas han dejado en el medio obrero desde hace décadas ha sido colmado por la burguesía y por su instrumento más camuflado y pérfido: la socialdemocracia. En España, a falta de una fuerza unitaria comunista, el PSOE consiguió arrastrar a toda la izquierda pequeñoburguesa a la formación de un gobierno que ha cumplido muy poco de lo poco que prometía y que ha hecho degenerar a un amplio sector del movimiento obrero antes combativo en un electorado posmoderno seguidista de la OTAN y de la Unión Europea. Su política favorable al gran capital y a su sector armamentista ha acrecentado las desigualdades y ha convertido a los explotados más empobrecidos en presa fácil de los demagogos reaccionarios que tratan de capitalizar su desesperación. A fin de cuentas, aunque el PSOE y sus aliados llamen a cerrar el paso a la ultraderecha por intereses estrechamente electorales, colaboran decisivamente en llevar a los trabajadores al fascismo y a la guerra^[2].

Dicho esto, la estrategia para cambiar la realidad esencial y la táctica que lo posibilita no son idénticas. Si lo fueran, si no hubiera ninguna diferencia —es decir, contradicción— entre la estrategia y la táctica, la humanidad no habría necesitado estos dos conceptos sino uno solo para perseguir sus fines^[3].

Hace casi una década, las masas combativas lograron echar al gobierno del Partido Popular que capitaneaba la ofensiva del capital financiero. Pero no supieron hacer otra cosa para frenarla que confiar en la izquierda burguesa (PSOE) y pequeñoburguesa (Unidas Podemos). En ese momento, Unión Proletaria propuso a otras organizaciones comunistas manifestar conjunta y públicamente nuestro respeto a la voluntad política de estas masas, para prepararlas a virar el rumbo nefasto adonde las llevaba la socialdemocracia. ¿Cómo? Fiscalizando con ellas la acción de su gobierno avisando de la traición que éste

preparaba, a la vez que movilizándolas a favor de las reformas que demandaban y en contra de la resistencia que la oligarquía oponía a las mismas, con el fin último de que desecharan el reformismo burgués en provecho del camino revolucionario. Se trataba pues de conquistarlas para construir con ellas, o con una parte importante y decisiva de ellas, una fuerza revolucionaria. Lamentablemente, no se comprendió la necesidad de enfocar la cuestión desde el punto de vista del materialismo dialéctico y no se pudo reunir una fuerza organizada suficiente para poner en acción esta táctica.

Hoy, nos toca revertir la traición ya consumada (sobre todo desde la participación del gobierno en la histeria militarista contra Rusia), partiendo de un mayor aislamiento de los revolucionarios con relación al grueso de la población. Para ello, es indispensable la crítica negativa al gobierno, pero lo es mucho más la propuesta positiva de medidas y objetivos que satisfagan las necesidades de la mayoría trabajadora empobrecida, a corto y también a largo plazo, con las alianzas más amplias, aunque claramente delimitadas.

Muchos comunistas siguen confiando equivocadamente en que un estallido popular espontáneo cambie las tornas. No se puede descartar que llegue a producirse una revuelta y sería, sin duda, un factor muy positivo para la revolución. Pero la historia atestigua que, sobre todo en los países dominantes, la burguesía tiene capacidad para desviar el desarrollo de las contradicciones de clase hacia objetivos secundarios e incluso hacia el chovinismo contra otras nacionalidades: si lo consiguió en Alemania hace un siglo, no es de extrañar que haya podido aprovechar la crisis más grave del movimiento obrero internacional para someter a Ucrania al ideario fascista de Stepan Bandera y Román Shujiévich. La tarea central de los comunistas no debe consistir en esperar que las masas se pongan a la vanguardia, sino en retomar nuestra misión fundamental: armarlos con la teoría científica del marxismo-leninismo,

concretarla en una política revolucionaria adecuada a nuestras condiciones particulares y llevarla a las masas.

Desarrollar una fuerza de masas en las metrópolis imperialistas

Vamos a volver sobre esta cuestión, pero antes veamos la otra causa de la derechización política de Occidente: la ofensiva desesperada del imperialismo en declive. No me detendré en la base económica de esta decadencia: superproducción y sobreacumulación de capital; disminución de la tasa general de ganancia; relativo estancamiento causado por el monopolismo; deslocalización industrial; militarización de la producción; deuda astronómica^[4]; resistencia de los oprimidos a la creciente explotación; desventaja competitiva con las economías emergentes en que el capital no domina, etc. Sin embargo, este deterioro estructural del imperialismo de Estados Unidos y de sus aliados/vasallos no debe llevarnos a olvidar que es todavía mucho más poderoso que los países oprimidos^[5], por mucho que esta correlación de fuerzas tienda a invertirse, tanto por la pujanza de éstos como por su propia decadencia. Esta tendencia lo lleva a una agresividad y a una temeridad cada vez mayores, que lleva a la humanidad a las puertas de una hecatombe termonuclear.

Ante estas perspectivas, las fuerzas democráticas y socialistas debemos fortalecernos y estrechar nuestra unidad con prudencia y paciencia estratégicas. Nuestros enemigos están empleando los medios de comunicación social que poseen y controlan (televisión, radio, prensa internet, educación, religiones, etc.) para adoctrinar y reclutar a una parte de la población como un ejército político enfilado al fascismo y a la guerra. Saben que no pueden ganarse a la mayoría, pero sí pretenden amedrentarla, dividirla e imponerse a ella. Desde los países occidentales, sólo podemos impedirlo si no entramos en pánico y si, de modo paralelo, formamos un ejército político de masas para la revolución, desde la vanguardia pro-

letaria hacia el resto de la clase obrera y del pueblo.

Tanto por el bien de la democracia y del socialismo, como por la misma supervivencia de la humanidad, no debemos dejar solos a los países que oponen resistencia a los imperialistas, y menos esperar a que todo lo resuelvan ellos. Al contrario, tenemos la obligación de desarrollar una fuerza antiimperialista de masas que detenga a las bestias agresoras desde dentro de su propia guarida (lo que, de paso, favorecerá las tendencias más progresistas en las naciones independientes). Esta tarea tiene unas características comunes y otras específicas a cada lugar. Aunque esta causa internacional se beneficie de los consejos y de las críticas de todas las procedencias geográficas, lo prioritario para nosotros es concretarla en el territorio del Estado español.

La fuerza capaz de neutralizar y, no digamos, de derrotar al imperialismo en nuestro país debe tener un carácter de masas. Cualquier alternativa a esto, por muy heroica que sea, es más perjudicial que beneficiosa. Y las masas se forman por la unidad práctica de los individuos. Por tanto, hay que luchar por la unidad y contra lo que causa división.

Necesitamos la más amplia unidad del pueblo contra las diversas manifestaciones de opresión causadas por la dominación del capital monopolista y financiero, dentro y fuera de nuestras fronteras. Pero el pueblo no es homogéneo, sino que está formado por clases sociales con diferentes intereses materiales. De todas ellas, la clase obrera es la única que realiza la producción socialmente desarrollada y sale de ella totalmente desposeída de los frutos de su trabajo exceptuando el mínimo vital. Por ello, es la que, objetivamente, tiene más interés en suprimir de raíz toda forma de opresión que produzca la sociedad imperialista. Para comprenderlo así, los obreros necesitan desarrollar su unidad a través de las tres formas que reviste su lucha de clase: económica contra sus patronos; política, por la democracia y el socialismo; y teórica, a través de la interrelación entre sus estratos más conscientes y menos conscientes,

es decir, entre los comunistas y los obreros sometidos a la ideología burguesa. En definitiva, debemos desarrollar la unidad popular, la unidad obrera y la unidad de los comunistas, de manera que se fortalezcan mutuamente.

Me centraré en el problema de la unidad de los comunistas, decisiva para el crecimiento de la unidad obrera y de la unidad popular. Todos los comunistas somos conscientes de la necesidad de avanzar en nuestra unidad para poder vincularnos estrecha, eficaz y acertadamente con el movimiento obrero de masas, es decir, para construir un partido comunista. Y no dejamos de intentarlo a través de la unión de diversas organizaciones comunistas o del crecimiento de una de ellas. Sin embargo, la experiencia en España no parece alentadora: no sólo las unificaciones se terminan resquebrajando, sino que las organizaciones que consiguen crecer tienden a sufrir escisiones de las que salen debilitadas. Estos fracasos se pueden evitar, como demuestra el éxito de los comunistas en otros países o en otros tiempos, siempre que tratemos las contradicciones de acuerdo con su naturaleza más concreta.

En la sociedad capitalista, el antagonismo entre capitalistas y trabajadores es muy influyente, pero las contradicciones entre los sectores obreros y populares no son antagónicas. E incluso la inevitable infiltración de posiciones burguesas y pequeñoburguesas en las organizaciones comunistas no tiene por qué saldarse con una escisión: también puede resolverse neutralizando o expulsando a tales sujetos. La influencia ideológica y política de la clase dominante puede llevar a cualquier militante a sostener posiciones erróneas que causen perjuicio a la unidad comunista. Pero, mientras se trate de errores no muy graves que no pongan en peligro la posición general marxista-leninista, pueden corregirse con un método no antagónico, siempre que se le permita explicarse razonablemente, que se le critique adecuadamente (conforme al materialismo dialéctico) y que la discusión se resuelva democráticamente, sometiéndose

la minoría a la decisión de la mayoría.

Para avanzar en la unidad comunista, desde la experiencia de Unión Proletaria, consideramos necesario: 1º) establecer las “líneas rojas” infranqueables, es decir, distinguir las posiciones políticas inaceptables, de aquellas otras en las que la discrepancia no impida la acción conjunta general que precisa la situación concreta; y 2º) acordar el método para desplegar la acción conjunta, a la vez que tratamos este último tipo de discrepancias.

Propuesta de eje principal para unir a las organizaciones comunistas

Es irrenunciable basar la unidad en el marxismo-leninismo, la lucha de la clase obrera, la revolución socialista, la dictadura del proletariado, etc. En este sentido, debe haber un compromiso y un esfuerzo por evitar todo lo que nos aparte de esta base: el revisionismo y el dogmatismo, el reformismo y el “izquierdismo”, el liberalismo y el sectarismo, el espontaneísmo y el intelectualismo, etc.

Entre las actuales organizaciones marxistas-leninistas, hay un acuerdo bastante amplio sobre las formulaciones ideológicas más generales, mientras que las diferencias aparecen a la hora de concretarlas. De hecho, tales diferencias también se dan dentro de cada una de las organizaciones. Pero, cuando los comunistas nos hallamos separados en múltiples organizaciones, se hace más difícil conocerlas y debatirlas, lo cual exacerba la tendencia a la división.

Hay distintas categorías de discrepancias, según su importancia actual, su urgencia. Así, por ejemplo, las que atañen a la evaluación de la experiencia histórica de construcción del socialismo no impiden una amplia unidad de acción entre organizaciones comunistas de los países capitalistas. Las que, por ejemplo, se refieren a la naturaleza social de la China actual restringen un poco más esa unidad de acción, porque aquellos grupos que la consideran capitalista son reacios a defenderla y a servirse de sus logros prácticos como apoyo a la propaganda socialista (es

una lástima, porque ha conseguido sacar a cientos de millones de la pobreza en poco tiempo sin agredir militarmente a otros países para saquearlos, algo incompatible con la lógica y la historia del capitalismo). No obstante, incluso este desacuerdo tampoco impide la unidad de acción principal, como veremos a continuación.

Hay que priorizar la unidad entre las organizaciones comunistas cuyas posiciones auguren un mayor desarrollo del debate y de la acción conjunta. Con otras, la relación sólo puede ser más ocasional, mientras se aferren a sus prejuicios sectarios. Pero ¿cuál es la limitación concreta y la “línea roja” pertinente?

La guía general para determinarla nos la proporciona el Manifiesto del Partido Comunista: “Las proposiciones teóricas de los comunistas no descansan ni mucho menos en las ideas, en los principios forjados o descubiertos por ningún redentor de la humanidad. Son todas expresión generalizada de las condiciones materiales de una lucha de clases real y vívida, de un movimiento histórico que se está desarrollando a la vista de todos.”^[6]

Es el movimiento social vivo —la plasmación de lo histórico y de lo estratégico en la actualidad— el que determina la acción de los comunistas y, por tanto, su unidad. El acuerdo acerca de la contradicción principal y del objetivo principal es la base para poder avanzar hacia la unidad comunista^[7].

Aunque la contradicción fundamental del capitalismo opone a la burguesía y al proletariado, aunque su solución sea la revolución socialista, la contradicción y el objetivo principales son su mediación necesaria, determinada por el carácter concreto —monopolista, imperialista— del capitalismo actual. En la confluencia de los siglos XIX y XX, nació el mundo presente a partir del momento en que los monopolios capitalistas se desarrollaron tanto que dominaron los mercados de Europa y Norteamérica. Toda la historia desde entonces es la de la colusión y pugna entre las oligarquías financieras de esta área geográfica por dominar el mundo, así como la de la

lucha de las clases y pueblos oprimidos por sacudirse esta dominación. Gracias al combate de éstos, algunas naciones oprimidas se han convertido en países poderosos, sin dejar de estar explotadas, acosadas, cercadas y agredidas por las potencias imperialistas. Aunque alberguen en su seno relaciones de producción capitalistas e incluso monopolios capitalistas (no en todos los casos dominan su sociedad y su Estado), siguen siendo oprimidas y su lucha de liberación nacional contribuye a quebrar la colusión imperialista mundial que es el principal obstáculo a las revoluciones, tanto democrático-nacionales como socialistas-proletarias.

Que su estatus de naciones oprimidas continúa en vigor lo demostró la historia reciente de la Rusia que regresó al capitalismo. Con esta transformación, la nueva burguesía rusa esperaba recibir un trato similar al que se dispensan mutuamente las oligarquías de Estados Unidos, la Unión Europea y Japón. Sin embargo, no fue así. No la trataron como un socio igual o de segunda clase, sino como una pieza de caza a saquear e incluso a trocear, como cualquier otro país del “tercer mundo”: la OTAN rechazó la solicitud de adhesión de la Federación Rusa, se amplió hasta las fronteras de ésta y alimentó la hostilidad contra ella (Chechenia, Daguestán, Abjasia, Donbás, Letonia, etc.). Quedó empíricamente probado que Rusia, al igual que China, forman parte del mal llamado “tercer mundo”, es decir, de los países oprimidos por las potencias imperialistas formadas como tal al culminar la etapa progresiva del capitalismo. La relación de opresión entre los dos “mundos” que resultan del capitalismo monopolista —como lo indica la palabra “monopolio”— prevalece y se impone sobre los éxitos que coseche un país oprimido en el desigual desarrollo capitalista^[8]. Son precisamente los éxitos en el desarrollo de los países oprimidos (sobre todo la URSS y China) el factor que ha forzado a las oligarquías financieras de aquellas viejas potencias a coludirse hasta ahora contra ellos, en lugar de volver a guerrear entre sí por nuevos repartos del mundo en

proporción a sus fuerzas respectivas.

En consecuencia, la unidad comunista sólo puede fructificar comprendiendo que ésta y no otra es la realidad contemporánea de la lucha de clases: es decir, dirigiendo todas las luchas parciales hacia el objetivo principal de desarrollar la unidad de todas las fuerzas oprimidas por los imperialistas, guiándose por el resumen que sugiere el Manifiesto del Partido Comunista: “los comunistas apoyan en todas partes, como se ve, cuantos movimientos revolucionarios se planteen contra el régimen social y político imperante. En todos estos movimientos se ponen de relieve el régimen de la propiedad, cualquiera que sea la forma más o menos progresiva que revista, como la cuestión fundamental que se ventila. Finalmente, los comunistas laboran por llegar a la unión y la inteligencia de los partidos democráticos de todos los países.”^[9]

De ahí que no sea posible contar para la unidad comunista con organizaciones enemigas de quienes combaten a los imperialistas, con organizaciones que tratan a Rusia y a China —las mayores fuerzas del campo antiimperialista— como lo contrario de lo que son. La crítica y la vigilancia son legítimas y necesarias, y es incluso admisible cuestionar el carácter socialista de China, pero la unidad comunista quedaría paralizada y destruida si pretendiera incorporar a organizaciones sectarias que, al estilo trotskista, confunden a amigos y enemigos, sembrando la discordia en el campo antiimperialista.

La clase obrera necesita reconstituir su Partido Comunista, reuniendo a todos los marxistas-leninistas dispuestos a fortalecer la unidad por el derrocamiento de los imperialistas y a promover en dicha unidad el camino de la revolución proletaria mundial, tal como propugna la Plataforma Mundial Antiimperialista.

Propuesta de método para unir a las organizaciones comunistas

La urgencia de esta tarea no la determina solamente

el sufrimiento actual de las masas, sino todavía más el dolor cualitativamente superior que nos deparan las acciones desesperadas de un campo imperialista que se está descomponiendo desde su misma base económica. En esta coyuntura, sería lo más conveniente que todas las organizaciones comunistas comprometidas con esta tarea nos convocáramos a un congreso que nos unificara en un mismo partido regido por el centralismo democrático para intervenir entre las masas según nuestros acuerdos políticos.

Lamentablemente, la experiencia reciente da fe de que todavía lo impiden nuestras diferencias teóricas y prácticas, causadas por la crisis del campo socialista y amplificadas por la prolongada merma y dispersión del movimiento obrero y comunista.

Por consiguiente, consideramos necesario y posible abrir un camino intermedio^[10] entre la actual división y la futura unificación orgánica:

1. Una unidad de acción alrededor de la lucha principal contra el imperialismo (y más allá, a medida que sea posible), que sea permanente y no sólo ocasional.
2. Este frente o federación de un creciente número de organizaciones comunistas concluiría acuerdos por unanimidad en reuniones frecuentes de representantes plenipotenciarios de cada una de ellas.
3. Cada organización se comprometería a fortalecer esta unidad y a cumplir lealmente los acuerdos, a la vez que conservaría su total independencia de actuación en todo lo demás^[11].
4. La actividad unitaria incluiría la atención a las iniciativas de los movimientos de masas y de sus organizaciones, pero no se limitaría a esperarlas.
5. Al contrario, partiría de una formación marxista-leninista conjunta, de la elaboración de un primer esbozo de programa político y de un plan de agitación y propaganda para movilizar a las masas por su realización.
6. Este plan tendría como eje central una prensa (entendida en sentido amplio como conjunto de medios de difusión) regular y frecuente que expu-

siera las orientaciones acordadas y diera también cabida a la discusión de las opiniones discrepantes, sobre todo acerca de las cuestiones más candentes. La necesidad del periodismo alternativo de contrainformación ha sido comprendida por muchos intelectuales revolucionarios que han desplegado un trabajo encomiable en esta dirección. Aprendiendo de ellos, los comunistas debemos reunir y centralizar estos esfuerzos desde un punto de vista estrictamente marxista-leninista, en torno a la realización del programa antiimperialista y socialista.

7. Aunque haya que empezar por tareas de clarificación y de definición política en base a la teoría científica del marxismo-leninismo, es de capital importancia evitar que la actividad comunista quede encerrada en un gueto de lo más avanzado de la clase obrera. Al contrario, hay que salir al encuentro de toda la población, no sólo con propaganda (muchas ideas para pocos), sino con agitación (pocas ideas para muchos), aprovechando al máximo las posibilidades legales.

8. Puesto que la realización de los acuerdos comprometería a los militantes de todas las organizaciones, se podría empezar a desarrollar una división del trabajo y una especialización entre los mismos, optimizando así el empleo de las fuerzas disponibles para llevar las posiciones que previamente hayamos acordado a más territorios, más centros de trabajo, más centros de estudio, más frentes parciales de masas, etc.

9. Con el tiempo, comunistas que hemos estado separados y enfrentados durante demasiados años nos iríamos conociendo y comprendiendo mejor, desarrollaríamos una confianza mutua y nos acostumbraríamos a estar unas veces en mayoría y otras en minoría hasta poder unificarnos en un mismo partido bajo las reglas del centralismo democrático.

Esta propuesta es lo que Unión Proletaria desea compartir con las demás organizaciones comunistas. El realismo y la prudencia no excluyen, sino que también nos exigen agilidad y valentía ante los graves

acontecimientos que se nos vienen encima.

Notas

[1] Véase el epígrafe “Sobre la relación entre la lucha por la democracia y la lucha por el socialismo” en el artículo <https://www.unionproletaria.com/el-oportunismo-no-se-combate-atacando-a-los-antiimperialistas/>.

[2] <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/paginas/2025/181125-sanchez-acuerdos-ucrania-zelenski.aspx#:~:text=Para%20continuar%20apoyando%20a%20Ucrania,Ucrania%20y%20acelerar%20su%20reconstrucci%C3%B3n.https://agendapublica.es/noticia/20548/implicaciones-mision-espana-ucrania-oportunidad-debate-serio>

[3] Si prestamos atención a lo que explica Stalin en sus Fundamentos del leninismo, sobre estrategia y táctica (<https://www.marxists.org/espanol/stalin/1920s/fundam/fundam7.htm>), observaremos que la “Dirección del golpe principal: aislar a la democracia pequeñoburguesa, aislar a los partidos de la II Internacional, que son el puntal más importante de la política de componendas con el imperialismo” no figura entre los requisitos tácticos, sino entre los objetivos estratégicos. Por consiguiente, se trata de cumplirlo mediante la táctica que lo permita, cuyos principios son desgranados por Stalin a continuación no partiendo solamente de las necesidades de las masas, sino del grado en que las comprenden. Y esa comprensión suya es la que determina absolutamente la intervención de los comunistas entre las masas, la única realmente revolucionaria.

[4] La deuda pública de Estados Unidos supera ya los 38,5 billones de dólares, más de dos billones adicionales a los de hace un año. De ellos, 8 billones vencerán en 2026 y habrá que “pagar” a los acreedores, ya sea imprimiendo más billetes verdes y provocando inflación o ya sea renovándola con garantías sobre riquezas ajenas, como el petróleo venezolano y otras.

[5] El Producto Interior Bruto de Estados Unidos en 1990 era cuatro veces mayor que el de China y Rusia juntas. En 2025, esta diferencia se ha reducido, pero el del país norteamericano todavía es casi un 50% superior. Y el de EE.UU. con sus aliados militares suma más del doble que el de los BRICS ([https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Pa%C3%ADses_por_PIB_\(nominal\)_en_1990](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anexo:Pa%C3%ADses_por_PIB_(nominal)_en_1990) y <https://www.worldometers.info/es/pib/pib-por-pais/>).

El dólar estadounidense protagoniza el 88% de las transacciones internacionales de divisas, el 58% de las reservas internacionales de divisas (euro 20%, libra 5%, Yen 5%, Yuan 2%) y el 54% del comercio mundial (<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/whats-behind-the-u-s-dollars-dominance-and-why-it-matters/#:~:text=Introduction,and%2054%25%20of%20global%20trade>).

El presupuesto militar de Estados Unidos supera en más de dos veces al de China y Rusia juntas. El de EE.UU. y sus aliados militares triplica al de China, Rusia y los aliados no militares de ambas (<https://www.bankinter.com/blog/economia/paises-gasto-defensa> y https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/yb25_summary_es.pdf). Y, en cuanto a bases militares en países extranjeros, son casi 1.000 contra unas pocas decenas.

[6] <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/48-manif.htm>,

capítulo II.

[7] “Cualquier problema «se mueve en un círculo vicioso», pues toda la vida política es una cadena infinita compuesta de un sinfín de eslabones. Todo el arte de un político estriba justamente en encontrar y aferrarse con nervio al preciso eslaboncito que menos pueda ser arrancado de las manos, que sea el más importante en un momento determinado y mejor garantice a quien lo sujete la posesión de toda cadena.” (Lenin, ¿Qué hacer?, capítulo V)

[8] Se puede especular con la perspectiva de que, tras la derrota de las actuales potencias imperialistas, se transformasen en imperialistas las actuales potencias oprimidas, al haber capitalismo en ellas. Pero, en primer lugar, es una hipótesis extemporánea y, por tanto, carente de todo valor político cuando todavía estamos lejos de poder cantar victoria sobre los actuales opresores. En segundo lugar, presupone que tal victoria pudiera alcanzarse sin un desarrollo cualitativo del movimiento obrero y comunista internacional, lo cual delata una falta de confianza en las masas y en la teoría revolucionaria que es más propia de un sectario que de un marxista. Y, en tercer lugar, condena fatalmente a este destino a las nuevas potencias emergentes sin investigar concretamente su historia y su relación con otros países, sólo porque no encajan en una comprensión superficial, estrecha y dogmática del marxismo.

[9] <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1840s/48-manif.htm>, capítulo IV.

[10] Ese “camino intermedio” consiste realmente en el proceso que lleva a diferentes organizaciones comunistas a unirse en un solo partido. No es ninguna ocurrencia ajena a la experiencia histórica, sino que un proceso así se ha dado en muchos casos, siendo uno de los más destacados el de los marxistas rusos. La represión policiaca había agudizado la dispersión ideológica entre ellos tras el Primer Congreso del Partido Obrero Socialdemócrata de Rusia (1898). Hacía falta recorrer un proceso de superación de las divergencias políticas para poder celebrar un Segundo Congreso que consolidara al partido (1903). Este proceso comenzó con el plan de Lenin y un grupo de marxistas revolucionarios deportados en Siberia consistente en publicar un periódico –Iskra– organizador de una actividad práctica libre de tendencias revisionistas. Para poder ejecutar este plan, primero, sumaron a las organizaciones afines del interior de Rusia y, después, se aliaron con el grupo “Emancipación del Trabajo” formado por los exiliados más ortodoxos. La difusión de Iskra fue atrayendo a las posiciones marxistas a un número creciente de organizaciones (y de individuos, entre ellos Trotski), llegando a ser mayoría al inaugurarse el Segundo Congreso.

[11] Lenin decía que “Discutir el problema, expresar y oír opiniones distintas, conocer el criterio de la mayoría de los marxistas organizados, estampar este criterio en una resolución y cumplir honestamente esa resolución es lo que se llama unidad en todas las partes del mundo y por toda la gente sensata. Y esta unidad es infinitamente valiosa e importante para la clase obrera”. (A propósito de la unidad)

“The State of Imperial Plunder”: Organized Crime from Power in the Terminal Phase of Imperialism

Jorge Gálvez | Workers' Party of Chile

The international order that emerged after the Second World War was formally constructed upon legal principles aimed at limiting the use of force, safeguarding state sovereignty, and promoting peaceful cooperation among nations. However, this normative framework was never neutral; from its inception, it was subordinated to the real balance of forces within the global capitalist system.

In the current phase, marked by the structural crisis of capitalism and the decline of imperial hegemony, that order is no longer even functional as a mask. A qualitatively new figure thus emerges: the “State of Imperial Plunder.” This is a state that not only violates international law, but makes that violation a systematic, public, and openly justified policy.

The “State of Imperial Plunder” is profoundly predatory and converges with forms of transnational state-organized crime.

From Classical Imperialism to the State of Imperial Plunder

Imperialism, as characterized by Lenin, was structured around the export of capital, the domination of markets, and the division of the world among great powers. Throughout much of the twentieth century, this domination was exercised through indirect mechanisms: formal colonialism, neocolonialism, coups d'état, covert wars, and subordinate dictatorships. Even when international law was violated, efforts were made to maintain a legalistic and civilizing rhetoric.

Today, that mediation has disappeared. The State of Imperial Plunder no longer needs to conceal its looting, nor seriously justify its aggression. The

appropriation and theft of strategic resources belonging to other nations, the freezing and confiscation of sovereign assets, massive economic sanctions against civilian populations, and direct military threats are openly proclaimed as legitimate instruments of foreign policy.

This new quality is a symptom of imperial crisis. Plunder-imperialism is imperialism weakened in its hegemony, incapable of constructing consensus and reduced to naked coercion. This state no longer seeks unlimited global expansion; rather, as a tactical move, it aims to devastate the resources of its immediate surroundings (the West and its “backyard,” Latin America) in order to entrench itself with the resources obtained through plunder and theft. Its intention is to resist the loss of global hegemony and, once its imperial capacity is restored, to launch a renewed planetary offensive.

The State of Imperial Plunder acts systematically outside international law, disregarding its binding character. It deliberately breaches treaties and multilateral commitments without assuming consequences. It repeatedly violates human rights both within and beyond its borders. It withdraws from or blocks international oversight bodies in order to evade scrutiny and sanctions. It despises the principles of the United Nations Charter, particularly sovereignty, self-determination of peoples, and non-intervention. It replaces law with force, and legality with unilateral imposition.

Despite its loss of hegemony, it remains a state with high institutional, military, and financial capacity—using that capacity to commit crimes on a global scale.

What distinguishes this imperial state is not occasional illegality, but the institutionalization of illegality. Criminal decisions are not made on the margins of power, but at its center. Governments, parliaments, ad hoc courts, armed forces, intelligence agencies, and strategic corporations operate in coordinated fashion.

Illegal economic sanctions function as collective punishment designed to provoke economic collapse, social discontent, and political destabilization. Financial blockades, the confiscation of international reserves, and the appropriation of foreign state-owned enterprises constitute acts of plunder prohibited under international law, yet normalized within imperial discourse.

Here, law ceases to be a limit and becomes a selective weapon: it is applied to enemies and suspended for imperial power.

The Rupture of the International Order

The State of Imperial Plunder does not merely violate the international legal order—it destroys it as a shared reference point. By acting without limits, it undermines the very possibility of a system based on norms and opens the door to a scenario of permanent confrontation, where force replaces law.

This process accelerates the delegitimization of imperialism itself. State plunder exposes the class character of the international order and pushes peoples and states under attack to seek new forms of cooperation, defense, and sovereignty outside frameworks dominated by imperial power.

The State of Imperial Plunder is the political expression of a system in crisis. It is the contemporary face of imperialism when it can no longer persuade, integrate, or hegemonize, and is left only with imposition, plunder, and punishment. Its conduct is not an aberration, but a logical consequence of the current phase of global capitalism in decline.

«Estado del Pillaje Imperial»: crimen organizado desde el poder en la fase terminal del imperialismo

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El orden internacional surgido tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial se construyó formalmente sobre principios jurídicos orientados a limitar el uso de la fuerza, resguardar la soberanía de los Estados y promover la cooperación pacífica entre las naciones. Sin embargo, este entramado normativo nunca fue neutral; estuvo desde su origen subordinado a la correlación real de fuerzas del sistema capitalista mundial. En la fase actual, marcada por la crisis estructural del capitalismo y el declive de la hegemonía imperial, ese orden ya no es siquiera funcional como máscara. Surge así una figura cualitativamente nueva, el «Estado del Pillaje Imperial», un Estado que no solo viola el derecho internacional, sino que hace de esa violación una política sistemática, pública y reivindicada.

El «Estado del Pillaje Imperial» es profundamente depredador y converge con formas del crimen organizado estatal transnacional.

Del imperialismo clásico al Estado del Pillaje Imperial

El imperialismo, tal como lo caracterizó Lenin, se estructuraba sobre la exportación de capitales, la dominación de mercados y el reparto del mundo entre grandes potencias. Durante gran parte del siglo XX, esta dominación se ejerció mediante mecanismos indirectos, colonialismo formal, neocolonialismo, golpes de Estado, guerras encubiertas y dictaduras subordinadas. Incluso cuando se violaba el derecho internacional, se procuraba mantener una retórica legalista y civilizatoria.

En la actualidad, esa mediación ha desaparecido. El Estado del Pillaje Imperial ya no necesita ocul-

tar el saqueo, ni justificar seriamente la agresión. La apropiación y robo de recursos estratégicos ajenos, el congelamiento y confiscación de activos soberanos, las sanciones económicas masivas contra poblaciones civiles y la amenaza militar directa son proclamadas abiertamente como instrumentos legítimos de política exterior.

Esta nueva cualidad es un síntoma de la crisis imperial, el imperialismo del pillaje es el imperialismo debilitado en su hegemonía, incapaz de construir consenso y reducido a la coerción desnuda. Este Estado ya no busca su expansión mundial ilimitada; sin embargo, es una táctica: busca arrasarse con los recursos de su entorno más cercano (Occidente y su patio trasero, América Latina) para atrincherarse con los recursos saqueados y robados, con la intención de resistir la pérdida de hegemonía a escala mundial y, una vez recuperada su capacidad imperial, arremeter nuevamente a escala planetaria.

El Estado del Pillaje Imperial actúa sistemáticamente al margen del derecho internacional, desconociendo su carácter vinculante. Incumple deliberadamente tratados y compromisos multilaterales, sin asumir consecuencias. Viola de manera reiterada los derechos humanos, tanto dentro como fuera de sus fronteras. Se retira o bloquea organismos internacionales de supervisión, para evadir controles y sanciones. Desprecia los principios de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas, particularmente la soberanía, la autodeterminación de los pueblos y la no intervención. Sustituye el derecho por la fuerza, y la legalidad por la imposición unilateral.

Aun con la pérdida de hegemonía es todavía un Estado con alta capacidad institucional, militar y

financiera, utilizando esa capacidad para delinquir a escala global.

Lo distintivo de este Estado imperial no es la ilegalidad ocasional, sino la institucionalización de la ilegalidad. Las decisiones criminales no se toman en los márgenes del poder, sino en su centro, gobiernos, parlamentos, tribunales ad hoc, fuerzas armadas, agencias de inteligencia y corporaciones estratégicas operan de forma coordinada.

Las sanciones económicas ilegales son castigos colectivos diseñados para provocar colapso económico, descontento social y desestabilización política. El bloqueo financiero, la confiscación de reservas internacionales y la apropiación de empresas estatales extranjeras constituyen actos de pillaje, prohibidos por el derecho internacional, pero normalizados por el discurso imperial.

Aquí el derecho deja de ser un límite y se transforma en un arma selectiva, se aplica a los enemigos y se suspende para el poder imperial.

La ruptura del orden internacional

El Estado del Pillaje Imperial no solo viola el orden jurídico internacional, lo destruye como referencia común. Al actuar sin límites, socava la posibilidad misma de un sistema basado en normas y abre paso a un escenario de confrontación permanente, donde la fuerza sustituye al derecho.

Este proceso acelera la deslegitimación del propio imperialismo. El pillaje estatal expone el carácter de clase del orden internacional y empuja a los pueblos y Estados agredidos a buscar nuevas formas de cooperación, defensa y soberanía, fuera de los marcos dominados por el poder imperial.

El Estado del Pillaje Imperial es la expresión política de un sistema en crisis. Es el rostro contemporáneo del imperialismo cuando ya no puede convencer, integrar ni hegemonizar, y solo le queda imponer, saquear y castigar. Su conducta no es una extravagancia, sino una consecuencia lógica de la fase actual del capitalismo global en decadencia.

The Era of “Do Whatever You Want” in the Global Capitalist Crisis: Part 2

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V

With the financial flow initiated by full economic subjugation, which took its sharpest turn between 1997 and 2001, dot-com companies in imperialist centers inflated like balloons. The world, almost unanimously, set about using all its trade surpluses, extra monopoly profits (and later, the surplus value generated by small businesses), to inflate the assets of imperialist centers, such as bonds and stocks. At the beginning of 2001, when the reality of this over-investment, which failed to deliver the expected profits, became apparent, dot-com company shares plummeted. The loss amounted to \$6 trillion.

This sudden collapse led to questioning the role of the US financial structure as the “last safe haven” and it immediately lost its magnet function of attracting almost all of the world’s monopoly profits. However, the effectiveness of this financial pool depends on its concentration in a single center; otherwise, the debt-credit chain breaks down. This situation means a hegemonic collapse for both imperialism and the US. And to reverse the collapse, the September 11 provocation was staged, and World War III began. The goal was achieved. This time, under the pretext of “fighting terrorism,” the US gained access to all bank accounts worldwide, and the structure dismantled by the ineffective magnet was forcibly rebuilt.

On the other hand, nothing had been accomplished yet; on the contrary, it was just beginning, otherwise this power could not have operated for so long. The

first steps toward complete economic subjugation had just begun to be taken. There was still ample room for maneuver to obtain extra monopoly profits through high labor exploitation stemming from capital scarcity in dependent countries.

The extent of this room can be calculated in the simplest and crudest terms as follows: the greater the difference between a country’s nominal GDP and its Purchasing Power Parity GDP, the greater the extra profit that imperialist monopolies can extract from these countries. In the years mentioned, at the beginning of the century, the nominal-PPP difference was fourfold in the lowest-ranked countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Roughly speaking, this means that the monopoly profit to be obtained from these countries is four times greater than that from imperialist centers. In moderately developed dependent countries such as South Africa, Turkey, and Argentina, the difference was nearly twofold during the same years. At the beginning of the 21st century, the world was still far from the “Full Economic Subjugation Paradox” that would emerge with the reduction of the nominal-PPP gap.

In this favorable environment, imperialists quickly found a way to recoup the \$6 trillion that evaporated in the dot-com crisis and began exporting large amounts of capital to the world from the forcibly reconstituted common debt pool. This process increasingly fragmented and diversified supply chains and stratified the global division of labor. Having learned their lesson, imperialists invested their extra profits not in the semiconductor sector, but in the real estate sector. The internet was forgotten; the construction sector became king. The real estate sector, which had

become almost a flying balloon with the soaring support of land rents, burst much earlier than expected. The 2008 crisis continued for a long time and buried the EU's banking system in history. The only way for imperialism to manage this crisis was to send the excessively inflated common pool, pumped up by credit money from the united Central Banks, to dependent countries in the form of short-term loans. Debt capital, once again attacking dependent countries, reached dizzying proportions. However, this was not to add new links to the supply chains, but to indebt every part of capital accumulation, including SMEs in dependent countries, in order to earn interest income. Private debt (corporate + consumer debt) in dependent countries multiplied rapidly. This situation eroded the profits of monopolies that had entered into tacit agreements, forcing them to borrow more just to stay in the game and pay their debts. Capital accumulation in these countries began to decline markedly, making production almost entirely dependent on imported inputs.

It is time to address the "Full Economic Subjugation Paradox", which became evident in the 2020s. With full economic subjugation, dependent countries were producing not only for the domestic market but also for the world market (as subcontractors/contract manufacturers). However, they lacked the capital concentration, accumulation, and supporting industries necessary to achieve such large-scale production and distribution. Yet, the scale of production, which could only be sustained through debt, quickly made them dependent on imports. This dependency reached 70% in the manufacturing industry in countries such as Turkey. This is where the problem began: living conditions in general, and the reproduction of labor power in particular, were based on products with high labor costs as a result of import dependency, and the medium- and long-term consequence of this situation was the closing of the nominal GNP gap specific to dependent countries. And from another perspective, as dependent coun-

tries tried to keep the exchange rate low in order to postpone the debt crisis, this gap closed at an even faster pace. As the extra profit margins of imperialist monopolies narrowed, they began to cut orders from the countries at the bottom of the chain. This meant rapidly rising living costs accompanied by rapidly rising unemployment. As in the cases of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the "Full Economic Subjugation Paradox" became the cradle of an unstoppable social explosion and revolution.

VI

The "Full Economic Subjugation Paradox", accompanied by the revolutions it triggered, led to dramatic declines in monopoly profits flowing to imperialist centers. As a result, financial markets, which cannot extinguish themselves and can only function as magnets for surplus value by inflating further, needed a manipulative pump. The slogan "artificial intelligence will change the world" became the vehicle for this manipulation. Moreover, this time, the bubble, which resembles a crude Ponzi scheme, is four to five times larger than the previous one. Gopinath, the former chief economist of the IMF, predicted that \$35 trillion would evaporate.

As we can see, this bubble arises from extraordinarily high fixed investments not being supported by intensive labor exploitation. According to MIT University's calculations, only 5% of the \$400 billion in artificial intelligence investments by 2025, which will reach \$5-7 trillion in four years, will be productive, meaning they hold no hope of creating added value. Where will the profits come from, which cannot be obtained in the production process and whose compensation opportunities are now diminishing due to the "full economic subjugation paradox"? From stock trading, which has turned into a Ponzi scheme. All artificial intelligence monopolies and a handful of financial capital groups that follow them are parties to this Ponzi scheme. They have created a capital

cycle where the investor, producer, creditor, and customer are one and the same. In this way, artificially inflated stocks are the only way to attract monopoly profits that are on a downward trend. The more you inflate the stocks, the more you get a piece of the shared monopoly profit. The math is simple.

It is inevitable that this bubble, advancing at an unprecedented speed toward its bursting point, will affect the entire world. This is because the global financial system is excessively dependent on the US stock market. The US stock markets are where the debt-credit chain, which has circled the world many times in the form of short-term debt since the 2008 crisis, returns. And each return is necessary to initiate a recovery and a new credit cycle. That is why the US stock markets function as a pump that must constantly operate to enable the rollover of debt. Now, the stopping of this pump will result in dependent countries, first and foremost, being crushed under mountains of debt.

One of the remaining questions is when this bubble will burst. For Marxists, this question never loses its importance. However, if the mouthpieces of finance capital have started talking about crisis, then the time is near. While many publications are running headlines about “destruction, fragmentation,” the Financial Times published a noteworthy warning. The established newspaper of financial capital published lengthy articles on how the crisis would erupt.

At this point, developments must be assessed alongside a global civil war. Let us recall Lenin’s warning that, as in nature, no phenomenon in society can be considered in isolation. The social character of production spread worldwide by the semiconductor industry pioneered the birth of global civil war, and now the same process, accelerated by artificial intelligence, is full of signs of a new phase in this war. This new phase is manifesting itself with the confirmation of the collapse of US hegemony.

Many shallow assessments made in the name of Marxism claimed that imperialist countries had

transitioned to a “post-industrial society” since the 1980s. With the same shallow perspective, a “return to industry” is now being proclaimed.

In reality, imperialist centers did not deindustrialize. Only the labor-intensive parts of industry’s integrated cycle of production-circulation-expanded reproduction, which can operate with much higher rates of exploitation and profit, were transferred to dependent countries with scarce capital, and imperialism deepened its character as a “rentier society.”

The industrial cycle of capitalist production begins with money, transitions directly to production with the purchase of means of production (machinery, equipment, labor power), and then moves to the sphere of circulation loaded with surplus value, etc. This integrated cycle includes administrative, financial distribution, marketing, storage, advertising, legal, and numerous other stages. In imperialist centers, most of the labor involved in the industrial cycle is employed in the “service sector.” A multinational monopoly is the center of a production network operating in over 200 countries. If this monopoly were to relocate the direct production stages scattered across dependent countries back to imperialist centers in the name of reindustrialization, the following would occur. It would be forced to eliminate most of the labor power gathered under the service sector, and not content with that, it would not pay its workers more than the producers in dependent countries. And both transformations would mean serious civil war in imperialist countries. Because, despite the “Full Economic Subjugation Paradox,” the wage and living standard gap with dependent countries is enormous, and such a gap can only be closed by bloody civil war.

The US, whose hegemony is collapsing, is moving away from the exploitation processes and supply chains that sustain the rentier society, not because of a choice to “reindustrialize,” but because of the markets it has lost. And it is going completely off the rails in its attempt to compensate for this situation

with a show of force, the ultimate rule of competition between monopolies. Trump is the most striking symptom of the terminal phase of US hegemony. Under Trump, the US is setting the world on fire to escape its own internal war.

Can it escape? No. Because all economic and political conditions are forcing it to squeeze extra monopoly profits out of its own society. The artificial intelligence breakthrough threatens administrative, logistical, financial, and other labor processes the most. That is why the term “civil war” is beginning to appear in headlines and spots in the US press. Trump is using a militia force larger than the US army, ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents, to terrorize society. The Pentagon is preparing a “Rapid Response Force for Civil Unrest.”

Headlines such as “fragmented society,” “tired democracy,” and “the collapse of civilization beyond economic and political collapse” are the clearest expressions of this landscape.

VII

There is a simple rule not written in bourgeois economics books. In the words of Sadun Aren: “As long as there are lenders, there will always be borrowers.” The 21st-century manifestation of the New Phase of Imperialism was shaped by debt capital. It targeted large infrastructure investments such as power plants, roads, and ports, as well as industrial investments that rapidly elevated collaborative capital to a monopolistic position. With the New Phase, all dependent countries became extensions of imperialist markets; while the integrity of the domestic market was fragmented, import-export became the main economic activity of these countries. This transformation encompassed not only collaborative sectors but all areas of production, including agriculture. Production began with debt capital, extra monopoly profits were transferred to imperialist financial capital, and gradually all production activ-

ity was reduced to a mere means of servicing debts, accumulation aside.

This development, which reversed the capital cycle, manifested itself twice in the form of crises.

The first was the 2008 crisis, which led to the major popular uprisings of 2011. The second crisis occurred during the COVID period, and this time South Asia and Africa were shaken by revolutions.

When the revolution broke out in Sri Lanka in July 2022, the economy was completely out of control. Yet, over the past decade, the country had surpassed Bangladesh in devaluing its labor force. When COVID cut off foreign capital inflows, the Sri Lankan people realized that whatever they needed had to be imported with foreign currency, and all foreign exchange reserves were quickly depleted. The biggest problem was gasoline and diesel; the state was unable to pay its own employees’ salaries. The uprising erupted at this critical threshold because the next step meant starvation for millions.

A similar COVID-related disaster was unfolding in Bangladesh. The country, which had saved labor-intensive industries such as textiles with the world’s cheapest labor force, was pushed to a point where it could no longer pay the interest on its massive debt. When shopping malls around the world temporarily closed, Bangladesh’s textile industry, which carried the burden of meeting their needs, experienced a downturn. However, the treadmill could not stop; even a brief pause was enough to make it impossible to pay the interest on the debt. In this sense, Bangladesh symbolized how dependent countries experiencing a full economic subjugation had become sensitive to the slightest fluctuations in imperialist markets. Unemployment rose rapidly, and the result was a full-blown uprising. In 2025, economies like Madagascar and Indonesia experienced another aftershock, varying in intensity and scope.

The countries that made it onto the list of revolutions share a common feature: they are all at the very bottom of the process of full economic subju-

gation. A domino had fallen in the world, and the next ones began to fall one after another. When Sri Lanka fell, the financial capital barons in London not only voiced this domino theory, but also admitted that they had bet that Turkey would be the first stone to fall.

The process that toppled the dominoes is what we referred to in previous sections as the “full economic subjugation paradox.” In summary, countries with scarce capital, and therefore cheap labor, inflated their import and export figures with the debt capital needed for production and the machinery, equipment, and intermediate goods purchased with that debt, along with full economic destruction. However, since production depended on imported inputs laden with the extra profits of most imperialist monopolies, the monetary value of labor costs inflated at the same rate. Not only labor costs, but all input costs increased extraordinarily. Even if the collusive monopolies pushed exploitation to its absolute limit, they could not find other dependent countries where the costs they borrowed were lower; the zombie companies that could not escape this time truly died.

The full economic subjugation paradox is closely related not only to rising labor and other input costs in import-dependent production, but also to the fact that the debt capital that initiated and circulated this production eroded the accumulated capital before full economic destruction and, at a certain point, fell to a point of profitability where it could no longer cover the interest on the debt. Therefore, the following should be added to the unwritten law of bourgeois economics: As long as there are lenders, there will be borrowers, provided they pay the interest...

VIII

The last quarter-century of monopoly capitalism in Turkey has been marked by conditions of full economic subjugation. This process also tells the story of how every branch of production, especially

industry, became unable to operate without debt and could no longer produce without imported inputs; how capital accumulation increasingly turned into a form of wealth that did not produce surplus value; and how, as a result of all these transformations, it became unable to produce surplus value for imperialist financial capital.

The result was the dissolution and disintegration of the industrial structure (flight abroad), its transformation into a black money reserve to keep the debt chain turning, and excessive work and an excessively expensive life for labor.

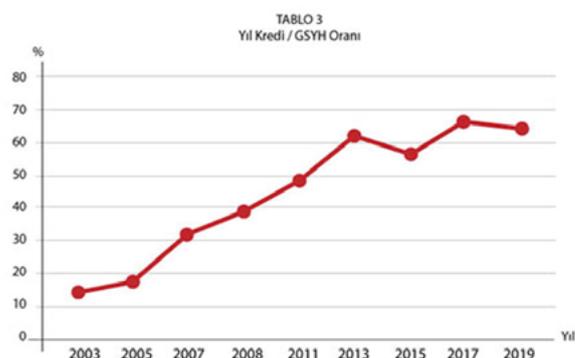


Table 3 shows the development of credit dependency over the last quarter-century. It resembles heroin addiction; each debt creates a need for more: as the credit ratio grows, the economy’s growth figures shrink. This dependency renders every branch of production unable to function without imported inputs. Dependency rates in key areas are as follows: Energy: 69%, CNC machine tools 80%, fertilizer 95%, automotive machinery 95%, textile machinery 95%... The list goes on. Imported inputs exceed 70% of total manufacturing.

To understand the extent of the economic damage, the automotive production sector is a striking example. Six thousand parts are needed for a car. Some of these are simple parts that can be produced domestically by medium-sized businesses. But listen to how an automotive industry boss complains: “We produce a significant portion of these parts domestically, they are exported, and then the company prints

its logo on them and sends them back.” The imperialist monopoly is squeezing blood from a stone. For the car entering the final assembly line, the collusive monopoly is not only dependent on 80% imported parts, but also has the imported input goods produced domestically by the ancillary industry, buys them to stamp its logo on them, and sells them to the supplier at a price as if they were the product of high-wage labor in its own country. Thus, it can extract extra monopoly profit not only from final assembly but even from the simplest parts of production, such as gaskets and windshield wipers. This gives meaning to the bifurcation we saw in Table 2 (see previous article).

This dependency has two important consequences. The first concerns the monopoly collaborative capital, the second the economy as a whole. Let’s start with the second. Table 3 shows the trajectory of credit dependency, which is growing and becoming insufficient as it grows. It is clear that development has followed a separate path since 2018. At this stage, we can assume, at the very least, that credit dependency has risen to 75%. Turkey pays an average of 8% interest to global financial capital for this credit. If production cannot grow at an annual rate of 6% (75% of 8%), this interest cannot be paid. In this case, beyond borrowing for production, borrowing to repay interest becomes inevitable. For financial capital, this type of debt is like taking money out of one pocket and putting it in another; it is impossible. Over the past 10 years, the Turkish economy has failed to achieve the necessary growth. As a result, the economy became awash in black money. As the Central Bank’s net error and omission item swelled, drug gangs became holding companies. But thanks to this, Turkey was able to avoid falling into a debt crisis.

The outcome for monopolies whose positions of collusion were shaken is quite dire: at this point, almost all of their profits are allocated to debt repayment. What has shaken the position of the

collaborators over the last 25 years is their inability to return their own savings to the expanded reproduction process. Because it is the imperialist capital groups that decide how, when, on what scale, and for which markets production will take place. Collaborators, who produce for foreign markets through import-dependent production, have ceded all of the extra monopoly profit to their imperialist partners in this cycle. So what did they do with the smaller profits that remained for themselves? They turned them into wealth, into a form that does not produce surplus value. The main mechanism of this transformation is the gold and jewelry trade. But it was more construction activities.

Why construction? Because every capital flowing into this area receives its share of the economy’s total surplus value through rising land rents. Rent is one of the ways of appropriating surplus value created in other areas of production. Monopolies provide the money needed to construction companies, each of which is a real estate partnership, and in return, they own the mortgage papers of the offices and apartments built. These mortgages are certificates of participation in surplus value sharing through rising land prices. Again, thanks to these extensive real estate assets (mortgages), the collusive monopolies obtain collateral for new loans for the imperialist economy.

Incidentally, it has become fashionable to target the “gang of five” (Erdogan’s inner circle) through the production of housing, hospitals, airports, residences, etc. As if they were monopolizing all the rent. Yet they perform an indispensable function for monopoly capital: converting capital accumulation into wealth and multiplying this wealth through rent. But as the old saying goes, what comes from nothing goes to nothing. This wealth, which does not enter capital accumulation, i.e., expanded reproduction, is a fragment of debt and can only play a role as collateral for debt payments.

Vestel’s situation is a typical example of this. Europe

had almost outsourced the production of white goods and electronic goods to Turkey. The situation in the automotive industry was even more pronounced. Inputs for these products were imported with high patent licensing fees and fed into the final assembly line. After China, Turkey became the second largest producer in this field, with 80% of its production exported. But the rule remained unchanged. As exports increase, imports also increase [Sabancı, one of Turkey's largest industrialists, summarized this situation very clearly: "Our exports are 85%, but our foreign exchange debt is even higher."]. Vestel became a "zombie," constantly borrowing more to produce, constantly settling for less profit to be able to export, and converting its earnings into real estate wealth.

IX

The consequences of full economic subjugation in terms of labor were exposure to hellish exploitation. Recent studies have found that in some industries, the rate of exploitation (surplus value) reached an extraordinary level of 600%. Parallel to this, large monopolies and banks broke profit records, especially between 2015 and 2024. In fact, Marxists emerged who, looking at these high figures, claimed that the economy was not in crisis at all. However, the other side of the coin was quite dark. Despite unprecedented exploitation rates and record profit levels, this dark side shed light on why monopolies suddenly found themselves unable to service their debts.

In reality, monopoly capital had become unable to pay its debts as early as 2018. [As we can see in Table 3, even a 1.5-point drop in the credit rate between 2017 and 2019 was enough to change the situation]. However, the religious fascist government opened the treasury to monopolies that year and took over their debts, allowing them to survive as zombies for a while longer. But the price of plundering the treasury

was high inflation. Cumulative inflation exceeded 250% between 2020 and 2025. On the other hand, the Central Bank's reserves were depleted in order to suppress the exchange rate. Thanks to this, the exchange rate only increased by 100% in the same three years. This situation allowed monopolies that brought imported goods to the domestic market to make huge profits. In particular, storable goods such as dry legumes, meat, automotive, and electronic materials became more expensive due to inflation, while the exchange rate spent on imports lagged far behind the increase. As the gap (%250-%100) widened, importers achieved profits of up to 150%.

However, to the extent that this scheme raised domestic labor costs, it rapidly eroded profitability in total industrial production.

The fact that both production and consumption domestically depended on imported inputs turned the gap between inflation and the exchange rate into a sword of Damocles hanging over the monopolies. As the necessities for the reproduction of labor power became more expensive, labor itself became more expensive. But the real big increase was in inputs other than labor. That was the real problem. Ultimately, you can suppress labor, but you cannot manage input costs.

Although the cost of labor has increased, in contrast, labor is fighting a more intense battle for survival. A few years ago, the minimum wage, which had become the average wage, was below \$200, but now it hovers around \$650. However, the goods consumed by labor have increased much faster than this. Housing costs, in particular, have risen at a rate that is by far a world record. In other words, the most important element of the "full economic subjugation paradox" has revealed itself. The nominal-SAGP gap has closed. Now, many goods sold domestically are more expensive than even London's most expensive neighborhoods. An apartment in Amasya, a small city in northern Turkey, costs as much as a mansion on the Miami-Malibu coast. This is a nightmare sce-

nario not only for labor but also for financial capital.

Financial capital, in terms of full economic subjugation, does not care to what extent labor is exploited (even if it is 600%). What matters to it is securing two forms of profit: extra monopoly profit and interest on loans. Despite high exploitation, these are the profits that Turkish monopoly capitalism struggles to generate and, in some sectors, can no longer produce.

Excessively inflated production costs have brought profits in the industry as a whole close to zero. Even the extreme exploitation of excessively cheap labor could not prevent this decline. This is because the rate of increase in the cost of non-labor inputs was faster than the potential for increasing the rate of exploitation. To simplify: If 10 out of 100 units of cost used to be labor expenses, now 2 out of 100 units go to labor; but even increasing exploitation to five times its previous level is not enough to increase profits. In fact, the dilemma faced by monopolies due to their current position of cooperation is quite clear in this simple and confusing calculation. Ultimately, even if the rate of exploitation could be pushed to its maximum limit, Turkish monopoly capital cannot reduce its debts or pay the interest on them. Naturally, textile manufacturers with light and portable workbenches are migrating to Egypt, while financial capital is shifting automotive production to Eastern Europe at a slower pace. White goods manufacturers are crushed under the burden of debt and are collectively laying off workers. In other words, industry is disintegrating and dispersing.

First Sri Lanka, then Bangladesh and others, the full economic subjugation paradox has lined up dependent countries. Major uprisings await us.

The Colonial Economy of the ‘Republic of Korea’ and Its Structural Crisis

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This article is a translation of the analysis of the South Korean economic crisis published in the January 2026 issue of “The Locomotive of Uprising,” the monthly magazine of the People’s Democracy Party.

Expanding Fears of an Unwinding of the Yen Carry Trade

No currency can be issued without limit. Since the abolition of the gold standard, money has become fiat currency, whose value is recognized through state credit and legal enforcement. Until the mid-1980s, the US dollar maintained high interest rates and strength despite large US fiscal deficits.

As US international competitiveness weakened, the United States sought to intervene in foreign exchange markets to prevent a decline in the value of the dollar, while major countries implemented excessively tight monetary policies to prevent their currencies from depreciating against the dollar, thereby accelerating economic recession. In response, in 1985, the finance ministers of the United States, France, Germany, Japan, and Britain agreed at New York’s Plaza Hotel to intervene in foreign exchange markets to depreciate the US dollar against the Japanese yen and the German mark.

In the two years following the Plaza Accord, the yen and the mark appreciated against the dollar by 65.7 percent and 57 percent, respectively. Despite the decline in the value of the dollar, the US current account deficit did not improve, and the Plaza Accord was no longer implemented as Germany and Japan hesitated to accept further currency appreciation out of concern for the loss of international competitiveness. However, the appreciation of the yen weakened

the export competitiveness of Japanese firms and became a decisive turning point leading to Japan’s so-called “lost decades.”

At the time, Japan’s economy, fueled by low interest rates, experienced widespread asset bubbles between 1985 and 1991 across real estate, stocks, luxury goods, and even cultural assets, both domestically and abroad. The Nikkei index rose 3.5 times, from 11,992 points in 1985 to 38,915 points in 1989. Over the same period, real estate prices increased 3.5-fold, and golf course memberships surged fourfold. There was even a saying that selling Tokyo alone would be enough to buy the entire United States. In 1989, 14 Japanese companies were included among the world’s top 20 firms by market capitalization.

This boom collapsed when monetary tightening began with an increase in the official discount rate in 1989, leading to the evaporation of assets totaling 1,500 trillion yen. Thereafter, Japan implemented zero-interest-rate policies and quantitative easing—direct purchases of government bonds—as measures to respond to deflation. These policies were later massively expanded under “Abenomics,” introduced with the launch of the Abe administration in 2012 and centered on quantitative easing, fiscal expansion, and growth strategies.

As a result of decades of debt-based fiscal policy financed by near-zero-interest bond issuance, along with rising expenditures linked to structural problems such as population aging, Japan’s national debt reached 1,323.7 trillion yen (approximately 9 trillion dollars) as of the third quarter of 2025, amounting to about 200 percent of Japan’s GDP.

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) raised its policy interest

rate to 0.1 percent in March 2024, marking its first rate hike in 17 years, followed by increases to 0.25 percent in July of the same year, 0.5 percent in January 2025, and a further 0.25 percentage-point hike in December 2025, bringing the rate to 0.75 percent. As Japan's benchmark interest rate rises, concerns over an unwinding of the yen carry trade are growing.

The yen carry trade involves borrowing yen at relatively low interest rates and investing in higher-yielding currencies to earn arbitrage profits. When interest rates rise and borrowing costs increase, investors begin to withdraw overseas investments, and the larger the scale, the greater the risk of a sharp collapse in stock prices. If the unwinding accelerates due to higher yen interest rates, overseas assets are sold, yen are purchased, and capital is repatriated to Japan.

In the process of selling overseas assets, stocks and bonds in the 'Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea)' also come under pressure. If the yen strengthens during the process of buying and exchanging yen, the Korean won weakens, exchange-rate volatility increases further. As capital flows back toward Japan, the burden is transferred to the 'ROK,' which has an open financial market.

Regarding the size of the yen carry trade, the Bank of Korea (BOK) estimates it at 3.4 trillion dollars, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) at 14 trillion dollars, and Deutsche Bank at 20 trillion dollars. While the interest rate hike at the end of 2025 has been assessed as sending relatively manageable signals for unwinding, in the 'ROK'—where exchange rates are high and stock markets are overheated—the unwinding of the yen carry trade is highly likely to become a signal flare for chain defaults and bankruptcies.

While the BOJ is pursuing monetary tightening, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is moving in the opposite direction with fiscal expansion. The BOJ has confirmed its exit from deflation and remains firm in its commitment to raising interest

rates, whereas Takaichi, inheriting "Abenomics," has announced stimulus measures through expansionary fiscal policy, leading to a depreciation of the yen.

Fiscal expansion also exerts upward pressure on government bond yields. The Korean won tends to move in tandem with the yen. At a time when the Lee Jae-myung administration is making all-out efforts to defend the value of the won, a weak yen is an unavoidable negative factor.

AI Bubble or Boom?

The "dot-com bubble" was a large-scale speculative bubble in which stock prices surged abnormally in the late 1990s due to excessive expectations regarding the value of internet and information technology (IT) companies, before collapsing sharply.

In the early 2000s, the dot-com bubble delivered a major shock to global stock markets, and over the two-year period from 2000 to 2002 the US Nasdaq index fell by nearly 78 percent.

In August 1998, the US hedge fund Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM) collapsed, and as fear spread across financial markets, the US Federal Reserve (Fed) cut interest rates in an effort to calm anxiety, triggering a stock market boom.

This boom continued into the early 2000s, and on March 10, 2000, the Nasdaq index reached an all-time high of 5,048.62 points.

When the Fed signaled a shift toward interest rate hikes the following month, the Nasdaq plunged abruptly in May.

Subsequently, earnings at technology firms such as Intel slowed, stock prices collapsed, and the bubble burst.

The Fed's rate cuts and economic stimulus measures ultimately inflated the bubble further, and the episode is widely regarded as a representative case in which markets responded in an extremely fragile manner once monetary policy shifted toward tightening.

Today, stock markets are being led by an AI-cen-

tered surge driven by Big Tech firms such as Nvidia, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Tesla.

Amid this overheating of equity markets, arguments warning of an “AI bubble” have emerged.

Analysts generally fall into two camps. One argues that concerns over an AI bubble are overstated. The other points to similarities with the dot-com bubble.

The basis of the AI bubble argument lies in growing doubts over whether the enormous capital expenditures poured in by Big Tech companies can ultimately translate into commensurate profits.

Experts also acknowledge the possibility of short-term overheating in certain technology stocks.

However, the prevailing view is that the structural growth of the AI industry—currently in the infrastructure-building phase—represents a real and tangible expansion rather than a speculative bubble.

At the same time, there are aspects that closely resemble the dot-com bubble.

As of August 2025, the Buffett Indicator stands at 211 percent, the highest level in history.

This exceeds the peak level of around 140 percent reached during the dot-com bubble in 2000.

Margin debt has also surpassed one trillion dollars, more than five times the roughly 200 billion dollars recorded in 2000. By contrast, the Fear & Greed Index stands at 56, well below the 80-90 range seen during the dot-com era.

This suggests that while psychological overheating in the current market is relatively subdued, structural leverage—where investment volumes far exceed investors’ own capital—and valuation pressures, with stock prices elevated relative to corporate fundamentals, are more pronounced than in the past.

In 2025, AI investment has reached an all-time high, and MarketWatch warned that AI investment has already reached “17 times the size of the dot-com bubble, and even four times larger than the 2008 global real-estate bubble” and “the misallocation portion of gross domestic product is fueled by artificially low interest rates.”

Whereas the dot-com bubble was driven by speculative excess among retail investors and investments centered on unprofitable firms, today’s AI bubble is characterized by massive pools of capital concentrated in Big Tech and amplified by leverage.

As a result, while the immediate shock may be less severe than during the dot-com collapse, it is said that macroeconomic indicators are signaling deeper and more structural risks, suggesting not a simple repetition of past crashes but an evolved form of systemic danger.

Investment banks such as Goldman Sachs and McKinsey describe this phenomenon as a “non-employee leverage” effect, in which AI diffusion raises productivity without increasing employment, effectively enabling limitless output growth without proportional job creation.

For the ‘ROK,’ where semiconductors have been the primary driver of current account surpluses, the implications of this effect are particularly significant.

Over the past decade, the US stock market has delivered the highest returns among major economies, with the S&P 500 rising by 228 percent. The KOSPI of the ‘ROK’ also recorded a significant gain of 103%.

In the third quarter of 2025, the blended net profit margin of S&P 500 companies reached 13.1 percent, surpassing the five-year average of 12.1 percent.

Profitability per unit of revenue has structurally increased.

If the bubble were to burst, asset losses and market volatility are expected to exceed those seen during the dot-com collapse or the 2008 global financial crisis.

As AI-related stocks come to occupy an outsized share of the overall equity market, falling stock prices are likely to translate into reduced consumption and broader damage to the real economy.

With the current ‘ROK’ administration moving to relax the separation between industrial and financial capital in order to support AI and semiconductor industries, these risks are being further amplified.

A Soaring Exchange Rate Warning of an Economic Crisis in the ‘ROK’

The exchange rate is the rate at which one currency can be exchanged for another currency. In the ‘ROK,’ the exchange rate is defined as the amount of Korean won required to exchange for one US dollar. When the exchange rate rises, the amount of won needed to obtain one dollar increases; therefore, a rise in the USD/KRW exchange rate means a depreciation of the Korean won.

Foreign exchange reserves are generally the foreign assets held by government authorities and the central banks. These reserves serve as a buffer against sovereign default and help stabilize the exchange rate during disruptions in the foreign exchange market. For this reason, foreign exchange reserves are considered a key indicator of sovereign credit rating.

Just before the Asian Financial Crisis in November 1997, the USD/KRW exchange rate was in the 800-won range. However, following the crisis, it surged to the 1,900-won range in December, temporarily reaching a peak of 2,063.0 won on December 24. As a result, the ‘ROK’ requested a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and implemented austerity measures, corporate restructuring, and high-interest rate policies, yet had to deal with severe economic consequences.

The global financial crisis in 2008, which began with the US subprime mortgage crisis, also had a major impact. The ‘ROK’ exchange rate surged from around 930 won to a peak of 1,570 won. During this period, the KOSPI plunged from 2,085 in 2007 to 892 in 2008. The KOSDAQ index also fell by more than 70 percent over the same period.

Meanwhile, the capital market liberalization in the ‘ROK,’ which had gradually progressed since the 1980s, accelerated in the early 1990s. Following the 1997 foreign exchange crisis, in order to stabilize the financial and foreign exchange markets, the government strongly pushed forward restructuring of financial institutions and corporations. In Decem-

ber 1997, it abolished foreign investment limits on all listed bonds, thereby opening the domestic bond market. In 1998, it fully opened the stock market and short-term financial markets.

Such a fully liberalized financial system is extremely vulnerable to external shocks. The KOSPI, which stood at 650 in early 1997, fell to 277 in June 1998, a drop of about 58 percent.

During the 2008 global financial crisis, global capital flowed into the US dollar, considered a safe-haven asset. The COVID-19 shock in 2020 also triggered a stock market decline amid a high exchange rate. The USD/KRW exchange rate, which was around 1,100 won in January 2021, surged to 1,400 won by July 2022. During the same period, the KOSPI declined from 3,266 to 2,134, a drop of approximately 35 percent.

The sharp appreciation of the dollar in 2022 was triggered by the US Federal Reserve (Fed) raising its benchmark interest rate seven times. Typically, when US interest rates rise, capital flows to the United States in search of higher returns, leading investors to sell the won and buy dollars, resulting in dollar strength and won weakness. The outbreak of the Ukraine war in 2022 further strengthened safe-haven demand for the dollar.

One reason why the ‘ROK’ stock market is sensitive to the USD/KRW exchange rate is its export-dependent economic structure. When the exchange rate rises, import costs for raw materials increase, foreign exchange risk expands, corporate profitability deteriorates, and inflation rises. Foreign investors in the ‘ROK’ stock market also tend to withdraw funds. Even if high returns are recorded, overseas capital ultimately needs to be converted back into dollars, which increases sensitivity to exchange rate fluctuations.

According to a report dated December 31, 2025, the foreign exchange authorities net sold approximately 1.745 billion dollars in the third quarter of 2025 to stabilize the currency market. As of Decem-

ber 31, 2025, the exchange rate closed at 1,439.5 won, marking the third-highest year-end closing rate in history, following 1,697 won during the 1997 crisis and 1,472.5 won on December 3, 2024, following the declaration of emergency martial law.

Exchange-rate pressures are increasing.

An Economic Crisis Deepened by a Treasonous Negotiation

As of November 2025, the foreign exchange reserves of the 'ROK' stand at approximately 430 billion dollars. The average exchange rate in December 2025 reached 1,467 won per dollar, a level comparable to that seen during the 2008 financial crisis. The high exchange rate is rooted in anxiety over capital outflows.

At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit held in Gyeongju on October 29, a summit meeting between the 'ROK' and the United States took place. On November 13-14, a joint fact sheet between the two countries was released. The 'ROK' government agreed to invest 350 billion dollars in the United States, of which 200 billion dollars will be paid in annual installments of 20 billion dollars over the next ten years. The package also includes a USD 150 billion 'ROK'-US shipbuilding cooperation fund.

In return for this massive investment, US tariffs on automobiles exported from the 'ROK' were reduced from 25% to 15%. Although a July 31 report announced a 15% tariff agreement between the United States and the 'ROK,' no final conclusion was reached during President Lee Jae-myung's visit to the United States from August 24-26.

Following Trump's remarks demanding that investment from the 'ROK' be made "in advance" and "entirely in cash," and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick's call for an increased investment scale, pressure mounted for an amount equivalent to 80% of the 'ROK's' foreign exchange reserves. As a result, the high exchange rate struck in the second half of 2025.

On October 1, the financial authorities of the 'ROK' and the United States agreed on the "basic principles of exchange rate policy," stating that neither side would manipulate its currency to hinder effective balance-of-payments adjustments or to secure unfair competitive advantages. Based on the premise that the 'ROK,' as a country with a trade surplus with the United States, artificially weakens the won to boost export competitiveness, the United States effectively compelled the 'ROK'—under its floating exchange rate regime—to leave exchange rate movements primarily to market forces.

While prohibiting exchange rate adjustments aimed at supporting exports through currency depreciation, the agreement also restricted government-level intervention by the 'ROK' to defend the currency except in cases of severe capital outflows.

After the release of the joint statement, the exchange rate continued its high trajectory, exceeding the 1,450-won range.

On November 24, the Ministry of Finance and Economy of the 'ROK' led the formation of a four-party consultative body involving the Bank of Korea (BOK), the National Pension Service (NPS), and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. On December 17, authorities introduced foreign exchange soundness measures centered on easing foreign currency regulations applied to banks and corporations and expanding dollar liquidity. On December 19, during an emergency Monetary Policy Committee meeting, the BOK decided to waive until June 2026 the foreign exchange levy that financial institutions are required to accumulate for external debt soundness management.

On December 23, the Ministry of Health and Welfare formed a task force (TF) with the NPS to implement flexible strategic foreign exchange hedging measures. The NPS operates a strategic and tactical currency hedging system that allows it to hedge overseas assets when the won-dollar exchange rate significantly deviates from its normal range.

According to a December 30 report, the NPS shifted from its previous system—under which hedging required prior approval from the fund management committee at specific trigger levels—to a more flexible and frequent execution mechanism. In practice, if the exchange rate rises more than expected, the NPS may sell dollar forward contracts equivalent to up to 10% of its overseas assets. This increases dollar supply in the market and exerts downward pressure on the exchange rate.

Following the formation of the task force on December 23, the authorities are presumed to have intervened in the market. On December 24, the exchange rate briefly fell to the 1,430-won range—the lowest level in December—only to surge again to the 1,440-won range on December 30. Market participants interpret this as an effort by the authorities to manage the closing price on December 30 which was the last trading day of the foreign exchange market. As the perceived intensity of intervention weakened compared to the previous day, importers and overseas investors—real demanders of dollars—reportedly moved in for “buying on dips.”

The Lee Jae-myung administration has faced criticism for mobilizing the NPS to defend the exchange rate.

Meanwhile, the depreciation of the won is intertwined with an expansionary fiscal stance and the limited feasibility of interest rate hikes. With over 70% of household assets tied up in real estate, raising interest rates—since loan interest is calculated as a percentage—would likely trigger personal bankruptcies and corporate defaults. The widening gap between the base interest rate of the ‘ROK’ and that of the United States is also linked to the surge in the exchange rate.

The record-high 2026 budget of 728 trillion won could further fuel inflation under high exchange rate conditions. Increased government bond issuance to finance the budget would heighten sovereign credit risk and external debt vulnerabilities, thereby exert-

ing additional upward pressure on the exchange rate.

A chain reaction of economic crisis appears imminent.

Collapse of the Real Estate Bubble and the Onset of Prolonged Stagnation

Concerns are growing that the real estate crisis in the ‘ROK’ is beginning to resemble Japan’s property bubble collapse around 1990. Following the Plaza Accord in 1985, monetary expansion driven by yen appreciation fueled a massive real estate bubble in Japan. When the Japanese government tightened regulations in the early 1990s, the bubble burst, marking the beginning of Japan’s “lost decades.” Corporate insolvencies, bank failures, shrinking consumption and investment, and rising unemployment led to asset erosion and a contraction in investor confidence, resulting in more than three decades of low growth.

In early 2024, reports indicated that the number of vacant homes (akiya) in Japan had reached 10 million. With 10% of the population aged 80 or older, vacancies are expected to rise further. The Nomura Research Institute projected that by 2038, 31% of all housing in Japan could be vacant. In response, initiatives such as “vacant house banks” have emerged, along with programs allowing foreigners to purchase homes for free or at very low prices in order to settle in Japan.

Similarly, real estate in the ‘ROK’ faces structural risks stemming from low birth rates, rapid aging, capital region concentration, and regional depopulation. As in Japan, there are concerns that after a period of excessive price increases, the market could enter a correction phase—or even experience a sharp collapse. Rather than a general decline in all housing prices, polarization may intensify: urban centers becoming even more expensive while outer areas deteriorate into slums.

Under the Park Geun-hye administration, real estate stimulus policies included deregulation of con-

struction and a prolonged low-interest-rate stance. Housing prices began rebounding in the latter half of her term, and under the Moon Jae-in administration, Seoul apartment prices recorded the largest increases in absolute price terms in history. A distribution- and income-centered policy orientation expanded liquidity. Although regulations targeting multiple homeowners and the wealthy were strengthened alongside supply measures, these efforts yielded limited results.

In February 2025, shortly before President Lee Jae-myung took office, Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon lifted land transaction permit designations in four Gangnam districts (Jamsil, Samseong, Daechi, and Cheongdam). After prices surged, the city reinstated and expanded restrictions within a month to cover all apartments in the three main Gangnam districts (Gangnam, Seocho, Songpa) and Yongsan. Nevertheless, the upward price trend was not contained. Even strong regulatory measures—such as designating speculative overheating zones and expanding land transaction permit areas—failed to reverse the rise.

After taking office on June 4, the Lee Jae-myung administration announced the June 27 household debt management measures aimed at curbing excessive borrowing for high-priced home purchases—so-called “yeongkkeul” (maxed-out leveraged buying). Mortgage borrowers were required to move into the purchased home within six months to prevent “gap investment,” and additional loans for those owning two or more homes in the capital region were effectively blocked. Regardless of income or housing price, total loan ceilings were uniformly capped—an unprecedentedly strong demand-suppression measure.

In practice, however, actual consumers with insufficient financial capacity were pushed out of the market, while cash-rich individuals with low loan dependence gained greater opportunities, leading to a concentration of speculation among the wealthy. On July 1, 2025, financial authorities implemented

the third stage of the Stress DSR (Debt Service Ratio) system, applying a 100% stress (additional) interest rate to loans across all financial institutions. The dual regulations of June 27 and July 1 significantly reduced the purchasing capacity of working-age buyers in their 30s and 40s who had income but insufficient assets.

Although transaction volumes declined due to government regulations, housing prices did not fall. Seoul apartment prices rose for 47 consecutive weeks from the first week of February 2025 through the fourth week of December, recording an annual cumulative increase of 8.71%. This exceeded the 2018 annual increase (8.03%) during the Moon administration’s housing boom and marked the highest rate in 19 years since the 23.46% surge in 2006 under the Roh Moo-hyun administration.

Industry analysts argue that a “lock-in effect” emerged, with sellers withholding listings while waiting on the sidelines. As a result, prices were sustained even with a limited number of transactions. Demand shifted to the rental market, and policies intended to curb purchase prices inadvertently fueled a surge in “Jeonse (lump-sum housing lease)” prices.

Ahead of new real estate policy measures and the 2026 local elections, new housing supply plans are being discussed, but uncertainty persists. President Lee Jae-myung has consistently argued that real estate ownership for investment purposes should be minimized and that investment demand concentrated in property should be redirected to the stock market.

Government policies aimed at stabilizing housing prices have never fully achieved their objectives, as housing demand remains structurally persistent. The larger the scale of the real estate market grows, the greater the concern over the economic shock that could follow from a potential bubble collapse.

Real Estate PF Threatening the Financial Sector

Another risk factor in the real estate market is real estate project financing (PF). In 2022, during the reconstruction project of Dunchon Jugong Apartments, construction companies demanded an increase in project costs as soaring raw material prices—triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine—combined with the housing association’s requests for design changes. When the association refused to accept the higher construction costs, work was suspended for six months. As building materials and construction costs surged, apartment presale prices rose overall. In regional areas, unsold units snowballed due to insufficient demand.

Meanwhile, when Gangwon Province announced the rehabilitation filing of the developer behind the Legoland theme park project, the market interpreted the move as a withdrawal of Gangwon’s payment guarantee on approximately 205 billion Korean won worth of ABCP (asset-backed commercial paper). As a result, the real estate bond market froze. Although Gangwon Province pledged to resolve the debt by the end of January 2023, the situation was only stabilized after the government announced measures to supply liquidity to the bond market on the scale of “50 trillion won + α .”

Real estate PF is a financing technique that raises funds based on the future profitability of a specific real estate development project. Loans are extended not on the creditworthiness of the developer, but on the feasibility of the project itself. The project is carried out through a special purpose company (SPC) established for each development. It typically begins with a bridge loan (a short-term, high-interest loan) for land acquisition. The bridge loan is then repaid through a main PF loan, which also finances construction costs. During construction, part of the PF loan is repaid using presale proceeds, and after completion, the remaining balance is settled with final

payments from buyers, thereby realizing profits.

Because it is premised on future profitability, PF inherently carries high risk. Its financial structure is complex, involving developers, construction firms, securities companies, savings banks, capital companies, and guarantee institutions. Compared to ordinary lending, the risk is far greater, and if even one link in this chain falters, it can trigger a cascading effect with serious consequences for the national economy. Domestic developers typically maintain very low equity ratios—around 3-5%—and rely on PF to finance most land acquisition and construction costs, which heightens insolvency risk. Moreover, if presale rates decline due to rising interest rates and a downturn in the property market, loan repayment difficulties intensify.

Real estate PF has become a latent threat to the financial sector. According to the report “Policy Responses to South Korea’s Real Estate PF Crisis” by Samil PwC Business Research, the current scale of real estate PF is estimated at approximately 200 trillion won. This figure consists of 160 trillion won in direct lending—including PF loans and land-secured loans—and 40 trillion won in securitized amounts. The government provisionally estimated total financial sector PF exposure, including managed land trusts of Saemaeul Geumgo (Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives), at 216.5 trillion won as of the end of June 2024.

As of the end of the third quarter of 2025, the delinquency rate on PF loans rose to 4.49%, up 1.07 percentage points from the previous quarter. This marks the first time the rate has entered the 4% range since financial authorities began regularly disclosing the data. The delinquency rate on land-secured loans—primarily handled by non-bank financial institutions—has approached 30%.

According to the provisional figures in the “2024 Business Performance of Savings Banks and Mutual Finance Cooperatives” released by the Financial Supervisory Service on March 21, 2025, the delin-

quency rate of the country's 79 savings banks reached 8.52%, up 1.97 percentage points from the end of 2023 (6.55%). Data from the Financial Statistics Information System show that this is the highest level since 9.2% at the end of 2015. The primary cause was a sharp rise in the corporate loan delinquency rate to 12.81%, driven largely by non-performing real estate PF loans—an increase of 4.79 percentage points from the end of 2023 (8.02%). In contrast, the household loan delinquency rate declined by 0.48 percentage points to 4.53% from 5.01% at the end of 2023.

The non-performing loan (NPL) ratio—an indicator of bad loans—also reached a record high of 10.66%, up 2.91 percentage points from 7.75% at the end of 2023. In general, within the secondary financial sector such as savings banks and mutual finance institutions, an NPL ratio below 5% is considered sound, and below 3% is regarded as excellent.

Financial authorities have announced that from 2027 they will gradually implement a “PF System Improvement Plan” that includes raising equity ratio requirements for PF projects. To minimize market shock, the new standards will apply only to newly originated projects, with the required equity ratio phased in over four years from 5% to 10%, then 15%, and ultimately 20%.

Although financial regulators continue to monitor developments through “Real Estate PF Situation Assessment Meetings,” concerns persist and the risks cannot be ruled out.

Rising Prices: A Potential Trigger for Recession and Economic Breakdown

Prices, along with unemployment, are among the aspects of the economy most directly and routinely felt in everyday life. Real economic conditions are often perceived through prices, and price levels largely determine the material quality of daily living.

In Iran, the sharp depreciation of the Iranian rial in the second half of 2025 (exchange rate collapse), the resulting surge in inflation, and steep increases

in the prices of essential goods became triggers for anti-government protests.

In the ‘ROK,’ despite macroeconomic indicators showing that inflation has remained relatively stable at around 2-3% in recent years following the sharp rise during the COVID-19 pandemic, the prices felt in everyday life continue to function as a fundamental driver of hardship for ordinary people.

Although international oil prices declined slightly in the second half of 2025, the depreciation of the Korean won—leading to a higher exchange rate—offset this effect, pushing the import price index up by 2.6% in November 2025, the largest increase in one year and seven months.

The annual consumer price inflation rate for 2024 stood at 2.1%, officially described as stable. However, agricultural, livestock, and fisheries prices rose by 2.4%, exceeding the overall inflation rate. In particular, seafood prices surged by 5.9% and livestock products by 4.8%. Mackerel, a staple fish for low- and middle-income households, rose by more than 10%, while imported beef increased by 8.0%. In addition, the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (AI) further destabilized egg supply. In 2025, rice prices jumped 25% year-on-year.

The Governor of the BOK warned that a high exchange rate has a significant impact on prices and could create conditions that make social cohesion more difficult to maintain. Reflecting recent exchange rate developments, the BOK raised its consumer inflation forecast for this year from 2.1% to as high as 2.3%, signaling heightened uncertainty.

According to Statistics Korea, the consumer price index (CPI) for the first quarter of 2025 stood at 116.03. Calculated with 2020 as the base year (100), this indicates that prices have risen cumulatively by 16% since 2020. The cost-of-living index—composed of 144 frequently purchased, high-expenditure items—reached 119.09 in the first quarter, while the food price index recorded 125.04. Although overall inflation did not appear excessive relative to the

average, prices for essential goods—such as food and clothing—showed comparatively high increases.

High food and dining-out prices of the ‘ROK’ are often attributed to its low food self-sufficiency rate and complex agricultural distribution structure. Meanwhile, based on purchasing power parity (PPP), food prices of the ‘ROK’ are approximately 47% higher than the OECD average, ranking second among 38 OECD member countries after Switzerland—higher even than the United States and Japan.

If prices of staple foods such as rice, meat, and processed products continue to rise, sluggish domestic consumption is likely to deepen further. The government designated vice-ministerial officials in each ministry as “Price Stabilization Officers” and announced close monitoring of key items. However, it is widely assessed that there are clear limits to controlling an external variable such as the exchange rate.

Even if living costs rise, the ‘ROK’ faces constraints in adopting interest rate hikes as an anti-inflation measure because of its high household debt burden. According to the March 2025 Global Debt Report by the Institute of International Finance (IIF), the ‘ROK’ household debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 91.7% at the end of 2024, ranking second among 38 surveyed countries after Canada (100.6%). The BOK assesses that when this ratio exceeds 80%, growth tends to slow due to weakened consumption, and the probability of recession increases.

Household debt rose rapidly during 2020-2023 under the low interest rate environment of the COVID-19 period, reaching the highest level in the world, before declining by 1.9% in the second half of 2024 due to regulatory tightening. Nevertheless, it remains well above the global average of 60.3%.

If interest rates are raised to curb inflation, the resulting burden on household debt repayment could act as a trigger for cascading defaults and broader economic instability.